

Developing EFL Critical Reading Syllabus and Materials for Students of the English Department - IKIP Mataram

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ABSTRACT

KKNI-based Curriculum, based in Indonesia required new syllabi and materials particularly for the department of English at FPBS- IKIP Mataram. This research has primarily been driven by the needs and learning characteristics of the students. At first, a qualitative research was done to source the data needed; then, they were qualitatively analyzed using the Likert scale, following which, two kinds of questionnaires were administered. Out of the 132 respondents, the results of the 'learning characteristics' showed that 'audio' had a response rate of 19.69%; 'visual's' response rate was 50.75%, while the response rate for kinesthetic stood at 29.54%. Based on the students' needs, there were four aspects that needed to be considered 1) necessities in which most of the students' topic interest was about education (72%); culture (63%); and social life (45%) 2) weaknesses in which the students' reading ability were categorized into good, but their current 'critical reading' skills was not good because of some obstacles 3) Teaching critical reading objectives were divided into two: external and internal sub-skills 4) Classroom activities. Meanwhile, the students' role as all roles but as knowledge receivers. Most of the students did not like doing the critical reading tasks (11%). Thus, it may be concluded that the students needed critical reading syllabus and materials that covered the whole objectives, with which three topics of their interest could have been administered to settle both the teachers' and students' role.

Keywords: KKNI, critical reading, syllabus, material.

INTRODUCTION:

The term 'critical' does not mean negative under any context, but it is the closest in meaning to the term 'evaluative', which common perspectives usually refer to as 'reflection'.

In the context of reading argumentative text, critical is meant to evaluate conclusion before making owned decision. (Olarak, 2014) talked about a feature of the term 'critical' as being a choice of words while speaking and/or writing. This feature can also affect social relationships, for instance, if one were to consider the proverb 'your mouth is your swords'.

Considering the market demand today, critical reading skills are paramount. Two general reasons propounded by Basri (2013) as to why one must be critical first, due to the various types of information received, either through sources or essences second, because of the students, representatives of people power who must be able to think in order to improve and discipline themselves.

The importance of critical reading as part of intensive reading is shown throughout the reading instructions applied by teachers or specialists in Indonesia (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006). Accordingly, they examined various instructional techniques for developing the students' reading and/or critical reading skills.

In addition, considering the variety of information presented today, either through printed or non-printed media, anyone (specifically college students) are required to understand how writing persuades, and determine

whether one should celebrate or undo the text (McNeil, 1992), as well as analyze, synthesize, and evaluate texts (Andreani, 2010). In other words, they have to be able to draw their own conclusions with logical reasons.

The students must pay attention to the reading materials. Richard (2001) states that 'instructional materials generally serve as the basis of much of the language input that learners receive, and the language practice that occurs in the classroom serves as a vocabulary retention (Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012) enhancing their critical reading profiles (Ghajar & Kafshgarsouteh, 2011). Another study conducted by Suarcaya (2011), found that the use of online audio materials for listening, does have positive results in terms of learners' responses (enjoyed and felt interested), and achievement (on the midterm and final tests). Additionally, one must remember that the reading materials provided, should be challenging texts. Errington & Bubna-Litic (2015) in this regard, stated that the textbook could reinforce underdeveloped students' epistemology through limitations of content, and position them as passive recipients of an authoritative version of oversimplified knowledge. In conclusion, we assume that by having appropriate materials, the students' academic and non-academic purposes can be increased.

However, it is important to note that primarily there are two types of textbook: one is 'teachers-made' textbook, and the other 'ready-made' textbook. In relation to the latter (i.e. ready-made textbook), Hutchinson & Torres (1994), warned that it would be difficult to find a textbook that can absolve the teachers of their responsibility in the day-to-day decisions, like for instance what and how to teach it. Further, they go on to add that it would be best if the textbook that is to be used within a classroom setting, could be developed by the teachers/educators themselves as they would know how and what to teach. They also assumed that the teaching materials used sometimes were not appropriate with the students' needs and characteristics. Because critical reading lecturers adapted materials from various resources to be used in the teaching learning process, this current research produced a textbook for students based on their needs and characteristics.

