CRITICAL READING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY GOOD CRITICAL READERS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ELT, STATE UNIVERSITY OF MALANG

Praptika Septi Femilia
State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Jember
praptikaseptifemilia@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The objective of the study was to find out how good critical readers employed their critical reading strategies and what model of reading shown by these strategies. Qualitative approach was applied in this study with case study as the research design. This study involved three good critical readers determined by the result of reading comprehension test given. The data were collected through retrospective think aloud and in depth interview. This study reveals that these three good critical readers employed nine critical reading strategies which consist of strategies for constructing the meaning of the text; they were previewing, questioning to understand and remember, monitoring comprehension, solving vocabulary problems and interpreting the text; and strategies for evaluating the arguments presented by the writers which consist of contextualizing, reflecting on challenges to belief and values, evaluating the writers’ arguments and; comparing and contrasting related reading. It was also found that the pattern of how these strategies utilized formed interactive model of reading. It is suggested to further researches to focus more on discussion about critical reading strategies which are related to reasoning evaluation.

Keywords: critical reading strategies, good critical readers, graduate students of ELT

INTRODUCTION
Critical reading is the highest level of reading comprehension. Based on the Crawley and Mountain’s (1995) hierarchy of reading comprehension, critical reading occurs after literal and interpretative comprehensions are mastered. The critical readers have an ability to evaluate the writer’s idea within the text. They usually place themselves toward the writer’s idea based on their own experiences. They decide of how to react to the text emotionally and intellectually. It can be inferred that critical reading is the highest level of reading which needs the highest-order level of thinking, in which based on Bloom’s Taxonomy of level of thinking it is called as creating.

Some experts have been suggested several sub skills or activities that may be done to reflect the readers’ ability of analyzing, evaluating and creating in critical reading. This study adopts several activities that are proposed Fowler (1997) and Pirozzi (2003). Based on both point of views, the sub skills measured in this study are separating important information from unimportant information, making inferences, distinguishing between facts and opinions, making judgments about the information, determining a writer’s purpose and tone, and compiling information in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

Dealing with good readers involved in this study, the profile of good critical readers is defined. Pang (2008) states that good L2 readers seem to make every effort to approximate the linguistic proficiency and repertoire of skills and strategies found in good L1 readers. She defines characteristics of good L2 readers into three dimensions. The first is language knowledge and processing ability. In this case, they own good store of cognitive strategies, are ready to access to variety of purposeful strategies, have higher and proficient use of strategies, possess effective use of prior knowledge and master supportive use of mother tongue in second language. The last dimension is metacognitive strategic competence which involves good knowledge of cognition, competence in monitoring comprehension process and competence in evaluating and
regulating strategy use to achieve maximum comprehension.

Not many studies have been reported about the types of critical reading strategies applied by critical readers. This study relies on two report studies by David (1998) and Sousa (2004). David proposed specifically 7 reading strategies that are applied by good critical readers. Meanwhile Sousa proposed 6 critical reading strategies by combining two critical strategies proposed by David into one. In addition, it is also appropriate to combine the reading strategies focus on the comprehension in general which is proposed by Block (1986) into the critical reading strategies. Therefore, the subskills and critical reading strategies examined in this study were described in the following table.

### Table 1 Subskills of Critical Reading and Critical Reading Strategies Measured

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Comprehension</th>
<th>Subskills Measured</th>
<th>Reading Strategies Examined</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reading</td>
<td>Separating important and unimportant information</td>
<td>Previewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distinguishing facts and opinions</td>
<td>Contextualizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making inferences</td>
<td>Questioning to understand and remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making judgment about the information</td>
<td>Reflecting on challenges to belief and status</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determining the writers’ purpose and tone</td>
<td>Monitoring comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compiling information in a new pattern</td>
<td>Evaluating the text</td>
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|               | Solving vocabulary problem                          |
|               | Interpreting the text                               |
|               | Comparing and contrasting related reading           |

### RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative approach was applied in this study with case study chosen as the research design. The specific phenomenon discussed in this study was the application of critical reading strategies by good critical readers which was different from those who belonged to low good critical readers. This study only concerned on the reading process conducted by good critical readers in order to find the reading model through their critical reading strategies.

This study involved three good critical readers determined by the result of reading comprehension test given. The test was implemented to a class of ELT Cohort 2014, State University of Malang. Based on the result, it was chosen three good critical readers involved in this study, namely PDW, PNP and PMR. They were selected among other students because their reading comprehension test scored more than 80. They belonged to good critical readers who could be more critical to the text than other students.

The data were collected through retrospective think aloud and in depth interview. Retrospective think aloud was conducted in written form instead of spoken one. It was based on practicality reason so that it could be implemented at the same time. Meanwhile, the in depth interview was conducted to those three participants to confirm the data obtained from think aloud and dig up data which did not involve through the think aloud. The researcher was the human instrument in this study that simultaneously collected and analyzed the data to draw the temporary conclusion and then final conclusion when the saturation was reached.

