

INDONESIAN STUDENT TEACHERS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN TEXT ANALYSIS WITH CDA APPROACH

Dwijani Ratnadewi*, Sofi Yuniarti

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Indonesia

*yani_rd@yahoo.com, sofiyuniarti88@gmail.com

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Abstract

Purpose of Study: The present study investigated the impact of critical discourse analysis (CDA) on Indonesian students teachers' critical thinking skills in their final projects.

Methodology: The study analyzed four final projects of student teachers text analysis. It was a qualitative meta-study applying four stages of Bregtsson's content analysis. These student teachers analyzed the world leaders' political speeches and lawyers' arguments in court using the CDA approach.

Results: The result of the analysis indicated that 58.3% of the students got the Proficient Level achievement, spreading from the critical skills of communication, analysis (interpretation) and synthesis.

Implications/Applications: The result illustrates that text analysis with CDA devices positively influenced the student teachers' critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, 75% of them were at low achievement, at the Emergent level, for Reflection (Self-regulating) skills, due to the fact that these students were not accustomed to observing their own analysis.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis; Critical Thinking; Content Analysis; Student Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Google is coming and information rush is unstoppable. What about our students who absorb any information they get? How is the teachers' role in helping students sort news that is not necessarily true? When this discourse is expressed, some educational experts say that there is nothing to do except to train students to choose the right news and let them have the critical thinking, so as not to easily receive and believe information that comes just like that without understanding its truth.

Critical thinking skills encourage a person to think deeply about all the information he gets to absorb good information and avoid misinformation including biased persuasion, prejudice, irrational attitude or idea. (Leicester, Mal and Denise Taylor, 2010) Critical thinking is actually the notion of objectivity, by considering all facts, explanation, and evidence, by opening to the strengths and weaknesses of his own as well as others. This brings a fair judgment improving self-confidence in understanding any evidence or references and its implications. (Judge, Brenda, 2009) With this capability, one may make connections across disciplines, apply knowledge to daily life and understand the content on deeper and longer levels. (Paul, Richard and Linda Elder, 2007) The ability to think critically helps to solve problems in life effectively. The ability to think critically improves the ability to develop self-potential because critical thinking ignores emotions but promotes logical thinking so that this can improve cognitive skills and ultimately can develop the potential of self as a whole.

Indonesia has developed some skills in its curriculum which is part of critical thinking skills or the critical thinking skills as part of those skills. They are life skills or soft skills. These skills have undergone many reforms until they become part of the scientific approach developed at the Indonesian latest Curriculum 2013 or K-13 for primary to high school. The scientific approach itself is rooted in the constructivist approach and problem-solving skills as its characteristics requiring students to think critically. In higher education, critical thinking skills are involved in a number of Indonesian laws and regulations such as Law no. 12 of 2012 on higher education, Presidential Regulation no. 8 of 2012 on the Indonesian national qualification framework (KKNI), and Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture regulations (Permendikbud) 49, 2014 on the national standard of higher education, which give a strong message that higher education should be able to produce competent and competitive Indonesian human beings.

Student teachers education in Indonesia is a four-year education under the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education with practice teaching included, and it is followed by one year teachers' professional program (PPG). Critical thinking skill is an essential skill for student teachers, so this skill needs to be taught/trained either individually or inserted in the lecture. Yet, some research findings illustrated that lectures for Indonesian student teachers have given less attention to this critical thinking skill. As an example, the research on engineering student teachers illustrates that lecture activities

that support critical thinking lacked emphasis; critical thinking content is not the main focus in the lectures. ([Samani, Ismayati, and Cholik, 2016](#)). Another study, from a foreign language department, from all the subjects, studied only one single lecture that contributes to critical thinking. ([Alwasilah, Chaedar, 2005](#)) Thus, the students' thinking ability has not been trained and sharpened in the college as it should be. Critical thinking needs to be taught and trained, especially for student teachers relating to their compulsory to grow this skill to their students later. In higher education, some subjects are indeed arranged to train students' critical thinking, but some others already have their own characteristics to make students think critically. Some experimental researches have actually proved that there is a positive influence of learning on students' critical thinking. In a language class, for example, the activities of journalistic text analysis with a critical discourse analysis approach have a significant and positive effect on EFL students' CT. ([Hashemi, and Afsaneh 2012](#)) Discourse Analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as one of the tools to analyze text trains and encourages students to think, due to the characteristics of the subject. It analyzes the text by using both internal and external aspects of the text, both manifest and latent information so that students have access to understand the text more broadly in accordance with the level of criticality.

