

Fostering Undergraduate Student's Critical Reading Skill through Multimodal Text

Kokom Nurjanah

English Education, STKIP Kusuma Negara, Indonesia
kokom_nurjanah@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

Abstract

This present study investigates the development of under graduate students' critical reading skills through multimodal text. Multimodal text is a text that contains semiotic mode which covers gesture, visual image, document, layout, music, architectural design, etc. The design of this study classroom action research (CAR) since the study aims to improve students' critical reading skill and solve several problems arouse in teaching and learning. The participants of this study are twenty-four undergraduate students studying at English education study program in STKIP Kusuma Negara. Based on the characteristics of CAR, it is done repeatedly until those problems can be overcome. Four instruments covering critical reading test, classroom observations, questionnaire, and interview were conducted as data collections of this study. The results of this study indicates that the students' critical reading skills improved significantly after using multimodal text as media in teaching and learning process. This study is expected to give an insight and contribution for English pedagogy.

Keywords: Critical reading skill, Image, Multimodal text, Visual.

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INTRODUCTION

The definition of critical reading is intensively discussed among the linguists, Flynn in Taglieber (2000) stated that critical reading is a kind of reading that is done wisely, gracefully, deeply, evaluatively, and analytically, and not just looking for faults. The concept of critical reading encompasses the ability to think critically by involving evaluation of evidence. Moreover, critical reading is intercorrelate with critical thinking which challenge the readers ask facts, analyse evidence that supports the question, scrutinize suitability and accuracy, compare several cases and assess better, assess the best of several alternatives, assess bias and propaganda, and assess internal criteria (text reasoning, relationships between parts, use of language effectiveness (Moore et al., 2016).

The need for critical reading is unquestionable, it grows daily because much reading matter, particularly newspapers, magazines, and advertisements, attempt to influence the reader's thinking and behavior. In general, critical reading is not only absorb other people's opinions but also try to find out whether they are truly sounded or not. By applying critical reading techniques, for instance, a citizen will be able to weigh public issues and make intelligent choices among political candidates. Critical reading will also enable someone to detect misleading advertisement claims, recognize the best values, and avoid spending their money

foolishly. And since it is a skill, it can be developed and strengthened through practice.

To a certain extent, critical reading is the process of questioning and evaluating printed material and is closely associated with the reader's ability to think critically and to react intelligently to the writer's ideas. In other words, critical reading is the manifestation of critical thinking, i.e. the use of mental ability as a tool of inquiry formaking purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based, in reading. Kurland (2000) stated that critical reading and critical thinking are interdependent. Critical thinking allows us to monitor our understanding as we read. If we sense that assertions are ridiculous or irresponsible, the readers examine the text more closely to test his/her understanding in critical reading.

Critical reading is a way of reading with see the author's motives and judge it. Critical reading activities require three aspects, (1) fast, (2) accurate, and (3) critical. The fast aspect is the speed in reading a passage. The accurate aspect is that the reader can study a reading based on the degree of irrelevance with unrighteousness (Afifah et al., 2023).

The concept of critical reading encompasses the ability to think critically, namely the ability to think reflectively by involving evaluation of evidence. Included in this critical thinking is the ability to ask facts, analyze evidence that supports the question, analyze suitability and accuracy, compare several cases, and assess better, assess the best of several alternatives, assess bias and propaganda, assess internal criteria (text reasoning, relationships between parts, use of language effectiveness), and judging by internal criteria (compared to things outside the test) (Paul & Elder, 2004, 2006; Moon, 2007; Burkhalter, 2016).

Meanwhile, critical reading ability is related to the ability to detect specific cultures that become the context of discourse, summing up relationships between events, between facts, detecting the relationship of principal ideas with explanatory ideas, and detecting conformity and generalization (Goatly, 2013; Hromova et al., 2022; Olson, Scarcella, & Matuchniak, 2015).