### RESULT

#### Critical Reading Strategies of Good Critical Readers

This study reveals that these three good critical readers employed nine critical reading strategies while they comprehended the reading text as well as evaluated the writers’ arguments. Those nine critical reading strategies consisted of previewing, contextualizing, questioning to understand and remember, reflecting on challenges to belief and status, determining the writers’ purpose and tone, monitoring comprehension, compiling information in a new pattern, solving vocabulary problem, interpreting the text, and comparing and contrasting related reading.

The previewing was a strategy conducted by good critical readers to predict what the content of the text would be about. The good critical readers conducted this strategy through several activities, such as reading the title of the text to predict the topic; reading the questions to confirm the topic guessed; skimming as well as predict the text structure to have a brief description about the main ideas; marking complicated sentences as well as unfamiliar words to predict the level of difficulty of the text. By doing this strategy, it means that good critical readers determined the purpose and tone of the text.
readers started to anticipate their reading process before reading the text carefully.

The second strategy was contextualizing which means that the critical readers tried to place the text based on its historical and cultural context. In this strategy, the good critical readers tried to make a perception of what the text might tell them about based on their own experiences related to the topic presented. They also predicted the significance could be given by the text that should be achieved at the end of the reading process. In addition, they also predicted the veracity of the text by looking where the text came from or by paying attention to the quotations used by the writers in their writing. By doing this strategy, the good critical readers could make a perception of the text whether or not this text was valuable for them to read, whether or not it attracted their interest, and whether or not it presented valid and reliable facts within its content.

The third one was questioning to understand and remember. This strategy was applied by good critical readers to start comprehending the content of the text. They looked for the main ideas of the text by following the thesis statement given. Besides, finding the thesis statement helped them in confirming the structure of the text which had been predicted previously. They also marked the supporting details to help them comprehend a certain paragraph as a whole. In other words, they connected the important information in the text which also means that they could differentiate the important information from the unimportant one. In this stage, the good critical readers also confirmed the information they got from the text with their own knowledge and experiences related to the text. In other words, they did not directly absorb the information but also analyzing the information whether or not it could be accepted.

Related to previous strategy, the good critical readers conducted reflecting on challenges to beliefs and status strategy. When they tried to comprehend the text, it might present two types of information which made them employ this strategy. The first one was when they found nonsense information within the text. It might not relate to the topic discussed within the text or it could not be accepted logically. The second case was if the good critical readers found new information within the text that challenged their beliefs related to topic discussed. For that reason, the good critical readers marked such information and tried to argue the information through the next strategy.

The next strategy was evaluating the text. It has been discussed in the background of the study that the critical readers should evaluate the text. In this study, it reveals that the good critical readers were good in evaluating the text by differentiating the facts and opinions presented in the text. They also found unrelated and illogic information given by the writers. By conducting this strategy, the good critical readers could decide whether or not they accept they information which challenged their belief. In this step, they evaluated the writers’ argument and confirmed to the facts given so that they could find the writers’ consistency in presenting the information.

Solving vocabulary problem became the next strategy conducted by good critical readers. This strategy did not only involve the strategy to overcome vocabulary problems, but also to overcome complicated sentence problems. The good critical readers admitted that these problems could hinder their comprehension process if they could not find the best solution to solve. For overcoming vocabulary problems, the good critical readers applied context clues. They could not rely on the dictionary because they conducted the reading process as a test. Meanwhile, they solved complicated sentence problems through analysis on sentences’ structure modification, predicat and coordination; and also identified the transition words and discourse markers. By applying this strategy, they could focus their minds more on the information presented without spending much time to focus on these problems.

The next strategy conducted by these good critical readers was monitoring comprehension. As its meaning to assess how far the readers’ understanding related to the text, the good critical readers applied this strategy to monitor their comprehension. It was found that they tended to assess their comprehension through the questions given following the text. They outlined the main ideas based on the questions given in the essay section. Meanwhile, the multiple choice items helped them in monitoring their understanding of the supporting details within the text. Besides, they also reread their note about the main ideas and supporting details. They go back to the text and reread the marks they made during the process of reading. By doing this strategy, the good critical readers could be sure that their understanding had been right as well as they could make any improvement.
if they felt that their understanding was wrong. It had to be clear before they went to conclude the text. Interpreting the text was the next strategy conducted. This strategy was important to be conducted because good critical readers need to compare or contrast the information got after reading a text to other related readings. The good critical readers in this study, interpreting the text by drawing a conclusion, paraphrasing the text and rereading the text after they completed the test.

