Improving the critical thinking skill through discussion method empowerment by using public controversy text in teaching reading

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Abstract - This study aims at (1) to find out whether the empowerment of discussion method with public controversy text can improve critical thinking skill in teaching reading and (2) to find out the steps of the empowerment of discussion method with public controversy text to improve critical thinking skill in teaching reading of class X students of SMA SS. This research is Classroom Action-Based Research. The subjects in this study were students of class X.1, while the object of this study was the ability to think critically. Data collection methods used were observation and test methods. Before the two cycles were carried out, first the initial test activities were carried out. This pre-test activity aims to determine the initial value of critical thinking skills in reading. The results showed that the empowerment of the discussion method with the use of public controversy texts could improve critical thinking skills in reading learning of students in class X.1. Learning is carried out through steps, namely 17 effective learning steps so that they can achieve the learning objectives.

Keywords: discussion method, public controversy text, critical thinking

1. Introduction

In teaching Indonesian, there are 4 (four) aspects of language skill, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four aspects have a close relationship with one another. They are an inter-related unity. As important as other aspects, reading is important to be mastered. Sudiana (2008:2) uttered that reading is the widest world window to master knowledge. From this utterance, there is a term that says 'reading is the window of the world'. According to Soedarso (2005), reading is a complex activity that exerts a large number of fragmentary actions, including the use of understanding or comprehension, imagination, observation, and memory. Concerning reading ability, the important thing is that reading is a complex linguistic skill. Reading is not merely an act of observing written symbols. In reading, there are many skills used by a reader to comprehend the reading. A reader tries to make the symbols to be fully meaningful for him.

Furthermore, Nurhadi (2005) defined reading as a complex and complicated process. Complex means the reading process involves internal factor, i.e., the factors come from the reader such as intelligence, interest, attitude, gift, motivation, and purpose; and external factor, i.e., the factors come from outside of the reader, such as facility of reading, environment, text, and the socio-economic background of the reader.

Reading activity has a strategic value in reaching intelligence. Reading could expand the horizons, insights, and linguistic knowledge. Therefore, a student is demanded to master a reading skill well. To master the skill, the student should be trained properly as well. Besides training the student, the availability of supporting the reading activity could be used as a tool to interact, to get information, and surely to train students critical thinking with the reading. Based on the observation at class X of SMA SS, it was found that students' critical thinking skill in reading is under the standard. In the teaching-learning process, the teacher provided the students with reading text and let them read, and then asking the students to answer some questions without any clarification about some issues that are not comprehended by the students. The teacher did not give sufficient time for the students to deeply and intensively comprehend the reading. Whereas more comprehending the reading, the students will more memorize the information of the text. Therefore, this problem should be handled with a certain method which can make the students more interested, comfortable, and surely understand the reading.

To improve students' critical thinking skills, the researcher decided to use the discussion method by empowering public controversy text as the students' reading. A controversial reading could trigger and stimulate students' critical thinking so they would explore their knowledge and experience to comment on the issue of the reading. The benefit of controversial text is that the issue is interesting and up to date in the public so the students at least know or have early schemata upon the topic of the reading.

The empowerment of controversial text in a printed mass media is appropriate for the needs of students because the topic could trigger students' critical thinking in finding some facts within the reading. Frieda (2007) stated that critical thinking is a systematic way form someone thinking which is considered as a comprehensive discipline attitude based on an intellectual standard in which the result is supported a careful reason. Supported by a discussion with their partners, surely the students will provide a high contribution upon the students reading after interacting with the reading text.

Considering the research background, this study aimed at (1) to find out whether the empowerment of discussion method with public controversy text can improve critical thinking skill in teaching reading of class X students of SMA SS, and (2) to find out the steps of the empowerment of discussion method with public controversy text to improve critical thinking skill in teaching reading of class X students of SMA SS.

2. Method

This study is a classroom action-based research that involved collaboration between the researcher and teacher. Classroom action-based research is a collaborative study among the researcher, teacher, principal as well as school supervisor to improve the teaching-learning process at the class (Sukidin, et al in Ardiani, 2007). It is in line with Wendra (2007) who defined classroom action-based research as a study that is conducted at a class through a certain action to solve the problem faced by the researcher within the learning process.

