

A CORRELATION STUDY BETWEEN CRITICAL THINKING SKILL, GRAMMATICAL MASTERY, AND CRITICAL READING SKILL

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Abstract: Critical reading skill is important to be learned for college students. The skill helps them especially when reading journal, writing critical summary, and writing thesis, as their final assignment. The aim of this study is to find out the correlation between (1) critical thinking skill and critical reading skill; (2) grammatical mastery and critical reading skill; (3) critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery toward critical reading skill. The population of the study is the third semester of one of the universities in Surakarta. The sample are 27 students. The instruments in collecting the data are tests. The results of this research show that 1) there is positive correlation between critical thinking skill and critical reading skill ($r_{xy}=0.669$); 2) there is a positive correlation grammatical mastery and critical reading skill ($r_{xy}=0.682$); and 3) there is a positive correlation among critical thinking skill, grammatical mastery, and critical reading skill ($R = 0.77$). The results of this research show that critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery have contributions on the students' critical reading skill especially in the students' score and the process to answer the question of the test. Therefore, critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery can be implemented in teaching and learning of critical reading. An English teacher needs to arrange some activities in his lesson plan which can increase students' critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery that are related to the teaching and learning of critical reading skill.

Keywords: Correlation, *Critical Thinking Skill*, *Grammatical Mastery*, *Critical Reading Skill*.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy in this 21st century is noteworthy, especially in language learning skill. Literacy is considered as a tool to participate more wholly in this digital society era. It is simply the one's ability to read and write. When talking about literacy, Indonesia is a country that has successfully decreased the illiterate people. Based on United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) data in Wiedarti et. al (2016), Indonesian literacy has reached 92.8% for

the adults and 98.8% for the teenagers in 2014 (p. 1) which proves that the country has passed the literacy crisis. Unfortunately, from 48 countries, the country ranks 45th regarding the reading ability in 2011 for the fourth-grade students in elementary school based on the Progress International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in Wiedartati et al. (2016). Meanwhile, Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) stated that Indonesia ranks 64th from 65 countries in 2012 for the 15th year age

children (p. 2). The results above indicate that most of Indonesians are not fond of reading; whereas, it is the first step to be an analytical and critical reader.

Reading is a lifelong skill which is used throughout life. It is a basic life skill which can determine one's success since it is the first key to get a better understanding of information (Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson in Küçükoğlu, 2013, p. 709). Küçükoğlu (2013) stated that reading is one of the most challenging areas of the education system (p.710). Meanwhile, critical reading skill is the productive thinking skill to evaluate the truth that lies behind the information. Developing the skill may enhance the students' way of thinking in decision making and enable them to participate the life actively (Ozdemir, 1997, Cfc, 2006 in Duran & Yalcintas 2014, p. 156). The main concern is actually about how the students understand the text for the deeper meaning. Hudson (2007) in Kadir, Subki, Jamal & Ismail (2014) stated that critical reading skill will prepare the students to be a good critical thinker that have better performances in any subject (p. 209). In addition, it can help them to engage themselves in reading activity analytically.

Critical reading skill is important to be learned especially for the college students since they tend to use an article in a journal as their additional material. It is not easy to understand the information in the article due to its complexity. In this case, the intended message can be misunderstood when the readers have different interpretation of the author. Besides that, mastering the critical reading skill aids the students in writing thesis, as the final assignment before they graduate. By improving the critical reading skill, the students are accustomed to having skilful conceptualization and active evaluation in gathering the information that

they can easily observe and synthesize (Scriven & Paul, 1996 in Winiharti, Herawati, & Rahayu, 2014, p. 102).

Tagliber (2003) also supported that critical reading is needed for studying (p. 144). When students have to write a satisfactory summary of a reading passage, they have to be able to include enough information. At that time, they have to select the most important ideas, and to be sufficiently specific or general. In this case, students need the ability to monitor the process by reading the passage, reaching a mental summary, verifying it with the source, writing a summary, and in the end checking the written summary towards the text.

The rapid development of information and technology has made an increasing amount of available information. That information; however, are not always valid. Due to that reason, critical thinking skill is needed. In addition, one of the ways to develop the critical reading skill is by developing critical thinking skill. In reading the written information, one has to be critical so that he can sort out the reliable information and the unreliable ones.

