EXPLORING TEACHER EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDING OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ENGLISH READING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in the Freire's (1971) critical pedagogy premise stating that education should impact social change and reading words should be followed by reading the world, this study explores the experiences of English language teachers who teach English reading classes with the critical pedagogy approach. We employed qualitative research with a case study as the research design to dig into the depth of teachers' perspectives. The data were garnered through in-depth interviews with four lecturers and analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The present study revealed that teachers' understanding of critical pedagogy is not explicitly stated by defining or explaining the notion of critical pedagogy. However, some stages and components of critical pedagogy can be identified, showing that to a certain degree the teachers implement critical pedagogy in their reading classes.

Key Words: Critical pedagogy; critical reading; problematizing text; transformative education

ABSTRAK

Berdasarkan premis pedagogi kritis Freire (1971) yang menyatakan bahwa pendidikan harus berdampak pada perubahan sosial dan membaca kata-kata harus diikuti dengan membaca dunia, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman guru bahasa Inggris yang mengajar membaca bahasa Inggris dengan pendekatan pedagogi kritis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi kasus sebagai desain penelitian untuk menggali lebih dalam tentang perspektif guru. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan empat dosen dan dianalisis mengikuti analisis tematik Braun dan Clarke (2006). Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pemahaman guru tentang pedagogi kritis tidak dinyatakan secara eksplisit dengan mendefinisikan atau menjelaskan pengertian pedagogi kritis. Akan tetapi beberapa tahapan dan komponen pedagogi kritis dapat diidentifikasi yang menunjukkan bahwa guru pada taraf tertentu menerapkan pedagogi kritis di kelas membaca.

Kata Kunci: pedagogi kritis; membaca kritis; pendidikan transformatif

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of Critical Pedagogy (CP) in Indonesian Higher education must be a priority. Indonesia has experienced being ruled by an authoritarian regime for tens of years. Furthermore, in the post-reformation era, it is such irony since the democracy in Indonesia shows regression (Power & Warburton, 2020). The aforementioned histories might have resulted in the alienation of critique and the suppression of sensitivity toward social issues that seemed to have penetrated the educational system (Hayati, 2010).

In education, the practice of the banking system of education emphasizing the knowledge capacity in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor of knowledge (Freire, 1970) is undeniable and the banking system is continuing partly due to low interest and motivation of the students in the learning process (Kalsoom, Kalsoom, & Mallick, 2020). More importantly, the development of information and communication technology not only brings positive impacts but could also bring about negative consequences on society such as spreading hoaxes and fake news so critical thinking skills should be a priority in all levels of Indonesian education, especially in Higher Education.

The alternative could be empowering education that is structured to empower individuals or collectives as the agents of social changes through a critical pedagogy approach. Thus, research on the application of critical pedagogy becomes an essential endeavor to reach better education. Also, it is hoped that more teachers of English and teacher educators will gain better insight into the feasibility of integrating perspectives of critical pedagogy to possibly transform the classroom, the community, and the broader society.

In Indonesian English language teaching (ELT), CP has been introduced in academia by teacher researchers (e.g. Mambu, 2009; Mambu, 2011; Mambu, 2018; Mambu, 2022a; Mambu, 2022; Puspita & Mambu, 2020) which has purposes not only to develop English language skills but also develop a critical consciousness of injustice (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Ingrained in Paulo Freire's (1970) book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, CP in language teaching tries to transform the classrooms by basing teaching and learning on "students' local culture", utilizing "L1 as a resource", students' real-life concerns, and making learners aware of issues faced by marginalized groups

(Akbari, 2008, p.278-281). Critical pedagogy in English language teaching is relevant to critical language pedagogy (CLP) introduced by Crookes (2021) and expanded in more detail by Crookes and Abednia (2022) who conceptualize three general key concepts of critical language pedagogy. The first concept is that "critical pedagogy is democratic", and intended to lead to increased democracy in society, including "democracy in the classroom" (Crookes and Abednia, 2022, p.8). Secondly, a critical pedagogy classroom is "dialogical", which is generally "exploratory and discussion-oriented" (Crookes and Abednia, 2022, p.9). Thirdly, even though it is easy to define but it is difficult in many conditions of practice, "critical pedagogy is action-oriented" (Crookes and Abednia, 2022, p.9.).

