

Creating Critical Literacy Skills for Young Learners at Primary School

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Abstract— In this 21st century, critical literacy skill is one of the important abilities of young learners that should be grown since primary school. Through critical literacy, students, currently as a millennial generation, are able to respond intelligently for various kinds of information that develops around them. In this paper, growing the critical literacy is related to students' critical reading and thinking skills. Critical literacy can be fostered through sustainable implementation design for 1st-3rd grade and 4th-6th grade of elementary school. This design can be varied with proper activities for young learners in primary school such as finding clues, completing pictures, and reading diaries.

Keywords— *critical literacy, primary school, thinking and reading critically*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology in the 21st century has caused unlimited access to information around the world. Information spreads quickly through various online social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Those platforms have become parts of society's lifestyle. However, this kind of development requires society to be more active and reactive to respond the information critically [1], [2]. It is related to the general phenomenon of the existence of 'spam' news or 'hoax' which easily spread among them. The truth is that everyone can make such news without any evidence that can harm other people.

To address the problem, self-awareness of growing critical literacy is crucially needed especially for young learners. Young learners, the elementary school students, have grown up in the millennial century that is surely affected by the modernization of human civilization. Critical literacy not only encourages students to actively analyze the text and think critically but also enables students to produce and design ways to address or solve a problem [3]. Students will not only become passive consumers in receiving the information but also can be active and critical. Critical literacy is expected to be an effective method to make students become intelligent millennial generation in dealing with the modernization of information and technology.

The critical literacy skills should be familiarized and trained from the primary education level. Previously, the government had promoted the application of emergent literacy at the primary education level through the school literacy program that called Gerakan Literasi Sekolah [4]. This is supported by the results of the PISA survey in 2015 which showed that the result of Indonesian survey (among 72 countries) got increased 6-rank above the results of the previous survey in 2012. It then became optimism to foster

and develop the critical literacy of students from early ages. Based on Piaget's opinion, students in primary school age start to develop hypothetical, debate, and cause-effect thinking patterns [5]. The application of critical literacy can be carried out simultaneously with the school program as a way to develop students' literacy skills.

In summary, the application of critical literacy needs to be deeply discussed in primary education domain. Critical literacy can be implemented simultaneously in teaching and learning process as well as text-based learning. By creating critical literacy, the students are expected to be capable of receiving and addressing information. Furthermore, in order to create an intelligent and cultured nation, critical literacy should be implemented as early as possible as the main 'asset'. That is why this study will mainly discuss how to create critical literacy for young learners in primary school.

II. CRITICALLY LITERACY

There is always someone's perspectives and messages in every information delivered. The problem is whether the information is accurate, trusted, and has positive purposes, especially in this digital era. It then becomes the reason why creating critical literacy since the early ages are highly needed. It requires students to learn how to read and think critically about the process of understanding texts. In addition, another purpose of critical literacy is building interest of students in constructing information for their future practices [6]. The students are directed to think more critically through various kinds of perspectives in which there will be more arguments to consider the validity of the information.

Basically, critical literacy is the form of literacy capability in making contradiction and reflection of the information provided in texts. Critical literacy awareness emphasizes the fact that text can be constructed to understand the background and choices made by the author [7]. By knowing the background, the students will have a comprehensible understanding of a certain text. In critical literacy, this kind of understanding can be received by reading as well as thinking critically which are closely related. The relationship between critical literacy and critical reading and thinking can be found in the scheme below.

There are sequential stages to create critical literacy skills. The scheme is based on the assumption that receiving information (in this case is reading) and putting them on the brain that involves thinking capability (the ability to think critically) are the basic things to respond the information. In addition, research showed that there was a significant

positive relationship between reading and critical thinking; critical reading skills will help students to practice critical thinking. In order to understand the whole information given, the students will think critically while analyzing and evaluating text in the process of reading [8]. After successfully getting the information, they will take a side and make contradictions for testing the validity of the information, whether it is suitable for the current situation. This is called as critical literacy capability. The following paragraphs are brief explanations of critical reading and thinking specifically in terms of creating critical literacy in primary school.

