

# Using Authentic Material to Develop Students' Critical Reading Ability

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**Abstract**— Having a critical reading ability is crucial for students to survive the modern societies. Especially now with the massive development of technologies and internet, we can easily access information produced elsewhere in the world. However, it makes us faced with a new challenge. The information we found on the internet can be incomplete, unnecessary, and written by unknown person. Therefore, teachers need to help students to be a critical reader. Critical reading primarily requires a reader to employ critical thinking skills, which is accepted as the skill of 21th century, while reading a text. One of a way to teach critical reading is by using authentic materials. Authentic material can help students gain real information and know what is going on in the world around them. However, authentic material also has its own complexity. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the problem teachers usually faced when using authentic material in the classroom. This study was conducted as descriptive qualitative research. The subjects were three English teachers in Medan and the instruments was an interview guide. The results highlight a number of implications and recommendations for future research.

**Keywords**—*Authentic Material; Critical Reading*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In English, reading is one of the skills that should be mastered by students. Either for careers purposes, study purposes or simply for pleasure, students need to be able to read texts in English [1]. Reading can be beneficial for students for many reasons. For study purpose, reading can benefit the students when they have to read English material for their own specialist subject but never have to speak the language [2]. Reading has significant impact to improve students' vocabulary, syntax and academic achievement [3] and can be a major source of comprehensible input [4]. Harrison [5] also supported that reading can effected way of thinking and the development of emotional and moral.

Urquhard and Weir in [6] defined reading as “the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print”. However, now we live in an advanced era where technologies changing thing. The change from the book to screen, and the change from traditional print-based media to the new information and commu-

nication technologies allow people to access information from a lot of sources. Book is no longer the only sources to gain information. Students need to be more critical in processing the information [7]. Therefore, students should develop their basic reading skill into more critically to process the information which [8] argues that high order thinking is needed to do that.

Critical reading originally comes from the application of critical thinking. It means being critical in the process of reading [9]. Because as [10] stated, reading is “a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning”. The process itself involves the reader and the writer to make an interaction. The writer as an encoder has something in mind then provides a text contain of information that the writer wants the reader to understand in certain ways. In this process, the reader act as a decoder, decode the written text and interpret it in order to acquire knowledge or understand the messages. Because a text does not carry meaning by itself, students need to enhance a critical stance by using their background knowledge to grasp the writer of the text's idea and compare it to their own idea [11].

Criscuolo in [12] stated critical reading is a critical process in which higher order mental process is used to interpreting and evaluating the information read. Being a critical readers will enable students not received explicitly what is written in the text but go beyond it to evaluate the content of the reading text by using their high order thinking skill (HOTS). Student will not only read and understand the words but also understand the text's purpose so they will not be manipulated by its content [11]. The basic reading just needs the ability to analyze the main idea of paragraph, text organizations, and transitions. Meanwhile, the critical reading is related to the ability to identify the inference, analyzing stated implied the main idea, synthesizing the sentences, distinguishing fact and opinion, explaining figurative language, and identifying fallacies and emotional appeals [13].

According to various experts such as [14][15][16] the teaching of critical reading skills will propose some skills and aspects for the students such as: (1) questioning the writer's

purpose, audience, subject, and context to identifying the basic information of the text, (2) differentiating fact to opinion in the text and identifying truth and falsify to analyze the fact and opinion in the text and whether it is true or false, (3) analyzing the different use of language and the emotive impact of words, (4) identifying kind of fallacies in the text, and identifying the cause of the fallacies, and (5) evaluating the truth, reliability, applicability and the value of the text.

Critical reading is one of the skill that they will be needed as it has become one of the compulsory subjects offered in university [17] University need not only say what they think or merely sharing their idea, they have to explain their judgement based on the evidence [18] In job market, employee who can solve problems, think creatively, gather and analyze information, draw appropriate conclusion from data, and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively are likely can survived the working field [19].

