Critical Literacy Education with Problem Posing Approach
An Alternative for Critical Learning Practice in Elementary School

Ani Hendriani, Teguh Ibrahim and Pupun Nuryani

Faculty of Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

anihendriani@upi.edu

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Abstract: The background of this research is the fact that it is hard to find critical literacy based texts in 2013 curriculum textbooks. Critical literacy based text is a text that contains representation of power, injustice, exploitation, ethnical issues, gender issues, powerlessness, and social marginalization. The aim that critical literacy based texts are presented is to evoke students' critical awareness on social reality in which they should already aware of as a problem that should be challenged and changed with transformative powered social act. The method of this research is classroom action research model by Kemmis and Taggart. The study was conducted in two cycles consisting of two actions. The participants of this research are 4th grade students of SDN Sarijadi 07 consisting of 30 students. Research showed that (1) the critical literacy education process consists of three stages which are: problematization (pre-reading), cultural discussion (reading), social action (after reading); (2) critical literacy-based learning can develop students' ability to write argumentative essays that serve as criticisms or solutions to overcome social inequality. (3) The average value of critical literacy in the first cycle resulted in 65.22 and increased significantly to 78.36 in the second cycle. This study has the significance of enriching the science of multiliteracies pedagogy especially critical literacy-based learning in primary schools.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the early years of elementary school, language learning within the framework of critical literacy is important for students' learning development. Critical literacy-based language learning explores the relationship between language and strength and focuses on the need to create speakers, readers, and critical writers who can deconstruct the surrounding texts and interpret them, both as a product and a process of specific social practice. In this context, literacy is recognized as an ideologically defined process of seeking meaning (Ioannidou, 2015).

Moreover, Lee (2017) claims that critical literacy is a good analytical procedure that can broaden students' understanding and perspective on power and social inequality issues. Critical literature encourages the reader to examine the point of view from which the text is constructed, and to think of other perspectives that may be included in a text, helping the reader to diversify their understanding, beliefs and perspectives of a text and its social context.

Several studies have concluded the importance of critical literacy learning for improving the quality of human resources that capable to bring changes in various dimensions of life. Ajayi concluded in his research that: Critical literacy acknowledges the possibility for female students to integrate their self-identity in creating socially and culturally relevant texts with their lives (Ajayi, 2015, 2012; Rogers, Mosley and Kramer, 2009).

A research done by Morrel (2009) concluded that 'Critical literacy researchers are also able to do far more with the analysis of students' cultural and textual production. When student work products are analysed from a critical perspective, we are able to look at these not just as evidence of the development of academic skills; but also we can examine the substance of this work to understand how students are learning to think differently about the world and their place in it''. Morrel found that the application of critical literacy-based education could change the way students perceived their reality, and they would be able to act as autonomous subjects with critical literacy projects aimed at social action.

Referring to previous researches, the researcher found a gap that not many research on the application of language learning methods based on critical literacy conducted in elementary schools has been found, especially in Indonesia. Based on these facts, the researcher attempted to design a critical literacy education framework with problem posing approach. This research aimed to provide alternative educational practices that have the potential to develop critical literacy skills of primary school students, especially in Indonesia. To simplify, problem posing can be interpreted as a learning approach that turn humanitarian problems into reflective materials that should be critically addressed. Problem posing education has the normative task of generating critical awareness, so learners have an eye analysis or direct observation in naming and disentangling social problems in human relations, finding the cause, reflectively acting on the issue, and transforming it towards better and more humane directions (Freire, 2008).

Through critical literacy education and problem posing approach, students are presented with problematic thematic texts that have the potential to generate critical awareness of the uneven social-cultural reality. In the observation of the researcher, the 2013 curriculum textbooks still do not contain contents that represent power, injustice, social marginalization, oppression, exploitation and gender or racial issues. The texts in the 2013 curriculum textbooks tend to cover the system that is currently imprisoning Indonesia from criticism of inequality.