Accordingly, the rationale for the course has been heavily influenced by the findings of a needs analysis. Richard (2001), stated that the needs analysis in language teaching is really necessary when curriculum planners intend an English teaching program for special purposes (ESP). Due to this, the researchers of this current research, while developing the syllabus and materials, should consider the research findings that would be conducted at the first year of research. In analyzing the learners' needs, it is very important for the researchers to see and consider two classification of needs: i.e. subjective and objective (Nunan, 1999). The subjective needs are the learners' needs, which cannot be observed easily by the teachers, or for that matter, even stated by them. The objective needs on the other hand, are the needs, which may be observed by the teachers in the form their individual data, including their language proficiency and their pattern of language use.

Another important thing to be considered besides teaching materials is the availability of the syllabus in which its content is more specific and more concrete than curriculum (Krahnke, 1987). The importance of syllabus, specifically in the Indonesian context may be seen from the accreditation files. In addition, its importance can also be noted from its purpose, which serves three major roles: i.e. a contract, a permanent record, and a learning tool (Parkes & Harris, 2002). However, the absence of a syllabus in the teaching-learning process might hinder the students to achieve their learning goals that had been developed by the institution. The lecturers might also choose irrelevant teaching materials to be taught. The development of KKNI-based curriculum had been done in 2015. Due to this, the researchers assumed that there might be no universities especially the English department of FPBS IKIP Mataram developed syllabi particularly for critical reading course.

METHODOLOGY:

This current research is aimed at producing certain products, syllabus and textbook. Two products were developed based on the needs analysis conducted in earlier research, due to which, the appropriate research design was Educational Research and Development (R&D) proposed by (Meredith D. Gall, 2003). R&D required the researchers to conduct some steps including: 1) studying research findings pertinent to the product to be developed; 2) developing the products based on these findings; 3) field testing it in the setting where it will be used eventually; 4) revising it to correct deficiencies found in the field-testing stage; and 5) whether the product meets its behaviorally defined objects. Due to the products of this current research, it would be used with the students of the fourth semester in the department of English, under the Faculty of Language and Art Education IKIP Mataram. The subjects therefore, would be taken from that institution. The model of this current research intended to use ten major steps of the R&D cycle as proposed by Meredith D. Gall (2003). The researchers adapted them in order to be appropriate with their development needs. The development steps of this current research are therefore: 1) early research (needs analysis), 2) development of products, 3) preliminary field-testing, 4) products revision, 5) main field-testing, 6) products revision, and 7) final products. The development model can be seen in diagram 3.2. The first step of this development is conducting research to

obtain information mainly about the students’ perception on critical reading, the learning context, the teachers’ role in facilitating instruction, and reviewing extant literature. Data gathered in this step will be both quantitative and qualitative, since the instruments that would be administered are questionnaires, observation sheets, and interviews. Data from the questionnaires would be analyzed using Likert Scale, while the other data from other instruments would be analyzed qualitatively as suggested by (Creswell, 2012) . The diagram 3.2 is displayed below.



From the data, the researchers will figure out relevant data in the form of words. The displayed data will be started when they begin color-coding and transcribing into drawing conclusions. In data reduction, the researchers will use color-coding to parts of the text in the observation sheet, but in the interview, they will first transcribe, and then use color-coding. After color-coding and transcribing, they’d begin to explore it in order to obtain a general sense (memorizing ideas, thinking about the organization of data, and considering whether they need more data). In addition, the researchers will reduce the data resulting from color coding and transcribing onto smaller number of themes. In drawing a conclusion, the researchers will at first see the research questions, and will examine and develop data in detail, or create themes to describe what they have learnt. The conclusion will be written narratively, through which they’d summarize the findings from their data analysis. In order ensure accuracy of the findings, the researchers would do triangulation and member checking.

The second step is product development, i.e. developing the syllabus and materials. The syllabus will be developed by considering the findings obtained from the first year research, and for the materials development, the researchers would consider both findings obtained at the first and the second year researches.

The third step is preliminary field-testing; this would be done by asking some experts to validate the products developed. Further, the aspects of the products that will be validated by three different experts with different jobs are the contents, organization, and design.

The next step includes products revision. This phase will be done by considering all information obtained from the experts, including their comments, and suggestions; then it would be evaluated again for drafting the products.

The fifth step is main field-testing, by which the revised draft of products would be implemented within a classroom setting. This would also involve observation and reflection on how the products are applicable and appropriate to be used within a classroom. In addition, the weaknesses on the use of the materials would be jotted down, and serve as the main parameter for further revision. The implementation of the products would be tried out through making lesson plans, which in turn would need to be implemented within a classroom setting.