In order to help students developing their critical reading ability, English teachers are play an important role in the process. As Brown [20] said that “teachers play the crucial role in teaching and learning process in helping the learners to master such skills by transferring knowledge, give some instruction to do something by using such kind of techniques and the result, students are understand and able to do and produce something.”. To support teachers teaching critical reading to students, choosing the suitable methods or materials is necessary to help the teachers. Using authentic materials is one of the methods that can be used by teachers. Authentic material refers to “real-life texts, not written for pedagogic processes” [21]. It is a material that was produced for genuine communication, and not specifically written for language teaching purposes [22]. In other word, authentic material is a material produced by real speaker/writer or a non-classroom audience conveying real message as it is not produced for pedagogical purposes.

There are different types of authentic materials that can be used in the classroom, but the most common are magazines, newspapers, advertisements, news report or song. The use of authentic material can give variety to the classroom. The rich and real language in it can help student expose to real language as much as possible to help them gain real information and know what is going on in the world around them. Students feel that they are learning a target language if they can used it outside the classroom [23]. Students are more eager to learn when the language is authentic or meaningful [24].

As much as authentic materials can give variety to the classroom, it also has its complexity that teacher must carefully take into account. Consequently, it is important for teachers to carefully choose the authentic materials with a clear pedagogic in mind. Teachers need to prepare authentic materials that students will need and want to be able to read when travelling, studying abroad, or using the language in other contexts outside the classroom [23]. Authentic material is not an easy task and has its own complexity that teachers need to take into accounts. For example, it has a complex vocabulary and structures that can be hard for lower-lever

learner [25]. Sometimes it cost a lot of time or money. Therefore, this study intended to explore the problem teachers have while using authentic material in supporting developing students’ critical reading ability.

**II. METHODS**

The data of this study were collected from three English teacher by using semi-structured interview. The researcher conducted the research at a senior public high school in Medan which considered as a respected school in Medan. The school also has a lot of achievement in English competition. In 2017, this school gained the highest English score in National Examination for public high school in Medan. As a result, this school was chosen as the place to conduct this study. Three steps in data analysis technique proposed by [26] will be used in this research, namely data organization, data summary, and data interpretation.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the interview are described in the table below:

**TABLE I. THE PROBLEM TEACHERS FACE IN THE CLASSROOM**

Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
1. Students’ Lack of Vocabulary 2. Choosing the materials that can attract students’ attention. 3. Internet is the major source of authentic materials that students most familiar with 4. Limited time for English lesson in Curriculum 2013	1. Teachers sometimes did not have enough time to prepare the authentic materials 2. The material chosen must be up to date and can catch students’ attention 3. Students put less effort in preparing the authentic material that teachers asked to bring in last meeting 4. Internet is the most useful source of authentic materials	1. Even after using authentic material, students sometimes still pay less attention to the teacher. 2. The school did not facilitate the students with free access to wifi.

To solve the problem above, there are two high light that the researcher found after interviewing the teachers:

**A. Doing Collaborative Learning**

Cooperative learning is one of the most effective ways for students to maximize their own learning and the academic accomplishments of their classmates . Students in cooperative groups work with each other to make certain that

everyone in the group has mastered the concept being taught. By doing collaborative learning, teacher can save enough time and build students' social learning experience.

#### *B. Taking Advantages of the Use of Smartphone*

Selecting materials that will attract students' attention is not an easy task. Especially students nowadays pay less attention to reading English lesson. Students' awareness of the important of reading in English are also low. Therefore, the teachers must find a way to encourage and motivating students to learn. Using smartphone is one of the ways to solve the problem. The teachers in this research agree that most of the students rely on their smart phone more than they rely on the teachers. Nowadays, we can find everything with the help of smart phone. Easy access to internet, application that can help students learn English, google translate, etc. Asking students to bring a newspaper, magazine, or a print paper of students' favorite song are useless. Therefore, teachers usually asked the students to browse for certain text or they can use google translate if they found difficult vocabulary. Showing the students to make a good use of their smart phone can encourage the students to do a lot of reading in English as well as introducing students to variety type of text in English.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Critical reading can be taught to senior high school students with a good assistance from the teacher. Especially with the help of technology which students nowadays are very familiar. Exposing different type of authentic material can encourage students to do a lot of reading. The success of using authentic material to support students in reading class depends on how the teachers can solve the problems occurred in the classroom. However, we should take into note to successfully developing students' critical reading ability need a lot of times. A well-prepared and good classroom management should be arranged carefully to make a successful use of authentic material in the classroom.

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