This study intends to observe the achievement of the students' critical thinking ability, after 4 years of studying in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. These achievements were examined from the students' final projects, the way they analyzed the text by using CDA, which was chosen because this approach contains a certain way of analyzing that drives someone to think critically. The projects were selected only those using the Critical Discourse Analysis approach in understanding texts. This study contributes to the awareness of higher education with the teacher training and education faculty in order to prioritize critical thinking in the courses. This is due to the fact that teachers should have critical thinking skills.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Language is “a socially conditioned process”, while discourse is the use of language in the process, the term “process” refers to practices of the society including especially both the production and process of interpreting the text. ([Fairclough, Norman, 1989](#)) Discourse is the use of language in everyday life to describe reality, both in the form of linguistic and non linguist used by someone to express themselves, while the CDA is not just an analysis of the text or the language it contains, but more than that CDA reveals how language is used and manipulated to express opaque as well as transparent intention of the speaker or writer, ([Gee, James Paul, 2005](#)) because discourse cannot be separated from the efforts of the writer, speaker or the person who convey the discourse, so that the message is delivered to others. The effort to construct reality in this discourse is influenced by various variables so that the discourse is formed behind the interest of the discourse maker. These variables may take the form of internal and external factors, strategies, language functions and communication systems used. ([Hojati et al., 2014](#)) From these variables, it can be understood that the text is a collection of aspects such as ideas, thoughts, desires, ways, goals, purposes including culture and social cognition. Therefore, understanding of discourse through discourse analysis such as Critical Discourse Analysis thus requires multidisciplinary analysis and intricate relation of the text with those aspects above. ([Van Dijk, 1998](#))

Moreover, the discourse itself is actually a form of language used in real life in the language user community, so the language in the discourse is shaped by social structure, thus containing the society's ideology. ([Fairclough, & Wodak, 1997](#)) CDA is said to be fundamentally concerned with analyzing structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as expressed in language ([Luo, Li, Peng, and Fan, 2018](#)) as it is also a means of control and social force

CDA and Critical Thinking

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical study that primarily observes the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality which are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. ([Van Dijk, Politics Ideology and Discourse, 2004](#)) CDA as the study of discourse serves as a tool for understanding the social construction of reality, but also as an instrument of power and ideological control that implies a relationship between a certain conversation with the situation, institution and social structure involved (Placeholder1) ([Fairclough, & Wodak, 1997](#)) ‘Critical’ in CDA means not taking things for granted, but opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism, and dichotomies, it may mean proposing alternative, so that unclear structures of power relations and ideologies become clear. ([Wodak, 2007](#))

As also stated by Fairclough ([Fairclough, Norman, 2001](#)) that CDA is a critical analysis which aimed to examine the hidden connections between language, power, and ideology. Discourse interpretation involves three dimensions, they are the language text (spoken or written), discourse practice (text production and text interpretation), and sociocultural

practice, of which Van Dijk ([Van Dijk, T.A., 2002](#)) clarifies more detail the dimension of discourse analysis to semantic macrostructures, local meanings, formal structures, text and context, discourse semantics, social cognition, social situations, societal structures. CDA has certain inter or multidisciplinary backgrounds and a great variety of methods and objects of study but it usually has at least seven dimensions they are: the “naturally occurring language use; the larger units than isolated words and sentences; beyond sentence grammar; non-verbal (semiotic, multimodal, visual) aspects; dynamic (socio)-cognitive or interactional moves and strategies; contexts of language use; and phenomena of text grammar and language use”. Discourse analysts want their recipients to dig the meaning when exposed to texts and not only just visible text.