The last step is the final products; before publishing and distributing the products, there would again be some revisions, by which the researchers would consider the results of the main field-testing for both small and large groups of students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

The findings of this current research were obtained on the basis of the analysis of the data collected from two questionnaires.

Four aspects need to be looked into in this part: the students’ necessities on critical reading; weaknesses on critical reading; the objective(s) of teaching critical reading; and the required classroom activities. The following are the details of the raw data obtained from the instruments of this current research, and it had been analyzed using *Likert* scale.

Table 1: The students’ topic interest and expectation on having critical reading sub-skills

No	Items		Percentage			
			VN	N	NN	NVN
1	Topic interest on					
	a.	Culture	63	29	8	0
	b.	Social life	45	49	4	2
	c.	Education	72	28	0	0
	d.	Politics	0	4	39	57
	e.	Law	0	0	48	52

No	Items	Percentage			
		VN	N	NN	NVN
Expectation on having CR sub-skills					
2	a. Giving logical reasons	44	51	5	0
	b. Paraphrasing and drawing conclusion	67	37	0	0
	c. differentiating among facts, non-facts, and opinion	53	47	0	0
	d. Evaluating the author’s conclusion	46	64	0	0
	e. Determining the evidence, trustworthiness and faulty of arguments	29	56	11	4

The table above describes two items regarding the students’ necessities on critical reading. The first item deals with the topic of interest to be discussed by the students during the teaching learning process, and/or to be displayed on the students’ textbook. The students’ response showed that they direly needed to talk about culture, social life, and education within the critical reading class. However, they did not need to talk about politics and law for instance. From the three topics, the students’ highest response fell into education (72%), culture (63%), and social life (45%) respectively.

The second item dealt with the students’ needs on the required critical reading sub-skills. These sub-skills became the researchers’ focus while developing the critical reading syllabus and textbook. Data showed that the students needed all the sub-skills to be taught, and/or presented in the textbook.

Responses regarding the students’ present reading ability, critical reading ability, and obstacles on critical reading are shown in the table below.

Table 2: The students’ present ability on reading and critical reading and obstacles on having critical reading sub-skills

No	Items	Percentage			
		VG	G	NG	NVG
Critical reading prerequisites					
1	a. Reading Comprehension I	39	54	7	0
	b. Reading Comprehension II	31	56	10	3
	c. Reading Comprehension III	23	48	21	8
	d. Extensive Reading	19	71	5	5
Current critical reading ability					
2	a. Drawing a conclusion	12	33	49	6
	b. Evaluating issues	7	13	58	22
	c. Distinguishing facts, non-facts, and opinion	17	19	47	17
Obstacles on having CR sub-skills					
3	a. Finding multi point of views	61	31	8	0
	b. Difficult to paraphrase and draw a conclusion	58	37	5	0
	c. Insufficient knowledge on the issue	49	41	6	4
	d. Difficult to scan the texts	19	27	52	2
	e. Limited vocabularies to explore ideas	26	28	45	1

The table above shows that the students’ present reading ability was mostly in good level (Reading Comprehension I (54%), Reading Comprehension II (56%), Reading Comprehension III (48%), and Extensive Reading (71%). However, the highest percentage fell onto Extensive Reading followed by Reading Comprehension II then I, and then III. The students who got very good score were Reading Comprehension I, II, III, and Extensive Reading. Moreover, only a few of them who were in not good, and did not have a very good score.

Regarding the students’ current critical reading ability, the students’ response was dominated in the not good category. It may be seen from Table 5.2 that the students’ ability in drawing conclusion was 49%. However, only a few of them could be categorized into good (33%), very good (12%), while the remaining percentage fell onto not very good (6%). It was not far from the students’ ability in drawing conclusions; their ability in evaluating issues was mostly categorized as not good (58%) and (22%) of them in not very good level. The remaining percentages fell onto the good and not very good levels. Dealing with their own ability in distinguishing facts, non-facts, and opinion were also in not good category (47%) followed by good (19%).

The respondents of this research faced obstacles on critically reading English texts mostly on finding multi points of view (61%), paraphrasing and drawing conclusion with no bias (58%), insufficient knowledge on the issue (49%), limited of vocabularies (26%), and scanning the text (19%). From the table, there were only two items, i.e. limited vocabulary and scanning the text, that weren't supposed to be dominant obstacles. Regarding the critical reading objectives, the researcher divided the section into two based on the students' response, as may seen from the following table.

