

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the introduction to present study. There are seven subchapters related to the research, namely background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

It is widely accepted that literacy generally is simply defined as “the ability to read and write”. It includes reading and writing various kind of texts that can be in the form of printed text, visual text, until digital text (Faulkner, 2005) and the use of those texts are used in various ways that change throughout time and place. (Schultz, 2002). Overtime, the theory of literacy has shifted from reading and writing to literacy as a social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Phelps, 1998). The comprehensive and complicated range of literacy that is considerably more sophisticated, dynamic, and intricate is also presented when literacy is seen as a social practice (Phelps, 1998). The concept of literacy that is viewed as social practice expands the practice of literacy into critical social literacy (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Heath, 1983; Lankshear, 1994; 1997; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003), which is the theory that underpinned this study.

The word "critical" comes from the Greek word "*kriticos*" which denotes the capacity for arguing and judging (Luke & Wood, 2009). This assumption gives rise to critical pedagogy, which views particular belief claims not as propositions to be evaluated for their reality but rather as components of belief and action systems that together have an impact on societal power structures (Emilia, 2005).

Therefore, according to Kalantzis and Cope (2012), the definition of literacy has changed from its semantic sense of being able to read and write, which denotes the acquisition of a set of technical communication

abilities, to a learning process involving how to create meanings to impact society (Freire & Donaldo, 1987).

The theory and practice of critical literacy have changed significantly in the early twenty-first century in response to the shifting contexts of foreign language instruction. Contrarily, the implementation of the practice of critical literacy in EFL teaching and learning activities is limited, particularly at the upper secondary school level (Park, 2011; Kuo, 2014), as well as in the Indonesian setting (Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2017; Asandi & Syamdianita, 2017; Gustine, 2014). In a similar vein, Ko and Wang (2009) claim that compared to Western Education where critical literacy has been implemented for years, there is still limited practice of critical literacy in EFL classes. However, the development of critical literacy is one of the key topics that should be explored to advance students' development both in their English language development and their critical literacy development.

Within a diverse world that requires people to think critically, collaborate, and communicate effectively, teachers are required to prepare their students for the discoveries that they could potentially have a direct access to only by clicking the button or swiping their finger. It means that the students can make use of Internet and media in order to help them think critically and communicate effectively. Without the assistance of critical literacy, the students could carelessly access the Internet, and it will lead to something unwanted when they access the information through the Internet. The focus of this research was situated in EFL critical literacy practices that the teachers utilize in online learning in order to engage their students to apply themselves in critical literacy.

There is one obstacle that teachers must overcome in order to apply critical literacy in their students' learning processes. Due to the catastrophic pandemic that the world is currently experiencing, most of the world's schools, including those in Indonesia, have been shuttered. In that situation, it is impossible for the teachers and pupils to carry out the teaching and

learning activity as usual. Global shockwaves caused by the COVID-19 outbreak have caused drastic changes in a number of industries (Andrews et al., 2020; Marziali et al., 2020; Priatna, 2020). The public health crisis has resulted in significant human suffering and fatalities, which is unprecedented in our lifetimes. The educational sector has also been severely impacted by the pandemic (OECD, 2020). The lockdowns in response to COVID-19 have disrupted regular classes, with most nations closing all schools on a national level, including Indonesia.

Therefore, in order to continue learning remotely via the Internet, television, or radio, or what we used to call online learning, students have had to rely more on their own resources. Additionally, teachers had to adjust to new pedagogical theories and methods of teaching, such as critical literacy. This raises the problem of the necessity for teachers to include online learning with critical literacy into their classrooms. Similar to this, Kellner (2004) makes the case for the value of critical literacy in digital environments, arguing that as people become more and more required to critically examine and scroll through massive amounts of information in the computer-mediated cyberworld, the importance of reading and writing skills improves.

The focus of published work on the implementation of critical literacy pedagogy in the classroom is increasingly shifting toward real-world EFL teaching and learning situations (Lewison et al., 2002). For instance, Forest and Kimmel (2016) use a qualitative method to content analysis to analyze the critical literacy performances of forty students in an online, asynchronous, graduate-level children's literature course. The results show that critical literacy may be practiced within online learning environments. It allows for plenty of time for students to formulate their opinions in asynchronous conversation. Similarly, Fajardo (2015) investigates the various critical literacy practices of teachers and English language learners and their effects on pedagogy.

Therefore, this research suggests that English language teachers must help their students develop a greater understanding of the existence of power structures and the subordination of various forms of literacy. Such pedagogy will give teachers and English language students the chance to consider why some literacy strategies are preferred over others.

This section has explained at least two crucial issues regarding critical literacy that can be considered. First, the teaching practice of critical literacy is not implemented optimally in EFL context (Asandi & Syamdianita, 2017; Park, 2011; Kuo, 2014; Gustine, 2014; Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2017). Second, because of the covid-19 pandemic, students who participate in teaching and learning activities online require critical literacy skills to help them critically examine and scroll through the vast volumes of material they come across. Based on the problems, related theory, and previous related studies that have been discussed, it is clear that in the Indonesian context, the implementation of critical literacy primarily focuses on its process in online learning, especially in the context of secondary level EFL classrooms and online learning rarely becomes the main focus. Therefore, this research attempts to close the gap by incorporating critical literacy into online learning for Indonesian EFL secondary classroom.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of this study, the study aims to address the following questions:

1. How does online critical literacy program support students to improve the critical literacy ability?
2. What are the students' opinions toward the teaching and learning of critical literacy in online learning?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

As stated in the research questions above, the study was aimed to identify how online critical literacy program supports students' critical literacy ability. Additionally, the study was found out the students' opinions

toward the teaching and learning of critical literacy in online learning, particularly in Indonesian EFL secondary school.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focused on investigating students' development in critical literacy during the teaching program conducted online for seven weeks.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This research was expected to provide theoretical, practical and professional benefits, to the following:

1. Theoretical benefits

Theoretically, this research was expected to be used to enrich the theories and methods in implementing critical literacy in EFL secondary context.

2. Practical benefits

Practically, the research findings were expected to give informative inputs for the students, the improvement of teaching critical literacy in EFL secondary classroom. It is also expected to provide teachers with richer ideas in using various types of media in implementing critical literacy.

3. Policy benefits

The purpose of this research study was to improve the teaching of critical literacy in the present day. The discussion of this research study was supposed to be a guide and reference for teachers, editors, publishers, and other involving institutions relating with critical literacy. The research was also used as a guide for policymakers as they assessed the effectiveness of local or institutional educational strategies.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, and Online Learning are explained to eliminate misunderstanding in this sub-chapter and used in the study to assist in understanding several terms or concepts of the study. The

target of each terminology will be elaborated as an effort to focus on the study's objective.

Critical Literacy in this study would refer from a theory of critical social literacy, specifically as stated by Anderson and Irvine (1993), is the study of writing and reading as ways of becoming aware of social practices that are historically and socially created in a particular relationship to a certain power.

Critical Pedagogy has been interpreted in many different perspectives. The following study put the stance on the definition of Critical Pedagogy from Kincheloe (2005) where it is an approach to teaching and studying languages that focuses on changing repressive power relations that result in human oppression.

Online Learning in this study refers to a type of education in which instruction and information are predominantly offered online that requires internet connection (Watson & Kalmon, 2005).

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consisted of five chapters. Chapter I in this thesis discussed background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of key terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II provided comprehensive explanations of related topics, previous studies and theoretical framework. Chapter III discussed research design, site and participants, research procedures, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV presented and discussed the data and the findings of this study. The last chapter, Chapter V presented the conclusion and recommendations for the future study.