The subjects of this study were all of class X.1 students of SMA SS. Meanwhile, the object of this study was the students' critical thinking skills in teaching reading of class X.1 SMA SS. It is in line with Wendra (2009) who defined the research object as the thing being studied in the research.

The procedure of classroom action-based research included four steps, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection. Planning is a process of planning the action to improve, fix or change behavior and attitude as the solution (Suyanto, 1997). The steps of this study are as follows.
(1) Conducting early initiation to the school in which this study is conducted; (2) Conducting early observation upon the Indonesian teaching on the reading material; (3) Explaining the method that will be used by the teacher; (4) Developing a teaching scenario. This scenario is developed to ease the teaching-learning process in the class; (5) Preparing the learning source; (6) Preparing the research instrument.

Action means a plan of action that will be conducted to improve, fix or change behavior and attitude as the solution (Suyanto,1997). The class action was in form of a planned-teaching learning activity. Before conducting the action, the researcher made an early introduction to the research subjects. It was intended to get more objective data. It was done because there was a possibility that the students would not concentrate on the teaching process when there was a stranger (someone that they did not know) around them. The action was conducted based on the teaching scenario that had been planned before.

Observation is a way to collect data through observation so the strength and weaknesses of the previous action can be collected. The observation was conducted during the process of teaching to find out the cycle was conducted based on the plan. During the teaching process, the observation was directed to the teaching process and activity of students' reading.
The observation was needed to know the weaknesses of the previous action so it could be used as guidance to improve the following actions. This observation was conducted by the executor of the action as well as the teacher of Indonesian by writing all of the activities during the action. All of the actions were written on the guidance that had been prepared before.

According to Wand and Bown (in Nurkancana & Sunartana, 1990) evaluation is an action or process in determining the value of something. The evaluation was conducted after conducting the action and declared finished. Sudijono (2008) stated that educational evaluation can be defined as an action or activity (which is implemented with a view to) or a process – (which takes place to) determine the value of anything in education, i.e., anything related to, or happens in the education field. So, the evaluation was conducted to know the level of students' success in achieving the determined purpose.

After the steps of planning, action, and observation, the following step was reflection. All of the previous steps were reflected to know the level of achievement. The reflection was conducted at the end of every cycle. This step was intended to review the entire actions that had been done based on the collected data and then there was an evaluation to improve the following action (Arikunto et al, 2008). In this reflection, there was only an evaluation upon the previous action and the implication upon the subjects was the effect of the action. The result of this reflection was done to determine the following action.

To answer this question, the researcher used two data collecting techniques, namely observation method to know the activity of the teacher and students, and written test method to

know the level of students' critical thinking in reading public controversy text. It means that to manage the data, there should be a technique to analyze it. In this study, the researcher analyzed the data by using quantitative and qualitative descriptive data analysis. Quantitative data analysis is a data display by using numbers or based on statistic data, while qualitative descriptive data analysis is a technique of data display that uses a benchmark. This qualitative descriptive data analysis used simple descriptions both using data number or percentage.

The data of students' critical thinking skills in reading and the data of students' responses were analyzed by using quantitative and qualitative descriptive data analysis techniques. The data analysis result was displayed by using words, so a conclusion could be drawn. There were criteria of success used as guidance in taking decisions. The success criteria of students' learning were determined from the minimum score achievement of 75%. In this study, students learning achievement under 75% in cycle 1 should be improved in cycle 2 by reconsidering the data analysis, technique of collecting data, and the method that had been used. Improvement was constantly conducted until the required condition was achieved. In this case, there were only 2 cycles.

3. Results and Discussion

Considering the result of students' reading test through the empowerment of discussion method by using public controversy text in cycle 1, it seemed that the study had been successful. It is because many students did not achieve the minimum passing grade that was 73. Considering the classical mastery percentage, this study was considered successful if 75% of the students achieved a score ≥ 73. Meanwhile, in cycle 1, there were only 9 students, or 45% of students who had passed the passing score or achieve a score ≥ 73. However, the empowerment of the discussion method by using public controversy text had improved the students' critical thinking skills in the teaching reading. It could be seen from the pre-test in which the classical mastery percentage was only 17% and in cycle 1, the classical mastery percentage reached 45%. It means that the critical thinking skill of the students in teaching reading has improved 28%.

