A PROPOSED SYLLABUS OF CRITICAL READING FOR THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF BRAWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is developing an appropriate Critical Reading syllabus for English department students of Brawijaya university. This study uses Research and Development design with a procedure which consists of needs analysis, description of the purpose, selection or development of syllabus type, production of proto syllabus, production of pedagogical syllabus expert validation, evaluation and revision, try out, final product. The final version of the product consists of Critical Reading syllabus. The product has been developed by following the stages in the modified Yalden’s model.

Keywords: critical reading, syllabus

Students at the college level should be trained to think critically. Therefore, to achieve this purpose, many English Departments have provided a course which is expected to train their students to think critically. This happens due to the fact that the teaching of Critical Reading is highly needed in today’s education world. The existence of any Critical Reading course at the college level is very crucial because it provides students with the techniques of problem-solving and critical analysis.

The Critical Reading course is one of the skill subjects offered at the English Department of Brawijaya University. In this university, the reading courses offered are Basic Reading Skills (BRS) course, Critical Reading (CR) course, and Extensive Reading (ER) course.

The Critical Reading (CR) course is given at the second semester in response to the need of critical reading today. It is also taught to respond to the fact that students are lagging in problem-solving and thinking skills. This observation is based on an interview that the writer conducted on July 24, 2011 to two teachers of Critical Reading course in the previous semester. This interview was done in order to get a closer look on how successful the implementation of the Critical Reading course is. It is expected that the critical reading course in the English Department of Brawijaya University may provide students with the techniques of problem-solving and critical analysis.

As its name suggests, critical reading actually teaches students to think while reading. It has been defined as learning to evaluate, draw inferences and arrive at conclusions based on the evidence [1].

Critical reading is categorized into a higher-order level of reading than literal and interpretive reading. This course is very crucial because it provides the students with the skill to be critical readers. Students’ ability to think and read critically will enhance their understanding toward the text they are reading. This happens due to the fact that during the critical reading process, readers continue to be "producers". They analyze, produce, and judge [2].

Bloom’s taxonomy of the cognitive domain (1956) identifies three levels within critical reading category: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. At the analysis level, readers distinguish facts from opinion, propaganda techniques, and fallacies in reasoning. They also identify motives or reasons for something to happen, assess the qualifications of a source of information, and determine evidence to support a conclusion, inference, or generalization. The readers...
also draw conclusions and identify motives. At the synthesis level, readers bring together information, produce original communications, make predictions, and anticipate outcomes. They may also write, create, develop, design, and synthesize. There will be more than one possible answer, and more open ended than the applied level. Finally, at the evaluation level, readers are making judgment. They form and offer opinions, and they also value and appreciate. They judge the merit of an idea, a solution to a problem, and an esthetic work. The readers may also offer opinions based on a set standard [2]. In this case, Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive domain (1956) is chosen due to the fact that this taxonomy provides appropriate level of Critical Reading that one should master. This taxonomy clearly shows the three levels within the scope of Critical Reading.

When talking about critical reading, of course people will always deal with the source of materials which can be used to facilitate the teaching of critical reading. As the construct of critical reading has been clearly stated, the source of critical reading materials can include both literary and factual texts. In the first place, literary texts are chosen because literature can inspire and challenge students to engage and interact with the book and connect it to real life. Next, a factual text is also included as a factual text will be very useful for the students to be able to think, analyze, and interpret what they are reading. The factual text given to students will facilitate the students to think critically and give students more chances to relate the contemporary issues they are reading to its problem solving. Students’ ability in solving problems related to the issues they face might give more chances for students to be more and more critical toward the phenomena happening around them.

Students’ critical reading ability needs to be enhanced because by reading critically, a reader will find the deep truth about what is being said and the reasons of saying so. Reading critically is done by seeing the writer’s motives or purposes and then evaluate it. The readers do not merely read but also think about what is being read or discussed. It is done in such meaningful way. In this case, the readers should analyze and evaluate what they are reading. In such a way, reading is called to be an interactive process which affects both the writer and the readers. So, reading is not only meant to understand the content of a passage but it also involve reader’s emotion so the reader can give an analysis and evaluation (Soedarso, 2001).

According to Rubin (1993), “critical reading skill refers to a higher level of reading skill because it does not only deal with literal and interpretation skills of evaluating”. He explains that critical reading ability is categorized into a higher skill because it does not only agree with the text and interpret what the text is about, but it also evaluates what is in the text [3].

