

Critical thinking concept: Students' perception and learning experience in writing class

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Abstract

Critical thinking has been defined in many different ways. It's the term which reflect people's nature on critically perceiving a subject matter. In university level, having critical thinking skill is prominent for students. However, the basic concept of critical thinking may not well grasp among students. This study investigates the student's perception over the concept of critical thinking and knowing their learning activities whether it applies the concept of critical thinking specifically in writing class. The references on critical thinking concept reviewed as the framework in this study. This study involved first year students of English education study program of a private university. They were required to fill the online questionnaire. The findings of this study revealed that the students partially grasping the concept of critical thinking. There were indicated that students have some problem in comprehending the concept. Thus happen for the inexistence of learning environment promoting the students critical learning habit and skill in writing class. While they experience writing class with lecturers as instructors.

Keywords: critical thinking; concept; perception; learning experience; writing class

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is a complex process that requires higher levels of cognitive skills in the processing of information (Cheah & Choy, 2009). Many argue that the perceptions of students influence their behaviors in the classroom. Horwitz (1989), in her article about student perceptions and language learning, cautioned that it is important for lecturers to consider how their students perceive them in the classroom. In today's information age, students are surrounded by information via their gadget. Through online databases, books, articles, newspapers, and more recently through websites, blogs, and social networking interfaces, students have access to unlimited amounts of information without ever leaving their house or school. the online media has had given students privilege to access any information as they expected with less effort.

What remains a challenge, however, is the student's ability in thinking and perceiving the information or any knowledge. The easy access of knowledge has nowadays bring them into a receiver and a user then, become less critical in absorbing

the information. It is critically urgent for higher education students for at this stage of education, urged to think in critical manner in order to develop the and create knowledge.

In the context of higher education teaching, on surface stage, students need to have a good conceptual background about critical thinking before bringing them to the manner. In college, the emphasis is on fostering “higher-order thinking”: the active, intelligent evaluation of ideas and information, (2011:1). By acknowledging the concept, lecturer has the ways to put it to the students. The practice of critical thinking drives the students in the classroom to be like giving exercise, classroom activities instruction on certain skill teaching. In the framework of teaching language class, thinking in critical manner is highly required in acquiring such skills, like writing and reading. This perception towards the concept that further will bring them to the development of the students ability as needed to critique.

This study involved the students of a local private universities at English education study program. The investigation covers students perception toward the critical thinking concept, to describe the implementation of the concept in the writing class, and, to describe how do they experience the learning activities that may able to drive them into a critical thinker.

In order to establish a background and a frame of reference for the study, this paper review a range of theories about the nature critical thinking, and the perceived difficulties in implementing it in writing class. judgement, defined as “the educational cognate of rationality” Siegel (1988 in Jones 2005), “reflexive skepticism” (McPeck 1981) and “critical self-reflection” (Barnett 1997 in Tapper 2004, p. 201). Toulmin, Rieke and Janik (1984 in Andrews 2000, p.5) associate critical thinking with reasoning, used for “the central activity of presenting reasons in support of a claim.” This type of logical argumentation can be taught through syllogisms (Davies ,10, 2008), but as Wingate (2011) points out, syllogisms are mostly suitable for single claims, rather than for the large-scale structure of the essay.

For education students, Critical thinking is essentially a questioning, challenging to coup knowledge and perceived skill. It involves examining ideas and information from an objective position and then questioning this information in the light of our own values, attitudes and personal philosophy. Brenda Judge, Patrick Jones and Elaine McCreery. (2009). (Mitchell and Riddle 2000), informed critical thinking should therefore form part of every academic subject and practice. In such a way, the studied terms ‘critical thinking’ is viewed as a cognitive skill related to logical.

METHOD

This study focused on finding out the students’ perceiving the concept and describe technically how do they experience in the writing class. This study is examining how they understand and engage with the concept of critical thinking, specifically to develop insights into the writing experiences of the English Education Department students in a local Educational University in the city. This study then,

designed to gather the information dealing with people's ideas and opinions, therefore descriptive qualitative design is best to imply in this study.

Qualitative methods, by definition, feature qualitative data—the researcher's description of what participants do or say about themselves and their activities in an educational setting (Stotsky and Mall, 2001:7). The rationale of using qualitative methods is not only obtain students' own interpretation about what they see and hear, they frequently explore what the language learning and teaching activities mean to the participants as well. This method makes researcher possible to discover the participants' point of view, thoughts, and feelings and why they think, feel, or behave.

The participants for this study are first year students of English education study program of a private university. This group of first year, who experience the same writing class. The data gathered from one group of students at the same level of labguage class, they share the same class at the same year of college. It allows the writer to have in depth analysis. Highlighted by Dornyei (20017), researcher of qualitative study can have the homogeneous participants in their study who share some important experience relevant to the study.

Some content full questions were designed to cover the area of the studied topic. In any given topic, it is possible to ask main types of questions in purpose of gathering information about people' experience, opinion, value, etc., (Patton, 2002). The questions were organised around a topic guide. The questions were packed into a well written and numbered list, and given online, it contains questions about the concepts and asking students experience is developed. By means of this, students have a freedom to tell, describe and narrate their answers in written form without any interference from the writing lecturer. In purpose of avoiding students-lecturer power gap, the filled out questionnaire were distributed to the students with two weeks deadline.

FINDINGS

This study was designed to investigate the perceptions and insights into their learning experience in the writing class. Specifically examining their perception toward the concept. It was interesting to find out the response of the participants.

How do the students of first year in Education Study Program perception on the concept of critical thinking?

