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DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL LITERACY IN READING CLASS AT AN ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Critical Literacy approach suggests that teaching reading should not only be focused on language but also on developing students' critical literacy. This article discusses the findings of research focusing on strategies used in developing critical literacy in Reading class at English Education Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and challenges faced by the lecturers in developing students' critical literacy. The subjects were 20 English Education Department students and three lecturers of Reading. The data were collected using interview, observation, and documentation. They were analyzed through data reduction, data display for categorization and conclusion by using relevant framework of critical literacy. The findings showed that the strategies used by the lecturers include using various texts, stimulating the students' interest, asking critical questions, discussing questions collaboratively, and writing summary and response. The challenges faced by the lecturers in developing students' critical literacy were students' low of critical literacy, students' lack of self confidence, students' low English proficiency and students' dependence of guidance.

Keywords: critical literacy, critical reading

INTRODUCTION

Critical literacy approach has become an important issue which is supported by high order thinking skill. It has replaced the skills-centered model of learning to read and write, and becomes increasingly important nowadays as students need to interact with more media of information and filter all the information so that they can select which information is useful for them and which one is not. As language becomes the means of conveying ideas and information, students who learn the language should be equipped with critical competence, enabling them to become critically literate.

Critical literacy is "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson and Irvine, 1993: 82). Another definition is given by Luke and Dooley (2011):

Critical literacy is the use of texts to analyse and transform relations of cultural, social and political power… to address social, economic and cultural injustice and inequality… it views texts – print and multimodal, paper-based and digital - and their codes and discourses as human technologies for representing and reshaping possible worlds. *Texts are not taken as part of a canonical curriculum tradition or received wisdom that is beyond criticism* (Luke & Dooley, 2011)

The position of the students in critical literacy are the user of the language who digest the text and the information and question the message behind the text, as stated by McLaughlin & De-Voogd, (2004), critical literacy is different from traditional reading in which the author who has the power. In critical literacy the readers have the power to analyze and be critical toward the hidden meaning and message. However, students who learn the language not only need critical literacy but also basic literacy to be able to take a position clarifying the issues and point of views conveyed in a text.

There are some models of teaching critical literacy. Four resources model proposed by Luke and Freebody (1997) as adopted by Ontario Ministry of Canada (2009) include 1) Code breaking, 2) Making meaning, 3) Using text, and 4) Analyzing text. Code breaking refers to basic or functional literacy. The students decoding the text to get the information conveyed in the text. In making meaning, students relate the information from the text to their own experiences or background knowledge to be able to interpret what the author is saying and to predict where he or she might be going next. Students are exposed to various texts and different organization of ideas in the text including the structure of the texts that might be used by the authors. By teaching critical literacy, students are taught to be critical questioning what the text is about, how it would be different if written in a different way, how it will be if it happens in a certain context, etc. This will make students aware of the possible different views in understanding a text, which does not only depend on the author's purpose but also the readers' background knowledge and the context. This shows that no text is neutral since it can be viewed from different perspectives.

Lehr (l982) as cited in Taglieber (2011) describes some of other models of teaching critical literacy which integrates Reading and Writing as developed by Clifford (l980). This model consists of four stages: 1) involvement, developing personal interest in the text, 2) perception, contemplating and noticing the details in the text that elicited that response, 3) interpretation, drawing meanings from the text, and 4) evaluation, making judgments about the texts.

Taglieber furthermore explains another model which is proposed by Barnes' (l979) questioning classification system which consists of four categories which, according to him, should be given in systematical order because the first two are a prerequisite for divergent and evaluative thinking. They cover 1) cognitive memory questions that elicit recall of facts or yes-no answers; (2) convergent questions that ask students to explain, express in another mode, state relationships, compare and contrast, or solve a problem; (3) divergent questions that ask students to infer, reconstruct, predict, hypothesize, solve a problem, or invent or design; and (4) evaluation questions that require students to judge, value, defend, or justify a choice or solution.

A third model for teaching critical reading and thinking in Taglieber (2011) is Cunningham's (l980) two-phase lesson. Cunningham proposes two-phase lesson because he thinks that teachers often confuse reading comprehension which is understanding the meaning with criticall reading which is evaluating meaning. Therefore, Cunningham thinks that it is necessary to develop this two different skills in two phase lesson, so that in each lesson, the activities of the students are relevant to the focus of the reading. The first lesson will improve the understanding of the text, and the second lesson will focus on analyzing the text, the hidden meaning and even write their judgment and position paper showing their perspectives toward the author's idea.