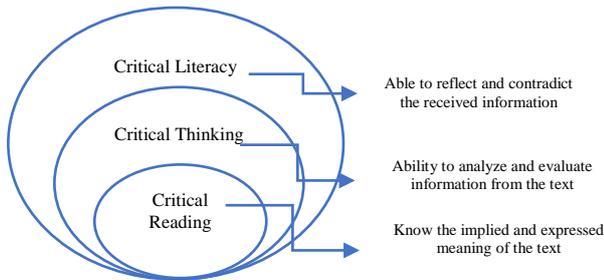


Fig. 1. Scheme Of Thinking And Reading In Critical Literacy

A. Critical Reading

In general, one of the main prerequisites in critical literacy is the ability of reading. Reading is categorized as receptive language skill in the written language. Students will obviously learn to use their background knowledge and skills to build up a strong ‘foundation’ in creating critical literacy by getting engaged actively in reading activity [9]. Reading activity through both printed and digital media gives students new insight and knowledge since there is always active input from reading sources to students schemata.

Specifically, in critical reading activity, its process focuses on understanding explicit and implicit information. That critical reading activity helps the students in deeply understanding certain text and criticizing new information [10]. Critical reading techniques involve the ability to analyze, comparing, and assessing the content of the text. This technique requires students to think critically about which they should not only passively receive the information but also actively give responses. It then becomes the basic thing in creating students’ critical literacy skills. The description of the critical reading process can be seen in Table I below.

TABLE I. CRITICAL READING PROCESS

Stages	Processes	Reading Activities
1	Pre-read	Reviewing received information from books, articles, personal news, etc (title, author, and topic) Making questions based on reviewing results (use 5W+1H)
2	Time-read	Reading the source of information carefully Making notes and marking parts that need to be discussed
3	Post-read	Analyzing information content by discussing questions arouse at pre-read and post-read Evaluating and assessing the information

Stages	Processes	Reading Activities
		from the sources Making general and specific conclusion about the received information

B. Critical Thinking

Based on the critical reading activities in Table I, we can see that students involve critical thinking skill from making questions until making a general and specific conclusion. Critical thinking processes are the important instrument to know whether the students have done ‘critical reading’ activities [11]. It requires students to actively give responses and find evidence before receiving and using particular information [12],[13]. The requirement of giving responses will increase students’ thinking skill and decide the trustworthiness of the information.

Critical thinking is an ability to use complex thinking and reasoning skill. Critical thinking requires the students to be active in analyzing and evaluating the facts of information to obtain or make some conclusion [14]. It can be developed since the early ages in accordance with cognitive development. Its activities are made based on the stages and portion of students’ cognitive development through simple and sustainable activities. At primary school age, students’ cognitive development is in the stage of concrete operational where they think concretely and begin to develop their ability to associate events that occur in their lives [5]. This ability is the main tool that supports the development of thinking skills in the cultivation of critical literacy. The description of critical thinking skills can be observed in Table II below.

TABLE II. CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

Stage	Thinking Activities	Description
1	Sharpen ability to ask	Creating assumptions about the information obtained <u>Building apperception through questions</u>
2	Adjust perspective	Contradicting the accuracy of received information with the real fact Clarifying and proving the information through accurate sources <u>Making general and specific conclusions</u>
3	Apply information	Aligning the received information with conditions in the surrounding environment Determining the attitude towards information Sharing the positive benefits of the received information

III. CRITICAL LITERACY AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary education is the main foundation of national education quality. In a broader context, primary education is also a stage to create critical literacy skill as the students’ characteristics. It can be built up by consistently familiarizing students with literacy in elementary school [15]. The literacy program previously has been applied through *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS)* issued by Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016. Literacy skills were developed to support further education and lifelong learning. The application of literacy through *GLS* involves (1) the habituation phase; (2) the development of literacy interests and abilities; and (3) the implementation of literacy-based learning [16].

Focusing on critical literacy skill, it basically aims to give the students ability to know their personal identity and surroundings because students, as millennial generations, will be affected by modernization where news and other issues are continuously spread from various sources all over the worlds. The more the students aware of the importance of the literacy skill, the more they are ready to compete in the modernization era [17]. Moreover, students have more interest in the sophisticated technology where the information comes in and give more attention to things existed in cyberspace. Therefore, creating critical literacy of students is crucially needed.

Critical literacy at primary schools can be designed integrated with or separated from school educational programs. The integration of critical literacy in learning process should give the students space to have direct interaction with various kinds of sources to develop their ability on critical thinking [18]. The application of critical literacy in elementary school should be based on students cognitive development. Students are directed to criticize the small thing to more challenging issues, for instance, current phenomena happen in their daily lives. Another thing is that the teacher should also be interactive and active in giving the students questions to guide the students on how to create a question and analyze new information. The construction of literacy skill of elementary school students should consider the students' cognitive level, type of the text requested, and its suitability in the context known by the students [19].