Investigation on the students perception reveals statement of lack of knowledge, confuse, uncertainty, in other side they understand that this term is familiar and literally generate the thinking manner. The sense of critical for them is having high curiosity, desire to know something, always questioning on certain matter. Simply they state 'always ask questions'. More detail expressions such as 'provide evidence', 'critically analyze', 'analyze from different point of view', 'questioning beyond'. While other group of students say that critical thinking is a concept which they are not even know how to do or so, or they understand it as a concept. Generally, the participants answer

on how do they perceive the concept of critical thinking was expressing a great uncertainty whether they have interpreted it correctly.

The students, in their written response, also express their reasons for answering the questions about perception of critical thinking. The expression displaying their problem in knowing the term critical thinking.

Do your writing lecturer implement the concept of critical thinking during the class? How?

This question responded in various ways expressed in the sentences written by the students. The response generate form simple to complex and details accordance to the writing teaching process in the classroom.

Around...of the answers expressed that the writing lecturers do different pattern or technique in the class. The most used is giving explanation about the material, giving exercise given in the book or handout and assigned students to write a certain text. The feed back was given in written rather than deep analysis.

Other number of participants write that the writing lecturer gives questions related to the material as it initiate the students. Then, it followed by the explanation of the material, continued by giving example and writing assignment.

Writing class was also open with questions, distribution of printed out examples and discussion. This class started with forming group of students in the class. Lecturer gave instruction and they go to group of 4 to 5 students. Each of the group given example of texts to analyze. The lecturer guide the students with some may confusing question for students at first. At the certain point, students are engaged with the movement and the lecturer required each of the group member to give simple analysis on the text. The result of the analysis then brought to the explanation about the theory given in the book references.

How do you experience your writing class?

This question is unarguably easy and quite simple. However, it is not quite easy to answer the question with certain entailment. The expression of boring is mostly revealed. Some of the participant admit that lecturer is become the main factor of their interest for learning in the classroom.

At this point of question, students explain in their responses that they have kind of regular activities, as mentioned that they come to the classroom, lecturer open the class, give instruction to open certain pages of the book, listen to the lecturer and leave the class with assignment to do at home. While other describe the class activities as easy going and unwell controlled activities in the classroom. The students also, explain that writing class is always taken as long hours of speech, less material absorb. In contrast, there is lecturers who spend only short minutes of class for direct explanantion, but it was used as students activities of analyzing and thinking. Thus, lecturer only explain

certain point about the material rather than long speech during the hours. The lecturer here becomes a facilitator for students in the classroom rather than an instructor.

DISCUSSION

The finding derived from the participants responses, it described that there are some different responses which consciously express the students' various perception. This various responses came up from various background knowledge of the students. The perception that they perceive may built from their early schools, academic and/or social community. The urgent matter about choosing the the first year students was that they are not yet bounded with the new environment that may change their point of view. Thus, the response is genuine.

Discussion toward the students response about perception on critical thinking which expressed differently brings a definition that critical thinking is complex. In general, the responses of the participants clearly stated that students of the first year students of English education study program of a private university, as students of a college, is that they do not have any certain guide. As students of a higher education requires to be personal who have the skill of critical thinking The different perception of the students shows that students do not have any certainty whether they have the correct perception. This is happen because of their lack of knowledge about the term. However, some of the students have more comprehensive, but not fully, perception toward critical knowledge

In higher education students need to be acritical thinker for the college students need to build skill and foremost, they have to develop the knowledge. In the case of teaching and learning process, lecturer need to consider how the students understand the critical thinking. For further, lecturer needs to develop it through the learning process. From the students response about how the lecturer teach in the classroom, it is seen that some of the writing lecturer tried to apply the concept of critical thinking. By means of teaching technique, and media like worksheet, initiating question, initial analysis from students and more. Lecturer of using this steps is the lecturer with the plan to build critical thinking people.

Type of lecturers way in teaching, the lecturer technique used in teaching in the classroom that bring students to different atmosphere of learning in writing class. The underlined response was when the students said that they only have regular activities of a lecture. This statement has obvious expression of zero goal of students achievement in learning. While the response which said that there are teachers who spend only short minutes of class for direct explanation, but it was used as students activities of analyzing and thinking. Students who have academic activities in the classroom like analyzing, dealing with the subject matter, may experience and applied the concept of critical thinking out of their unconsciously.

Without needed any axplanation about what and how to do critical thinking, students will experience the thinking process. To be able to expreince the process, student are dependently on the lecturer as facilitatpr in classroom learning. While

students in the classroom with the regular activities may not experience the critical manner in learning. The teacher who designs the class with activities dealing with the subject matter, has led students to exercise on their ability of critical thinking.

CONCLUSION

The finding and discussion of the study indicated that students have some problem in comprehending the concept of critical thinking in general. There are only some of the students have a comprehensive perception. This can be concluded that the students of the university only have partially grasping the concept about critical thinking.

While the analysis of the finding about classroom activities in the classroom brings to conclusion that the students' activities have less implementation on the concept. Asking about the writing class learning experience, students response that they have different experience with different teacher. Thus happen for the inexistence of learning environment promoting the students critical learning habit and skill in writing class. While they experience writing class with lecturers as instructors.

The finding and analysis of this study has defined that critical thinking is urgently need to be built and developed insight the students of higher education or university level. The emerge of this is that students will need to master the skill of any field they are studied at. In order to have a critical thinking or to think critically toward a certain matter is prior for university level, particularly in developing the text.

SUGGESTION

The result of this study has portrait how the critical thinking is developed and build insight of personals in language teaching class. This is suggest that the techniques of teaching in writing class is designed to include the steps of teaching that consciously bring students to think critically. the design can possibly realized in lesson plan for writing class. The lesson plan suggested to cover the teaching and learning activities plan and design of the exercises related to the material.

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