The skill can also analyze and evaluate the information which is stated in the text (MacKnight, 2000 in Wang & Woo, 2010, p. 541). Moore and Parker (2014) in Johnson & Hamby (2015) stated that critical thinking is the way of thinking in deciding whether a statement is true or not. They further explained that it is a process of screening the beliefs or idea to be a good sense (p. 12). In the end, the critical thinkers will have their own opinion regarding the information in the text.

Mastering the grammar of English is also included as one of the ways to help students to get a better understanding of reading a text. Grammar, based on

Wiertelak & Pawlak (2012), can also be understood as the subconscious internal system that is possessed by the users and developed by the language learners (p. 1). The students who master the grammar have a more comfortable feeling when interpreting the big amount of information by dividing it into small parts (p. 2). Having a good performance in English structure will help the students to get a better grasp that will lead them to have a good interpretation as the aspect of critical reading skill.

Most of the students in Indonesia neglect the importance of critical reading; therefore, this research is urgent to be conducted. The students usually tend to read wholly without knowing what they are reading. They tend to read fast that sometimes, in the end, they even do not know the information that they have read before. It is also commonplace that they have missed interpretation of the text. Besides that, critical reading skill is not a skill which is cognized by the teachers/lecturers. Therefore, it is hoped that the critical reading skill will get more attention from them.

Based on the theories explained before, there are three hypotheses that can be formulated in this study; 1) there is a positive correlation between critical thinking skill and critical reading skill 2) there is a positive correlation between grammatical mastery and critical reading skill and 3) there is a positive correlation between critical thinking skill, grammatical mastery simultaneously toward critical reading skill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Thinking Skill in Reading

The simplest definition of critical thinking is the use of knowledge in complex ways (Hitchcock 2017, p. 480). He added that the complexity of critical thinking

becomes the part of it to discern the facts that lie outside its scope. In this way, to find the facts that lie beyond, one needs to be critical. It can be defined as a cognitive process which involves someone's mind to think using skills of analyzing and evaluating to assess the arguments in order to create a reasonable perspective or thought (Cottrell, 2005; Duron et al., 2006; in Paul & Elder, 2007).

Critical thinking is reasonable reflective thinking focusing on the decision towards what to believe and what to do (Ennis, 1985; 1987 in Hitchcock, 2017, p. 480). Ennis (1987) in Aloqaili (2011) further explained that critical thinking is the one who has abilities such as, focusing on a question, analyzing arguments, asking and answering questions of clarification, judging the credibility of a source, deducing, inferring explanatory conclusions, and identifying assumptions (p. 38).

Facione (1990 in Hitchcock, 2017) then characterized critical thinking as purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference (p. 480). Meanwhile, Fisher and Scriven (1997 in Hitchcock, 2017) defined critical thinking as an active skill interpretation and evaluation of observations, communications, information and argumentation (p. 481).

Meanwhile, critical reading is the application of critical thinking skill in reading process. Furthermore, it is the act of criticism in analyzing the qualities of text and evaluating what we read (Peters, 1991, pp. 9-10). He added that it is actually a process of personal response. Thus, the outcome of the activity depends on the readers' perspective when analyzing and evaluating the text (Peters, 1991, p. 10).

Critical reading is described as the analytical habits of thinking which use

several levels of thought simultaneously like analysis: the clarification by verifying the parts of the text, synthesis: the combination of the relevant parts into coherent entirety, and evaluation: the establishment standards to make judgment towards the ideas upon the standards to validate their reasonableness (Flynn in Taglieber, 2003, p.142).

A critical reader has to be open to understanding the content and does not automatically accept and adopt the author's perspective even he has to consider which aspect is incomplete and inaccurate from the text (Devoogd, 2007 in Duran & Yalçintaş, 2015, p. 1561). Moreover, the critical reader always evaluates from many angles including logical, rhetorical, historical, ethical, social, and personal perspectives by relating to the past experiences from what he has read by then creating new meaning by his own (Wheeler, 2007; Asilioglu, 2008 in Duran & Yalçintaş, 2015, p. 1561). Therefore, a critical reader is open to understanding the content which should be evaluated from many angles to find out the incomplete and inaccurate information so that the new meaning can be created by his own.

