DESIGNING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS-BASED INSTRUCTION FOR EFL READING

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Many studies uncover the fact that the Indonesian students EFL reading literacy are still below the international standard of reading literacy. This phenomenon encourages EFL teachers to innovate some strategies to increase EFL reading proficiency. One of the ways to increase the Indonesian EFL reading proficiency is by integrating EFL reading skills with critical thinking skills. To meet this need, this paper aims at integrating EFL reading with critical thinking skills by implementing three routine practices namely internalizing, applying and evaluating. Internalizing concept is a situation where an initial learning occurs. In this stage it is recommended to learn any new concept well. After that, applying the concept to a problem or issue is recommended after internalizing stage, so that the EFL learners can come to see the value of understanding the concept. At the same time, the EFL learners need to evaluate how well they are internalizing and applying the concepts they are learning. This paper also connects both the theoretical and practical implementation of these three routine practices to acquire more appropriate pedagogical implementation of critical thinking skills in reading in EFL classroom.

Keywords: critical thinking-based instruction, EFL reading

Critical Thinking Skills, further called CTS, is one of the skills that are required to survive in this globalization era. The tight and worldwide competition in this era requires people to have CTS to innovate ideas in technology, to increase educational quality and to produce outstanding human resources. CTS is a skill that brings precision to the way someone thinks and works to be more accurate and specific in noting what is relevant and what is not. Having this skill is beneficial in terms of providing a useful tool for problem solving and project management, bringing greater precision and accuracy to different parts of a task (Cottrell, 2005:4). Accordingly, acquiring CTS could save time since it helps to identify the most relevant information more quickly and accurately. This reason becomes one of the crucial points to consider in arranging the government policy to design curriculum for national education in Indonesia.

CTS in this paper are defined as the ability to analyze and assess source of information to challenge the authority to identify the weakness of the argument using certain standard or criteria. The standard is based on the mini guide for the improvement of instruction by Paul and Elder (2007). The standard involves designing instruction so that EFL

learners engage in routine practice in internalizing and applying the concepts they are learning and evaluating their understanding of each.

The cognitive skill in CTS is similar to reading skill in a way that both are valuing cognitive activities or skills. The process of reading is the process of activating the brain to encode language from printed media. The skills of encoding language are undoubtedly needed to assign a meaning to the written symbols in the text. Thus, reading skills, among other language skills are of equal importance to assimilation process that is a process of integrating various new information from the text with what is already known (Aebersold & Field,1997; Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2004, Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2002).

The important role of reading in English language teaching is directed to reading for academic purposes (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006; Suharmanto, 2006). In the study on the teaching of EFL reading in Indonesian context, Cahyono & Widiati, 2006 emphasized the importance of reading among other language skills. They revealed that the demand that the students should be able to comprehend messages conveyed by reading texts has led to a new trend that the teaching of ESL/EFL reading should be placed in its primacy for some reasons. First, there was a need to enable students to learn academic subjects through reading textbooks and similar materials. Second, written texts offer various pedagogical purposes such as enhancing language acquisition process, providing good models for writing and providing opportunities to introduce new topics, to stimulate discussion and to study language. On the basis of these, this study is intended to incorporate CTS with reading.

Despite the prominent factor in acquiring EFL reading proficiency, some studies have indicated that most of EFL learners still have unsatisfactory result in English as Foreign Language (EFL) reading proficiency (Lie, 2007). The low scores of EFL reading and English communication might be the causes of the unsatisfactory scores on EFL proficiency. This finding encourages many studies to increase EFL reading competences (Sulistyo & Suharmanto, 2007; Lie, 2007, Iftanti, 2012).

Many attempts are made to improve the EFL reading strategies in EFL learning. What has been the concern of this paper is introducing the CTS based instruction to improve EFL reading skills. The design includes internalizing, applying and evaluating concept to be implemented in EFL reading classroom. Figure 1 describes the concept of this design.