In line with CDA, critical thinking also motivates learners to think clearly and rationally. It is a cognitive skill that uses the mind or the mental processes which connect with ‘reasoning’ or using ‘rational thought’ including analyzing evidence and drawing conclusions from it. It is considered as thinking skills as stated by Halpern ([Facione, Peter. 2016](#)) that it is involved in solving problems, creating inferences, analyzing likelihoods, and making decisions. While² states that thinking critically is basically an activity to understand the information included observing ideas and information objectively and question the information based on values, attitude, and private philosophy with evidence so that any reason given is strong and verified. Critical thinking competence is represented in critical thinking skills elements. Facione ([Halpern, Diane, 1999](#)) states that there 6 elements of critical thinking skills, they are (1) Interpretation, (2) Analysis, (3) Evaluation (4) Inference, (5) explanation, (6) Self-regulation, while SPC Pittsburg’s College in its rubrics (Act, 2010) states that the elements include Communication (Identification), Analysis, Problem Solving (Decision Making), Evaluation, Synthesis (Research) and Reflection and Halpern suggests five dimensions of critical thinking: oral reasoning, argument observation, thinking, possibility and uncertainty, also decision making and problem-solving. This is in line with CDA which relates its analysis with any intrinsic or extrinsic aspects which influence the text to come to an interpretation.

Critical thinking skills support students’ capability to understand subjects in their study better. These skills need to be acquired by students especially when they have to read literature, it enables them to assess the evidence in the text and identify fake or illogical reasoning. As stated by Willingham ([Willingham, Daniel. 2017](#)) critical thinking skills cover the ability of “seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be confirmed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems”. This research observed political speeches, which needs to be analyzed carefully and the research questions served are the extents to which students perform their Critical Thinking skills in analyzing text using CDA.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative meta-analysis study using Bengtsson's content analysis consisting of four stages analysis (decontextualization - recontextualization - categorization - compilation), ([Bengtsson, 2016](#)) although some percentage was also used to deepen the analysis. The research observed four research results from the students’ final projects. They were in the final semester of four years of an Indonesian teacher education university majoring English ranging from 2014-2016. Their projects were the studies of texts by using Critical Discourse Analysis on the speeches of the world leaders in the presidential election campaign and inaugural speech and also the dialogue between law enforcement in court.

Actions performed on stages were, first in decontextualization stage, data were selected based on the meaning unit, which was then condensed and coded. In the next stage, which is decontextualization, data reduction was done by including 'content' data and excluding 'dross' data, whereas in the categorization stage 'homogenous' data was unified and analyzed using category of critical thinking aspects, and the final stage is a compilation or drawing a realistic conclusion. For the categorization stage, the steps were modified by inserting the aspects of critical thinking skills of St Petersburg’s College Assessment of Critical Scoring Template. ([The St Pittsburg’s College. 2015](#)) In this stage, the texts were analyzed using this scoring template and combined with Fascione’s and Halpern’s aspects of critical thinking skills. This modified rubric consists of the competence levels, they are: exemplary, proficient, developing, emerging and not present, while the critical thinking skills aspects are communication, analysis, problem-solving, evaluation, synthesis, reflection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results illustrated in Table 1 showing the student teachers’ (S1,2,3,4) performance level of the critical thinking skills in analyzing text. It appears that the critical thinking ability by using their Critical Discourse Analysis approach in

analyzing the text as the research material spread among Proficient, Developing and Emerging level of performances. None achieved the highest level of performance (Exemplary) nor the lowest (Not Present).