In spite of the importance of the Critical Reading Skill at college level, the Critical Reading Skill in English Study Program of STKIP Kusuma Negara is still inadequate. Students' average reading score especially for critical reading were considered low. Based on the preliminary study conducted on teaching Extensive Reading course on second semester students, it is found that the teaching of critical reading was still far from expectation. In this case, Critical Reading is offered in the second semester which is aimed at applying the various reading techniques taught in Extensive Reading course in more complicated passages by synthesizing the materials suitable with the students' needs. However, based on the result of preliminary study reveals that the students have difficulty in comprehending text as the texts are getting more and more complicated in terms of length and the topic. Besides, the students have lack knowledge in term of the ability to use the strategy in critical reading.

Since the teaching and learning process conducted in online class, the problems grow bigger. Students are not interested to read long passages on the screen, they have lack motivation to share their ideas. Moreover, the classroom atmosphere is

individual competition and the students do the reading assignments individually. Since the reading activities considered as monotonous activity, the students feel boring while joining the class.

Dealing with those problems, the teacher as the facilitator in the learning process should encourage the students not only to participate actively in the reading class but also to use their background knowledge while reading. So, the students cannot easily believe in somethings outside. They have to asses whether the information is real or contains hoax. Moreover, the teacher may offer guidance in helping students to engage in the thinking process (Brown, 2001). The teacher should also be able to provide a model of certain teaching strategies, which can encourage the students to be more active and have strong motivation in the reading class.

Ideally speaking, the critical reading class should be filled with challenging media that accordance with digital era, so the students can relate their learning process with their real life. One of the media can be applied is multimodal text. Multimodal text incorporates a variety of modes, including images, hypertext, and graphic design elements along with written text (Serafini, 2010). Expanding the perspectives students use to make sense of these multimodal texts is an essential part of comprehension instruction.

Multimodal text is essentially linked to digital technology. In many digital texts, various modalities of hearing, sight, gestures, space, and language come together to create meaning. Multimodal is also defined as the use of different semiotic modes in a product together to accompany and enhance the message to be delivered in the product (Liebert & Metten, 2012). Other definition about multimodality is stated by Kress (2010) as a framework that involves a collective interpretation of two or more scripts, visuals, videos, graphics, animations, sounds, music, gestures and facial expression for constructing meaning. In evaluating a text, experts state multimodality as the procedure which collaborate with a linguistic analysis step such as systemic functional linguistics, or functional grammar, with analytical tool to understand images, when the text is evaluated using two modes, verbal and picture (Kissel, Hathway, & Wood, 2010).

In educational contexts, more progress has been made in recognizing the approach required to understand written text than in identifying strategies to understand multimodal texts. Studies have shown that certain cognitive strategies such as visualizing, summarizing, asking questions, and predicting are successful in supporting readers' comprehension of written texts (Sweet & Snow, 2003). In conjunction with this body of research, pedagogical frameworks for teaching cognitive strategies have been proposed (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Santman, 2005). However, the visual images contained in multimodal texts, picture books in particular, require readers to use different strategies for constructing meaning than the aforementioned cognitive strategies. Unsworth and Wheeler (2002) asserted that if readers are to understand how images represent and construct meaning, they need knowledge of the various visual sign systems (e.g., photography, diagrams, graphs, typography, illustrations) used in their production and interpretation. In addition, Dalton and Proctor (2014) noted that research is needed to develop a "more robust model of comprehension that reflects the dynamic nature of texts". As students encounter multimodal texts with greater frequency, they and their teachers will need to develop a metalanguage for discussing the aspects of multimodal texts and the strategies used to understand them (Zammit, 2007).

Rose (2001) distinguished three modalities that have significant impact to a critical understanding of visual, namely, (1) technological—any form or devices created to be displayed, (2) compositional—formal organization or approach, for example colour, spatial arrangement or content, and (3) social—the structure of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image. Rose (2001) pointed how some procedures focused on the visual parts in and of itself. Composition, colour, spatial organization, and light become the major focuses and it suggested an image's expressive content or the combined effect of visual form and subject matter.

Research indicates that using multimodal texts has significant contribution on students critical reading. Varaporn and Sitthikul (2019) the study revealed that the students who performed multimodal tasks significantly improved their critical reading ability and also generally had positive perceptions towards multimodal tasks. In addition to fostering analytical thinking and critical reading skills, the students perceived multimodal tasks as useful for enhancing their motivation towards reading, as well as for preparing them for out-of-school experiences. Furthermore, Boshrahadi and Biria (2014) who claimed that using multimodal texts had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension skills. They adds that multimodal texts reading processes not only helped the participants to gain a considerable amount of useful information on reading skills, but also served as a strong motivating factor and made the reading class more enjoyable than regular reading class.