The mean score of the students also improved. The students' mean score in the pre-test was 64,4. Meanwhile, in cycle 1, the students' mean score in teaching reading through the empowerment of discussion method by using public controversy text was 72,8. It means that there was an improvement of 8,4. Although there was an improvement, yet this study could not be considered as successful since the classical mastery did not reach 75%.

The data in cycle 2 showed that the action in cycle 2 was successful in improving students' critical thinking skills of class X.1 in teaching reading. It could be seen from the comparison of students' critical thinking skills in cycle 1 and cycle 2. The score in cycle 1 was 72,8 while the score in cycle 2 was 86,9. It means that there was an improvement of 14,1. The improvement was only found in the students' mean scores but also the students' classical mastery.

students' classical mastery in cycle 1 was 45% and it significantly improved in cycle 2 which reached 100%. It means that there was a significant improvement of 55%. Classically, the teaching was considered successful if 75% of the total students inthe class got a minimum 73, so the action could be stopped. In other words, if 75% of the students inthe class got 73 so the study was considered successful.

Based on the success criteria, and considering the students' classical mastery, 75% of students had reached a score ≥ 73. In this study, especially in cycle 2, the students' classical mastery had shown 100%. It means that all of the students could reach the minimum passing grade, which was 73. In other words, all of the students passed the minimum passing grade.

As mentioned previously, one of the correlated studies was a study entitled "The Implementation of Learning Community with Media of controversy Problem to Improve Oral Argument Skill at Class X.1 Students of SMA Negeri 1 Sawan."This study which was conducted by Upriani has a similarity with this present study, i.e., controversy media. The other

similarity is that both of them involved discussion process, both in the learning community and discussion method. The difference is that the study of Upriani involved the variable of teaching speaking while this study involved the variable of teaching reading. The finding of Upriani's study found that in cycle 1, the score was 68,9, and it improved in cycle 2 to be 77,77. The implementation of a learning community with controversial problem media could improve students' oral argument skills.

Nurjaya et al (in Upriani, 2010) stated that the implementation of controversy could interact students' attention in learning so the students' boredom would be gone. The attraction of using critical thinking skills by the student will improve students' knowledge and experience so they will be able to argue logically. By discussing the problem solving of controversy issue, the students' emotion will be involved as well. The benefits of the controversy case as follows:

1. It could attract students' attention to the teaching
2. It could raise students' emotions and passion to give an opinion.

Considering the idea of Nurjaya concerning the benefit of controversy media which is implemented in teaching speaking, the researcher also implemented controversy text media in teaching reading. The result was not too different when the media was implemented in teaching reading.

Based on the data analysis, this study found that there was an improvement of the students' critical thinking skills in teaching reading through the empowerment of discussion method by using public controversy text at class X.1 of SMA SS. Students' critical thinking skill in cycle 1 and cycle 2 was qualified as Good. There are some crucial findings related to empowerment of discussion method by using public controversy text at class X.1 of SMA SS. These findings were (1) the empowerment of discussion method by using public controversy text at class X.1 of SMA SS could improve students critical thinking skill, (2) providing public controversy text with discussion method facilitated students to interact with the reading and made the targeted results satisfactory, (3) giving guidance and reward by the teacher could make the students better.

The empowerment of the discussion method by using public controversy text at class X.1 of SMA SS could improve students' critical thinking skills. It was caused by some factors. First, the choosing and implementation of the discussion method by using public controversy text. The given controversial text was closely related to the life, environment, and experience of the students. By implementing the discussion method by using public controversy text the student became more critical and creative to interact with the written text. Besides that, it also gave a chance for them to share with their friends concerning a difficult issue that they should consider alone. Through the discussion method, they could be easy considering the case in the reading with their friends.

