

Critical Literacy-Based Instruction In Teaching Reading: Insights And Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Teaching reading in the Indonesian educational system still focuses only on the comprehension and vocabulary exercises and does not encourage learners to become critical thinkers in reading the text. Critical literacy-based instruction is a critical thinking development technique that helps students become active meaning-makers. This study investigated teachers' understanding and challenges on critical literacy-based instruction in teaching reading. In this case study, the research questionnaire and interview were used as instruments of data collection. The data collected from the respondents were gathered together to be analyzed using qualitative analysis of interactive models. The result of this study shows that some teachers were in misconception about critical literacy. They are also difficult to differentiate the concept of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and critical literacy. Besides, they face several obstacles and challenges in implementing critical literacy-based instruction in teaching reading. Mostly, when they asked students to evaluate multiple texts to study how the story changes when told from different perspectives, read from a resistant perspective, and produce counter texts. Enhancing students' critical thinking ability in reading can be approached from three perspectives; critical thinking, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy. This study only focused on critical literacy in teaching reading. This study will be preliminary inputs for the readers or other researchers to further study in a similar research area with different interests.

Keywords: Critical Literacy, Critical Reading, Teaching Reading

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INTRODUCTION

Through Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan No 36, 2018, the government of Indonesia states that the role of Curriculum 2013 is to strengthen critical learning patterns. The teacher's role is to facilitate students to learn actively in collaborative and interactive teaching-learning activities and develop their critical thinking ability. Enhancing students' critical thinking ability can be approached from three perspectives: critical thinking, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy. Those perspectives are related to each other. For example, the process requires the reader to engage with logical inquiry or critical thinking to understand, analyse, evaluate and judge information and messages in texts by reflecting on his prior knowledge. To read critically, one should go through a leveled process to understand the information conceived and the message's spirit and analyze and evaluate the text (Muchsonah, 2015). Critical literacy is also closely related to critical thinking and critical awareness, it allows someone to think divergently, develop problem-solving skills, and develop thinking skills concerning cause and effect, perspectives/points of view, evidence, possibilities, and debate (Halimah, et al., 2020).

Nowadays, when students are almost drowning in the news or social media, they face serious problems in anticipating hoax information. Therefore, it is urgent to train students in critical thinking habits to evaluate what they see, hear critically, and read. They can also read selectively and sort out the bits and pieces that are interesting and useful. Students with higher critical thinking ability and resilience had better performance on

reading texts with unknown words (Velayati, et al., 2017), and engage them in high-level thinking to strengthen their reading comprehension (Indriyana & Kuswandono, 2019).

Developing critical thinking skills in reading activities has been significant research interest in various countries' educational contexts. Several studies have been conducted on critical thinking and critical reading in Indonesia's education context (Velayati et al., 2017; Gustine, 2018; Rohadi, 2018; Rohmah, 2018). Those studies' results are students' lack of practice, background knowledge, and language mastery made them felt that critical thinking was difficult to be done. They are also confused about what they have to do related to critical reading. Another result shows that teachers lack knowledge of critical literacy in EFL education. They do not fully grasp the essential essence of literacy in English teaching, and the methods of teaching reading used are oriented to how to answer the questions on the reading. It implies that the students are prepared for test-taking strategies in reading materials that focus on answering questions rather than reading critically. Unlike previous studies exploring students' points of view, difficulties, and reflections, this study focuses on teachers' insights and challenges investigation. Although this study is similar to Gustine (2018), this study also explored their challenge in using critical based instruction in teaching reading. It provides evidence that the teaching of reading in the Indonesian educational system still focuses only on the comprehension and vocabulary exercises and does not encourage learners to become critical thinkers in reading the text. Thus it leads the researcher finds that it