Supporting the idea, Roe and Ross (1996) say that a critical reading skill is a process of querying and evaluating the text which surpasses the skill of interpreting the text literally. Consequently, critical readers have some characteristics that they understand how to ask, analyze, and evaluate. They try to find a cause of a problem; they are capable of differentiating between facts and opinions [4]. By taking a look at those explanations, the writer believes that critical readers should rely on knowledge on literal and interpretive reading. It means that the literal and interpretive reading is the prerequisite for someone to be a critical reader.

The availability of a syllabus for a Critical Reading course along with its material of course plays a very important role in teaching English. Olstain and Dubin (1986:28) state that a syllabus has an utmost significant effect on selecting and developing materials [5]. In addition, they say that a syllabus is a vehicle
through which the policy makers-language program, teachers and learners convey information to teachers, textbooks writers, examination committee, and learners concerning the program. When either a syllabus or instructional materials are not available, the objectives of the course cannot be well achieved.

However, despite the importance of the Critical Reading course at the college level, the Critical Reading course in English Department of Brawijaya University is yet inadequate. It is due to the fact that the syllabus and the materials for this course have not been well developed as the implementation of Critical Reading course is still relatively new here, and thus not many things have been done. So far, the implementation of the teaching and learning process of Critical Reading course is based on a syllabus which still needs improvement. Actually, the existing syllabus has all the components of a syllabus. It contains a course identity, course description, course objective, content, assessment and scoring system. Last but not least, the existing syllabus also has a matrix of the course but the meeting schedule is absent.

Despite its complete components, however; the existing syllabus has some weaknesses. First of all, in its description of the course the existing syllabus states that Critical Reading is designed to help the students to be able to make critical evaluation on a passage. By taking this course, the students are expected to be able to read critically texts of fiction (literary texts) and non fiction (scientific texts) at an advanced level with a focus on analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. However, this objective does not state the specific objective of the course. Moreover, the existing syllabus does not state the level of proficiency that this course intends to reach. In this case, it does not state the level of vocabulary size the students should reach, so both the teachers and the students do not really know to what vocabulary size their critical understanding is reflected neither does it state the expected grammar complexity.

The description of contents of this course covers identifying facts and opinion, evaluating author’s opinion, inferring meanings, making generalizations, summarizing, synthesizing, paraphrasing, interpreting, recognizing the writer’s tone, recognizing the writer’s purpose, and recognizing the writer’s bias. However, the existing syllabus was not developed based on a careful library research so the syllabus did not reflect the appropriate construct of critical reading in terms of its contents including the language, content, reading skills, and its rhetorical structure. No wonder, the sequence of the topics taught is not sequential. This happens due to the fact that the existing syllabus was made in such limited time so there are not many things have been done. This is somehow inappropriate since developing syllabus should be accompanied by deeper analysis on students’ and teachers needs (needs analysis) and library research as well.

In addition, the existing syllabus also mentions the methods applied in this course, namely lecturing, individual work, group discussion, pair and group work, and presentation. The writer considers lecturing inappropriate because in the critical reading class, students are not supposed to be lectured but are required to be more active in class discussion.

Next, the existing syllabus is also equipped with the matrix of the course. However, it does not state the media used in the classroom. A good model of Critical
Reading syllabus should provide various media used in the classroom so it can reach the intended objective.

Last but not least, in the existing syllabus the source of materials used rely too much on one source that is the model of Critical Reading module made by Sri Andreani which is applied in Critical Reading course for English Department students of University of Malang. It is considered inappropriate since a good syllabus should provide various sources to be able to each the objective of critical reading course. The model of critical reading syllabus developed by Sri Andreani was taken into account because the syllabus is based on the theory of Critical Reading compared to other critical reading syllabus reviewed. The English department then takes Andreani’s model of syllabus as one of the references and with some other components that the English Department considers important. That is why, a new developed syllabus should actually provide more sources or more references of Critical Reading material [6].

After doing a needs analysis on Critical Reading which include the activity of documenting, giving a questionnaire to the students of Critical Reading, interviewing some teachers who teach Critical Reading course, and doing a library research, the writer thinks that it is very important to develop a better form of syllabus to facilitate the teaching and learning of Critical Reading.

