CRITICAL LITERACY BASED INSTRUCTIONAL READING MATERIALS

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Abstract: *he study aims at developing and producing a set of instructional materials used as a model of teaching/learning materials of critical reading. The model is developed through stages and procedures of research and development methods. The results of the study show that; a) the existing instructional materials in certain extent referring to students' and lecturers incompatibility requires variation in terms of new reading approach, skills to be trained, and types of activities; b) the type of critical reading to be developed is critical literacy; c) the models resulted from the study are theoretically and practically eligible and feasible in accordance to a panel of expert judgment; d) the models are empirically proven effective to improve student's skills in reading critically; e) the final models comprise of students learning materials, teachers guidance/manual, and some supporting materials.*

Keywords : *Model, Teaching/Instructional Materials, Reading, Critical literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to read is condition sine qua non. That is why; it is very vital prerequisite in both academic and social life. Through reading, one could access the development of new technologies and other most current stuffs. Texts that have to be faced by individuals in globalization era comprise of varieties of oral, written, and visual forms which come into their lives intentionally or accidentally. Only the individuals who own the skills of discourses can critically process and communicate those various kinds media forms to more advantageous knowledge (Wells, 1987). According to Giroux (2002), the supposedly literacy to be acquired should be critical literacy. Critical literacy can provide not only the skills

of reading and writing but also learning and utilizing the representational forms in texts, which in turn, communicating them socially.

Referring to the report of *Program for International Student Assessment* (PISA) in 2009, Indonesia was ironically ranked within low achievement countries on literacy quality. It implies that Indonesia faces a paradox in which on one hand Indonesia has to imperatively improve its human resources quality, on the other hand Indonesia has not been able to competitively improve its education quality (OECD, 2009).

Regarding the elevation of education quality in more specific context, Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Syekh Nurjati Cirebon is obliged to be able to do it. The areas of curriculum, teaching materials, lecturers' competency, and teaching-learning facilities are among other things that are possible things to be improved. This study tries to focus on researching and developing instructional materials due to the ease and accessibility factors.

This article aims to report the result of developing instructional materials based on critical literacy tenets. The instructional materials to be developed is intended for Reading Course which could eventually facilitate and train students to acquire the so called "life skills" for their personal purposes in social life and for skills to later on be trained to their students. It hopefully benefit students to actively process, use, and communicate the representation in media so as not to take any information for granted (Papen, 2005).

The instructional materials are written in the form of model since it becomes a representation of the encompassed reality and the theories. A model functions to operationalize the abstract concepts to be the concrete ones. Furthermore, it can, in education contexts, lead educators, teachers, and curriculum developers, to develop betterment in education (Frigg & Hartman, 2012).

Materials (Brown, 1995) or Instructional or teaching material (Richards and Renandya, 2002) is an important element of teaching and learning. Instructional material encompasses a systematic description of techniques and practices used in classroom consisting of lesson plan, books, games, and other activities (Brown, 1995). In addition, Richards

dan Renandya (2002) similarly pointed out that instructional materials comprises of textbook, materials institutionally prepared, and teacher generated materials which are used in classroom practices. Materials can take two forms authentic materials and created materials of which has its own strengths and weaknesses Jack C. Richards (2001).

In terms of reading, instructional materials should pose some characteristics to be such as: interactive, meaning focus, reading strategies training, fluency and accuracy focus, purposeful, reflective, multi genre, and cultural (Birds, 1995). Specifically in terms of critical literacy, instructional material should comply with such aspects as: disruption of commonplace, examination of multiple viewpoints, focus on sociopolitical issues, and action steps for social justice (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004).

This developed instructional material is designed with concepts and principles of language, language teaching-learning, reading, and critical literacy. In this study, firstly language is viewed from critical literacy perspective to be interwoven with reality. Secondly, language does communication through negotiation. Thirdly language creates ideas and values instead of communicating them. Fourthly, language is never neutral but bias in terms culture. Finally, language is dinamicaly changing depending on context **(**Morrell, 2008; Cervetti, et.al., 2001; Freire dan Macedo, 1996).