2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 The Historical and Theoretical Foundation of Critical Literacy Education

Historically and theoretically, critical literacy education and problem posing approach were initiated by Paulo Freire's thought. He is a figure of education from Brazil. The concept of Freire's critical literacy education aims to awaken the critical consciousness of the oppressed to the reality of oppression that has shackled them as human beings. "The development of critical awareness keeps people questioning the nature of their historical and social situation, reading their world for the purpose of acting as autonomous subjects capable of bringing change to a more democratic and humane society" (Kesuma and Ibrahim, 2016).

Therefore the concept of critical literacy education aims in the ability of learners to read all forms of social and cultural reality that surrounds them. The concept of Freire's critical literacy education is not to only read the word, but also to read the world, linking the text with the context of human life. Paulo Freire's "Read the Word and the World" concept is the cornerstone of critical literacy-based language learning, as it is stated by Freire and Macedo (2005):

"The act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings do before reading the words. Even historically, human beings first changed the world, secondly proclaimed the world and then wrote the words. These are moments of history. Human beings did not start naming A! F! N! They started by freeing the hand, grasping the world."

Referring to Freire's opinion, the author draw the conclusion that critical literacy education is more oriented towards the oppressed awareness program of their humanity that capable of grasping the world. The process of evoking using the praxical approach is through a critical reflection of their social and historical situation, reading the 'world' of theirs, which then provokes the birth of an action capable of bringing social changes.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Method

This research used CAT (Classroom Action Research) model by Kemmis and Taggart (2000). This model consists of four stages: planning, execution, observation, and reflection. These four stages flow like a continuous cycle to overcome various problems in the classroom. This goes in accordance with the function and purpose of the CAT, according to McNiff (2013): 'CAT is a reflective cyclical research conducted by the teachers themselves, in which results may be utilized as a curriculum development tool, school development, development of teaching skills, etc.'.

3.2 Subject and Site of Research

This research was conducted on the fourth grade students at SDN Sarijadi 07 with 30 students consists

of 15 male students and 15 female students. The researcher was interested in this school, because the researcher was conducting FEP (Field Experience Program) students' coaching at the school, so the researcher was given the opportunity by the school to conduct the research. The researcher was also interested in SDN Sarijadi 07 because that the literacy learning was still focused on reading, writing, math and science. Critical literacy-based learning is still rare at the time the school is being observed. This condition would affect the students' inability to realize the dichotomy between the text and the context, as well as the social gaps that exist in the surrounding environment, as well as the lack of student autonomy for social action.

3.3 Data Collecting and Analysis

The process of collecting data was done by implementing critical literacy-based problem-posing education in several action cycles. From several cycles that have been implemented then obtained some data which are:

1. Descriptions of critical literacy-based learning steps in primary school using problem posing education model.
2. Essential findings of increasing critical literacy skills on elementary school students.
3. And critical literacy work of students in the form of an argumentative essays.

To collect the data, the researcher used several instruments such as the observation format and the student's critical literacy skill assessment format. These three data will be described in the results and discussion sections.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Steps of Critical Literacy Education with Problem Posing Approach

Critical Literacy Education Design with Problem Posing Approach is a modification of the Literacy Education stage of Paulo Freire in (Kesuma and Ibrahim 2016) and the Critical Schemata Method of Indonesian Multiliteration Expert, Yunus Abidin (2012). The stages are as follows:

4.1.1 Problematization Stage (Pre-Reading)

This stage consists of two steps: codification and decodification. This stage is the stage of literacy education in concrete context and theoretical contexts (through figure s, folklore, etc). The **codification stage (naming)** is the process by which the educator gives names of illustrations (figure s, folklore, etc.) of the problematic themes to be built based on the reality experienced by the learners. Codification is an object of knowledge that bridges educators and students in uncovering the veil of life.

While the decodification (disentangling) of the codification allows the teachers and the students to analyse their lives, in lengthy discussions they took out all the acuity of their visions in which they are involved with the world (objective reality). Teachers and students position themselves as subjects that reject the mute culture. (Kesuma and Ibrahim, 2015).