Attempts to incorporate critical language pedagogy in English language teaching and language teacher education programs have been documented globally. Some previous studies have proposed strategies to prepare English language teacher education programs to be critically oriented (e.g., Gray, 2019; Hawkins, 2004; Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Akbari (2008) paved the way for critical pedagogy in English language teaching by delineating CP principles and proposing some areas for CP

practitioners. CP was also brought to life in an Indonesian ELT classroom by Mambu (2009) who used Codes to teach English to develop both language skills and students' criticality. Gustine (2014) tried to bring critical literacy to one of the secondary schools in Bandung, West Java by doing participatory research with a graduate teacher student in a professional learning program. This research is considered to be successful in the sense of designing and implementing critical literacy through a professional learning program in an EFL setting. The program is also successful in helping students to become more critical, tolerant, and socially aware and assisting the teacher to change his teaching practice from a "banking" or transmissive approach to one aligned with a "critical pedagogy" (Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy is also worthwhile to develop students' critical consciousness (Abednia & Izadinia, 2013; Jeyaraj, 2019; Mambu, 2018; Mambu, 2022a). Recently, Mambu (2022a) has co-constructed a critical ELT curriculum as an attempt to bring CP into life and integrated ELTL with global issues, such as sustainable development goals (SDGs) to foster students' criticality (Mambu, 2022b).

The previous studies show the possibility of enacting CP in ELT and showcase some positive impacts;

however, the implementation of this critical pedagogy in language teaching and learning is not without challenges. Several empirical studies which investigated the challenges of implementing critical language teaching in several settings can be identified (e.g. Pessoa and Freitas, 2012; Lin, 2004; Liyanage, 2012). Although critical pedagogy was accepted by students pleasantly pertaining to their language development and critical thinking as a result of engagement in the dialogic process of critical language teaching some issues emerged pertaining to students' positions and academic voices, the choice and the length of themes, and the conception of language as social practice (Pessoa and Freitas, 2012). Also, Liyanage (2012) discussed the challenges of the practice of critical pedagogy in ESL/EFL teaching in South Asia including home-grown and foreign, particularly on the tension between local and international geopolitical tendencies. She further suggested that "we need to be critical of both traditional and indigenous approaches to education the modern ones in order to be effective (Liyanage, 2012, p.148).

To sum up, previous studies show the possibility of introducing or incorporating CP in ELT classrooms and English education programs and some challenges in the implementation of CP in those settings. This makes the researchers realize that there is some area that needs to be further investigated for example how teacher educators or lecturers understand critical pedagogy and how they try to enact critical pedagogy in their teaching practice, particularly on teaching English reading.

CP is timely since the Indonesian ministry of education, culture (MoEC) has launched new curriculum called *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to learn) with the goals to "meet the demands, current changes, and the need to connect and match with the world of business and industry, and to prepare students in the world of work" (Prahani et al., 2020) instead of enacting social justice (Freire, 2000). A CP approach needs to be enacted in this educational context to counter the neoliberal ideology which is lurking in the so-called "freedom' oriented program (Freire, 2000; Kubota and Miller, 2017, cited in Sondari, 2021, p. 11). Besides, research on the implementation of CP in ELT needs to be extended to different grounds and contexts. Little has been known about teachers' understanding about CP and the implementation of CP in Islamic-based universities which hold the unity of sciences–incorporating science and

religion, such as universities under the ministry of religious affairs (MoRA).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is first to investigate how teachers understand the notion of critical pedagogy. The second is to explore how critical pedagogy is implemented in the reading classroom. What follows is the description of our research method and findings by following the order of the research questions.

METHOD

Research design

This study used a case study research design to answer the research questions. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on a bounded system. The bounded system means that the case is separated for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries (Creswell, 1998). Stakes (1995, as cited in Hood, 2009) said that the case study aims to illuminate a particular issue, problem, or theory. As a qualitative study, the data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and continuously. A case study design can be quite tentative; the research questions become more solid after analyzing the first interview, diary entry, or

observation (Heighham and Croker, 2009). There are several types of cases including single individuals, several individuals, a program, events, or activities (Creswell, 1998). In this study, there were individuals including lecturers and/or teacher educators as the cases. Besides that, the type of case study in this research is 'instrumental case study' which is intended to provide insight into a wider issue while the actual case is of secondary interest; it facilitates our understanding of something else (Dornyei, p.152). We used the instrumental case study because this study is aimed at investigating a wider issue in the implementation of critical pedagogy in critical reading classes. Since this research constitutes an exploratory study, the investigation is limited on how teacher educators and lecturers try to articulate their understanding of CP perspectives and how they try to enact CP understanding into their teaching practices, particularly on teaching English reading.

Participants

The participants of this research are four lecturers of English at Islamic Higher Education Institution from four different universities and regions. Based on their curriculum vitae and their story when the interview was conducted, three of them have been

teaching English for more than ten years, and one claims to be a new lecturer. Based on the informal conversation before the interview, they stated that they had experience teaching reading for some years and had moved from teaching reading for comprehension into more critical reading, as seen in Table 1. The recruitment of the participants first relies on the data from the higher education data sources (PDDIKTI) to identify their teaching experience, particularly in teaching Critical Reading. Then, we contacted the participants via email or Whatsapp which is given by colleagues who already knew the aspiring participants. All of the participants voluntarily signed the consent form for this study and were available to provide the information asked by the researchers. To keep the confidentiality of the data, pseudonyms are used.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