Reading is one of receptive language skills. It involves process and genre, background, readers, purpose, strategies, and fluency that integratedly in such a way lead to comprehension (Nation, 2009**;** Harmer, 2007; Grabe and Stoller**,** 2002; Brown, 2000; Nuttall, 1996; Nunan, 2003). The purposes of teaching reading are of teaching strategies and comprehension skills depending on the purposes and types of texts as well as activating background knowledge and broadening students repertoire of vocabulary so to be good readers. In order to achieve this, there has to be framework of teaching which popularly known as three **phases teaching,** before/pre-reading, during/whilst reading, and after/post-reading **(**Harmer, 2007; Grabe and Stoller**,** 2002; Brown, 2000; Nuttall, 1996; Nunan, 2003).

Critical literacy is pedagogically conceived by combining post-structuralism, critical, and Freireian theories. From post-structuralism, critical literacy claims that text is ideologically constructed in discourses systems. Critical social theories urge any text to be continuously critiqued. In addition, Freire proposed that literacy practices should take justice, freedom, and equality into account (Behrman, 2006; Luke, 2006; Luke and Dooley, 2011; McLaughlin dan DeVoogd, 2004).

Critical literacy is characterized by some distinctive tennets. First, it encourages readers to be active participants in the reading process. Second, it supports readers to shift from passive recipients to actively question, investigate, and problemetize power relations between readers and writers. Third, it focuses on power issues and encourages reflection, transformation, and taking action. Fourth, it is of making concious that one experiences is historically constructed within certain power relation. Finally, it support active reading in order to understand profoundly socially constructed concepts, discrimination, and unjustice within human relation (Behrman, 2006; Luke, 2006; Luke and Dooley, 2011; McLaughlin dan DeVoogd, 2004).

Critical literacy in its teaching and learning contexts is to describe the ways used by teachers and students to deconstruct text. It is thinking tools to encourage readers to question the construction and production of the text. Using critical literacy tools, readers consider the inclusion, exclusion, and representation in texts, relate text to his/her lives, and consider the influence of the text. Critical literacy method of teaching is flexible (Behrman, 2006; Luke and Dooley, 2011; McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004). Due to some limitation, the study focuses only on critical literacy based reading skills of problem posing/problematizing the issues on the text (McLaughlin dan DeVoogd, 2004).

The main source the instructional materials is derived from authentic hypertext which are available on internet. The authenticity is based on cohesion, coherence, intentionality, in formativeness, acceptability, situational, and intertextuality besides three principles of economy, effectiveness, and fitness (deBeaugrande, 1975). The level of difficulty of text is measured by readability Fry Grafik and complies with the concept of (i + 1) (Krashen in Nunan, 2003).

METHOD

The main aim of the study is to develop a model of reading instructional materials with critical literacy perspective for Reading V course at Jurusan Tarbiyah Bahasa Inggris IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. It adopts research and development approach suggested by Borg and Gall (1979) and specified with detailed stages by Jolly & Bolitho in Tomlinson (1998) and Richards (2001). The stages are simplified into three stages comprising preliminary research, planning and production, and evaluation and revision of the product. To guarantee the feasibility, reliability, and validity of the product, there have been some evaluation done including expect judgment.

To collect the data, such research instruments as questionnaire, observation check list, interview questions, and test. are used. Prior to their use, those instruments have gone through evaluation. In addition to this, these instruments are directed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data that concern on the approach, publication, and design aspects of instructional material and its use.

The feasibility and effectiveness of the developing instructional material is theoretically and empirically tested. the feasibility of the instructional material is tested through expert judgment and the effectiveness is tested through experimental design ranging from small, medium, and operational scale of experiments.

FINDINGS

The study has resulted in some findings. The findings revealed from preliminary study are that the existing and ever used instructional material lack in a ways that they are not beyond the expectation of both lecturer sand students. Those materials are incompatible to the students' English level; they are sometimes too easy and too difficult. According to lecturer, the approach and method of teaching matter. They seem to be confused of knowing that the methods are relatively similar. The methods used are oriented to how to answer the questions on the reading. It implies that the students are prepared for test taking strategies in reading.

The next findings from analyzing existing materials show that lecturers used materials that focus on teaching how to answer questions. It can be identified from the books used such TOEFL books from different publishers. This situation leads to monotonous and boring learning situations, which in turn, influence the motivation of students to read.

The syllabus developed in the planning phase is classified into mix type of syllabus. It consists of situational, topical, and functional in presenting activities and task in classroom. In this study the syllabus is written in the form of course summary.