A. Design of Critical Literacy Class

In this paper, there will be an early class (1st-3rd grade) and high class (4th-6th grade) in creating students' critical literacy. This arrangement is based on the students' development that in the early class students are in the process of developing imaginative factual thinking patterns, while in the high-class students have begun developing realistic patterns [20]. The design of creating a literacy program focuses on the learning process which involves reading and thinking activities. The following table (Table III) shows a design of creating critical literacy program at a primary school.

TABLE III. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL LITERACY FOR THE 1ST-3RD GRADE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Competency Mapping			
Critical Reading	Critical Thinking	Assessment	Critical Literacy
Pre-read - Students observe the title of the text or discourse - Students observe images or illustrations (if there is any) - Students are given apperception questions about the text content - Students are stimulated to ask about text content before time-read activity - Teacher records student questions	Asking Skill - Students identify the theme of the text or discourse - Students make assumptions through observation Students form an initial perceptions	- Ability to make questions	Students are accustomed to analyzing information from the source as an initial description of the content and context of information
Time-read - Students do reading or guided reading activity at the class	Adjust Perspective - Students explore the	- The attitude on reading	Students are accustomed to actively

Competency Mapping			
Critical Reading	Critical Thinking	Assessment	Critical Literacy
- This activity can be carried out with a relay, in pairs, or individually reading	contents of the book through reading activities	activity	read at inputting information in text
Post-read - Students classically are guided to answer questions during pre-read - Students are given the opportunity to ask questions after reading the text (point to the problematic question) - Students are guided to give opinions and assess the text they read - Students explain the reasons for their opinions - Students conclude the content of the text and its relation to daily life	Apply Information - Students analyze and conclude the implicit meaning or explicit meaning - Students identify problems that arise in text or discourse - Students determine the solution to the problem that appears in the text guided - Students associate the implicit and explicit meaning of the text with events around it	- Ability to rationalize personal opinions and solve the problems	Students are accustomed to reflecting off the content with surrounding events. Students confirm the correctness of the information before determining attitude and opinion about that

On this program, the teacher plays an important role in guiding students to create critical literacy during the 1st-3rd grade. Teachers should be committed to fostering the students' critical literacy in every lesson starting from material selection to critical literacy habituation stages. The teacher can choose the suitable materials for the learning process in the classroom so that the growth of critical literacy can be sustainable. It is appropriate with the curriculum competence for the early class that contains many learning materials using fiction and descriptive text. This material can be explored through both printed and digital media that can be analyzed and contradicted during the learning process. For example, in science learning, teachers can choose reading material about the characteristics of carnivorous animals. Students can be stimulated to analyze definitions, characteristics, benefits, differences, and roles in their surrounding environment. The students are invited to do step by step activities that lead to the growth of critical literacy which is in accordance with the design. At the end of this design, the students can conclude and prove the existence of carnivorous animals.

TABLE IV. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL LITERACY FOR THE 4TH -6TH GRADE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Competency Mapping			
Critical Reading	Critical Thinking	Assessment	Critical Literacy
Pre-read - Students read the headlines of discourse (news/articles/info) - Students	- Students identify the contents and contexts of the discourse - Students make assumptions through	- Conformity with the contents of discourse - Types of	Students improve their analytical skills independently by

Competency Mapping			
Critical Reading	Critical Thinking	Assessment	Critical Literacy
observe the writers, publishers, or sources of the discourse - Students are given the opportunity to make assumptions about the purpose and content of the discourse - Students are given the opportunity to write questions about the content of the discourse (teacher can limit questions)	identification results - Students form an initial perceptions	questions formulated by students	making assumptions that will prove at the next reading activity
Time-read - Students read the discourse carefully with individuals activity - Students are given chance to mark the misunderstood parts while reading	- Students explore the contents of the discourse through reading activities - Students do reading with thinking activity to determine the misunderstood parts from the discourse	- Student attitude while reading activity - Misunderstood parts that can be analyzed by student	Students increase their activeness to observe information at the discourse. When students are able to analyze the misunderstood parts, it shows that they have activated their schemata in reading with thinking critically
Post-read - Students identify the keywords and the facts of the discourse - Students are given the opportunity to ask questions about the entire contents of the discourse - Students and teachers discuss all the questions during pre-read until this post-read activity - Students get problem-solving worksheets to be solved and discussed in a group - Students identify the events around	- Students analyze and identify facts from the discourse - Students determine the implicit and explicit meaning - Students find the problems and the solutions from the discourse - Students validate the accuracy of information from discourse - Students generalize information on the surrounding events	- Ability to distinguish between facts and arguments - Problem-solving skills - Ability to rationalize an information with events around it	Students develop their skills of information input process by confirming and contradicting the information before receiving it. Students improve their problem-solving abilities by distinguishing between facts and arguments through the results of an analogy with the