RESEARCH METHOD

The design of the study is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Based on its characteristics, the classroom action research is done repeatedly until those problems can be solved. Since it deals with the classroom setting, the study is directed to develop the teaching strategy in order to find out a solution to the classroom's problem in the teaching critical reading, and therefore, multimodal text was applied as a media during the learning process.

The participants of this study were 24-second semester students majoring in English Education in STKIP Kusuma Negara. The research design was implemented to improve students' critical reading skill and solve the obstacles found during the teaching and learning process in extensive reading class. The measuring instruments employed in this study consisted of a reading test, questionnaire, observation and interview. The research divided into two cycles. Each cycle should contain the planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis, 2009). The implementation of multimodal text was conducted in eight meetings in which each meeting consisted of 100 minutes. The second meeting was employed to investigate the problems dealing with reading course faced by the students. Meanwhile, the other five meetings were utilized to apply the use of media in the teaching of reading. Then the last meeting was intended to provide the lecturer's comments to find out the students' opinion about the implementation of multimodal text through questionnaire and interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study is based on the implementation of multimodal text such as videos, images, and PowerPoint slides conducted for eight sessions. The total number of the meetings in this study are eight meetings and 6 meeting for teaching and learning process, The result of interview with the students about the process of teaching and learning. The objectives of interview to get the information of students' difficulties in applying critical reading strategy in Extensive reading class. To strengthen the result of interview, the researchers also conduct the direct observation inside the class. In the beginning, the researchers selected the most appropriate to the student ability and compile the material for the 2nd-semester students. The fix reading text materials used in the classroom for teaching critical reading. The researchers also provide relevant media related to the text being discussed. The combination of media used in the classroom for teaching reading brings the classroom atmosphere more alive. The result of this research is based on the implementation of multimodal text for teaching critical reading in order to help students solve their problems in extensive reading class, especially in criticizing the content of the text.

In this research, the researcher conducted the observation to describe teaching and learning activities. In the first meeting, the researcher was delivering the goals of critical reading skill and the importance of having this skill. Moreover, the researcher introducing the media that will be used during the sessions. The next meeting, the lecturer was implemented the multimodal text as media to support and help the students understanding the content of the text entitled "Hair loss advertisement". After that the researcher asked the students to assess the appropriateness the picture and the content of the text. In the implementation of multimodal text in the teaching-learning process showed that the interaction among students and researchers also conducted in a good situation. The results of this study also supported by the result of questionnaire. The interaction happened among the students and researchers at the beginning of meeting and at the end of meeting while the researchers provide an assignment. The results of questionnaire show that 80% from 24 students argue that they agree with the use of multimodal text such as video, picture, brochure, flier and powerpoint slides in the teaching and learning process. Based on the students' experience they feel more challenging as the multimodal text ask them to use their modes. Thus, there are many activities can be gained through multimodal text, it could be a combination activity like speaking-reading, listening-reading and so on. The researcher and the students are actively engaged during the class. The researcher not only discussed the material and figure out the problem arouse but also creating a different circumstance inside the class like giving quizzes, playing some games to make the class more alive. The researcher gives the students critical reading test twice to measure the students comprehension of critical reading material. From the first test the result show that 60 percent students get grade A (above 80), 30 percent students get B (70-79) and 10 percent students get C (60-69). Based on this result it indicates that less than a half of students need more treatment to strengthen their critical reading skill. Thus, the researcher gave other activities in order to enhance students critical reading skill. After the next three session the researchers also presented the last post-test by 60 minutes and conducted informal interview to gain the students' opinion related to the difficulties in the teaching and learning process. The result showed that the

students get easily in understanding the text moreover their clearly assess the content of the text, judging the appropriateness the language use of the text because they have enough background knowledge in relation to the text being discussed. The final results shows that the score of students' post-test average was 85 indicated that the students are capable to reach the critical reading goals completely. Thus, from the result of the test it can be concluded that multimodal text can improve students critical reading skill, moreover besides there is improvement in critical reading skill, students feel more enjoy using multi modal text during the lesson compare to any others media.