In this study, the problematization stage is carried out by presenting a problematic story that represents issues of power, injustice, exploitation, social marginalization, and gender or race disparities. The theme raised in cycle 1 is a cheating merchant and in cycle 2 is a greedy village chief. In this stage the teacher tells the story with the help of representative image, after which the students and teachers build a dialogue by brainstorming about the characters, the story line, and student experiences related to the story. The teacher help the students to name (codify) and unravel (decodify) the social imbalances that exist in the story and its relevance to the problems they experience in daily life. At this stage the researcher gives the Pre-reading Process Worksheet that serves to dig the students' schemata on the story presented. The Pre-reading Process Worksheet can be seen in Figure 1 below:
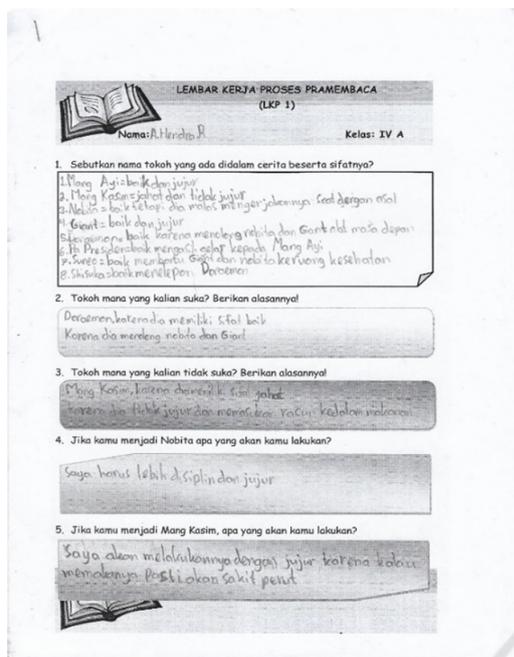
Figure 1: The Pre-reading Process Worksheet.

4.1.2 Cultural Discussion Stage (Reading)

This stage is an advanced stage in units of small working groups that seek to uncover the context of the text under a discussion using key words (Kesuma and Ibrahim, 2016). This stage is where students read the word and read the world. Looking for linkages between text and context.

At this stage the teacher conditions the students into groups, the students read the stories previously read by the teacher, then they discuss with the group to name the facts and opinions in the text, which they then design in the form of concept maps of facts and opinions (Abidin , 2012). The making of facts and opinions concept map serves to build children's schemata, make them more critical, and help children in designing factual arguments. In addition to designing a concept map of facts and opinions, students are also assigned to look for lame social events, this stage is also aided by keywords; for example the word "cunning", students should look for social events associated with the word.
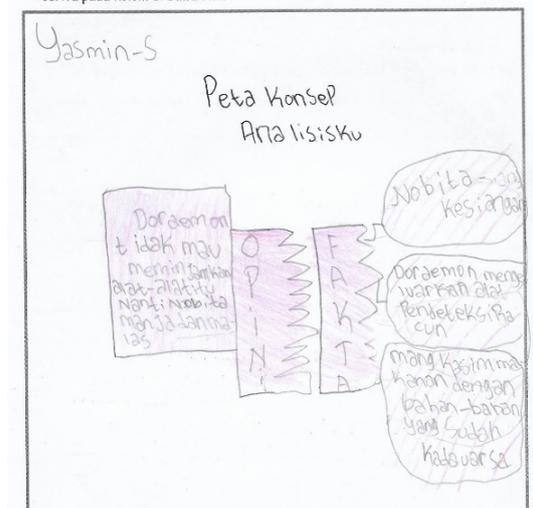

Figure 2: Step aims to develop students' critical reading skills.

This step aims to develop students' critical reading skills. Through information-seeking activities of facts, opinions and social inequality events in the text is believed to help children hone their analytic skills on the social reality that occurs in the text. In this regard, critical literacy demonstrates the involvement of dynamic participation with information around us that requires the need for critical thinking (Pestacore, 2007). Moreover, critical literacy can also be defined as knowledge to approach information critically and methodically by assessing existing knowledge (Hammond and Macken-Horarik, 1999). Critical literacy is also an advanced form of understanding that involves critical evaluation to understand information from texts. This description is further suggested by Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999) who argued that the foundations of critical literacy revolve around reading and writing skills with more critical observaton in various dimensions of life.