Table 3: Other interference made in critical reading class

No	Items		Percentage			
			VA	A	NA	NVA
1	Non sub-skills goals					
	a.	Vocabulary mastery	25	48	13	14
	b.	Writing skills	39	32	19	10
	c.	Grammar mastery	16	22	44	18
2	Sub-skills goals					
	a.	Knowing the English texts organization	21	38	40	1
	b.	Producing new ideas in the form of spoken and written	48	31	13	8
	c.	Synthesizing others ideas	71	21	8	0
	d.	Drawing good logical conclusion	79	19	2	0

It could be seen that the students had a variety of responses to these two items. In terms of the students' vocabulary mastery, most of them agreed (73%); however, 27% of them did not agree fully. It was the case dealing with their writing skills but their grammar mastery by which they did not agree (62%).

Different from non sub-skills, the sub-skills ones were dominated by those who agreed fully vis a vis those who didn't to the whole sub-skills. Dealing with knowing texts organization (59%), Producing new ideas (79%), Synthesizing (92%), and Drawing good logical conclusion (98%).

There were three aspects of teaching that became the researchers' focus: i.e. the teachers' role, the students' role, and the learning model. The following table details out the response taken from the respondents.

Table 4: The role of teachers and students in classroom and the learning model

No	Items		Percentage			
			VA	A	NA	NVA
1	Teachers' role					
	a.	Class controllers	11	27	34	28
	b.	Class organizers	41	21	30	2
	c.	Class collaborators	52	48	0	0
	d.	Information providers	60	40	0	0
	e.	Feedback givers	48	52	0	0
	f.	Class facilitators	35	49	16	0
2	Students' role					
	a.	Knowledge receivers	9	21	67	3
	b.	Knowledge informants	41	59	0	0
	c.	Knowledge providers	49	51	0	0
3	Learning model					
	a.	Self-working	18	22	33	27
	b.	Work in pair	36	64	0	0
	c.	Work in small group	48	52	0	0
	d.	Work in large group	7	4	67	22

Regarding the teachers' role, the respondents (62%) did not agree fully with the teachers as controllers. However, most of their response showed agreed fully when their teachers became Class organizers (62%), Class collaborators, (100%), Information providers (100%), Feedback givers (100%), and Class facilitators (84%).

Talking about the students’ role, they really wanted to be the knowledge informants (100%) and providers (100%) rather than knowledge receivers (30%).

In terms of the teaching-learning model applied in classroom, the respondents wanted to do the critical reading tasks by themselves (40%), in-pair (100%), in small group discussion (100%), and in large group (11%).

The data found from this second type of instrument dealing with the students’ learning characteristics.

Table 5: Data about the students’ learning style in critical reading class

No	Respondents	Types of Learning			Remarks
		Audio	Visual	Kinesthetic	
1	132	26	67	39	-
	Percentage	19.69	50.75	29.54	-

The table above shows that from 132 respondents, there were 26 or 19.69% who preferred learning something using picture or other visual media. However, the highest learning style fell on visual by which 67 out of 132 or 50.75% preferred to learn something through hearing and speaking. Moreover, there were 39 respondents or 29.54% who loved to be given something to accomplish.

It had been elaborated that one of the aspects of needs analysis was dealt with the students’ necessities. This kind of aspect focused on finding the students’ topic of interest, which was to be discussed during the teaching-learning process. The researchers found three main topics: i.e. education, culture, and social life. In terms of education, 72% of the students were interested in it. That percentage indicated that the dominant materials to be taught and developed was about education followed by culture, and social life. In addition, by having the percentage of the three main topics of interest, the students were really aware on their future carrier, as the teachers along with their own communication, relationship, and adaptation with their society.

On the basis of the data found, the students’ strength was on the prerequisites of critical reading, and it indicated that they were ready enough to learn the critical reading skills. However, when they were asked about their current critical reading ability, they were low on some sub-skills. Due to the objective(s) of teaching, critical reading should cover the whole sub-skills with the required classroom activities.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the data analyzed, the researchers conclude that the students were ready enough to learn critical reading; the critical reading syllabus and materials should cover the whole objectives and three topics of interest with the settled teachers and students’ role.

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