Table 1: Students' Performance on Critical Thinking Skill

Performance LCT Skills	Exemplary				Proficient				Developing				Emerging				Not Present				Total
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
Students																					
Communication				+	+	+	+														4
Analysis				+	+	+	+														4
Problem Solving				+					+	+	+										4
Evaluation				+		+			+		+										4
Synthesis				+		+	+		+												4
Reflection									+						+	+	+				4
				5	2	4	3		1	3	1	2			1	1	1				24
				Total 14			Total 7				Total 3									100%	
				58.3%			29.2%				12.5%										

Table 1 illustrates the conditions where the performance of the critical thinking skills of students who reached the level of Proficient is quite dominant (58.3%) compared with the performance of Developing (29.2%) and Emerging (12.5%). The average performance of each student shows a fairly clear difference. For example, S1 gained the highest, Proficient performance, she achieved the highest score of 5 (21%) while S2 reached the lowest (2) 8.2%, S3 reached 4 (16.6%) and S4 reached 3 (12.5%). In Developing performance, S2 reached the highest that is 3 (12.5%) compared to S1 and S3 which respectively reached 1 (4.2%) while s4 reached 2 (8.2%). And all S2, S3, and S4 are in the Emerging level (4.2%).

Judging from the distribution of critical thinking skills of each student, there are quite striking differences (Table 2). These students are quite good at their performance in Communication and Analysis skills, all of them (4) is at the level of Proficient (100%). In Problem-solving skill, only 25% (1) of the students reached the Proficient level, while (3) 75% is at the Developing level. At the Evaluation skill, 50% of them are still in the Developing level, while the rest have reached the Proficient level. In the Synthesis skill, 75% are in Proficient level and the rest (25%) are in Developing. On the other hand, on Reflection skill, most of the students are in the Emerging level (75%) and only 25% of them are in the developing level.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate students' critical thinking skills in their final projects of analyzing the speeches of world leaders and analyzing the dialogue between law enforcement officials. Because the data were the statement of politicians and law enforcers, the criticality of the analyzer is needed to understand the political statement. From the above findings, it turns out that the students are critical enough because more than half of them (58.3%) have Proficient level and with the characteristic that the critical thinking skills achieved most by these students are Communication and Analysis (100%). None of them achieved the highest and lowest level of performance. However, some still performed Developing (29.2%) especially seen in the critical thinking skills element of Problem Solving (75%) so it can be said that they are still not able to identify the problem well, and have not used facts and relevant evidence to develop a valid conclusion. And what is questionable is that on the element of Reflection, it is found that there is an Emerging performance of 75% of the participants, which illustrates that most of them are not self-consciously monitoring their own cognitive activities especially self-correction and self-examination,¹⁸ nor they considered an alternate point of view of their own thoughts.

Table 2: Rate of Performance of Critical Thinking Skills

Performance L CT Skills	Proficient	%	Developing	%	Emerging	%
Communication	4	100				
Analysis	4	100				
Problem Solving	1	25	3	75		
Evaluation	2	50	2	50		
Synthesis	3	75	1	25		
Reflection			1	25	3	75

From the analysis using four stages content analysis of Brengtsson's, decontextualization - recontextualization - categorization - compilation, 20 with some modification of critical thinking insertion, it has been found that these four students have different tendencies on the ability of each critical thinking skill. The following is the explanation of these tendencies under the scope of each project topic.

Speaker 1

Speaker 1 achieved the Proficiency level for five out of six core skills of critical thinking skills in analyzing the Australian Prime Minister' speech during the political disturbance between Indonesia and Australia in the year of 2014. Australia was accused of wiretapping several Indonesian officials. In the analysis Communication or Explanation skills were performed by serving the main and supporting ideas²¹ in proper ways, like in the topic of 'refusing to apologize' she found out that the main idea of Asserting the Standpoint of Australian Prime Minister to Unstating Apologetic Statement supported with ideas like how Tony Abbot used the word "Australia" means Australian safety priority. This idea was said to be an excuse or just political rhetoric for not expressing an apology to Indonesia. The Analysis skill was seen in identifying the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements(Ahmadi et al., 2014) here and how she addressed the implications and consequences of not apologizing concerning the spying done by Australian Intelligent towards Indonesian government, such as the diplomatic termination threat. Other skills performed as Problem Solving when she identified and dealt with key aspects of the problem which was the unwillingness to apologize to the Indonesian government and used facts and related evidence of these problems of the two countries to develop conclusions. In analyzing the topic of The Anger over the Spying Services, S1 performed her Evaluation skill by distinguishing appropriate argument of how tapping allegation broke laws, and how this was very offensive to Indonesian people so they showed their indignation and disappointment to Australia.

