

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the teaching of critical reading to fifth semester students of English Department at a private university in Bandung - West Java, Indonesia.

As a general introduction to the thesis, the current chapter briefly discusses some notions that characterize the research. The first section of this chapter introduces the background of the research, which will be followed by discussion of the purposes of the research. The next part are general structures of academic report containing research question, significance of the research, scope of the research, research design, and thesis organization.

1.1 Background

The current world demands people to comprehend more than their native language. Foreign languages are used in various dimensions from formal to informal fields. English as an international language dominates the information source in a range of facets, it makes English becomes one of the essential foreign languages to be learned by most countries including Indonesia. English as a foreign language is an obligatory subject in all schools in Indonesia from elementary to senior high schools. English is also being offered as a general course in universities as has been explicitly stated in several documents released by the government, especially those related to education. Moreover, many universities take English as one of the requirements of graduation even for non English department, for instance UPI, ITB, STAN, Sriwijaya University obliges the students to take a TOEFL before they follow comprehensive test (http://www.unsri.ac.id/?act=pengumuman_detil&id=93).

One of the essential English skills for students of tertiary level in Indonesia is reading. This is an indispensable skill since many information and knowledge are available in English

language. In fact they are demanded to be able to comprehend any kind of text written in both Bahasa Indonesia and English, inside and outside the classroom.

This research focuses on more specific reading skill component that is critical reading skill. This skill need to be master by all member of the society since in this reform era people are massively flooded by the marketing of ideas and products across the globe. This mass of information is reaching the people in a very modern system which in turn requires the information receiver to be able to make meaning from the array of information sources. The critical reading ability becomes important skill because what is heard (e.g., news reports, public speakers, conversation) and what is read (e.g., newspapers, tabloids, Internet-based material) are not necessarily accurate or unbiased.

As a part of the society students have to become an active consumer of information. They have to be able to identify whether the information will bring positive or negative effects upon their ways of living. To master critical reading ability students need to be trained by a well arranged program. School is a proper medium to sharpen students' critical reading skill. By having critical reading skill students are expected to be more sensitive towards any kinds of issues on the society, as mentioned by Coffey (2009):

Within classroom practices, teachers can utilize critical reading in any content area or grade level to encourage students to interrogate societal issues and institutions like family, poverty, education, equity, and equality with the purpose of critique the structures that serve as norms and to demonstrate how these norms are not experienced by all members of society.

Critical reading takes the students further than the development of basic literacy skills such as decoding, predicting, and summarizing and requires them to become critical consumers of the information they receive. Wray (2008) proposed that being literate in a 'basic' sense is not enough. Teachers who value critical literacy will thus tend to have a stake in social change and

will encourage their pupils to investigate, question and even challenge relationships between language and social practices that advantage some social groups over others. At the heart of this approach to teaching is the belief that while literacy facilitates students to make meaning from texts, critical reading will empower them to understand how texts are trying to influence and change them as members of the society.

Despite the benefit of critical reading, however in Indonesian education the teaching of critical reading is not yet popular and it is still rarely observed by researchers or teachers. Hence, this study aims to investigate the effect of a teaching program which synthesizes classroom practices of EFL students with critical thinking, critical literacy and critical pedagogy concepts in helping to develop their critical capacity in reading.

1.2 Purposes of the Research

The purposes of this research are:

- 1) To identify and to portray the effect of a program which is a synthesis of critical thinking, critical literacy and critical pedagogy in helping to develop students' critical reading.
- 2) To find out the students' responses toward the program.

1.3 Research Questions

In compliance with the aforementioned purposes, this research strives to answer following questions:

1. Can a program which is a synthesis of critical thinking, critical literacy and critical pedagogy help the students develop their critical reading?
2. How do the students respond toward the program?

1.4 Scope of the Research

This study is limited to investigate the teaching of critical reading formed by the theory of critical thinking, critical literacy, and critical pedagogy. It will be shown that the aspects of critical thinking, critical literacy and critical pedagogy applied are only those considered to be relevant to the context of students' understanding in this program. The participants of the research are limited to the fifth semester students of one private university in Bandung.

1.5 Significances of the Research

This research will enrich the literature of critical literacy in foreign language learning in Indonesian context which is still rare. In terms of practical use the result of the study can provide information for teachers on how to teach critical reading in English as a foreign language context.

1.6 Thesis Organization

This thesis presents ideas, data, analyses, findings, and interpretation in six chapters. The chapters will be subdivided into subtopics that elaborate the given issues. Chapter I is an introduction to the present study, this contains the background and burning issue underlying the research. Chapter II provides theoretical foundation on the issue which includes definitions and components of critical thinking, critical literacy, critical pedagogy and also critical reading.

Chapter III discusses the research method and implementation of the program. Chapter IV and V in sequence presents and discusses data obtained from the teaching program and students responses relevant to the research as presented in chapter I and the theory discussed in chapter II. Chapter VI is the conclusion of the study, limitation, and suggestion for further research.

