Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Language Teaching:
Oral Interpretation Class

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Abstract: Critical Thinking Skill (CTS) is one of the skills that is required to survive in this globalization era. People need this skill to innovate in technology to increase education quality and to produce outstanding human resources. However, not many Indonesian learners master this kind of skill. There are still some constraints in applying this skill into action. Both teachers and students have difficulties in implementing this skill in the classroom. This paper aims at producing innovative CTS strategies that are easily conducted in language teaching. The language teaching in this paper is specified in teaching oral interpretation class in which the students are expected to be able to apply CTS to master both receptive skills, listening and understanding audio visual teaching media, and productive skills, producing appropriate oral interpretation skills to bridge the gap between two languages. Constructing questions while watching audio-visual media and taking notes to supplement short term memory is the first innovation in CTS teaching. The second one is taking the essential notes using signs, symbols and figures to get the essence of the source language. Demonstrating a role play in oral interpretation is the final activity in this teaching and learning process.

Keywords: critical thinking skills, language teaching, oral interpretation class

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is one of the skills that are required to survive in this globalization era. The worldwide and tight competition in this era requires people to have critical thinking skills to innovate in technology, to increase educational quality and to produce outstanding human resources. Critical thinking skill, further called 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.

On the basis of the above information, the National Education Department makes a commitment to prepare better human resources by reforming the national education system. This policy is enforced by Indonesian Government Regulation No. 20/2003 concerning the National Education System. The regulation contains the Indonesian government's vision, mission, function and goals of national education as well as the strategies of developing national education to create a qualified education which is relevant to the need of competitive global world. The content of the regulation disposes critical thinking as one of the benchmarks that should be acquired for a qualified education.

As one of the benchmarks in implementing the national education unit, CTS could be implemented at schools in accordance to the potential needs and characteristics of the students (National Education Department, 2009). In order to make this program runs well, the roles of the overall members of the schools need to be done more effectively. Teaching strategies using critical thinking –

based learning should be designed more meaningful to achieve the goal. Therefore, the aims of teaching CTS in the classroom which emphasizes on the independent learning and creativity could be achieved to improve the educational process in Indonesia.

Dealing with the above reasons, the Minister of Education in Indonesia published a technical guideline to cultivate the CTS of the Indonesian students. This guideline aims at giving references, facilities, understanding, supports and guidance to augment the role of the society to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia. Besides, the critical thinking guideline also provides some benefits to the students to: 1) define the CTS. 2) Understand the concept of CTS. 3) Develop the standards of CTS using Bloom taxonomy. 4) Mind maps the concept of developing systematic CTS. 5) Design CTS – based learning. 6) Facilitate the students to monitor and improve their own thinking skills. 7) Facilitate the students to collect information and data as a basis of developing critical thinking. 8) Exhibit the students' products showing critical thinking development. 9) Evaluate the development of CTS. 10) Maintain the sustainability of the students' competence in learning. These ten elements are used as a guide to develop critical thinking for Indonesian students. From this guideline there are four activities suggested to be implemented in the classroom namely transferred of learning, book review and criticism, as well as Socrates' questioning techniques.

In addition to the concept of critical thinking in Indonesian context, critical thinking is generally defined as a skill of delivering logical reasoning to identify what is relevant and what is not to solve a problem. It involves ability to think in a reasoned way (Cottrell, 2005:3). It is associated with reasoning for rational thought or in other words, being rational to solve the problems. This definition is supported by Paul (2006: 4) who elaborates critical thinking into eight elements of reasoning namely establishing purpose, raising questions, looking for information, making inferences, constructing concepts, making assumptions, drawing implications and establishing point of view. These eight elements of reasoning actively help establishing reasoning skills to achieve a particular intellectual standard. These standards are standards of judging something intellectually which consist of ability to identify clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness. These nine standards can be used as a measurement to see how critical someone in thinking is.