The skill performance included in synthesis skill was found when she identified the needed elements and considered the relevant information in the case of tapping allegation committed by the Australian government against Indonesia. This information was to conclude that Tony Abbott as the Australian Prime Minister had made a mistake by refusing to apologize for the allegations against Indonesia, S1 using some related sources and information, such as comparing Tony Abbot's policy with Barack Obama when they faced similar problems, highlighting the opinions of Eva Kusuma S, the Indonesian house member of Commission III on tapping allegation, and taking into account the types of cooperation with Australia so far, such as the problem of the asylum boat seekers.²²These new information was used to enhance the chosen solution to clear these two neighboring countries' tension. However, S1 was caught up in her own analysis of the speeches and failed to make an evaluation of her own. This is a critical thinking skill of the Self Regulation category as a 'metacognitive' skill of self-check and self-regulation. The strengths and weaknesses identification in her own thinking²³ as a skill feature of this category was not revealed clearly.

Speaker 2

Based on the finding in Table 1, S2 achieves Proficient level for Communication and Analysis skills as he was able to identify the main problem with some supporting details in an organized manner. In analyzing judges' arguments in the court shown in the movie, he used logical reasoning to make inferences as to when he sought for evidence of how the character in the movie practiced his power speech acts showing a threat to other interlocutors in the court. The analysis made also showed his ability to analyze the 'good/bad educated and uneducated guy' in retaining power in court. Based on the principle of 'no discourse no ideology', this discussion diverted to an estimate of the statements politicization in order to seek legal loopholes to win their clients in court even though they were not necessarily legal. The Problem Solving skills were shown in the steps taken to find a solution of the 'bad-educated guy', yet the principle of the suspect's presumption of innocence seem not to be considered well. The discussion about Power in the speech domination of the 'bad character' tried to identify some aspect of the problem by judging the suspect guilty, although it seemed right, to decide a suspect in the court to be wrong and guilty, instead of firstly providing relevant evidence is not accepted theoretically. It thus produced a less appropriate opinion in solving the problem happened. In spite of everything, a text analyst should put himself as critical but fair as well

Speaker 3

In analyzing Mr. Bill Clinton speech in his inauguration ceremony, as illustrated in Table 1 this speaker achieved 4 skills (Communication, Analysis, Evaluation, and Synthesis) at Proficient Level. This achievement is better viewed from the way he used logical reasoning when, under the topic of Leftover Deficits, a synchronic analysis was applied, it can be seen in relating two concepts and ideas of the American past time with today's problem to identify potential effect of what Clinton called it as 'something wrong with America', concerning government deficits and high unemployment rate connected to his aims to unite Liberal and Conservative parties. This reasoning used to make inferences regarding a solution to make both parties united. (López, Daniel, Oscar Espinoza, and Silvia Sarzoza. 2018)

Evaluation skill was shown by establishing appropriate argument of some elements of how liberal and conservative people would support Bill Clinton as the new President by addressing both parties as one that was the people of America,

also by reminding of the history of America from the use of the metaphor “spring” and “winter” to illustrate the condition of America in the past and ‘promising-current- America’. These logical supports are used to justify Clinton’s intention to unite the two parties.

