

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of background of the study, purposes of the study, research questions, significance of the study, clarification of main terms, and organization of the paper. Each of which will be explained in turns.

1.1 Background of the Study

In this 21st century as the age of information technology, the amount of availability of information on the media such as internet is inescapably unstoppable. Accordingly, there is a significant requirement of critical thinking skills in selecting, reading, and evaluating the reliability of the information (Halpern, 1999; see also Grabau, 2007; Oliver & Utermohlen, 2007). Therefore, they have to be possessed by all members of society including students. Students need to realize that all readings from sources like newspapers, internet, and other media are not necessarily objective and neutral. They need critical thinking to allow them to think more intensely about “what they read or are told in the media” (Leicester & Taylor, 2010, p. 2). They have to read a text or information by viewing it from different points of views in order to make informed decision.

The ability to think critically is also considered essential in a democratic society (Beyer, 1985) and thus pertinent in Indonesia in which democratic era is now encountered. However, based on research, South-East Asian (including Indonesian) students are considered lacking of critical thinking skills and unaware of the importance of skills of analysis and critiques (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004; Djwandono, 2013 & Wallace, 2003). It might be occurred because the students do not have opportunities to share and discuss their idea.

The teaching of English has been considered effective to promote critical capacity of students. Thus, it should be implemented not only to develop students’ basic language skills, but also their critical thinking and higher order thinking and valuing skills (Alwasilah, 2014; Emilia, 2005). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction (Emilia & Safrina, 2010) particularly the teaching of reading

and writing (see Emilia, 2005) may be one of the effective ways to develop Indonesian students' critical thinking.

In fact, basic language skills (such as reading and writing) has a strong correlation to thinking skills as supported by critical theorists that to be effective reader and writer, students need to learn to read and write critically (Paul, 1995). This statement leads this study to portray the teaching of reading which focuses on more specific reading skill component that is critical reading skills. Critical reading can be defined as the process of reading which applies critical thinking (see Reichenbach, 2001). In this view, EFL teacher has the responsibility to provide reading activities that encourage students to think more critically.

Questions on the subject of how to teach critical thinking skills in reading have been queried. One of characteristics of instruction that is considered to improve critical thinking is one which promotes student-student interaction (see Ten Dam & Volman, 2004). In this sense, cooperative learning which promotes greater interaction between students (Webb, 1982) has been frequently used to foster students' critical thinking (Cooper, 1995; Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991; Sharan, 1980). Nevertheless, most of the time interaction between students is quite neglected (Johnson & Johnson, n.d.).

As a matter of fact, cooperative learning promotes critical thinking through dialogical instruction in which students are involved in a dialogue by arguing on different points of view (see Paul, 1995). Through cooperative learning, students could enhance their critical thinking as they share their learning in discussion and take responsibility for their own learning (Totten, Sills, Digby, & Russ, 1991, cited in Gokhale, 1995). For that reason, the implementation of cooperative learning groups should be increased.

Moreover, in Indonesia, cooperative learning and critical thinking have become buzzwords in and been regarded as the completion of 2013 curriculum. It is stated that in 2013 curriculum, individual learning pattern becomes team-based learning pattern, and passive learning pattern becomes critical learning pattern (Permendikbud No. 69 Tahun 2013).

Many empirical studies also showed that cooperative learning develops an array of skills that will extend to the critical thinking skills (e.g., McConnel, Steer, Owens, & Knight, 2005; Sadeghi, 2012) which are required by students to select and evaluate the accessible information. However, the relationship between cooperative learning and critical thinking has been neglected in many academic settings (see Sadeghi, 2012), particularly in Indonesian context. The limited number of research which highlights the relationship between cooperative learning and critical thinking published in an Indonesian context guides this study to examine how the implementation of cooperative learning techniques facilitates students' critical thinking in reading and to investigate the benefits and challenges of the implementation of cooperative learning techniques.

1.2 Purposes of the Study

This study is intended to investigate how the implementation of cooperative learning in classroom instruction facilitates students in learning critical thinking in reading and to find out the benefits and challenges in the implementation of cooperative learning in teaching critical thinking in reading.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the purposes above, this study attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. How does the implementation of cooperative learning facilitate students' critical thinking in reading?
2. What are benefits and challenges of the implementation of cooperative learning?

1.4 Significance of the Study

With regard to the significance of the study, this study has the potential to give implication to the theory and educational practice.

Theoretically, the research findings are expected to enrich the development of literature of teaching critical thinking in reading through classroom instruction and provide a comprehensive data regarding the teaching of critical reading in Indonesian education context. As previously stated, the relationship between cooperative learning and critical thinking has been neglected in many academic settings (see Sadeghi, 2012), particularly in Indonesian context, as shown by the relatively few research studies on these issues in Indonesia.

For educational practice, the results of this study are expected to provide information regarding cooperative learning techniques which can be used to teach critical thinking to students. Moreover, it is expected that this study offers a clear base for teachers to consider involving critical thinking skills to be incorporated in classroom instruction. For instance, this study offers an alternative method of instruction to be implemented for promoting critical thinking skills of the students particularly through reading.

1.5 Clarification of Main Terms

To avoid misconception of some terms discussed in this study, clarification of some terms is conveyed as follows:

1. Cooperative learning refers to as the classroom instruction that involves students working in small groups to optimize their own and each other's learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Cooperative learning here is more than asking students to work together in a group. There are several key elements that should be fulfilled to implement a successful cooperative learning instruction namely positive interdependence, face-to-face (promotive) interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing which will be elaborated in chapter two.
2. Critical thinking is defined as “reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do” (Ennis, 1991, p. 6).
3. Critical reading is “an active, intellectually engaged process in which the reader participates in an inner dialogue with the writer” (Paul, 1995, p. 525). For

instance, critical reading in this study will be defined as a process of reading which apply critical thinking

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The following is the detail of how each chapter is presented.

Chapter I presents the background of the study, purposes of the study, research questions, significance of the study, clarification of main terms, and organization of the thesis.

Chapter II discusses theoretical review underpinning the research, presenting the concept of cooperative learning including a brief history of cooperative learning, definition of cooperative learning, key elements of cooperative learning, benefits and challenges of cooperative learning. It also presents the theoretical support for reading including the nature of reading and the teaching of reading. Moreover, theoretical support for critical thinking including definition of critical thinking, critical thinking dispositions, definition of critical reading, and the relationship between cooperative learning and critical reading is also provided.

Chapter III describes the detail of research methodology including research design, site and participants, data collection techniques, data analyses and the validity. This chapter reveals how the study was conducted and presented in detail.

Chapter IV presents the findings and discussion of the obtained data collected from all research instruments including classroom observation, questionnaire, interview, and students' written tests.

Chapter V provides the conclusions and limitation of the study followed by suggestions for further research.