Although CTS are important to conduct in the teaching and learning process, there are some constraints that hamper their implementation in the classroom; one of them is the cultural constraint. The critical thinking-based learning, as mentioned above, is not yet cultivated well in EFL teaching and learning in Indonesia due to the cultural constraints (Junining, 2015). Kameo (2007:6) reported that no matter how good critical thinking sound in theory, it cannot be automatically transplanted into a culture which holds different values. There are two dimensions of culture in her point of view namely power distance, and individualism. The former deals with the authority given by teachers to the students, and the latter is related to the individualism. She emphasized that Indonesian students tend to respect their teachers too highly such as accepting answers of a question without questioning and waiting for top-down instruction without initiating. These two factors might be the indicators of valuing submissiveness that does not encourage the development of CTS (Kameo, 2007: 6). In terms of individualism, she added that EFL children tend to be dependent upon the teacher and upon each other. As a result, they tend to have low independence, self-reliance and self-confidence.

The above mentioned constraints in implementing the CTS can be overcome by conducting two innovative actions, namely incorporating the CTS with other language skills, listening, in this case, and creating more challenging activities in analysis, synthesis and

evaluation. Incorporating CTS with listening skill in this case is not merely discrete listening skill, but listening to produce oral interpretation skill.

2. ORAL INTERPRETATION SKILL

Oral interpretation skill is a skill of transferring a source language into a target language orally. Its primary function serves as a bridge between two languages or two cultures. In interpreting the two languages, an interpreter should master the two languages well in order to avoid misunderstanding.

Oral interpretation course is offered to the seventh semester of English Education Department students at the Faculty of Cultural Studies at Universitas Brawijaya in Malang, East Java. While taking this course, the students have already accomplished all of the skill courses offered by the faculty. The prerequisite of this course is the Theory of Translation course. Thus, the students taking this course have already in advanced level of English mastery, as a result, they have no difficulties in transferring the source language into the target language.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study is descriptive qualitative. According to Merriam (2009:13) descriptive qualitative is understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make use of their world and the experience they have in the world. From this definition, it can be concluded that descriptive qualitative research investigates the nature of phenomena. It describes the something as it is.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The result of the study indicates that developing CTS in language teaching, oral interpretation class, in this case, can be conducted by implementing three procedures namely analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These three steps are adapted from Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains.

4.1.1 Analysis

In analysis, the students are supposed to listen and watch a video about the role of interpreters, public speaking, concentration and memory and note taking skills. Before the video is playing, they should prepare questionings such as what is the topic about, what is the role of interpreter, what kinds of interpretation roles are there, what should an interpreter of public speaking do and avoid and many others, as long as the

questions related to the topic of the video. In this questioning part, the students are forced to make questions using their critical thinking skills. All of the students are encouraged to give questions, even the passive ones.

4.1.2 Synthesis

In this part, the students should prepare a paper and pen for starting to make note taking. The listening part stimulates the students' receptive skills to understand the text in listening. Then this understanding is decoded, stored and retrieved in the form of writing the essence of the listening using signs, symbols, keywords and figures. In the process of listening until writing the keywords, there is a process of synthesizing in which the students should understand the listening and retrieve it in the form of writing keywords using symbols, signs and figures.

4.1.3 Evaluative

The activities in evaluative section involve demonstrating the activities in analysis and synthesis part in the form of role play. First, they make a role play in one type of oral interpreter such as interpreting at a conference, in a lecturer, interpreting a text, interpreting in a museum and so forth. A group of three students make a role play, one student acts as a native speaker of the source language and another student as a native speaker of the target language and the other one act as an interpreter. The rest of the students act as an audience. The audience is given an evaluative sheet functioning to give evaluation for each role. In the final section each student is given a task to make a self-evaluation regarding the role that they play such as what is their feeling during the role play, what you like and dislike during acting the role and so forth.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Stimulating the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation is essential not only in higher education, but also in all levels of education starting from elementary schools to secondary schools. The practice of these three domains seems to have already appeared in K-13 that is the national curriculum of 2013 for elementary and secondary education in Indonesian context. However, its implementation needs to be evaluated regularly. In addition, the practice of the three domains in higher education should be explicitly covered in the syllabus and lesson plan. The lesson plan, material and assessment should be verified by the head of the study program and evaluated regularly in the academic staff forum.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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