

Developing Critical Literacy Practices using Speaking Tasks of Tertiary Level Students

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Abstract: Teaching English as a second language means that all skills from listening, reading, writing and speaking are scoped. When a teacher focuses on reading, students need to learn how to analyse wide range of reading texts as it is seen as response to the social construction of one's peers, culture, communities and world (Lesley, 2004). This study suggests that lecturers can actively incorporate critical literacy practices into speaking task as it can generate more meaningful learning experiences among their learners and encourages students to use their voices and life experiences as valid sources (Hass-Dyson, 2001 as cited by Kaur and Shidu, 2014). Using a qualitative paradigm, the subjects of the study were the 3rd semester students of English Department at Universitas Negeri Semarang. The questionnaire was given to investigate students' attitude in critical literacy practices which were varied using current texts from various sources. The steps of critical instructions were structured from asking the students to search information or texts, asking them to comprehend and report the content of the texts. The findings showed that the tertiary level students were accustomed to reading texts and commenting critically when they had the speaking tasks. Their critical opinion contains wide range of vocabulary and grammatical awareness.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tertiary level education means that it is the level in which the learners need to have wider knowledge. For that reason, the students are expected to be independent learners from the moment they start entering the tertiary level education. The learners are also expected to be self-motivated. While, in the teaching and learning process in tertiary level, it needs more effort on making the higher education learners comprehend the texts well from all the materials given to them. The need to understand, analyse, comprehend and finally create their own critical texts is very essential to be done by the tertiary learners.

In addition, the tertiary level students are strived for being able to develop their knowledge as much as they can, without being guided by the lecturer. It is a must for the students to read a lot of literature to improve their knowledge. However, in receiving the information, it is a must for the students to filter the information that they get wisely. They have to be critically aware of the idea that the author writes so their ability of critical literacy can be improved.

The critical literacy is indeed needed by the students in comprehending the text. When the students are having the critical literacy on them, they are able to find the rationale idea that the author tries to inform the reader. The students are also able to absorb and process the information that they get wisely and effectively.

The critical literacy, furthermore, will make the students able to think out of context by thinking the other possibility of the idea given by the author. It, however, trains the students' brain to work over and over again which simultaneously give them more information than they firstly needed. The more information that the students get, will, as a result, give them many supporting ideas to be talked. If it is related to the speaking skills, the critical literacy helps the students to speak a lot of idea due to the many literatures that they have already read.

From the background above, the purpose of conducting this study was to be able to describe the critical literacy process which was incorporated in speaking class. The students of tertiary level were tried to be given by the steps of comprehending the texts until they can absorb the information and finally

able to create opinion or critical comments via speaking task instructed by the lecturer in the class.

In applying the critical literacy process, the students need to be a critical reader. According to Goodwyn and Stables (2004) as cited by Kaur and Sidhu (2014) for being able to be a critical reader, the reader needs to:

- Consider the author's purpose in writing the account
- Seek to identify the main claims the authors make in putting forward their argument
- Adopt a sceptical stance towards the author's claims, checking whether they support convincingly what they assert
- Question whether the author has sufficient backing for the generalizations that they are making
- Consider whether and how any values guiding the author's work may affect what they claim

Related to this study, there were some previous studies which also studied about the application of critical literacy in the language classroom. For example, the study which was conducted by Kaur and Sidhu (2014) had found that the tertiary level learners in Malaysia still had difficulties in reading strategies. Those were understanding the author's message, distinguishing facts from opinion, understanding main ideas, guessing meaning from context, and making inferences. It was suggested in Kaur and Sidhu' study (2014) that university lecturer can incorporate more literacy practices and theories to get more meaningful learning for the learners. Another study was conducted by Fajardo (2016), one of findings described the reading process when students address articles of local issues, represents that student build knowledge from their real context likewise, building that knowledge has a straight connection to what students have experienced before. This means all the inter-textual connections student create not only from the previous knowledge they possess when they are at school, but also, the connections they do when they access technological platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snap chat and else. Another study then conducted by Jeong (2012) with the title "Developing Critical Literacy through English Newspaper Articles for High Intermediate EFL Students in Korea". It was found that However, critical literacy class seems to be difficult for teachers to implement in their teaching experiences. First, English newspapers have not been instituted as part of official English curriculums in current education systems. Second, applying critical literacy to English classrooms has been rare in EFL situations because teachers are busy catching up with current schedules

which are already set up according to curriculums. Third, EFL teachers may not have been educated in the ways of critical literacy, or they may not be interested. Unfortunately, many fields and subjects such as science and social studies value and utilize critical literacy in their classes more often than EFL classrooms (Jeong, 2012)

From those three studies mentioned, this study has almost the same research conducted. Dealing with the speaking task, there is a need to be more interactive and active in the class, the students were asked to involve in various tasks based on the purpose of the lesson. The tasks that are implemented in the class should be appropriate with the adult's characters. It is not only dealing with the active one but also with the matters of fluency and encompasses some other aspect like pronunciation, vocabulary grammar and accuracy.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

In this qualitative study, the data were collected from the 3rd semester students of English Department at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) in 2017. The students were, firstly, instructed to make group and found a topic, the lecturer gave some topics related to their current discussion. Then, the students chose one for each group based on their preference. They had to discuss it with their group member then found texts that supported the topic that they chose. The group that they created consisted of roles such as group leader, note taker, consultant, observer and group member. The texts chosen then were varied. However, it was led by the lecturer to find them by considering on the facts and current issues related to the topics they chose. It needed time, in fact, for the students to find the appropriate texts outside of the class.