There are four stages of critical reading skill based on Peters (1991, pp. 11-12). They are (1) reading for comprehension (2) interpreting the text (3) evaluating the text and (4) writing about what you have read. While Kurland (<http://www.critical-reading.com/step>, 2001, pp. 1-2) mentioned there are three steps in critical reading process, they are reading for literal meaning, analyze and describe, and interpret an overall meaning.

Grammatical Mastery

Grammar is a set of rules in a language to change the form of words and combine them into sentences which consider the meaning and functions of the sentences in the language (Hornby, 1995, p. 517). Harmer (1987) added that grammar is the ways of changing the words and grouping them together to make sentences (p.1). Thus, grammar is a set of rules for changing the form of words and grouping them to make sentences by considering the meaning and functions.

Brown (2000) stated that grammar is the system of rules in controlling the arrangement and relationship within words in a sentence (p. 362). It is supported by Thornburry (2005) that grammar is a description of the rules that controls on the form of the language's sentences. Therefore, it can be inferred that grammar is the system of rules in controlling the form of the language's sentences and the relationship within words in a sentence (p. 1).

House & Harman (1950) stated that grammar is the study of words and their functions including syntax; the relation of words to other words in phrases, clauses, and sentences (p. 11). It is supported by Lock's theory (1996) who viewed grammar as the study of the syntax—how the words are combined—to form meaningful sentences and morphology –the system of rules that cover the formation of words– (p. 4). In this case, grammar is the study of words and their functions including syntax; how the words are combined and the relation of words to other words in phrases, clauses, and sentences.

Thereby, from those definitions above, it can be concluded that grammar is the study of a set of rules for changing the form of words and grouping them to make sentences by considering the meaning and

functions which includes syntax; how the words are combined and the relation of words to other words in phrases, clauses, and sentences.

Hornby (1995) defined mastery as a great knowledge and great skill in understanding of a particular thing (p. 721). Therefore, it can be concluded that grammatical mastery is a great knowledge and great skill in understanding the usage a set of rules for changing the form of words and grouping them to make sentences by considering the meaning and functions which involves syntax; how the words are combined and the relation of words to other words in phrases, clauses, and sentences.

The limitation of grammar in this research is grammar that is learnt by the third-semester students in English Education Department of one of the Universities in Surakarta which are simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is categorized as a correlational study which is one of quantitative research that summarizes the results numerically in order to find out the level of correlation among students' translation ability (X_1), students' reading habit (X_2) and students' reading skill (Y). Correlation method based on Kothari (2004) is a method which concerns on the joint variables of two or more variables for determining the amount of correlation between the variables (p. 130). There are three possible results of a correlational study: a positive correlation, a negative correlation, and no correlation. The correlation coefficient is a measure of correlation strength and can range in a score of -1.00 to +1.00. Perfect positive correlation will result in a score of +1.

Perfect negative correlation will result in -1 (Nunan, 1992, p. 39).

The research was carried out at the third semester of English education students at one of the universities in Surakarta the academic year of 2017/2018 during November 2017 until July 2018. The sample in this research was taken by cluster random sampling. Sugiyono (2011) stated that cluster random sampling gives equal chance to every member in the population to be selected in the research (p. 83). From the lottery, the 30 students of class A from the third semester of English education students became the sample of the try out. Then, 27 students of class B from the third semester of English education students became the sample of the test. The writer used test as instruments to collect the data for this study. The test item instrument was used to get the data of student's critical reading skill, critical thinking skill and student's grammatical mastery.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the test of the students' critical thinking skill, it was found that the highest score is 87 and the lowest score is 60, so the range is 27. The mean is 74.06, the mode is 69.17, and the median is 73.64. Then, from the test of the students' grammatical mastery, it was found that the highest score is 94 and the lowest score is 75, so the range is 19. The mean is 83.76, the mode is 85.28, and the median is 84.44. Meanwhile, from the test of the students' critical reading skill, it was found that the highest score is 93 and the lowest score is 71, so the range is 22. The mean is 80.41, the mode is 76.75 and the median is 79.56.

The finding of the study from testing the first hypothesis shows that there is a positive correlation between the students'

critical thinking skill and critical reading skill. The calculation shows that the correlation coefficient (r_{x_1y}) between students' critical thinking skill (X_1) and critical reading skill (Y) is 0.669. It is also found that the value of R^2 (coefficient of determination) is 0.4484 it means that 44.85% variance of critical reading skill is determined by the students' critical thinking skill and 55.15% variance of critical reading skill is determined by other factors.