No.	Name	Gender	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Teaching Expertise
1.	Emala	Female	11 years	Master of Education	Intensive Reading, Extensive reading, and Critical Reading
2.	Ilham	Male	22 years	Doctor of Philosophy	Vocabulary, Critical Thinking reading, Cross-cultural understanding, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics
3.	Harun	Male	15 years	Doctor of English Education	Inferential Reading, Critical Reading
4.	Farid	Male	5 years	Master of English Education	Reading Comprehension, Critical Reading, Listening, Writing, and Speaking

Data collection technique

In collecting data, we employed semi-structured interviews to elicit the participants' experiences implementing a critical pedagogy approach in their English reading classroom. Before we conducted the first interview, the guidelines of the interviews were reviewed by the expert to get feedback from the expert. Then, the interview questions were piloted to someone who has expertise in critical pedagogy and has research publications regarding critical pedagogy. Having revised the interview guidelines, we conducted four separate interviews with four participants. The first interview was conducted with Emala in the first week of April 2022. The interviews with Pak Ilham were conducted in the second week of April 2022. The third interview with Pak Harun was held in the second week of May 2022. Lastly, we interviewed Pak Farid in the mid of June 2022. All interviews were conducted online via Zoom due to the participants' willingness to prevent being infected by the Covid-19 virus. To avoid language hindrances, we used Bahasa Indonesia in the interviews and it is also based on the participants' preferences. Then, the transcripts were translated into English by the researchers.

Data analysis

Data for the study were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six thematic analysis stages, including familiarizing ourselves with data, generating initial codes, searching themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming the themes. To begin with, the researchers tried to familiarize the participants' responses to the interview by listening to the audio recordings of the interviews several times. Then, we transcribed the recordings verbatim and read the transcriptions several times to understand the participants' responses and interpret the participants' statements. After that, we highlighted the important statements of the interviewees and found the code of the statements by following the theoretical frameworks, including Crookes's (2013) components of critical pedagogy and Naiditch's (2017) steps of critical pedagogy in teaching reading to capture the moments in which Critical Pedagogy was implemented in the reading class.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings explore participating lecturers' understanding of CP, the implementation of CP in the English reading classes, and the challenges when implementing the CP in the English reading classes. The study's findings are presented by following the research questions and under the shade of emerging themes.

Teachers' understanding of critical pedagogy

Teachers participating in this study were still unfamiliar with CP. This can be seen from the statements of one participant when asked about CP who said that "Not yet, but if critical education, in general, is possible, for example, I know from Paulo Freire or educational liberation, but I don't remember specifically" (**Ilham/Interview**). From this data, it can be seen that the notion of critical pedagogy is not always recognized by the participants. However, the participant understood the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy, especially in the lens of linguistics, Pak Ilham could mention two types of linguistics: descriptive and critical linguistics. He also knew the prominent figures of critical pedagogy, such as Paulo Friere, Fairclough, and van Dijk. This shows that he has the foundation of a critical perspective of language teaching.

The unfamiliarity with CP in English language teaching is also seen in the interview with Bu Emala. She could not explain clearly what critical pedagogy is. But, surprisingly, she could give illustrations of how she

understood the implementation of the principles of CP in the classroom, especially in the Critical Reading unit. The excerpt below could be the proof as Bu Emala narrated:

> "If we see it by the definition, maybe I cannot explain it in more detail, but with some kind of implementation like I said before, I emphasize it more to my students about the implementation.
>
> ... I put more emphasis on the students that in every aspect, not only as a teacher or lecturer, not only in the educational situation but in every aspect when we are facing some issues, we are required to be critical. For example, when I was asking my students about some global issue or their neighborhood issue, will you directly face the issue based on your perspective or will you try to see it from another point of view? If you only see it based on your perspective, then you are not ... trying to solve the issue or face the issue. If you are already thinking critically, you should not stop there. You are supposed to find out the background of the issue, what is underlying the issue, what makes you ... competent enough to comment on the issue, and what is

your relationship with the issue". **(Emala/Interview)**

From the excerpt of the interview above, it can be understood that teachers encourage students to be critical thinkers; students need to read issues from various perspectives. They need to compare one perspective from one source to another. This understanding of critical reading is in line with Wallace's concept of critical reading (2003).

Furthermore, teachers' understanding of CP is then explained in another excerpt as follows.

> "After that, we usually will try to lead them to take their role. Their actual role is not only as students but also as the Agent of Change. That is when I make them realize that their roles will not stop only if they are learning. Students will have to make a positive influence on their surroundings, show them your competency to analyze some issues, to face some issues, how you can pass it on to others, so if some people have a little misunderstanding about the issue, ... because they are just got some insights from you, or some new information, it can make them have a better point of view". **(Emala/Interview)**

From the excerpt, Emala understands that CP is the implementation of students' critical thinking about issues and spreading their understanding about issues to others, especially those who need insight from intellectuals. She also mentioned that students play a role as agents of social change. She believes that students should bring positive influence to society while and/or after they are learning at the university.