Second, providing other examples that were related to the material. The example or the illustration should be appropriate with the teaching material. Therefore, the example should be made as interesting as possible. Some examples provided by the teacher could inspire the students so they could understand the material easily.

Third, giving guidance and reward by the teacher could make the students better. The teacher has a significant role in the entire teaching process. The effort of the teacher upon the student's guidance should be based on sincerity, willingness to sacrifice, without any motives, and whatever the result, the teacher should appreciate the student's effort whether in failure or even in success. All should be used as a teaching process so the students would not quickly satisfy with the results that had been obtained. Guidance is an integrated part of the entire education to make the students achieve their optimum result. The main function of education is guidance on an individual to meet the needs and desires which are appropriate with his potential so he could reach all social aspects of his life. The teacher's guidance in teaching reading will ease the students to understand the learning material. The obstacle of the students in learning could be solved because the teacher guided them.

Giving reward is an effort to motivate the students to have a good attitude which can be accepted by their environment. Therefore, they will be able to adapt themselves. One of the functions of giving a reward is educating since it shows that students' attitude is appropriate with their environment expectation. In teaching reading, the teacher always gave rewards to the students who achieve a good result. It was done to appreciate students' effort in learning. However, the teacher also encouraged the students who did not get a good result not to be down and be more motivated to get a better result.

There were some steps of empowering discussion method by using public controversy text to improve students' critical thinking skill in teaching reading. These steps are as follows.

(1) Teacher delivered apperception as a way to focus students' attention on the teaching material; (2) The teacher delivered the learning objective and learning indicator; (3) The teacher found out students' prior knowledge by asking and answering questions related to the teaching material; (4) The teacher completed students' answer and explained the teaching material; (5) The teacher provided an opportunity for the students to ask about the teaching material; (6) The teacher showed a controversial text taken from *Kompas* news paper entitled "*UN Jangan Jadi Acuan* (National Examination should not be a Benchmark"; (7) The teacher gave the text to all students; (8) The teacher divided the students into several groups consisting of 2 students; (9) The teacher asked the students to prepare before reading such as minimizing disturbance, sitting properly, and catching a glimpse of the entire reading; (10) Each group read the controversial text; (11) The teacher asked the students to find the main idea, facts, and opinion by summarizing the reading in few sentences; (12) All students answered the prepared questions; (13) The teacher asked the students to discuss with their partners; (14) The teacher discussed the reading with the students and solved the problem faced by them; (15) The teacher gave encouragement and reward to the students who answered excellently; (16) The teacher advised the students related to the teaching reading which involved critical thinking skills; (17) The teacher and the students concluded the discussed material and closed the lesson by closing the greeting.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research problem, research finding, and discussion, there are two conclusions as follows. The empowerment of the discussion method by using public controversy text can improve students' critical thinking skills at class X.1 of SMA SS. There were 17 effective steps of empowering discussion method by using public controversy text to improve students' critical thinking skill in teaching reading at class X.1 of SMA SS as follows, teacher delivered apperception, learning objective and learning indicator, found out students' prior knowledge, completed students' answer as well as explained the teaching material, provided opportunity for the students to ask about the teaching material, teacher showed a controversy text, gave the controversy text, divided the students into several groups, asked the students to prepare before reading such as minimizing disturbance, sitting properly, and catching a glimpse the entire reading, each group read the controversy text, teacher asked the students to find the main idea, facts, and opinion by summarizing the reading in few sentences, all students answered the prepared questions, teacher asked the students to discuss with their partner, teacher discussed the reading with the students and solved the problem faced by them, teacher gave an encouragement and reward to the students who answered excellently, teacher advised the students related to the teaching reading which involved critical thinking skill, and teacher with students concluded the discussed material and closed the lesson by closing greeting. From these 17 steps, the most dominant step that made the students more active in learning was giving motivation in form of encouragements such as giving compliments, applause, and so on. Besides that, there was a correction upon students' bad attitude during the teaching-learning process. The teacher reprimanded and emphasized students who were less disciplined not to

laugh at the courage of their friends in giving an opinion. With this correction, the other students became more discipline in following the teaching-learning process.

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