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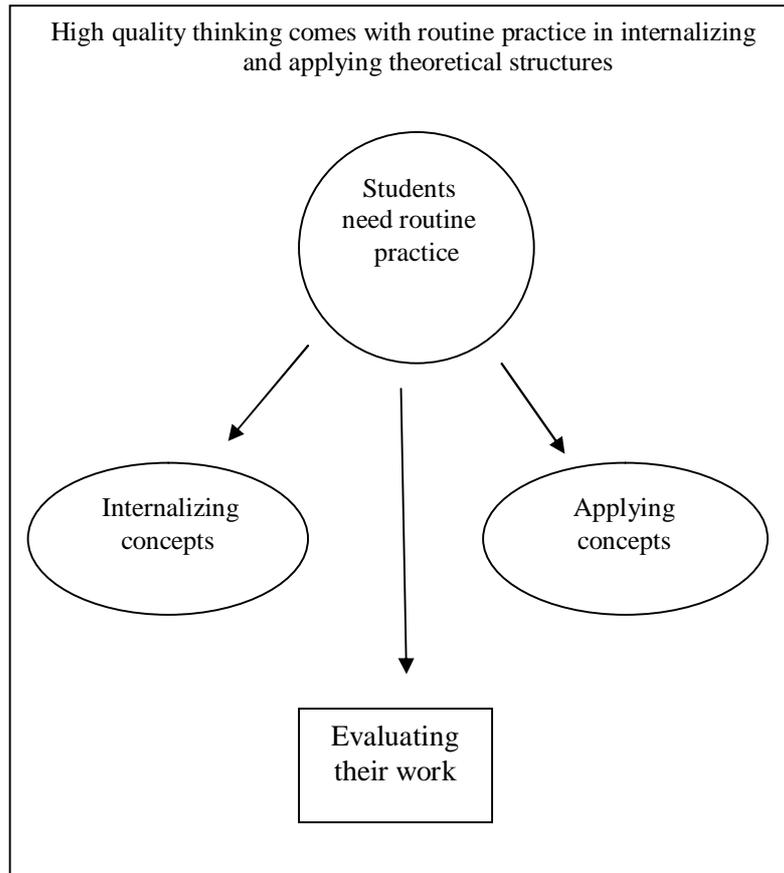
Figure 1. Design of CTS-Based EFL Reading

Internalizing the concept is the initial step in CTS based EFL reading strategy. It is a specific ability to incorporate culture and social relationship within the self as conscious or subconscious guiding principles through learning or socialization. In this step, EFL reading learners internalize the key concept in the subject by exploring the schemata, relating the subject with previous knowledge to get sufficient and clearer concept and ideas of the subject being read. Vygotsky (2014) stressed internalization is the process of recognizing the importance of past experiences and prior knowledge in making sense of new situation or present experiences. Therefore, all new knowledge and newly introduced skills are greatly influenced by each student's culture, especially their family environment. Further, he stated that internalizing is the overall goal of education.

The second step of this model design is applying the concept to a problem or issue so that they come to see the value of understanding the concept. This step includes the skill to apply strategies that help them to comprehend and interpret informational and literary texts (ORC. resources, 2014). According to Paul and Elder (2007) "It is only when students apply

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what they are learning to actual situations or problems that they come to see the value in what they are learning. And only when they see the value in learning the content will they be internally motivated to do so." In other words, EFL learners could master the real EFL reading skills when the y applies them in a meaningful way such as practicing and evaluating their work.

The final CTS-based EFL reading strategy in this model is evaluating. This is the strategy of self-evaluating their work. In this self-assessment, EFL learners are suggested to figure out the logic of what they are reading. According to Paul and Elder (2007), a good reading is a dialogue between the reader and the text. The writer has chosen words to convey his/her thoughts and experiences. The reader must translate from those words back into his/her own thoughts and experiences, and thereby capture the meaning of the author. This is a complex process. One effective way to teach students this process is by modeling it as follows.

The teacher should place the students into groups of three, each with a letter assigned (A, B,C). He/she, then, reads a paragraph or two out of the text aloud slowly, commenting on what the teacher is reading as what he/she is reading. In this sense, the teacher explains what is making immediate sense and what needs to figure out by further reading. After modeling in this manner for a couple of paragraphs, the teacher asks student A to take over and read aloud to B and C. In this case, student A should explain to the other members of the group, sentence by sentence, what he/she is able to figure out and what he/she is not. After A is finished with two paragraphs, then B and C comment on what they do and do not understand (in the paragraphs that A read). Then, the teacher read aloud to the whole class the two paragraphs that A read, commenting as you go. Then, B takes over and reads the next two paragraphs to A and C. Then, A and C add their thoughts. Then, the teacher reads aloud what B read. Then, the teacher goes on to C who reads the next two paragraphs to A and B, and so on. As the students are reading in their groups of three, the teacher is circulating around the room listening in and getting an idea of the level of proficiency of their critical reading. The more the teacher uses this process, the better students become at critical reading. When the learners become proficient at it, they begin to ask questions in their own minds as they read, clarifying as they read, questioning what they do not understand.

In conclusion, the model design CTS-based EFL reading consists of three primary steps namely internalizing, applying and evaluating. Implementing the three strategies are

able to cultivate critical reading strategies that are crucially needed in comprehending both informational and literary texts especially in higher education.

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