

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an initial description of the thesis that will review some research-related notions of the current study. It is organized by firstly introducing the background of the research on implementing Critical Discourse Analysis principles in a reading classroom. The subsequent part is the discussion of the purposes of the research followed by research questions, significance and scope of the research. The chapter is ended by the presentation of the organization of the thesis.

1.1. Background

The fact of the global era today indicates that the world has developed rapidly in all aspects of life, including in the field of information technology. The advance of information technology enables people worldwide to connect to each other, consuming all genres of information, even witnessing historical and momentous events in another sphere of the world within seconds. What is needed in that condition is simply to open pages of newspaper or magazine, to watch video or television broadcast, or even to surf the internet that presents more hybrid information both in content and form.

The confrontation of information to people's life however requires the ability of its consumers to sort out the message presented including anticipating any ideological content as it always lies behind any language product (Fairclough,

2003). To do so, people are not supposed to minimize their contact with the sources of information but rather how to see them from a critical perspective through a process of thinking, as Chaffee puts it as “making sense of the world by carefully examining the thinking process to clarify and improve our understanding” (2000: 47). What is essential is not only the ability to access every bit of information but also how to interpret them as well as contrast them with any other references (García, 2008).

One best circumstance to foster critical capacity is in the classroom, as an answer to Burke’s (2010) criticism, that the prevailing curriculum, mainly in the context of US’ education, does not prepare students with cognitive skills demanded by the workplace (in Nathan, 2010: 6). In this sense, language lesson can be regarded as one appropriate background since it focuses on studying language with all of its attributes.

Congruent with this, many studies on improving critical thinking in the classroom setting have been undertaken along with the raising awareness of the importance of being able to evaluate any received information in this unlimited-access age. Most of them revolve around the notion of critical thinking (Burgess, 2009; Van Tassel-Baska et al., 2009; Yağcioğlu, 2009), critical pedagogy (Fredricks, 2007), critical literacy (Huang, 2009), and critical reading or writing (Bosley, 2008; García, 2008), in which the current study deals with. Although each term has different entailments, still in the pedagogical circle, they share the similar spirit of “critical paradigm”, as opposed to Freire’s popular metaphor

“banking education” (Morrow & Torres, 2002) that regards “students as passive, empty, silent recipients” (Shor in an interview with Macrine, 2009: 126).

The commonality of the mentioned research trends is that all are centered on the teaching of reading. In Indonesia’s higher education context, similar studies have been conducted on incorporating critical thinking (Gustine, 2007; Kustini, 2010) as well as the synthesis of critical thinking, critical literacy and critical pedagogy (Maulida, 2010) to reading subject.

Given the fact above, it seems that there is still space for other researchers to develop reading activities from other critical perspectives. In this respect, Critical Discourse Analysis is another critical approach which has a possibility to be infused in a reading classroom. Under its pedagogical wing, namely Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (Fairclough, 1992c in Pennycook, 2001; Wallace, 2003), many researchers have developed CDA in their teaching. Farias’ (2005) study in an EFL class in Chile reveals that CLA can contribute to the teaching and learning of English as a global language. Meanwhile, Smith (2004) outlines some practical aspects of CLA in an informal context of English teaching.

CLA’s aim to build students’ awareness on the use of language is the interest of the current investigation which believes that CDA generates a lot of benefits to the practice of language pedagogy, primarily in the reading subject. Some previous studies on related subject have become valuable references for the present research, such as those of conducted by Ivanov (2009), Świerczyńska, Cots (2006), and Dar et al (2010).

The purpose of Ivanov's study is to find out the areas of discourse analysis relevant to the teaching of EFL reading at a Swedish upper-secondary school as well as to identify what language teachers and learners can borrow from the linguistic study of text and discourse and then make use of it inside and outside the language classroom.

Meanwhile, the implementation of CDA to EFL teaching in general and reading subject in particular is also endorsed by Świerczyńska, Cots (2006), and Dar et al (2010). Świerczyńska presents an article containing the main assumptions of CDA and its analytical tools to be applied in a language course. Although the title is intriguing, a practical guide to the implementation of CDA in the classroom activity however is not available in this article. In contrast, a more comprehensive description is provided by Cots' study (2006) who applies one of CDA frameworks proposed by Fairclough and breaks it down into a set of critical questions as guidance for students to read texts critically. The last study conducted by Dar's et al (2010) which applies CDA techniques in a reading course to disclose students' CLA and critical thinking. Unfortunately, CDA techniques are not clearly clarified and the research only takes one session of teaching which is regarded far from sufficient for this complex subject of discussion.

Regarding this, the present study will undertake a research on a critical reading teaching in Indonesia's EFL classroom whose major goal is to demonstrate the implementation Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the reading subject of tertiary level of education. The main distinctive feature of the present investigation from the previous ones is on the material of CDA to be implemented

which is not taken from one framework but rather generally taken from the principles of CDA itself. The result of this investigation is expected to contribute to the pedagogical practice mainly to the reading teaching in Indonesia's EFL context.

1.2. Research Questions

The research is conducted in order to find the answer of the following questions:

1. How are the principles of CDA implemented in a reading classroom?
2. What are the effects of the teaching program towards students' critical reading?
3. What are students' responses towards reading activities based on CDA principles?

1.3. Purposes of the Research

In line with the research questions, thus the purposes of the study are:

1. To explore the implementation of CDA's principles in a reading classroom.
2. To figure out the effects of the teaching program towards students' critical reading.
3. To investigate students' responses towards reading activities based on CDA principles.

1.4. Scope of the Research

The essence of this study is the testing of a considerably more critical approach to teaching reading through principles of Critical Discourse Analysis and whether or not this implementation has positive results towards the improvement of students' critical reading. This study is designed by focusing the investigation to the reading activity based on eight principles of CDA (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) which are not explicitly taught in the classroom but are drawn into a set of critical questions, whose idea is adapted from Cots (2006), as a means to evaluate the texts. By doing so, it is expected that the principles of CDA can be incorporated in the teaching of critical reading without resulting any confusion of the complex notion of CDA itself.

1.5. Significance of the Research

This study is significant in such a way that: firstly, it attempts to demonstrate CDA as not solely a critical approach to examine text regarded as an individual activity, but also as a framework possibly developed in the teaching practice to become a more negotiable, communal activity; secondly, the incorporation of CDA's principles in a reading classroom is regarded as a new method in Indonesia whose primary aim is to build a critical attitude of students' reading as suggested by the CDA's pedagogical wing, namely critical language awareness; lastly, in a more practical way, this study is expected to be a worthy model for implementing a wide range of critical paradigm (for instance, critical thinking and critical

literacy) in general and critical discourse analysis in particular to classroom practices in order to foster students' criticality as required in the current era.

1.6. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the thesis which is started by the background of conducting the research and followed by some important notions of the research covering research questions, purposes of the research and scope and significance of the study. The subsequent chapter addresses literature review that underpins the study and become the theoretical reference during the overall process of the research. The theories covered in this section are Critical Discourse Analysis as its principles are applied in the reading subject, Critical Reading as the process as well as the expected goal of the study, and Systemic Functional Linguistics as the analytical tool for observing the text in the textual level. Chapter three presents methodology which contains the objective of the research, description of site and participants, research design, teaching material, including data collection as well as data analysis. The next chapter is the elaboration of the teaching program. It highlights the overall process of the teaching of critical reading by implementing principles of CDA in which findings and discussions are presented simultaneously. The thesis is ended in chapter five which provides the conclusion of the overall study together with limitation of the study and recommendation for the betterment of the related research in the future.