Furthermore, another teacher knows more about critical literacy than critical pedagogy. For example, Harun was engaged in the topic of critical literacy in his research. He also knew about critical literacy pedagogy. According to Harun, CP is a more general topic or the shade of critical literacy pedagogy. He used literary works to teach critical reading in the classroom since he is a lecturer of literature studies.

> I have heard more about Critical Literacy as one of my research projects is using Critical Literacy. Then for Critical Pedagogy, I am focusing more on Critical Literature Pedagogy. **(Harun/Interview)**

Pak Farid also admitted that he has just heard about critical pedagogy even though he has been teaching some courses at the university, such as critical reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Compared to other lecturers, Pak Farid is considered the youngest one and has the least experience in teaching. Even though he has not been familiar with critical pedagogy, he believes that language, culture, and ideology are intertwined. He mentioned that "A person's culture can show or be illustrated by his language as well as the ideology he holds" **(Farid/Interview)**.

In sum, teachers' understanding of the notion of critical pedagogy is not explicitly stated but they understand some perspectives of CP and they believe in some principles of critical pedagogy as stated when the interviews were undertaken. Based on the analysis of teachers' understanding of critical pedagogy and their belief in principles of CP to some extent the teachers in this study could be categorized as 'critical pedagogues', as defined by Jeyaraj (2014, p. 16) as "ELT teachers who draw on the foundational values and theories of critical pedagogy". What follows are the findings related to the teachers' experiences implementing CP in the reading class.

How is critical pedagogy implemented in the English reading class?

Reading as a Practice of Knowledge Reproduction

Reading has been known as a method to develop language skills as well as developing content knowledge of certain areas (Rudman, 1993; Smallwood, 2004). According to Naiditch (2017, p.88), to develop reading ability, learners need to be taught not only to grasp information presented in the text but also to "activate their background knowledge, make comparisons and connections (analysis), and create new knowledge (synthesis)". More critically, teaching reading should provide opportunities for students to interpret texts in multiple ways. Equally important, critical reading "requires developing an awareness of how the themes that students read can lead to individual and collective transformation" (Naiditch, 2017, p. 88).

Referring to interview data, Pak Ilham believes in the principle that reading is not enough to grasp knowledge. Rather, it should be producing new knowledge.

"I am a little bit affected by education in India. It turns out that reading is a must, especially for education in India. For instance, the teaching method is to produce knowledge, not get knowledge, not receptive, so there is synthesis there". **(Ilham/Interview)**

It is also interesting to note that Pak Harun emphasizes the importance of giving opportunities for students to interpret the reading texts in multiple ways as narrated in the following excerpt.

"Oh, yes, it turns out that interpretation is not only based on one standard. But we can also find different interpretations. … you don't have to be the same as other people are. Yes, you can show the different interpretations, as long as following a logical process and academic process without having too far interpreting". **(Harun/Interview).**

Connecting Reading with Real-Life Issues

According to Bu Emala, reading is often considered a boring activity by her students, and the literacy level in Indonesia is quite low, which demands her to make the reading class enjoyable. Some measures were undertaken, for example by bringing global issues and/or issues related to students' life into the class and having students discuss the issues in the class. Emala encouraged students to express their

opinions related to what they read. As narrated in the excerpt below.

"So, in Critical Reading, the interaction is more like a discussion… encouraging the students to always share their opinion in class. So, the class will not be quiet, instead, there will always be some discussion between one student with another". **(Emala/Interview)**

Ibu Emala emphasizes that teaching reading should not stop on developing critical thinking, it should also bring impact on others as she narrated in the following excerpt.

"I put more emphasis on my students about how you can implement your critical thinking or implement what you have already known, what you can analyze from some issues, then what is the impact to others, after that you can share it with more people." **(Emala/Interview)**

She also asked her students to connect reading with real-life issues. Any issues are allowed to be brought into the classrooms. As she narrated:

"As I have mentioned before, I always ask my students to analyze some information or text, and connect it with some currently happening issues or issues in their

environment. It can be … gender issue, even if it is a taboo issue, that is fine." **(Emala/Interview)**

In sum, teachers in this study have understood how to teach reading more critically and know how to make reading classrooms to be more engaging as well as relate teaching reading with real-life issues. This practice of teaching is in line with the principles of CP which emphasized reading words and reading the world as suggested by Freire and Macedo (1987).

Problematizing the Texts as the Practice of CP

According to Naiditch (2017, p. 93) texts are not always "right". Therefore, in critical reading class as Naiditch (2017, p.93) suggested that "they [students] need to be taught to argue with text, to agree and disagree with the authors, to confront what is being read". Teachers need to encourage students to have a skeptical attitude (Naiditch, 2017).