Another model is proposed by Lewinson, et al. (2008) in Gustine (2013). The model consists of four dimensions (1) disrupting the commonplace, i.e., investigating widely held beliefs using a new lens (Van Sluys, 2005), (2) considering multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on socio political issue which emphasizes the need the need to link literacy education with the socio-political context and (4) taking action to promote social justice does not always require someone to become a social activist, but a shift in attitude or the way one develops from a superficial reading to critical reading can also be categorized as taking action (Van Sluys, 2005).

Abednia (2013) proposed another framework to practice teaching critical literacy that include 1) Familiarizing Learners with Critical Literacy, 2) Negotiating Readings, 3) Asking Critical Questions, Discussing Questions Collaboratively, and 4) Writing Reflective Journals . There are some theories of framework for teaching critical literacy. Another framework for teaching critical literacy is suggested by McLaughlin & Allen (2002a) which consists of five steps involving explaining, demonstrating, guiding, practicing, and reflecting.

In English Education department, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, critical reading is given to the third semester students. Students are expected to interpret a wide range of literature

and to have skills of questioning, making inferences, predicting outcomes, distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying an author's bias, evaluating the writer's authority, comparing and contrasting information, classifying or categorizing information, analyzing information, synthesizing information from various sources, making judgments, drawing conclusions, and making generalizations. Related to the theories as described above, it is interesting to investigate how lecturers develop critical literacy in this subject, how students' critical literacy are and what challenges the lecturers face in developing students' critical literacy.

A bulk of research on critical literacy has been conducted, among others is research conducted by Ko (2013) which investigated an EFL teacher's critical literacy teaching in a reading class in Taiwan. The findings show that by posing critical questions and having a critical dialogue with students, the teacher helped students to read beyond the text on its literal level and raised their awareness of the subtle workings of ideologies in it. The teacher himself also underwent a change in his professional development. Some problems faced by the teacher were a transmission model of literacy, students' language learning beliefs, and teaching resources. Another research was conducted by Kuo (2013) investigating critical literacy in the EFL Classroom, using multiple perspectives through learning tasks. He focused on how students respond to an activity designed from a critical perspective and how the students compared their learning in this activity to their prior experience. His study found that this activity led students to assume the role of social agents. They developed a critical stance, investigated multiple perspectives, and re-examined their familiar world. In addition, adopting the role of language learners, students formed critical responses to the activity; three themes recurred with regard to classroom materials, topics, and tasks. In Indonesia, a study was conducted by Gustine (2013) which was focused on designing and implementing a critical literacy-based approach in an Indonesian EFL secondary school. She used the framework proposed by Lewinson (2008) which consists of (1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) considering multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on socio political issue and (4) taking actions. The result showed that the framework improved the students' critical literacy as well as gaining positive response from the students.

The previous studies above have different setting, subjects and focus. This paper will discuss critical literacy which is integrated in a Reading class. The problems to be discussed are the strategies used by the lecturers to raise critical literacy and the students' responses to the strategies used by the lecturers. This study is expected to give insight to the use of critical approach in teaching reading and to the awareness of the importance of teachers' creativity in developing critical literacy.

RESEARCH METHOD

The subjects of this study were the third semester students which consisted of 60 students and three lecturers of critical reading of English Education Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Data were collected in one semester using classroom observation and interviews with the teacher. The writer used field notes to write any information obtained from the observation. Interviews with the lecturers were recorded. All data were analysed using existing critical literacy frameworks. The technique of maintaining the credibility of data was done by using triangulation of the source and techniques for collecting data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
3.1 Teachers strategies in teaching Critical Reading
Based on the interview and the observation, the strategies used by the lecturers are:

3.1.1 Using various readings that are relevant and interesting for learners.
The lecturers choose various short stories. Among others is A Clean, Well-Lighted Place and *Tom Sawyer*. This is to make students interested in the story so that they enjoy reading the text. In ad-

dition, literary texts stimulate them to interpret the text critically.

Saya memberikan cerita pendek agar mahasiswa senang membacanya. Disamping itu kalau kita baca karya sastra kan banyak yang harus diinterpretasikan.(I give them short stories to make them enjoy reading the texts. Besides, literary works needs much interpretation) (An interview with Mr. T, November 2016)

The selection of various Reading text can be seen from the material given to the students such as *Tom Sawyer* and *A Clean Well- Lighted place.* This is in line with a strategy proposed in four resources of Model (Luke and Freebody, 1997), that is, *Using text*. Students need to be introduced to different texts forms and how these have different uses which shape the language, structure and organization chosen by the author as all texts are constructions and contain belief and value and texts elicit and stimulate different analysis and interpretations.