Furthermore, according to Rosenblatt (2004) the critical reading process allows the reader not only to play the role of a codebreaker, in the sense of writer and reader, but also to act as a critic of the text. Furthermore Anstey and Bull (2006) emphasized the risk that would be faced by students if they are not taught how to read critically because "they may be marginalized, discriminated against, or unable to act actively in the relations of life, in short, students will not be able to control the future of their social life". Referring to the opinions of these experts it can be concluded that critical literacy skills involve reading

activities of the text by involving the analytic and critical thinking skills in finding symptomatic social imbalances, then students proceed to take proactive action to change it with several alternative solutions.

4.1.3 Social Action Stage (After Reading)

This stage is the real stage of "praxis" in which the actions of each person or group become a direct part of reality. This step aims to realize the actions that have been reflected earlier in the stage of codification, decodification and cultural discussion. (Kesuma and Ibrahim, 2016). Cultural action begins by investigating the facts, opinions, and social phenomena present in the text and then performing critical reflection and self-assessment. After that the students take a real action role as an agent, in which critical writing is one good example.

In this regard Koh stated that: critical literacy is about how to position the author as an agent with the concern of using language to describe reality. This action is certainly beyond the nominal value of texts and more to question the representation of reality in a text. (Koh, 2002). Furthermore, Fairclough (1992) recommends that students should be given the opportunity to practice writing in different positions and be guided to realize the social impact of the choice of language they address to others. They should also be responsible for the risks they take when they are opposing a social inequality.

Responding to this, at this stage, the researcher assigned students to write an argumentation that represents the role of an agent to oppose all forms of social deviation. Basically, argumentative essay is written by the author to convince readers. Finoza stated (in Dalman, 2014) "Argumentative writing is an essay that aims to convince the reader to accept or take a certain doctrine, attitude and behavior, while the main requirement to write an argument is that the writer must be skilled in reasoning and developing a logical idea".

Writing an argumentative essay as a social action is considered suitable for elementary school students. Because it is considered impossible to take further social action. The argumentation written by students is good enough and critical, contains facts and opinions, reflective, promotes change, and opposes all forms of social imbalance for the sake of a better life. In the following, the researcher provides an example of an argumentation written by a student.
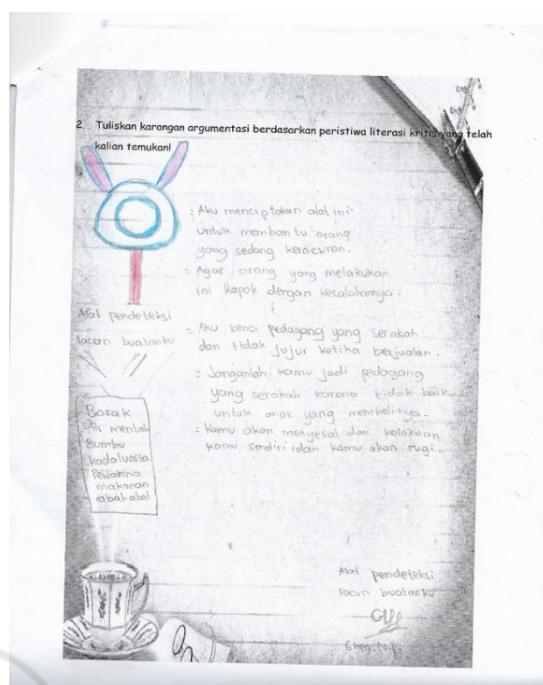

Figure 3: Students' protests.

The argumentative writing on figure 3 is about the students' protests, criticisms and solutions to the fraudulent phenomenon of street vendors who mixed the food they sell with potentially harmful substances that may poison the students. In figure 3, the student is able to think critically by realizing the problems and negative effects of cheating, the student is also able to act as an agent by creating a poison detector, and the student is able to express the normative reason as the background of the creation. The translation is as follows:

> I created this poison detector to help those who has been poisoned. So that people who do this (food poisoning) would be deterrent. I hate greedy and dishonest merchants. Do not be a greedy merchant because it is not good for those who buy. You will regret, you will lose".