Drawing on the data from interviews with the teachers, there are several important findings on how teachers tried to encourage students to problematize texts. Ingrained with critical theory, Pak Ilham believes that all texts have semiotic symbols and they are always meaningful. Secondly, texts

are constructed deliberately, not by accident.

"Because it was an intentional construct, then it always has certain goals but I'm not saying negative, but obviously, there's power, there's the influence of the author's ideology" **(Ilham/Interview)**.

In a similar vein, Ibu Emala also encouraged her students to have a skeptical attitude toward the text. As she narrates as follows.

"So, in the Critical Reading class, I connect it … more with techniques such as Critical Thinking. So, when they are … facing the text, I ask them to be more suspicious." **(Emala/Interview)**

She further explained that when she taught critical reading, she asked students to be suspicious about the texts they read. For example, she asked students to analyze who is the writer of the texts, what their backgrounds are, and why the writers wrote the texts. Pak Harun also invited his students to analyze the representations of Muslims in the literature written by Westerners.

An important point was also made by Pak Ilham in his class. He encouraged his students to ask questions about every text, not only written texts but also multi-modal texts. And in understanding the texts, students should achieve not only comprehension but could find the implicit meaning of the texts. He did not want his students to be trapped with technical or mechanical thinking. He even criticized the learning method of teaching reading TOEFL, such as finding the reference of the words, and synonyms. This is because he did not want his students to be dominated by the way of thinking or the logic of the reading exercises like in TOEFL. He contends that "God does give our minds that are borderless and timeless even imaginative thinking, thinking is no longer descriptive but reflective" **(Ilham/Interview)**.

He is optimistic that students have the potential to think critically about the issues related to students' life, education, and world issues (e.g. Palestine). In contrast, students felt that the way of teaching practiced by Pak Ilham became more complex. They thought that the learning became more difficult. But Pak Ilham convinced the students that the critical approach to reading texts is important for the development of their critical thinking. Humorously, he said that if you want to get a good score on TOEFL you just need two or three months to practice for the test, you can achieve that.

Becoming Active Readers by Developing Horizontal Relationships

Naiditch (2017) argues that to make students become active readers, their level of reading must be elevated to become a co-writer of a text by empowering them to dialogue with texts, identify the perspective of the text, and contrast with their own. In so doing, Naiditch (2009) recommended *a horizontal learning pattern,* "where everyone's knowledge and backgrounds are recognized and learners' contributions and perspectives are encouraged and valued as much as that of the teacher or the authors of a text" (Naiditch, 2017, p. 94).

Pak Ilham also argues that power relation matters in the teaching of reading**.** He also suggests that students should have more power concerning the teacher in the class as he narrated in the following excerpt.

> "The relationships I build are power relations where I give my students more power, and also more appreciation when they can construct arguments both orally and in writing." **(Ilham/Interview)**

> "If our power relation is good, both the author and the reader are equal, for example, Bourdieu and Wodak also provide the basics for reinforcing the critical theory that the text is not as it is but the text is always constructed by three things for example from the context of the situation, there is a field, … tenor, … mood and there is also the name of the cultural context that is intertwined and the position of the author if not approached critically, usually the author will have a very strong hegemony towards its readers". **(Ilham/Interview)**

The interview with Pak Harun shows that he holds the principle of the horizontal relationship between teacher and student. In class, he usually calls his students a friend. This is to build an egalitarian relationship. At first, his approach is considered awkward by students; but students accept this approach eventually. Pak Harun felt that creating an equal relationship could increase students' engagement when participating in online discussions even though he also thinks that students' engagement may also be influenced by the students' motivation. In a similar vein, Pak Farid who is the youngest lecturer in this study usually builds a close relationship with students. He is often involved in some activities organized by the students. In sum, creating horizontal relationships between students and teachers appears to be the principles held by participants in this study.

Observable Components of CP

The practice of critical reading modeled by Naiditch (2017) can be an indication of the implementation of CP. Likewise, the components of CP proposed by Crookes (2013) could be the indication of the CP. What follows describes some observable component of CP based on the lecturers' reports.

Critical Content in Materials and Codes

Based on the interview with Pak Ilham, the data show that critical content used to teach reading is about Jihad and Islamic moderation. Jihad is used as the critical content since misunderstandings about jihad are still happening, so Pak Ilham brought this into the class. Also, he brought the issues about Islamic moderation in the class since this topic has become the mainstream discussion among Indonesian Muslim scholars, even the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs tries to bring Islamic moderation values to the front through several programs, such as a course of Islamic moderation in several universities. Pak Ilham narrates:

"First, I chose the issues of jihad. I think that's important and we have a lot of resources now with the internet. The second one we usually use religious

moderation, which has a lot of resources written in English, so it's not a literary issue, for example, classics or modern literary texts about the West which used to be common in developing language skills." **(Ilham/Interview)**

From the excerpt, Pak Ilham also emphasizes that he used locally made materials, not the materials imported from the West as it had been practiced some time ago. "Learning English in the past was filled with Western imaginations" **(Interview/Ilham)**. In the interview, he said that he doesn't want to rely too much on the Western idea.