The questionnaire showed that some phenomenon appears during implementing multimodal text in the teaching of reading. First, the noise was the students' difficulties in using various media during the reading teaching-learning process. It makes the researchers unable to control the condition. Otherwise, at the beginning the students also found difficulties to use this media and waste the time during the learning. Third, the students get difficulties in term of lacking English skill. It is quite difficult for them to comprehend the vocabulary used in the text. They need more additional tool to help them such as a dictionary.

The result from the questionnaire reveals that 30 percent students feel encourage with this media they also feel motivated. 70% students said the use of multimodal media extremely appropriate for extensive class, 42% students said this strategy was delighted, and 83.3% students agreed that this media implemented in the future. Otherwise, the negative response also occurs where 5% students give their response that the method was not interesting and not attractive, while the students focus on the media only and still confused with the content of the text.

Finding of the research

The result of this study reveals that the use of multimodal media including video, picture, brochure, flier and ppt, especially for teaching critical reading, make the students easier to analyse the text. It shows that the use of multimodal text makes the students feel more enthusiastic to produce the new concept of critical reading, and it can be said that this media is more practical than the other media. The students found the new experience in the teaching and learning process.

Based on the finding of this study, the students also had different ideas, but in general, they expressed positive attitude. When the teacher-researcher was introducing multimodal text in the teaching of reading, the students looked motivated to understand more not only the content but also the media. The use of various media in the teaching-learning process motivates the students to learn more since the process of teaching-learning becomes more interesting (Abubakar, Alfian, & Rasyid, 2023). The students feel relaxes in studying the reading material not only discussed the contents of the materials but also doing the instruction of the teacher (Park, 2021). The materials for teaching reading comprehension are more suitable for the students' needs and more authentic (Sen & Towndrow, 2013). It also based on the curriculum. The development of the materials and curriculum are based on the students' need, the situation, the students' environments, and the students' level of proficiency. From the finding of the research, it can be concluded that the implementation of multimodal media could improve the students' critical reading skill especially in term of assessing the content of reading, analysing the author intention and judging the accuracy of the use of the language. This could be viewed

from the result of the analysis of process and product implemented throughout the research. Critical reading test was conducted twice during this study to measure the successful criteria of the implementation of multimodal text.

Multimodal text differs from the other conventional media for teaching English to the students. It uses various modes to the reader to construct meaning. Meanwhile traditional text uses only one mode, and it can be so boring to the students. Multimodal text can be considered by the teacher to use the various media and materials through the online or offline as an alternative way to improve the teaching-learning process because this strategy can make the students interested to write, read, and speak (Wardani & Kurniasih, 2023). When the students practice all the component of the language skill together, it will enable the students to memorize and implement all the information they get longer than the students only see it. The use of multimodal media also motivates the students to learn and understand the text freely and easily (Varaporn & Sitthikul, 2019). They get new background knowledge to make them easier in understanding the content of the text. By providing multimodal text and various activities, the students will not feel bored anymore in the reading class.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion of the research: it can be concluded that the use of the Multimodal text in teaching critical reading skill can improve students' achievement at second semester students at STKIP Kusumanegara. The implementation of multimodal text on critical reading skills can be achieved successfully. Also, the application of Multimodal text in teaching critical reading increases students' participation and interest in learning.

On a final note, the researcher suggests that teaching critical reading skill in university students needs various methods and media. The teacher and the students can use the internet as the media for teaching and learning critical reading. The use of appropriate media can also help the students in building their critical reading skill. By these findings, the teachers are expected to learn more about the element of multimodal text and how to use it in order to improve the students critical reading skill. However, many teachers have been using multimodal text but don't know about it and how much it can influence the teaching and learning process, moreover many teachers also don't know how to develop this media in order to become appropriate or authentic so the students can feel there is a relation for what being taught and their real world. Furthermore, this research is expected to give an insight in educational context so the use of multimodal text as media can be more vary, the educators and the institution can provide multimodal text not only in printed form as supplementary textbook, but also can create multi modal text in term of digital resources.

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