The product of instructional material is designed to be used by students who take Reading Course V at ELT Department IAIN Syekh Nurjati. The product posits some features regarding the approach, methods, objectives, strategy, activities, and evaluation. It is designed from the perspective of critical literacy. Critical literacy reading strategies is transformed to be skills through practices and exercises. The skills to be developed are critical reading skills which are manifested into the activities of analyzing and questioning the text to deconstruct text and to identify role, representation, stereotype, value, attitude, culture and power relation, as well as justice. The type of texts used is authentic hypertext downloaded from internet. Critical pedagogy is implemented into tasks carried in individual or group work. The choice of texts is based on students' cultural and psychological aspects. The content and tasks also develop students' affective domain. The materials are designed into three different level of difficulty.

After getting through the stages of evaluation, the developing instructional material proves to be feasible according to expert panel and readability test. In addition, the instructional material is also effective for independent use without its developer based on t-test (α 0,05). So that, the instructional material can be used by both lecturers and students of English Department IAIN Syekh Nurjati

The final product of this study is resulted in a learning material for students and instructional material for lecturer. Basically these two forms of products are similar, they differ in the existence of teacher's guide and supporting materials such as lesson plan, answer keys, critical literacy

teaching tools. The structure of the developed instructional materials is divided into preliminary part, teaching units, and supporting materials. The preliminary part consists of information relating to contents and materials presentation, theoretical and practical consideration, teacher's guide, including the framework of teaching. Teaching units comprise of three phases of teaching reading pre-reading, whilst reading and post reading and are combined with critical literacy stages of teaching prediction, immersion, deconstruction, reconstruction, taking action (Gregory and Cahill, 2009). The end part of the unit contains practices/exercises as part of application of previous learning.

In prediction stage, some questions are provided to direct students to the topics being discussed. Then, in immersion stage, reading activities are oriented to understand the main ideas and supporting ideas of the text. After that, in deconstruction stage, students are given examples of how to make questions following the strategies of critical literacy to be trained. The next activity is deconstruction in which students are given examples of how to reconstruct texts. The last stage is taking action stage in which students are given examples of how to create questions relating to actions that might be taken referring to the topic of the text. The second part of the unit is practice. The students are encouraged to practice strategies of critical literacy in more independent way.

DISCUSSION

This research and development in brief is conducted through three stages starting from theoretical review and research, and then planning and production, and finally try-out, validating, revising. It eventually result in an instructional materials which represent theoretical basis and customer/user needs..

Through critical literacy as the main theoretical basis in its framework, the lecturer and students become critically conscious. Furthermore, critical consciousness is turned into alternative pedagogical concepts in teaching and life skills in social life. In addition to it, the critical literacy based instructional material lead students to actively participate in a democratic and just society (Comber, 2001).

Despite the proved effectiveness, the skills of critical literacy require longer to time acquire. Lecturers should be aware that to be critical will often face rejection from the milieu; therefore, the lecturers are suggested to really be able to recognize which topics to be criticized within certain social culture context. In other words, there exist borders to be recognizant (McDaniel, 2004).

Theoretically, this study has contributed new study toward the study of teaching learning reading on Reading Course in higher education level. It is helpful in such a way that it improves students' ability in reading.

The study cannot avoid from its weaknesses regarding its research methods and findings. First, the product resulted from study is locally tailored. It might lead the transferability of the product to other broader contexts with variety of users. Second, the execution of the stages in the study is mainly carried out by the researcher himself. This influences the scope of the research due to limited time of the researcher and the subjectivity of the researcher. Third, variable control is not implemented. It suggest other research with tight control of variables to detailed aspects such graphic design and picture quality. It also influences the availability of exposure which is very limited. Finally, the findings collected during the study are not entirely implemented in the developing instructional materials due to the limitation of the study.

CONCLUSION

The instructional material produced has reflected theoretical bases and users needs. Moreover, it has gone through some evaluation and tests, so that it is eventually feasible theoretically and empirically effective to use on Reading Course in English Department at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. New nuance is flourished in this instructional material by blending reading concepts and critical literacy. In certain extent, the materials have helped the lecturers obtain new critical perspective in teaching reading. Likewise, the materials have assisted students to acquire basic skills of critical literacy. All in all, both lecturers and

students have been empowered to actively process and evaluate any information so as to properly make decisions.

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