He was also confident with the locally made materials, especially authentic materials, such as Journal articles or Newspaper articles. He used journal articles, books, and newspaper articles as the codes for teaching reading. In the interview, he talked about using articles from IJIMS (International journal of Indonesian Muslim Society), which is a reputable journal that belongs to one of the Islamic State Universities under the ministry of religious affairs. He also mentioned that other codes used to teach reading in the classroom are newspaper articles written by him in the opinion rubric of prominent

Indonesian newspapers written in English.

In contrast, Bu Emala used literary works, such as short stories to teach critical reading. One of the assignments for students is making a review of a short story. Similarly, Pak Harun also uses literary works to teach critical reading. He uses literary works, such as novels, to trigger students' critical thinking. Students are encouraged to analyze the tone, and mood of the literary works. He also encouraged students to identify the representation of Islam in the text they read as narrated in the excerpt.

We start to introduce …how the work represents Muslims, for example. Is it true that we can see the characters even though they are not Islamic stories? **(Harun/Interview)**

Regarding critical content materials and codes, some teachers in this study used critical issues that happened in Indonesia. Since this study was conducted in the Islamic Higher Education Institutions, the critical issues about Islam were presented in the classroom. They also used codes to trigger students' critical thinking.

Critical, Democratic, and Participatory Assessment

Based on the critical pedagogy components Crookes (2013) suggested, the assessment should be critical, democratic, and participatory. Drawing on the data from the interviews, the participants to some degree show critical, democratic, and participatory assessment. Overall, they suggested that the assessment should have outcomes or real work. The assessment should not assess students' comprehension of the texts. Instead, they have to be able to implement their comprehension and their critical thinking skills to make or produce new knowledge. For example, Ibu Emala asked her students to write a critical review of short stories. The review should critically analyze the author's implicit purposes and connect their understanding of the reading texts with the relevant issues surrounding society or their real life. She also asked her students to review the text orally in the form of a video. This is an alternative assessment to accommodate the different strengths and weaknesses of each student.

Similarly, Pak Ilham asked his students to review books in a limited number of words, like 600-900 words. Students are allowed to choose their reading or pick the options given by the

teacher for example the biography of Abdul Kalam, the first Muslim president of India, and the power of ideas written by B.J Habibie. They were assigned to make a summary or synopsis of the book they had read. Not only that, they need to justify their summary with solid arguments by providing other sources or their reflections.

Lecturers' Self-reported Challenges in Implementing CP

Previous research finds some challenges in the implementation of CP. In this study three main challenges were also found. Firstly, students' participation and involvement in the discussion about the texts are still low. According to Ilham, even though this is still an assumption, it is due to cultural handicaps, which majority of students are alumni of traditional pesantren. The power relation in pesantren is still vertical, meaning that santri always listen and obey their kyai. The tradition of conveying ideas or opinions is uncommon. He used to be a santri and he admitted that the power relation between santri and kyai (students and teachers) is unequal.

"The tradition of expressing thoughts and opinions in pesantren is lacking. It's a cultural handicap because I also reflect when I was at pesantren (boarding school), I was more into *sami'na wa ato'na* (listen and obey). It's very rare to give an opinion in front of the Kyai. I listen more to him when reading the book and giving the *syarah* (explanation) of the book, so dialogue is rare."
(Ilham/Interview)

The reason for students' passiveness in the critical reading class is due to low English proficiency. Students who have low English abilities face two problems. The first problem is to understand the texts which are in English and the second one they have to deliver opinions in English. The measure can be done for the second reason for example allowing students to use their L1 when delivering opinions. However, he thinks that the use of L1 in the classroom could be a violation since the students are prospective English teachers who must be able to speak English. The students' passiveness in the class could also be influenced by students' low motivation and low level of literacy. They think that reading is a tiresome activity.

The second challenge of implementing CP in the reading classroom is the problem of online learning. An unstable internet connection may hinder students from interacting with their peers to have dialogue. Emala, Harun, and Farid

confirmed this challenge since they were conducting online learning when teaching the critical reading class.

Thirdly, from a personal point of view, the challenge of implementing critical pedagogy is about the perception of critical thinking. "The figures we cite that we consider critical, which turn out to be no longer critical", Said Pak Ilham. Therefore, he suggested that we have to update our understanding of critical thinking. We need to continue seeking information, for example about critical discourse analysis. Lastly, making students understand critical thinking is another challenge that can't be denied as narrated by Pak Ilham.