is crucial to find the teachers' insight and challenges in using critical based instruction in teaching reading.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical literacy refers to the ability to stand back from texts and view them critically as circulating within a larger social and textual context. It includes the capacity to look beneath the surface of discourse, to understand implicit ideologies and agendas, to think and speak for oneself, to understand how social contexts affect, how texts are designed and understood, and to appreciate the resources of cultural and linguistic diversity (Warnick, 2002). Furthermore, Kuo (2014) states that critical literacy maintains that texts, literacies, and language practices are never neutral, so students should be equipped with critical competence, enabling them to recognize ideological messages and social forces encoded in the texts in order to help them learn a language effectively and also change their attitudes toward the society in which they live. Critical literacy offers a critical approach to the text within the classroom context, a language of critique or critical discourse, and an examination of literacy across content areas. However, before critical literacy can occur within the classroom, students need the opportunity to engage in meaningful use of literacy, or other words, to use literacy in ways that relate to their interests and needs. Without the opportunity to write and read for a range of purposes or access to various texts, there is no basis upon which critical discussion of and reflection on literacy can occur. Such opportunities are essential if students begin to examine how texts are constructed and for what purposes. Some practices support critical literacy in the classroom, such as reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, reading from a resistant perspective, producing counter-text, and providing opportunities for student's choice (Behrman, 2006).

He also explained that in supplementary text, a teacher could provide students with novel, film, music, or magazine to focus on social issues and confront social issues glossed over or avoided by traditional texts. Furthermore, reading multiple texts encourages students to understand authorship as a situated activity. They can consider who constructed the text, when, where, why, and the values on which it was based. By experiencing different treatments of the same topic or event, students recognize that text is not "true" in any absolute sense but a rendering as portrayed by an author. They can be encouraged to "peel" different layers of meaning from a text and to explore how the same reader might approach a text from different identities based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexuality, and religion. Another example of critical literacy is producing counter-texts. A counter text is a student-created text that presents a topic from a non-mainstream perspective. It is a personal response to the topic being learned, as in a reading log or journal. Producing counter texts can validate students' thoughts, observations, and feelings, and other underrepresented groups. Whereas producing counter texts places emphasis on the student's perspective, this next category places emphasis on the student's choice of topic. Each student identifies an important personal topic and then conducts extensive research (Behrman, 2006; Yoon & Sharif, 2015).

In addition, there are also several critical literacy activities with integrate with critical reading and critical activities such as ask students to previewing (Getting an overview of text structure, text cues, pictures, and

personal experiences prior to reading a text), ask students to look for clues in the text, think about what those clues trigger in prior knowledge, and make a prediction, ask students to monitor for understanding by checking to see if the text makes sense, ask students to write a paragraph or more that presents the main ideas in their own words, invite students to abstract from their observations, to think about the implication of their ideas, and to generate these ideas across a range of specific contexts, use writing assignments with specific tasks or goals focusing on a particular kind of thinking or reflection, use student workshops on projects (students work together to provide feedback and suggestions for major projects, Identify strengths and weaknesses of an author's thesis and argument(s)), ask students to evaluate the different sources from which they draw information, and ask students to evaluate evidence from multiple perspectives (Nasrollahi et al., 2015; Sulaiman, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to identify teachers' understanding of critical literacy and explore teachers' difficulties in implementing critical literacy in teaching reading. Regarding those research purposes, a qualitative study was used as a research design in this study (see Dalman et al., 2020; Apriyanto & Anum, 2018; Kusuma & Apriyanto, 2018; Anum & Apriyanto, 2019; Flick, 2014; Young & Hren, 2012). The participants in this study are 50 English teachers. This study used multiple techniques for data collection. It means that the data will be collected from one source of data and at the end of the study and ongoing. The data collection technique comprised of questionnaires and interviews. Apart from the questionnaire, a focus group discussion was conducted two times in which all participants were invited to engage in a topic related to the themes in the questionnaire. The data collected from the respondents were gathered together to be analyzed using qualitative analysis of interactive models.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following section discusses the findings and discussions from the questionnaires and interviews. The results and discussions are divided into two main issues following the research questions. The first examines teachers' understanding of critical literacy-based instruction in teaching reading, and the second explore teachers' difficulties in implementing critical literacy-based instruction in teaching reading.

a. Teachers' understanding on critical literacy based instruction in teaching reading.