Competency Mapping			
Critical Reading	Critical Thinking	Assessment	Critical Literacy
them and collect evidence in accordance with the contents of the discourse - Students conclude and share the accuracy of information from the discourse			surrounding events

On the continuation of this program, critical literacy skills began to be developed from the previous design. The material is directed to the factual text in the form of news or issues in the surrounding environment. The teacher can take suitable material from spread information through offline or online media to be analyzed and proven its accuracy. Students are accustomed to criticizing, confirming, and contradicting the information. The teacher should also present a clear example of hoax or spam news which has negative impacts. Furthermore, the teacher can choose a discourse material in accordance with the learning process. For example, in social learning, a lot of material can be explored related to news and social issues. Students can be taught to make contradictions between learning material and social issues until students can make a general conclusion at the end of the session. If the teacher can create critical literacy skill at 4th-6th grade in the learning process, the students' critical literacy skills will be formed and increased from the previous class. The modification of this design is possible to do by still focusing on creating critical literacy of student at primary school based on the school program.

B. Variation Activities for Creating Critical Literacy

According to the characteristics of the primary school student, it is very important to use a variation on creating critical literacy. Although primary school students (7-12 years old) are interested in sophisticated technology, they are basically still children who always want new things. Variations of critical literacy aim to give the students impression lessons so they will remember and apply what they have learned. The teacher can use various kinds of fun games or pictures as learning media. The example of variations of activities can be seen as follows:

- Find The Clue

This activity will be carried out during pre-read activities. In this activity, students will find the clues by analyzing the contents of a discourse. Students are given a series of news that can be analyzed to find the clue of the correctness of the information provided. Students are trained to use scanning, skimming, and intensive reading skills. The variations of this reading activity can support student ability on critical reading. The teacher can choose an issue [21], for example, the occurrence of a fire of Kalimantan forest. From issues chosen by the teacher, students are given other interrelated guidelines and discourses to complete the task. Students use scanning reading techniques to find keywords in each discourse, followed by skimming reading techniques to determine the relevance of the topics in the discourse. After finding the appropriate series of the discourses, students read

intensively the entire content which is followed by the design of critical literacy class according to activity at Table III.

- Complete The Picture

This activity will be carried out during post-read activities. In this activity, a series of images will be utilized as a medium to foster students' critical literacy skill. When reading, students will be given a series of images based on the content of the text or discourse. The teacher can easily download this media through search engines. At the time of reading, students are given a series of random images to be matched with the content of the text. Students will analyze and write down the facts below the appropriate images. This will help students to explore and identify fact and information inside it. The newest research has proven that serial images can facilitate and attract students to be interested in reading [22]. Serial images provide a visual description of the event or topic of the text. After student can match the fact from the text, they are guided to evaluate the entire text content by reflecting and contradicting it according to the post-read activities in the critical literacy class design.

- The Reading Diary

The reading diary can be used as a routine facility to support students in improving their critical literacy skill. The reading diary is used like a journal to record student activities in finding facts or information out of the text. After reading and thinking critically, students prove the accuracy of information or events around it. This information can be recorded in diaries which have been designed by the previous teacher. From this diary, the teacher also can assess the development of students' critical literacy skills. Everything that the students have written down will show what they get and learn from the activity. To attract students' interest, the reading diaries can be designed as creative as possible, for instance, creating handmade books that can be previously planned in art learning. This integration of learning will greatly support activities of creating students' critical literacy skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

Creating critical literacy for young learners in primary schools is very important. Critical literacy skill is the provisions of students to face the rapid development of technology and information. It encourages students to be active recipients who always analyze and prove the validity of every information they receive. Creating critical literacy skill is closely related to critical reading and thinking activities. Reading and critical thinking direct the students to develop their skills in critical literacy since reading activity is the instrument to input the information and critical thinking is to process information. As the output, critical literacy will be the final conclusion obtained by the students. Critical literacy activities can be designed to be implemented in primary school through gradual activities which are integrated with teaching and learning process. The critical literacy skill is able to be developed gradually from the initial level of elementary school, the 1st-3rd grade, and the final level of elementary school, 4th-6th grade. The design in this paper involves critical reading and thinking activities that can be varied based on the characteristics of students at the primary school. Variations of activities can be alternative choice through, for example, finding the clue, completing the

picture, and the reading diary. All forms of this activity specifically focus on creating critical literacy of students at the primary school level.

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