**METHOD**

This study uses Research and Development (R&D) design considering that the study engages research and development, and results on an educational product, the Critical Reading syllabus. The research attends nine steps needs analysis, description of the purpose, selection or development of syllabus type, production of proto syllabus, production of pedagogical syllabus, expert validation, evaluation and revision, try out, final product. Data in this research are analyzed descriptively.

Research instruments are employed to collect data in some steps of the procedure. The data of needs analysis gained for this study was collected through four instruments—document, questionnaire, interview, and library research. By studying legal document, it allows the writer to get valuable information from educational policy such as the implementation of Critical Reading course at the English department of Brawijaya University. This data would be the basis to determine the expected syllabus which serve the students’ needs. The data or documents that were used by the writer were the data from *Pedoman Pendidikan Fakultas ilmu Budaya Universitas Brawijaya* (2010) [7].

The documentation of what was found concerning Critical Reading was used as the guidance to develop the Critical Reading syllabus.

The next instrument is questionnaire. There are two kinds of questionnaire used in collecting the data. The first questionnaire was addressed to the English Department students who took Critical Reading in the previous semester in the needs analysis stage. The questionnaire was distributed to gain some information relation to students’ needs on the method
of assessment and media used in Critical Reading class.

The second questionnaire was addressed to the experts in form of validation sheets in the stage of validating the product. The experts were asked for feedback and constructive comments about the syllabus of Critical Reading developed to get the betterment of the product.

The other instrument that was used is interview. The interview was given to two critical reading teachers in the English Department of Brawijaya University. They were asked about their perceptions on the implementation of Critical Reading course. Things asked were methods of teaching, variety of activities used, types of text, reading strategies, and obstacles when teaching Critical Reading course.

Another instrument used is documentation from library research. The data collected from preliminary study were about the needs of the what to teach in Critical Reading course. The way to get the data was by doing a library research. By doing the library research, a researcher knew what should be included in Critical Reading syllabus.

**Product**

**Needs Analysis**

In this first stage of Yalden’s language Program Development, firstly, the writer did a needs analysis. The needs analysis is an important stage conducted in order to develop the syllabus for Critical Reading. It was carried out to identify the student’s needs in this case it concerns with students’ preferences about the method and facilities in the teaching and learning of Critical Reading course as well as their proficiency level. It was driven from legal document through documentation, questionnaire, interview toward the subjects of the study, and the library research or review of related literature to identify the construct of Critical Reading.

**Description of the Purpose**

The description of the purpose of the Critical Reading course is drawn up after doing the needs analysis. It is formulated that Critical Reading syllabus must be able to make the students able to read advanced reading texts critically with a focus on analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating by implementing a range of reading strategies to achieve critical reading comprehension.

There are several topics that can be considered to be included in the Critical Reading. In the analysis level, the students are trained to differentiate between facts and opinion, make use of inference, make generalization, identify the writer’s purpose, recognize the writer’s bias, and determine the writer’s tone and attitude. Next, in the synthesis level, the students are trained to synthesize a text and anticipate outcomes. Finally, in the evaluation level, the students are trained to evaluate the writer’s argument and reasoning and evaluate an advertisement and research digest.

**Selection/Development of Syllabus Type**

After doing the needs analysis, the task-based syllabus is chosen as in this this Critical Reading syllabus the chief focus of classroom work become the performance of tasks rather than the language required to perform them. It is used for situation where linguistic resources are limited, that is in a foreign language teaching context (Ur, 1996).

**Production of a Proto-Syllabus**

The production of proto-syllabus is made after deciding the syllabus type in the previous stage. In this stage, the writer listed the language and language use in the syllabus. The data gained at this stage are the syllabus that is developed and the topics to be covered, the reading strategies needed to include, and the types of reading
texts need to include. Those data are gotten during the need analysis stage.

**Production of Pedagogical Syllabus**

After making the proto syllabus, the activity then is continued to the production of pedagogical syllabus. The pedagogical syllabus of Critical Reading course is written based on the description from the previous stage which include the an overall narrative description of the objective of Critical Reading course; the materials and activities included in the proposed syllabus of Critical Reading course; the time allotment of the materials taught; the teaching learning activities and techniques applied in the teaching of Critical Reading course; the evaluation or assessment used by the teachers to assess their students’ critical reading skills.

**Expert Validation**

The validation was done by giving the proposed syllabus of Critical Reading and an instrument for validation to the experts of syllabus design and Critical Reading. There were two experts involved.