"Then another challenge is to make students understand critical thinking. Now I am indeed thinking about dealing with students' difficulties with critical thinking, and it seems that teachers need to make guidelines about stages such as higher order thinking skills. I will also give a limitation from low order thinking to high order thinking along with operational verbs".
(Ilham/Interview)

Discussion

This section will discuss three main issues that emerge from the finding. First, teachers' understanding of the notion of critical pedagogy will be looked at closely. Our analysis revealed that teachers are still unfamiliar with the notion of critical pedagogy, especially when it comes to the definition of this notion. However, data from the interview show their understanding of critical pedagogy perspectives, especially when it is linked to teaching critical reading units. They aspire that students can develop their critical thinking when teaching critical reading. It is in line with the philosophy of education suggested by Paulo Freire: "The purpose of education is to develop critical thinking by presenting the people's situation to them as a problem so that they can perceive, reflect, and act on it" (Crawford-Lange, 1981, p. 259). In reading the texts, for example, the 'word' and the 'world' (cf, Freire, 1971). In regards to the unfamiliarity with the notion of critical pedagogy, the previous research confirms; for example, Puspita and Mambu's (2020) study shows that several indicators of critical pedagogy in the classroom activities and learning process can be observed, yet teachers are not familiar with the notion of critical pedagogy. They surely implement some critical

aspects in their teaching but they "just don't know what they know" (Wink, 1999, p.33).

Second, the indicators of the implementation of critical pedagogy in reading class, including the steps of implementing critical pedagogy in the reading class and the components of critical pedagogy, are illuminated here. Regarding the implementation of critical pedagogy in the critical reading course, it can be seen that teachers to some extent have implemented the steps of teaching reading by following the perspectives of critical pedagogy as suggested by Naiditch (2017). In the step of *teachers' understanding about reading*, teachers state that reading texts is not enough to merely grasp knowledge, rather it should be creating new knowledge. In a broader scope, "studying is a form of reinventing, recreating, re-writing, and this is a subject's, not object's task" (Freire, 1985). In so doing, "Learners enter into the process of learning not by acquiring facts, but by constructing their reality in social exchange with others" (Wallerstein, 1987, p. 34). The finding of this study also confirms that reading should have a connection with real-life issues. In Freire's term, it is called "reading the word reading the world". In this study, relating reading with real-life issues could increase students' motivation to read since reading is

considered boring for some students; therefore, some measures should be taken.

Another issue arising from the finding relates to *the problematization of the relationship between text and reader.* Teachers have shown their understanding of how to see texts from critical perspectives. Texts always have symbolic meaning and are constructed deliberately, not by accident. Therefore, all texts are not neutral, there is always intention behind the production of certain types of texts. As a consequence, when reading texts, students need to challenge the arguments conveyed through the texts. This finding reflects what has been the central premise of Freire's (1971) critical pedagogy asserting that "education is not neutral; whether it occurs in a classroom or a community setting, the interaction of teacher and student does not take place in a vacuum. People bring their cultural expectations, experiences of social discrimination and life pressures, and their strengths in surviving. Education starts from the experiences of people, and either reinforces or challenges the existing social forces that keep them passive" (Wellerstein, 1987, p. 33).

The passivity of the class becomes problematic when teachers implement critical pedagogy. It is assumed that "the students in East Asian countries

are submissive and obedient and the teachers are authoritative and authoritarian; therefore, the classrooms are supposedly rigid, hierarchical, which in turn makes discussion between students and teachers difficult (Shin and Crookes, 2005, p. 99). The data from the interview revealed that teachers in this study challenge the assumption by creating *horizontal relationships with students*. One teacher even claims that he gives more power to students. Also, in the critical reading classroom they emphasize the relationship between the writer and reader is equal; therefore, reading texts needs to be followed by a critical approach. However, the students' responses to the implementation of critical reading are not always good. Some students in Pak Ilham's class complained about the lesson since it became more complicated according to students' beliefs. Most students believe that learning a language is for instrumental purposes (e.g, getting a higher score on the test), while in critical pedagogy the goal of learning a language is not limited to achieving a high score on the test. Instead, "it aims to give students a language of critique to achieve equality and social justice or effect social transformation" (Edelsky, 1999; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Shor & Freire, 1985 as cited in Ko, 2013, p. 91).

To shed light more on the implementation of critical pedagogy in the reading classroom, some components of critical pedagogy suggested by Crookes (2013) were investigated. The analysis of the findings revealed that the components of critical pedagogy identified in this study include negotiated syllabus, critical content in materials and codes, critical, democratic, and participatory assessment. The aforementioned components of critical pedagogy are observed in the findings; however, the negotiated syllabus is not optimally implemented by the teachers. This is because most of the teachers have made the syllabus or the lesson plans. Also, the involvement of students in constructing the syllabus is under consideration.