The result from testing the second hypothesis shows that there is a positive correlation between the students' grammatical mastery and critical reading skill. The calculation shows that the correlation coefficient (r_{x_2y}) between students' grammatical mastery (X_2) and critical reading skill (Y) is 0.6821. It is also found that the value of R^2 (coefficient of determination) is 0.4653 it means that 46.54% variance of critical reading skill is determined by the students' grammatical mastery and 53.46% variance of critical reading skill is determined by other factors.

The finding of the study from testing of the third hypothesis shows that there is a positive correlation between critical reading skill, critical thinking skill, and grammatical mastery. The calculation shows that the correlation coefficient ($r_{x_1x_2y}$) between the students' critical thinking skill (X_1), students' grammatical mastery (X_2) simultaneously and critical reading skill (Y) is 0.7684. It is also found that the value of R^2 (coefficient of determination) is 0.5904. It means that 59.05% variance of critical reading skill is determined by the students' critical thinking skill and students' grammatical mastery while 40.95% variance of critical reading skill is determined by others factors.

There is a Positive Correlation between Critical Thinking Skill and Critical Reading Skill

Firstly, it has been known that in English critical reading activity, one should be able to apply their logic into their understanding of the text. The readers' logic in this case, influences their way of thinking regarding the text. The ability to think critically will give them great advantages for the purpose of observing and assessing the content in a text for critical reading. It should be noticed that an ideal critical thinker has a good rationality, self-awareness, discipline, and judgment characteristics. In this case, those characteristics are important for a reader in the process of critical reading skill.

Secondly, there are four stages which should be done in critical reading skill. They are reading for comprehension, interpreting the text, analyzing the text, and evaluating the text. At first, the readers build a literal understanding of the text which includes recalling details and summarizing the text. At this point, the reader has done very little critical thinking skill. This explanation is supported by the study conducted by Aloqaili (2011). Then, the readers start to form their interpretation and make inferences. After that, they are thinking analytically using the hints and clues to make sense of ideas implied but not directly stated in the text. Finally, at the last stage, readers evaluate the ideas in the text by judging the accuracy of the information and the logical organization of the text evidence. Here, Aloqaili (2011) also explained in his study that the abilities in critical thinking skill are involving analyzing argument and evaluating the credibility of a source.

This finding of the study is also supported by many previous studies. A

study conducted by Kadir, Subki, Jamal & Ismail (2014) explained that the teachers should also develop the students' critical thinking skill when teaching critical reading skills. It can be said that both of them are synchronized each other. In addition, Fahim & Sa'eepour (2011) discovered that critical thinking skill is able to influence the student's language proficiency, especially in reading skills. Then, Vaseghi, Gholami, & Barjesteh (2012) also conducted an empirical study and they found out that there was correlation between critical reading skill and critical thinking skill due to their close similarities aspects.

In conclusion, it is obvious that critical thinking skill has a close relationship with critical reading skill because the beneficial aspect which critical thinking skill brings to critical reading skill is inevitable.

There is a Positive Correlation between Grammatical Mastery and Critical Reading Skill

At first, all reading materials are written and organized based on the grammar of the language used. Reading and grammar are related to each other since the knowledge of grammar helps the reader to understand the meaning of the sentences so that they can read the text well. Thus, mastery an English grammar is important for the sake of the readers' understanding. It is supported by the finding of the study conducted by Akbari (2014). He found out that grammar was used as a tool to develop and facilitate reading comprehension; moreover, student's grammatical knowledge predicted better comprehension and may be used as an indicator of success in reading.

Thus, it is obvious that grammatical mastery plays an important role for the students to comprehend the text. Grammatical mastery helps them to

understand what makes sentences and paragraphs clear in the passage. It can be said that the lack of knowledge about grammar will result in grammatically incorrect sentences which can lead to misunderstanding. Without a good grammatical mastery, students may face difficulties to understand the meaning and the function of each sentence in reading passage. This is in line with the study conducted by Yar, Siok, Tan, & Hoon (2015) that found out there is a relationship between students' performances on grammatical test with writing essay and reading comprehension. In this situation, grammatical mastery is important equipment for the students to help them in the critical reading process.