The writer validated the syllabus to the first expert twice. It happened due to the fact that at the first validation the first expert suggested some elements to be revised before she started validating and signing the validation sheet. First, the validation on November 5, 2011 has gained some feedback. First, the first expert suggested the writer to describe the course which is prerequisite to Critical Reading course, that is Basic Reading Skills course. Second, the writer was suggested to describe the students’ proficiency level by seeing the students’ vocabulary level or their proficiency level through TOEFL test. Third, she also suggested the writer to differentiate between developmental research and Research and Development (R&D). According to the first expert, the writer’s study is included into Research and Development (R & D).

After being revised, the revised draft was given to be validated. The second validation was on November 28, 2011. At this time the there was not much suggestion made by the first expert as the draft has been revised in the first validation. Finally, she signed the validation sheet and took some notes in the validation sheet.

Different from the first expert, the second expert did the validation once that was on December 5, 2011. However, there was still some suggestions to be considered for the effectiveness of the syllabus.

The elements for validation cover the objective, the description of contents, learning strategies, assessment, source of materials, and time allocation of Critical Reading syllabus. The experts were asked to evaluate whether those elements are excellent, above average, average and unsatisfactory.

Both of the experts gave score 4 for the objective of the Critical Reading course. They said that it is clear enough and it corresponds to the theory of Critical Reading. They had no problem on this part.

Regarding to the materials for Critical Reading course, the first expert said that she did not know what to evaluate as the writer did not give the samples of materials taught in Critical Reading. She suggested it was changed into the description of the content is appropriate. If it is so, she said it is. Therefore she gave score 3 on this part and so did the second expert. Still related to the materials, she also said that the sequence of the skills taught in Critical Reading course is sequential enough and it is in accordance with the theory of Critical Reading, therefore, she gave score 4. Different from the first expert, the second expert gave score 3 for this part.

Another element being asked is about the learning strategies employed in the teaching and learning of Critical Reading
Both of the experts said that it is excellent as it matches the competence to be achieved and the method used enhances the learner’s involvement. Therefore, they gave score 4.

About the assessment, the first expert score 3 meaning above average because she was worry that the students face problems in completing reading task in one meeting. However, the second expert gave score 2 because the percentage of the assessment in the course outline is not the same with the one in the appendix III. Related to the issue whether or not the assessments used in the syllabus involve a variety of assignments and exercises the first expert said that it does. Therefore the first expert gave score 4 while the second expert gave score 3.

Based on those two experts’ opinion, the sources used in critical reading course are excellent meaning that there are adequate support of material. However, the first expert suggested that there should be more various teaching aids like pictures and other medias. Therefore, she gave score 3 for the teaching aids. The same as the first expert, the second expert also suggested that the lecturers of Critical Reading may need to prepare a number of teaching aids to suit with the students’ needs and level. Therefore she gave score 3.

Distribution of time allocated for each unit is considered excellent by the experts since they know the Critical Reading course requires its students to gain in more interactive activities like discussion and presentation which are very time consuming. They added that that each skills is proportionally developed in terms of time allotment.

At the end of the validation, the second expert stated her opinion that Critical Reading skills are indeed very crucial for English Department students. She said that the syllabus offers a careful step by step learning process.

**Try-out of the Product**

Having validated on November 28, 2011 by the first expert and on December 5, 2011 by the second expert, the proposed Critical reading syllabus was revised based on the validators’ suggestions. Then it was tried out on December 6, 2011 to two Critical Reading teachers in English Department of Brawijaya University. For a proposed Critical Reading syllabus, two critical reading teachers were asked to write lesson plans based on the proposed syllabus. The sample materials are given by the writer. This activity was intended to check whether the proposed syllabus is clearly understood in terms of its language, format and its content. Another purpose of the try-out is to check the applicability of the syllabus to be developed into lesson plans. To make them understand what they should do, the researcher made an informal teacher conference.

The two Critical Reading teachers found that the syllabus is sufficiently clear and easy to be developed into the lesson plans and they also add that the samples of instructional material are appropriate.

**Evaluation and Revision**

The lesson plans written by the Critical Reading teachers reflect the strength and the weaknesses of the developed syllabus. Based on the weaknesses found in the lesson plans, an informal conference was held to share ideas to improve the syllabus. The feedback from expert validation and the feedback gotten from try-out result were then used as the basis for the revision on the syllabus.