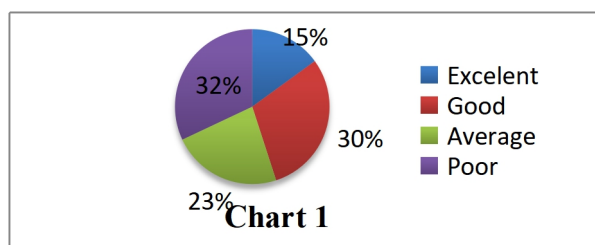


Chart 1 shows that 15% of teachers have excellent understanding, 30% of teachers have good understanding, 23% of teachers have average understanding, and 32% of teachers have a poor understanding of critical literacy-

based instruction in teaching reading. Responding to all questions, almost all respondents confused critical literacy with critical thinking and critical reading. They have a misunderstanding in defining critical literacy. "teknik menemukan informasi dan gagasan yang terdapat pada texts."

"... metode penyampaian materi reading dengan cara pendalaman pemahaman isi secara rinci dimana siswa diharapkan dapat menemukan informasi secara rinci baik isi maupun gramatikal dalam teks bacaan tersebut."

"... suatu metode pembelajaran reading dengan cara skimming reading dimana siswa-siswi dapat mendapatkan informasi secara rinci baik isi maupun gramatikal dalam teks bacaan."

Some of the characteristics of critical literacy that respondents stated above, such as reading critically, differentiate facts from opinions, and critically investigate the validity of information they receive, are highly relevant to critical thinking. Apart from the teachers' misunderstanding between critical literacy, critical reading, and critical thinking, another response related to this question was how the teachers' associated critical literacy solely with reading. The important point is that critical literacy education is more oriented towards raising awareness of the oppressed about their humanity, which can grasp the world. The awareness process uses a praxis approach, namely through critical reflection on their social and historical situation, reading their world, which then provokes actions to bring about social change. In the new perspective of the literacy learning paradigm, it embraces critical literacy theory. This theory requires learning by instilling high expectations of students' academic achievement and recognizing and respecting students' cultural competencies. Furthermore, this theory also develops social-political awareness of teachers and students by providing students with experiences based on the concept that they are members of community groups, linking students' knowledge of community groups with textual criticism related to power issues and relations. Domination and group, as well as the tendency to see students as part of various socio-cultural classes as a group that reflects the reality of society (Kucer, 2005).

b. Teachers' difficulties in implementing critical literacy-based instruction in teaching reading.

In implementing critical based instruction in teaching reading, teachers face several difficulties in several aspects. First, they have problems in giving essential techniques of questioning for their students. They still focus on reading comprehension questions. It means that the questions still in level knowledge and comprehension. Second, students' ability in close reading is low, so teachers difficult to ask students to combine ideas and information selected from different texts. Third, teachers faced difficulties in using structured controversy or debate. These obstacles are caused by their understanding of the principles of critical literacy-based instruction. However, they believe that as a pedagogical model in teaching reading, critical literacy plays a positive role in reading beyond the text. Still, when teachers focused on implementing critical literacy in the class, one of the participants was afraid that the classroom atmosphere would be dull and uninteresting. Critical pedagogy is not about polemics or preaching a teacher's knowledge in the classroom. Conversely, critical pedagogy involves students' autonomy to share responsibility when encountering problems based on their collective experience of the social reality at hand. Critical educators challenge the

status quo in both content and method. That means that critical educators always desire to improve their capabilities as a teacher both in content and strategy. He fought for change and didn't want to be a perpetrator of the status quo, and he moved from his comfort zone.

CONCLUSION

From the result of questionnaires and interviews, it may be inferred that despite the teachers' lack of critical literacy in teaching reading, this research brings hope that English teachers embrace the essential notion of literacy and its pedagogical practice in their classroom. Although most teachers in this study may not fully grasp the essential essence of literacy in English teaching, some of the respondents have raised critical awareness of what critical literacy looks like in the classroom and how to create a critical literacy-oriented English classroom. Critical literacy education helps students explore language and power relationships and focuses on the need to create critical speakers, readers, and writers who can deconstruct the texts that surround them and interpret them, both as products and processes of specific social practice. In this context, literacy is recognized as a source of ideologically defined meaning.

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