Referring the quotations from the student argumentation, it can be understood that through the critical literacy education students can act as an agent that provides criticism and solutions to social inequality that occurs in their surroundings. In line with the opinion of Cooper (2008) who argued that "Critical Literacy is the capacity to read words and the world, linking self-efficacy development, a curious attitude, and a desire to have an influence in

positive social change". Referring to Cooper's opinion, the emphasis on critical literacy education is certainly the existence of utopian awareness, namely the desire for a positive change. As it is supported by Simon (1992) in his statement:

Critical literacy has to take seriously the ways in which meaning systems are implicated in reproducing domination and it has to provide access to dominant languages, literacies and genres while simultaneously using diversity as a productive resource for redesigning social futures and for changing the horizon of possibility (Simon, 1992).

Referring to Simon's opinion, it is understandable that critical literacy education gives us hope for a better future. Especially in improving the dominating system that limits the space to emancipate the humanly life. Critical literacy education raises the social awareness of learners to act as an agent that capable to bring positive changes to the social realm.

4.2 Students' Literacy Critical Skills Improvement Results

In addition to reporting qualitative data artifacts in the form of descriptions of learning steps and students' argumentations, in this article, the researcher also reports the improvement of students' critical literacy skills in each cycle. The acquisition of students' critical literacy skills can be seen in the figure 4.
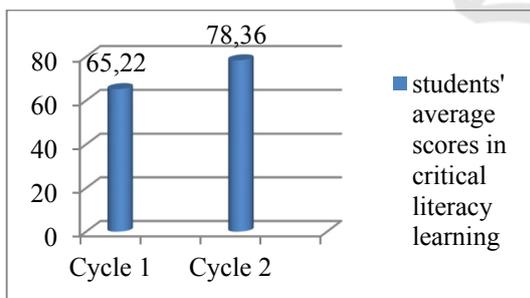

Figure 4: The Capability of Critical Literacy Average Score Per Cycle.

Based on the figure above, it can be concluded that the average score of writing an argumentative essay in regards of students' critical literacy has increased. In cycle 1 the average score is 65.22, and in cycle 2 the average score of students' critical literacy has increased to 78.36. The average value achieved indicates that the students' critical literacy

has improved very well. This is not apart from the efforts of the researcher to reflect and improve the learning process in each cycle.

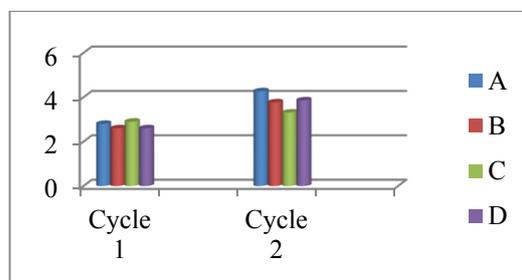The increase of each indicator of students' critical literacy when writing an argument can be seen in figure 5.

Figure 5. The Score of Each Indicator on Argumentation Writing Abilities in Critical Literacy Learning.

Information:
A: Authenticity and Logical Value of Opinions
B: The Comprehensiveness of Facts
C: Content
D: Language Preferences and Grammar

Based on the figure above, it can be concluded that the critical literacy skill indicator of students in writing an argumentation has a significant increase from cycle 1 to cycle 2. At first, the students felt difficulty in developing and making an argumentation, in this case the researcher continued to provide guidance so that students were able to make an argumentation that matches the intended purpose. Referring to the statistical data that the researcher presented above, it can be concluded that the critical literacy education using the problem posing approach can significantly increase critical literacy skills.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This research is a classroom action research that tried to carry critical literacy education by using problem posing approach. The learning phase consists of: 1) Problematization (Pre-Reading), 2) Cultural Discussion (Reading), 3) Social Action (After-Reading). This study concludes that critical literacy education is a necessity that can be applied at the primary school level. Through the application of critical literacy education, students are able to name and disentangle the social problems that exist in the

text, students are able to problematize to fight against unfair social systems, students are also able to act as an agent that proposes a variety of solutions to change the social system full of domination, injustice, oppression, cheating, and various representations of social problems that occur in their living environment. The application of critical literacy education can also improve students' skills in writing critical literacy based argumentative essays. The average value of cycle 1 reached 65.22 and increased significantly in cycle 2 to 78.36. This proves the effectiveness of critical literacy education by using problem facing approach. Critical literacy education is a necessity that can be applied in elementary schools to prepare the golden generation in facing the 21st century's challenges.

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