

Critical Literacy and its Challenges in Education in Indonesia

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Abstract: Reading is one of the four language skills that should be mastered by students. Dadzie (2008) states that reading is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development. Bahadır (2012) claims that in today's societies, reading has considered as indispensable for a life of high quality. By reading, students will gain new understanding, new ideas, and also new knowledge that can expand their views later. Literacy culture will lead to critical literacy. The term of Critical Literacy arises from the results of research that has been conducted by Freire, an education expert from Brazil, who concluded that literacy learning should focus on reading words and reading the world or reading texts and contexts. This research was carried out using a review of the literature. A literature review is a description of the theory, findings, and other research materials obtained from reference materials that will be used to guide research activities. A literature review includes reviews, summaries, and the author's thoughts on various sources of literature (articles, books, slides, internet information, and so on) on the topics discussed. A good literature review must be current and relevant.

Keywords: Reading, Literacy, Critical Thinking

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1. Introduction

Reading is one of the four language skills that should be mastered by students. Dadzie (2008) states that reading is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development. Bahadır (2012) claims that in today's societies, reading has considered as indispensable for a life of high quality. By reading, students will gain new understanding, new ideas, and also new knowledge that can expand their views later. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, students' reading interest is still low. An Indonesian writer, Ayip Rosidi, stated that Indonesian children only read 17 pages of books per year or 1 page per 15 days. Taufik Ismail, a senior Indonesian poet and writer, even stated that since the independence of Indonesia, there was no one literary book has been read at school, the Zero Book Tragedy occurred in Indonesia (Kompasiana.com, October 2016). This is unfortunate and should be a concern not only by educators but all elements of society..

2. Materials and Methods

This research was carried out using a review of the literature. A literature review is a description of the theory, findings, and other research materials obtained from reference materials that will be used to guide research activities. A literature review includes reviews, summaries, and the author's thoughts on various sources of literature (articles, books, slides, internet information, and so on) on the topics discussed. A good literature review must be current and relevant.

3. Results

To foster students' reading interest, The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched the School Literacy Movement in 2015 as an implementation of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2015 concerning Growth of Character. This literacy movement not only expected to be able to increase students' reading interest but also understanding the importance of literacy in their life. Literacy is an important skill in life and most education processes depend on literacy skills. Literacy is the ability to access, understand and use information intelligently. Literacy culture that has embedded in students will affect their level of success, both in school and in social life.

Literacy culture will lead to critical literacy. The term of Critical Literacy arises from the results of research that has been conducted by Freire, an education expert from Brazil, who concluded that literacy learning should focus on reading words and reading the world or reading texts and contexts. Yoon (2015) defines critical literacies broadly as cultural, social, and political practices that examine the relationship between language and power in texts. According to Johnson and Freedman (in Priyatni, 2012, p. 28), critical literacy is a combination of critical thinking skills and attention to the content of social justice, politics, language, and power contained in the text. It can conclude that critical literacy is the ability to develop literacy skills both of reading or writing to find social inequalities that represent the power abuse, oppression, marginalization and critical of humanity, this process not only involves cognitive abilities but more deeply involves awareness and experience.

The practice of critical literacy in Indonesia, unfortunately, is still not fully implemented, even though the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched the school literacy movement. The basic factors that obstruct the school literacy movement, usually, are the lack of student interest in reading and the lack of availability of reading books. More than that, the teacher's reading interest is also still low. Not all teachers have an interest to read, whereas they have a crucial role in the success of this school literacy movement. This is similar to Janks (2014) statement that teachers' roles are crucial in supporting students' development of this ability and in "doing" critical literacies in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers ought to be a literate person before they teach about critical literacy to their students. They must be able to create conditions where reading is not just an obligation but gradually makes it a habit, culture, even a hobby. If literacy culture is strong enough, it will be easy to teach critical literacy to students. In addition, by reading a lot, students will also know the global issues that are happening. They will also understand about diversity and difference. That the culture of each nation is different, so they will be able to learn how to communicate between those differences.

Teaching children to use reading and writing to expand how they understand their world requires criticism (assessing strengths and weaknesses) of the production of current knowledge, authority, and power relations. In this globalization era, being a literate person is very important. Therefore, instead of preparing the students to be national human, the teachers are expected to prepare them to have a global perspective. Thus, they will not be left behind by this increasingly rapid era. Due to the globalization process also raises global awareness that every individual in the world has the same right to learn, or even to compete with one another, and the ultimate goal of the education process in this globalization era is to provide human resources who have international competitiveness.