Speaker 4

There was an evaluation skill performed in analyzing Trump’s speech during the presidential campaign when both sides of the issue of the world’s negative response to immigrant limitation plans in America with the domestic support is opened to a new evidence that American public interest turned to remain as Trump’s preference. ([Rozzaq, Achmad Cholili, 2015](#)) It is an effort to dissect the structure of the two major public opinions, by presenting the components of both of these opinions and each supported by equal strongholds, and the effort ended at the new evidence that Americans support this renew, which dismissed many people’s opinions about the public denial of Trump’s plan. Synthesize skill was performed when considering the other two different poles of some ideas and sources enhancing solution of the world’s protest relating to Trump’s Muslim banning. The first was a neutral source by stating that half of American’s voters supported the idea that made him as a candidate of U.S President from Republic party ([Avicenna, 2015](#)) and the opposing ideas stating that it was not what the American people’s wish to ban Muslim but the existence of Jewish in American politics which raises sentiment and emerging the idea. ([Edelman, Adam, 2016, 2017](#))

These multiple sources were made possible since the issue of Trump’s banning was on the public at the moment, but it needs to recognize the potential effect of those sources to enhance solution showing S4’s weakness in his problem-solving. To perform the Problem Solving skills someone is required to have the ability to find the key aspect of the problem and use fact and the relevant evidence to develop valid conclusion, nevertheless the student failed to give relevant evidence on deciding that the source of violence happens in America mostly because of immigrant and many of them were Muslims, and on stating that this plan emerged due to the emotional appeals for the past tragedy, ([Rachman, Andhita, 2016](#)) surely this statement needs evidence before it comes to valid conclusions or solutions.

Of the overall result, what is interesting is the fact that all students in Reflection skills, the Self Regulation skills show low achievements. Observing Table 1, 75% of these students are at Emerging Level. Most of them failed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own thinking. The personal assumption was found, they tried to find reason or causes of their curiosity and revealed the meaning behind the aims of the spoken discourses, yet they did not do exactly ‘ self-correction or self-examination’ as Self Reflection skills should be due to the fact that they talked about their curiosity alone. The analysis lack of the proposed ideas’ evaluation and correction, nor the analysis of the flaws and advantages of their own thinking. Why were 75% of these students at Emerging level? Interviews with the students note that the students were not used to give introspection and corrections to their own ideas; it is a new thing for Indonesian students to give an evaluation to their own work. In addition, the model of the writing of their final assignment report may indeed not support to write such a self-reflection. ([Olesova, & Borisova, \(2016\)](#))

CDA and its Contribution to Critical Thinking Skills

This study found these students’ tendencies both in the analysis and interpretation when they analyzed the text. Analysis of texts with the CDA approach emphasizes this skill, the impact of the CDA on interpretation - considering and determining whether generalizations or conclusions based on given data are required seen in the results of the students who achieved the 2nd level of performance (prominent) on communication, analysis (interpretation) and synthesis critical skills. This is in line with the main CDA theory which sees the message behind the statement, to read between the lines and to uncover the real intention behind a text. Devices provided by CDA support higher-order thinking. This device was revealed by Fairclough’s three-dimensional model: textual, discourse and social dimensions as a package of analysis from concrete to vague data which must be explored to find the answer. Van Dijk even stated that to understand and see CDA solves the problem of vague opacity in a discursive practice requires at least eight steps ranging from the linguistics, the discourse itself to the society (ideology, power, cognition) the text involved.

This research still needs to deepen its analysis by considering more variables which influence the research result. Besides, the cross-cultural approach might be taken into account to conduct this kind of research, because CDA involves socio-cultural analysis so that each community has characteristics that affect their thinking in analyzing the text. This study examined the product of student teachers at the end of their education through their final projects. High-order thinking in college is a necessity, critical thinking skills need to be a soul in every learning, so that they will be ready to become teachers who not only master their own field but also critical and alert to the surrounding situation as mandated by Indonesian education law.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of CDA in analyzing texts facilitate analysts with deep and comprehensive analytical tools because they involve the linguistic, discourse and socio-cultural dimensions of a text. This research proves that CDA has made the analysts think critically in analyzing texts because most of the research Subjects reached high level especially in communication, analysis (interpretation) and synthesis skills. However, they were at a low level for Reflection (Self-regulating) skill, due to the fact that these students were not accustomed to observing their own analysis

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