The last strategy conducted by good critical readers was comparing and contrasting related readings. After having a conclusion about the text, good critical readers did not let it that way in their minds. They tried to look for other related readings to confirm the information they got from the text given. Since the process of reading in this study was conducted through a test, the good critical readers could not do this directly. They conducted this strategy after they finished with the test. In other words, the good critical readers still tried to be as critical as possible to the text even when they had accepted information given. They felt it was still important to compare or contrast the information they got to other related readings to confirm its veracity.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the reading process in this study was seen as a strategic process which let the readers to be active in using their reading skills and strategies. The readers applied a number of skills and strategies to reach their goal which was to comprehend the text critically.

Furthermore, it is also recognized that the existence of content schema, linguistic schema and formal schema influenced the process of constructing meaning conducted by the critical readers. Meanwhile, the process of evaluating the writers’ arguments depended more on the amounts of content schema, formal schema and socio-cultural schema.

DISCUSSIONS
The findings of the study support the critical readings strategies listed by previous study about critical reading strategies (David, 1998; Sousa, 2004). According to David (1998), there are seven critical reading strategies that may be utilized by critical readers. It starts with (1) previewing which is learning the text before reading it and making a prediction: (2) contextualizing which is making a perception of the text based on historical, biographical and cultural context as well as making inferences; (3) questioning which is asking questions about the reading material’s content; (4) reflecting on challenges on beliefs and values which is examining personal responses; (5) outlining and summarizing which are restating main ideas; (6) evaluating the arguments which is assessing its validity and credibility; (7) comparing and contrasting related reading. Meanwhile, Sousa (2004) only categorizes the strategies into six by combining reflecting on challenges on belief and values strategy with questioning strategy.

Supporting the previous studies does not mean that this study proposes exactly the same critical reading strategies as the previous studies revealed. This study reveals that outlining and summarizing can be divided into two different strategies which deal with different goals. Brown (2004) posits that by doing outlining the readers gain in retaining information by supporting ideas into a visually manageable framework. In other words, outlining is conducted by the readers to maintain or monitor their understanding before the process of reading finish. On the other hand, Alderson (2000) states that a reader summarizes the text when he/she understands the main ideas of the text, separates relevant and irrelevant ideas and organizes their thought about the text. Simply, it can be said that summary can be done as the result of readers’ interpretation of reading material. In sum, monitoring comprehension strategy and interpreting strategy can be included to the list of critical reading strategies.

In addition, the data reveals that monitoring strategy did not only appear through outlining, but also the same to interpreting strategy which was not only indicated by making a summary. The good critical readers in this study outlined the main ideas and supporting details of the text and also made a note by using her own words to monitor their comprehension. Meanwhile, interpreting the text appeared through drawing a conclusion about the text and rereading the text after completing the test.

Several studies support the existence of these three strategies in critical reading. Yang’s (2006) study revealed that monitoring comprehension strategies should be included in critical reading since the readers may still fail to comprehend the texts even though they apply other reading strategies. Then, a comprehension monitoring strategy is engaged to aid readers to evaluate their own reading comprehension. In this study, the good critical readers took a corrective action when failure in comprehension was
detected. Dealing interpreting the text, Zemliansky (2008) states that one of the key principles of critical reading is that active readers do not read silently and by themselves. It means that they need to compare or contrast their own interpretations of those texts with the interpretations constructed by other readers or other texts. Therefore, making interpretation should be conducted by critical readers. Solving vocabulary problem also needed to be included. The critical readers will not optimally express their higher order of thinking which is needed in critical reading when they cannot comprehend the text well. Aloqaili (2012) proves that there was a well-established relationship between reading comprehension and critical thinking. For this reason, interpreting the text should be included to the list of critical reading strategy.

Based on the critical strategies shown by the good critical readers, the present study reveals that interactive process of reading was applied. From the findings, it is shown that each good critical reader shifted the use of strategies for both, bottom up and top down process, while reading the text given. Rumelhart and McClelland (1981) state that interactive process of reading is a process in which data driven, bottom up processing combines with top down, conceptually driven processing to cooperatively determine the most likely interpretation of the input.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion presented in the previous chapters, the conclusions of the present study are summarized into the following list:

1. Nine critical strategies employed by good critical readers involved in this study, namely strategies for constructing the meaning of the text; which consist of previewing, questioning to understand and remember, monitoring comprehension, solving vocabulary problems and interpreting the text; and strategies for evaluating the arguments presented by the writers which consist of contextualizing, reflecting on challenges to belief and values, evaluating the writers’ arguments and; comparing and contrasting related reading.

2. In this study, reading was seen as a strategic process which involved skills and strategies to reach the comprehension; and as a flexible process which gave a chance for the readers to adjust their reading process and the goal of comprehension they wanted to achieve.

REFERENCES