The efforts to make the critical theory more applicable, Lewison et al. provided four dimensions that the teachers can use in the classroom to deepen and enhance reading comprehension. The first is disrupting the commonplace. This dimension guides teachers and students to focus on seeing daily life through new lenses, both in teaching practice and in the issues highlighted in the literature sheet. It can be seen as a way to give the experience with the text that has the potential to emerge the assumption and students' belief. The teacher can provide more implied relationships between student life and text. Thus, students can engage in conversations that ask them to consider the critical issues

highlighted in the texts. The second one is considering multiple viewpoints. This dimension considering many viewpoints. The readers are required to position himself to understand the information or problems that contained in the text based on personal perspectives and other people's perspectives. It will make the reader wiser in responding to the contents of the information in the text. The third is focusing on the socio-political. This dimension related to the socio-political issues, the relationship of power, and language with the teaching process. In this dimension, literacy is seen as political action and teaching as social practices. The importance of this dimension lies in how critical literacy is not only seen as the ability to read texts but also the capability to analyze social and political injustice and inequality so that students can become active members of society. The last one is taking action and promoting social justice. In this dimension, language is seen as a power against the practice of social injustice. It can be defined as texts that have been analyzed and criticized can influence thoughts and actions, and it can be done by changing attitudes in ways of thinking and behaving after critically reading and analyzing texts.

Since literacy cannot be separated with culture, therefore, when the students are able to understand what critical literacy is, they also will understand about culture. Not only their own culture but also another culture around the world without they should go to where the culture exists. This is in line with the term which Paolo Freire said that is "read the world by reading the word". It means that when we read, we have opened the window to this world. Through reading, we can understand human life in other parts of the world, as well as with their diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Book gives a lot of knowledge, and people be able to get much information only by reading a book.

According to Yoon (2015), critical literacy theory can be implemented into practice with global and multicultural perspectives. He said that if cross-cultural understanding developed in students successfully, critical literacies will help them to become responsible and informed global citizens. Yoon also introduces four dimensions of critical global literacies, namely; 1). Developing the student's global awareness with the interconnected world concept which focus on developing students' critical consciousness on global issues. The importance of this dimension is to help students focus on who they are and how they are situated in the larger world community beyond local and national boundaries. 2). Making connections from personal to global which focus on helping students make connections between their personal lives and global issues. Literacy activities based on this dimension help students engage in view-ing their real-life experiences through a critical global lens. 3). Analyzing and critiquing text from global and cross-cultural perspectives which focus on the promotion of cultural pluralism. In this dimension, the students are encouraged to embrace diverse viewpoints while also analyzing and critiquing their ways of thinking from global and cross-cultural perspectives. 4). Encouraging students to be socially and politically active on global and multicultural issues which focus on encouraging the students to be an active participant for social justice and equity.

The practice of literacy in Indonesia might have a different concept with another country, however, the goal of literacy learning are similar, that is to make the students being literate person where they can be able to understand what they read and apply it in their lives. Besides, the students are expected to be able the things from a different perspective and think critically to make the changes in their life. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, that literacy movement in Indonesia is still not fully implemented. Therefore, the practice of critical literacy will not work either as long as there is no effort to make a change.

However, considering the importance of critical literacy not only in the education field but also in our daily life to face global challenging. As an educator, make the students being a literate person is a must. The teacher's role is not only encouraging the students to increase their reading interest but they also should encourage themselves in order to accustom to reading, due a literacy mover ought to a literate person. The school literacy movement has expected to be able to increase students' reading interest to successfully

critical literacy practice. The successful of critical literacy practice is where students are able to understand what they are reading, implement it in their lives, and be able to see their surroundings from a different perspective. In that way, the students will be more prepared to face globalization era and compete globally.

5. Conclusions

By reading, students will gain new understanding, new ideas, and also new knowledge that can expand their views later. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, students' reading interest is still low. Since literacy cannot be separated with culture, therefore, when the students are able to understand what critical literacy is, they also will understand about culture. Not only their own culture but also another culture around the world without they should go to where the culture exists. This is in line with the term which Paolo Freire said that is "read the world by reading the word". It means that when we read, we have opened the window to this world. Through reading, we can understand human life in other parts of the world, as well as with their diverse social and cultural backgrounds.. However, considering the importance of critical literacy not only in the education field but also in our daily life to face global challenging. As an educator, make the students being a literate person is a must. The teacher's role is not only encouraging the students to increase their reading interest but they also should encourage themselves in order to accustom to reading, due a literacy mover ought to a literate person.

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