In regards to critical contents in materials, from interview data, particularly with Pak Ilham, the critical contents arising in the materials are about Jihad and Islamic moderation. The issue of Jihad is still contested and sometimes it is misunderstood, therefore bringing the issue in the classroom is important. Students can understand the issue not as a dogma but through critical considerations. This is one of the obligations of educational institutions that are expected to contribute to handling controversial issues and promote public

understanding (K. Flensner, Larsson, & Säljö, 2019). More importantly, the issue of Islamic moderation is used as the critical content of the materials. Bringing Islamic moderation into the class discussion which aims to promote the moderate values of Islam in Indonesia is imperative since this is situated in the students' lives. Campaigning for the moderation of Islam through dialogue in the classroom will be more meaningful compared to preaching in the mosque for example. By dialogue, students can reflect and act on it which results in praxis (Freire, 1971).

More importantly, the use of journal articles, newspapers, and books as codes in teaching reading is one of the findings of this study. From the interview data, Pak Ilham talked much about the utilization of locally made teaching materials. He did not rely on materials imported from the West. This is because the resources of materials written in English are now abundant. Journal articles written by Indonesian scholars are easy to find, even Pak Ilham wrote some articles in the journal and opinion articles in the newspapers. The use of authentic and local reading materials is a good decision. Ko (2013) contends that authentic materials, such as newspaper articles from American newspapers are considered inappropriate for critical literacy

instruction because the texts used in the class should relate to students' lives and experiences (Shor, 1992).

As part of the critical components, critical, democratic, and participatory assessment is also explained by the teachers with some variations between one teacher and another. The analysis of the interview and the analysis of documentation revealed that teachers tried to implement the critical pedagogy-based assessment. For example, teachers asked students to make annotated bibliographies or make reviews of short stories. Instead of giving a comprehension test in the form of multiple choices or filling in the blanks, teachers asked students to reproduce knowledge by making critical reviews of books or short stories. The assessment becomes more democratic since students are allowed to choose the books or short stories based on their interests. Even so, the assessment explained by teachers has not met the assessment from a critical perspective when assessing a text and students' reading comprehension that needs to consider what students take with them from the reading activity and how reading affects their lives (Naiditch, 2017).

Even though the indicators of implementing critical pedagogy in the

reading classroom can be identified, the challenges in implementing critical pedagogy are undeniable. The main challenge is the students' passivity and this is confirmed by the majority of the teachers in this study. For example, Pak Ilham argued that students' passivity is considered a cultural handicap since the majority of the students in Islamic State Universities graduated from *pesantren* where the power relation between students and teachers is vertical. However, this assumption might be wrong since Pak Ilham himself graduated from *pesantren* and had experienced the culture of *pesantren* but now he is considered a critical pedagogue since he holds critical perspectives. Shin and Crookes (2005a) challenge an assumption stating that "East Asian countries are submissive and obedient and the teachers are authoritative and authoritarian; therefore, the classrooms are supposedly rigid, hierarchical, which in turn makes discussion between students and teachers difficult (cf. Kubota, 2001). Shin and Crookes (2005b, p. 133) "call into question the stereotype of East Asian students as passive and non-autonomous and helps dispel the myth about East Asian classrooms as rigidly hierarchical, in the same way, that the learning experience in this study successfully dispelled the stereotype that this student had about the Southeast-Asian workers in Korea".

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Regards to teachers' understanding of critical pedagogy are not explicitly stated by defining or explaining the notion of critical pedagogy. Instead, they reflect on societal issues and act on them. Even though they do not know about critical pedagogy, their stories about their teaching practice show that they implement some perspectives of critical pedagogy. The implementation of critical pedagogy in the reading classroom is proved by their experiences of teaching critical reading units for undergraduate students majoring in English language education and English literature. Some indicators can be mentioned, such as teachers' understanding of how reading should be taught to grasp knowledge and create new knowledge. The reading activities should not stop in their mind but be brought to action. In other words, reading activities should be reflective and transformative. Other components of critical pedagogy could be identified, such as negotiated syllabus, providing critical contents of materials, utilizing authentic materials as codes, and giving more critical, democratic, and participatory assessments. Having implemented

critical pedagogy in the reading classes, teachers face some challenges, including students' passivity and technical problems. It is worth noting that students' passivity is not mainly due to cultural handicaps based on the assumption that Asian students are considered submissive and obedient and the teachers are authoritative and authoritarian, because they are given equal power they could be active readers ultimately. Also, the transformations of being plunged into critical pedagogy, particularly on the critical reading could be identified both in teachers and students; for example, the changing attitude and worldviews, becoming critical readers, and having sensitivity to social issues situated in students and teachers' lives.

Even though this study has yielded significant findings from the participant's experiences, it still has several limitations. First, the data is mainly derived from the interviews; only four participants are being interviewed. To shed more light on the implementation of critical pedagogy, observation should be undertaken. However, this study is still missing the observation as a technique for collecting data. Doing interviews with more participants and on several times probably will dig in-depth perspectives from teachers.

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