3.1.2 Asking critical questions in written and orally.

The lecturer asked some critical questions related to the text.

Questions:

"Why do parents send their children to school? This question is related to the short story being discussed, that is Tom Sawyer which is not like the other children who go to school.

" At one point, the older waiter says to the younger one, "We are of two different kinds."

"What does he mean by this? Do you believe there are two different kinds of people?"

" Why do you think that Hemingway used some Spanish words in the story?"

"In your opinion what is the meaning of the title?"

"What element of the story do you think is the most important: the character, plot, or setting?"

The lecturers asking critical analysis stimulate students' critical thinking that lead to critical literacy. This is in line with the strategy four resources model of critical thinking proposed by Luke and Freebody as cited in Ontario (2009), that is, making meaning. Rather than approaching text passively, students need to be encouraged to be a "text participant" – to use their own prior knowledge and experience when reading to interpret what the author is saying and to anticipate where he or she might be going next. They need to learn how to "deconstruct" text, to unmask an author's purpose and intent, to form interpretations in light of their own knowledge and point of view, and to examine and then find the most effective ways to convey their thinking.

3.1.3 Stimulating students' interest, prior student knowledge and experience

The lecturers relate the text with the students' background knowledge as seen in the following example of a field note:

Lecturer: "Why do parents send their children to school? This question is related to the short story being discussed, that is Tom Sawyer which is not like the other children who go to school. (Field note on November 2016, Text: Tom sawyer)

This is in line with a model of four resources model proposed by Luke and Freebody (1997), making meaning. Students use their own prior knowledge and experience when reading to interpret what the author is saying and to anticipate where he or she might be going next.

3.1.4 Facilitating and guiding students to understand the text

Sometimes, the lecturer asked the students to list the difficult words and find their meanings. The lecturer also asked the students to translate certain part of the text which was thought to be important so that he was sure that the students did not misunderstand the language.

 How If you write this sentence in Indonesian? Tutor helps students translate the sentence and ask the meaning of a phrase in the sentence. One student replied, followed by other students who have their own opinions. "Which means what? Center. Example. Anyone else? " So if you translate a

sentence we should think about the context of the sentence. Read paragraph 4, that is the core of the story. " Why children schooled in elementary, junior high school-IT ? "(Field note November 12, 2016).

This strategy is suitable with *Code breaking* as suggested by Luke and Freebody (1997). Code breaking is equivalent to basic or functional literacy in which students try to comprehend the text through its vocabulary, grammar and organization of ideas.

3.1.5 Writing summary of the test and response to it

The lecturers asked the students to read the text at home and summarized the point. This can be classified as code breaking and analyzing the text which also include making meaning.

Saya meminta mahasiswa banyak membaca dan berlatih. Jadi saya beri teks khusus untuk mereka rangkum dan kemudian saya minta mereka menulis tentang responsnya. (interview with Mrs. V)

I ask students to read much and do exercise so that I give them some texts to summarize and ask them to write their responses to the texts).

Based on the observation, the lecturer gave the task to the students to choose one text and summarize and write their rasponses to the texts. This supports one step proposed by Abednia (2013): Negotiating Readings and Writing Reflective Journals. In addition this is also in line with one strategy suggested by Luke and Freebody (1997), that is, analyzing text. By summarizing and writing their responses, students are forced to analyze the text. And by analyzing the texts, they will elaborate their high order thinking skills and activate their knowledge and interpretation related to the texts.

3.1.6 Discussing questions collaboratively.

The questions related to the text that is being discussed, which is about the phenomenon of teenagers. Tom, boy character in Mark Twain's story is not like some other children. Lecturer again explained about the story of Mark Twain. Students are asked to answer some questions related to the text and discussed together at once.

This is in line with one of the step in a model proposed by Abednia (2013) as one step to teach critical literacy where the students exchange their opinion and share their responses. This is also the strategy which is using different voice to examine the texts (Luke and Freebody, 1997).