It should be noted that mastery English grammar is important for comprehending a text as the starting point in the critical reading skill process. The process runs smoothly when the readers are able to understand the text literally, contextually, and thoroughly. Faulty understanding may guide them into the false interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of the text. Therefore, grammatical mastery is able to help and influence the stages which are happened in critical reading skill process.

By comprehending a text well, the readers then are able to continue to the next stages well which are analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating. Without passing the first stage of critical reading skill, reading comprehension, the readers cannot continue to the next stages and achieve the goal of critical reading activity. Finally, from the explanation above, it is clear that grammatical mastery and critical reading skill are related to each other because grammatical mastery has a

significant contribution to the critical reading skill process.

There is a Positive Correlation between Critical Thinking Skill and Grammatical Mastery and Critical Reading Skill.

A positive correlation between critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery simultaneously and critical reading skill indicates that critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery support critical reading skill together. It can be pointed out that critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery simultaneously create a positive and good relationship and give significant contribution toward critical reading skill. It can be seen that most of the students, who have high score on critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery, can answer the questions in critical reading better. Thus, it is clear that critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery help students to achieve the goal of critical reading skill.

Moreover, if critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery activity keep being learnt continuously and repeatedly, it will be very beneficial to improve the students' critical reading skill a lot. The more students have good critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery, the more they have great critical reading skill. In summary, it can be said that students' critical thinking and grammatical mastery simultaneously support the students' critical reading skill.

IMPLICATIONS

Students' critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery have a positive correlation and contribution to the students' critical reading skill. As the implication, the teachers should create the process of learning English that involves high order skill to enhance the students' critical thinking skill. The concern of teaching

critical reading skill is how to encourage the students to be able to think critically over the written word. In this case, teachers have to teach in creative ways.

There are five guidelines to improve the students' critical thinking skill. They are, stimulate personal interest, use students' experiences and background knowledge, facilitate and encourage skill transfer, conduct an active and interactive participation by all students, and extend comprehension instruction.

In addition, the teacher should also pay attention to the students' grammatical mastery. Here, in the critical reading class activity, the teacher can induce grammar. Firstly, the teacher should give the students the topic which they are interested to because it will increase their motivation to read and learn the English grammar. In the class activity, the teacher also asks the students to make a Grammar Log. They may write what difficulties that they find in the text. Then they will be grouped to discuss about their matters. After that, the teacher helps them to get the right answer so that this activity may also increase the students' participation.

Besides applying many ways to activate and improve the students' critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery, it is important to do those processes through lively teacher and learning activity by providing the students with comprehensible input and fun learning. Moreover, extensive exposure and practices are also needed and important to help the students to achieve the goal of critical reading. By creating effective learning to improve the students' critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery, hopefully the critical reading teaching and learning process will be more effective.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

There is a positive correlation between critical thinking skill and critical reading skill. It means that critical reading skill will follow the increase or decrease of critical thinking skill. There is a positive correlation between grammatical mastery simultaneously and critical reading skill. It means that critical reading skill will follow the increase or decrease of grammatical mastery. It is also found that there is a positive correlation between critical thinking skill, grammatical mastery simultaneously, and critical reading skill. It indicates that critical reading skill will follow the increase or decrease of critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery.

As it has been known that critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery have a correlation in students' critical reading skill, the teachers or lecturers should be aware that there are many factors influencing the students' critical reading skill such as critical thinking skill and grammatical mastery. In order to increase the students' critical reading skill, the teachers or lecturers should create the learning process that involves the students' critical thinking skill.

In addition, they need to give a close attention to teach grammar to lead the students in comprehending a text in the learning process so that all the stages of critical reading skill may run well. They are expected to master the technique or strategy of teaching critical reading skill well to achieve the goal of teaching learning process of critical reading successfully. In this case, they need to give more practices related to critical reading skill by applying the stages of critical reading skill (reading comprehension, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating)

There are many other aspects in language learning besides critical thinking skill, grammatical mastery, and critical reading skill that can be explored by the other researchers. For the other researchers who are willing to conduct the same type of study, the writer suggests to find and investigate the other factors that particularly might influence critical reading skill or the other language skills which are not investigated in this study.

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