The first revision was made by describing the course which is prerequisite to Critical Reading, that is Basic Reading Skills course. The writer then described the Basic Reading skills course in the backgroud of the study. Secondly, the writer investigated the TOEFL of students of English Department who takes Critical Reading course. The data were gotten from the Academic Bureau of English Department
of Brawijaya University. The TOEFL score is very useful to describe the expected students’ proficiency level to be reached upon completing the Critical Reading course. Then, in chapter II, the writer stated that her research is included into Research and Development (R&D) not The developmental research as they are very different.

Next, related to the content in the syllabus, the writer revised it into the description of the contents. This is done due to the fact that the syllabus does not provide all the materials but the description only. Then, the writer also revised the different percentage of assessment listed in the course outline and in the appendix so that it will not be confusing for the users.

Last revision was made on the basis of the media used. The writer added more various teaching aids like pictures and other medias.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Final Product

The conclusions cover the final version of the products, the strengths and weaknesses as well.

The Final Version of the Product

The final version of the product consists of Critical Reading syllabus. The product has been developed by following the stages in the modified Yalden’s model. The final version of the product is described like the following.

The final version of the syllabus is made based on the result of the expert validation completed with the result of the try out. As suggested at the stage of validation, the syllabus elaborates the objective of the Critical Reading course. The objective is considered clear enough and corresponds to the theory of Critical Reading. Then, description of the materials for Critical Reading course is appropriate. Besides that, the sequence of the skills taught in Critical Reading course is sequential enough and it is in accordance with the theory of Critical Reading. Regarded to the learning strategies employed in the teaching and learning of Critical Reading course, it is said that it matches the competence to be achieved and the method used enhances the learner’s involvement. Then, the assessments used in the syllabus have already involved a variety of assignments and exercises. Another is related to the sources used in Critical Reading course. The syllabus is said to have adequate support of material. However, based on the suggestion given during expert’s validation stage, it is suggested that there should be more various teaching aids like pictures and other medias. It is further suggested that the lecturers of Critical Reading may need to prepare a number of teaching aids to suit with the students’ needs and level. Finally, the distribution of time allocated for each unit is considered excellent as it gives the students enough time to gain in more interactive activities like discussion and presentation. Consequently, each skill is proportionally developed in terms of time allotment. The result of the try out of the syllabus suggests that the syllabus is sufficiently clear and easy to follow and be developed into the lesson plans and the samples of instructional material are easy to be transferred into lesson plan. Therefore, the final version of the syllabus of Critical Reading course mainly consists of unit, basic competence, indicators, main teaching and learning activities, methods & media, source, assessment, and time allotment.

The Strength and Weakness

The strength of the syllabus is that it is completed with five lessons plans that have been made during the try out stage so that the users may use them directly in the classroom.

Related to the weakness of the product, the syllabus was only tried out to two Critical Reading teachers. The try-out would be more beneficial, if it was
conducted to more than two teachers for gaining more inputs so that the syllabus would be much better. The decision of involving only two teachers of Critical reading in the process of try-out is based on the consideration of the time limitation when developing the product.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion
The final version of the product consists of Critical Reading syllabus. The product has been developed by following the stages in the modified Yalden’s model. The final version of the product is described like the following.

The final version of the syllabus is made based on the result of the expert validation completed with the result of the try-out. Therefore, the final version of the syllabus of Critical Reading course mainly consists of unit, basic competence, indicators, main teaching and learning activities, methods & media, source, assessment, and time allotment.

Suggestion
To make use of the syllabus, the teacher and the prospective students of Critical Reading may notice the objectives given in each meeting obviously. Since the samples of materials provided in the syllabus are accompanied with its examples, the teacher and the students are served with the information on the scope of the content to be learned in class precisely. Last, the teachers can allocate the time provided with the materials to be completed. Briefly stated, they have enough preparation for Critical Reading with adequate planning.

This set of Critical Reading syllabus need to be socialized especially to the potential users including the teacher of Critical Reading and the students who involve in the course. A discussion on the product attended by Critical Reading teachers can be done before the semester where Critical Reading course is going to be conducted.

Further suggestion is also addressed to the next researchers who want to conduct similar study. They are suggested to be able to continue this study by making more lesson plans and developing the Critical Reading syllabus into instructional materials of Critical Reading.

REFERENCES