The following is the table of findings in term of strategy used by the lecturers

Table 3.1 Strategies used by the teacher

Strategies	Appropriateness with the theories
Using various readings	Key concepts of critical reading, i.e., each text has its own purpose. Students need to be introduced to different text forms and how these have different uses which shape the language, structure and organization chosen by the author (using text) (Luke and Freebody, 1997).
Stimulating students' interest	Students use their own prior knowledge and experience when reading to interpret what the author is saying and to anticipate where he or she might be going next (Making meaning). (Luke and Freebody, 1997)

Asking critical questions	Making meaning (Luke and Freebody, 1997)
Facilitating and guiding students to understand the text	Code breaking (Luke and Freebody, 1997)
Discussing questions collaboratively	Discussion the texts collaboratively (Abedinia, 2013) Using different voice to examine the texts (Luke and Freebody, 1997)
Asking students to summarize the text and write response	Analyzing text. Critical literacy teaches that no text is neutral (Luke and Freebody, 1997)

3.2 Challenges faced by the lecturers in developing critical literacy

The Lecturers found some challenges in developing students' critical literacy. Based on the interview, the challenges faced by the lecturers are students' low capability of critical literacy, students' lack of self confidence, and students' lack of knowledge. However, based on the observation, it seems that the students also find difficulty in comprehending the text which is due to lack of English proficiency.

Sebagian besar mahasiswa belum terbiasa berpikir kritis. Kalo ada biasanya mereka punya latar belakang aktivis karena mereka terbiasa dengan high order thinking. Sebagian besar mahasiswa kalau ada pertanyaan subyektif juga tidak terlalu pede menjawabnya dan cenderung copy paste dari sumber lain. (Most students are not accustomed to critical thinking. If there is they usually have a background of activists because they are accustomed to high order thinking. Most students if there is a subjective question not too confident menajwabnya and tend to copy and paste from other sources) (interview with Mr. T)

Kesulitannya, mahasiswa kurang background of knowledgenya, dan terbiasa dituntun, gak pede. The problem is that the students lack of background knowledge (an interview with Mr. V).

 An example of the students low English proficiency can be seen in the following examples:

Lecturer: "Both descendants of virginians, itu *maksudnya apa*? *Yang dimaksud siapa*?"

The students did not respond to the question. They kept silent. The lecturer then explained the meaning of the phrase. The lecturer showed the meaning of a sentence in paragraph 3 and asked one of the students to translate it. Students translate it in relatively long time (Field note November 2016)

However, when the questions were asked in written and the students answered them in written, too, their answers are more elaborative, although mostly did not explain the answer with good argumentation. Based on the observation of the document and the classroom, the students mostly find difficulties in answering questions which need interpretation and opinion as can be seen in the following examples:

Question 1:
The Lecturer: At one point, the older waiter says to the younger one, "We are of two different kinds." What does he mean by this? Do you believe there are two kinds of people?

Student 1: yes I believe
Student 2: The mean by the story is he had a self-confidence and more younger than old man. Although, he had everything, but he still feels loneliness in his life.
Question 2:
Lecturer: In your opinion, what is the meaning of the title?
Student 4: Different characters of people
Student 5: Clean and spot on.
Student 6: A clean place with good light so it looks cozy.

The student did not support his answer with explanation or argumentation. Another student answered the question more critically.
Student: it mean that, there are different opinions between older waiter and the young waiter. the young waiter want to go home and meet his wife but the older waiter want respect the costumer. yes I believe that there are two different kinds of people, in this life there are 2 kinds of people. first is kind people and bad people, kind people who is respect to other and bad people is people who not respect other.
I think, they are not different. They are looks same between the old man and the older waiter. They feels lonely. And they go to bar for breaking of lonely. If the old, he feels lonely because he just live with his niece and he has everything. He can buy anything but he felt so lonely without has a wife.
If the old waiter, he feels lonely because he just live with his wife. And he not riches.
So that, they looked lonely with different problems.
The students show different opinions. This shows that everybody has their own opinion and interpretation about the text. The lecture's questions elicit students' different responses. This makes students aware of different opinions and multiple perspectives about a text. This was then discussed to find out the logical interpretation and answer which fit the context. However, only few students answered the questions supported by explanation as the above examples.

CONCLUSION
To be critically literate is important for the students to get more than the skills when comprehending the text. Critical literacy is a way of interacting with information that goes beyond the understanding the information stated in a text. It encourages learners to engage with information sources and to question the social contexts, purposes, and possible effects that they have on their lives. It makes them critical as not only to receive the information but also to analyze it based on any aspects which may be involved, such as ideology, opinions, socio-politics, perceptions of reality, and to consider those of others. For Indonesian English learners, critical literacy can be a means of comprehensively exploring the new language and culture through various texts. To support them, teachers need to develop their own understanding of language as well if they are to help students question and understand how language works and how texts are used for particular purposes so that they can teach their students to become critically literate. Developing critical literacy is a challenging task for EFL teachers in a skill-oriented cultural context. However, teachers should be professionals to improve themselves and creative in planning and implementing the strategies used in developing critical literacy.

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