When they found the texts, they had to implement the process of literacy by reading the texts and trying to understand and comprehend the content of the texts also made notes of information that could be used by them as their support in their speaking later on. After all of them were ready, the students were asked to simulate in a group discussion of the topic that they were interested in. It was free for them to speak and gave critical comments, based on the information they got on the texts, about the topic that they chose. The oral presentation, however, is used as an evaluation of students speaking ability. The informal interview also conducted in order to know whether the literacy process practice can help them to speak fluently that before.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The major finding is related to the results of student oral performance through speaking task namely group discussion simulation. The finding of the students' performance in speaking task, that was the group discussion simulation, was also discussed based on the observation analysis results. Before the students performed their group discussion simulation as their speaking task, the critical reading activities of texts given by the lecturer were done many times in order to get more knowledge and various perspectives when they had to deliver their ideas. Here is the percentage of the improvement results from the simulation.

Table 1: Result of group discussion simulation 1 (preparation).

GROUP DISCUSSION SIMULATION 1 (PREPARATION)	
Pronunciation	50% of all students have not achieved the appropriate pronunciation in their speaking
Fluency	80% of all students have not achieved the fluency rate as expected
Content of critical comment	70% of all students have not achieved the critical comment practice to show the knowledge and comprehending of the texts

Table 2: Result of group discussion simulation (real assessment)

GROUP DISCUSSION SIMULATION 2 (REAL ASSESSMENT)	
Pronunciation	60% of all students have achieved the appropriate pronunciation in their speaking
Fluency	70% of all students have achieved the fluency rate as expected
Content of critical comment	70% of all students have achieved the critical comment practice to show the knowledge and comprehending of the texts.

From the findings of achievement results of students via speaking task, it can be seen that there is slight improvement on the aspect of pronunciation, fluency and students' critical comment on the texts

that they have read. The results indicate that the need to practice and implement the steps of critical literacy helps the students to be better in their aspects of speaking ability, namely fluency and ideas.

Also, the learners feel that when they engaged in paired and group, they can absorb more information from the texts they have read from their peers. It increases the self-regulated motivation to learn and read some texts because there is interactive communication between and among peers to argue, discuss and solve the problems of the topics they have already chosen to be discussed in the group.

From all the reading processes of the students did in and outside the class, the lecturer can see that the tertiary learners are needed to practice the literacy process like inference, questioning, clarifying, summarizing and giving prediction from the problems or cases based on the texts they have chosen. It was real finding to be able to see that the tertiary level learners finally are able to give critical comments in the class after they practice the critical literacy process outside the class with their groups.

From the topics that they chose, the examples of the texts are "the difference between past and nowadays in terms of lifestyle", "technology in modern era", and "the importance of having breakfast for healthy". They showed their self-motivation to summarize by their own by using some reading strategies like scanning and skimming, inference and analysing. The learners seemed to have ideas to be delivered in their speaking tasks based on the course purpose that has to be achieved.

This study, thus, shows the potential impact of the effectiveness incorporating the critical literacy process in the Speaking class since it gives chance to the tertiary learners to absorb more information from the texts and practice to share ideas related to the texts that they have read. Moreover, the responsibility of the learners become increasing because the need and effort to share information are assessed by the lecturer through the speaking task activity formally and informally.

Although sometimes in some meetings of the class, the responsibility of the students is very difficult to be seen. They are able to construct knowledge in their groups because they have role to be involved in the group discussion. Thus, the lecturers need to be very careful in observing the students activity when they have group discussion. The assessment should be done continuously in order to see and able to know the students' improvement on the critical analysis and ideas delivered when they have speaking performance.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, there are a lot of benefits of incorporating the critical literacy process in teaching Speaking. It can be said that because during reading activity as the process of literacy, the students can get more knowledge. It gives diverse learning and opportunities to adults learners like the students of tertiary level.

It can also strengthen the academic relationship among peers in the class since it gives more opportunities to the learners to interact one another outside and inside the class using the target language to be learned. It suggested to university lecturer to be more often to give learning materials which contain more and various texts related to the course purpose in order to bring the tertiary students to think critically. Some activities of critical reading practices are also recommended to the teaching and learning in tertiary level.

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