

The Students' Critical Thinking in Acquiring English Speaking

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Abstract. Critical thinking is needed to be applied in the English classroom because one of the goals from the implementation of curriculum 2013 is metacognitive intelligence which consists of 4C (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, Collaboration, and Communication). However, critical thinking is still rarely used and realized by the students in acquiring English speaking. Stuck in generating ideas is triggered by the low of critical thinking. Sometimes, they know what they want to speak but it cannot be expressed orally. The mistakes anxiety that will be occurred in formulating the sentences is being caused by this problem. To solve those problems, analyzing the students' critical thinking in acquiring English speaking is conducted on this research. By applying critical thinking, idea blocking will be avoided. This research is conducted by employing the qualitative research method with a thematic analysis approach. After interviewing the informants, The themes of each parameter were found. Brainstorming for interpretation, reluctance for analysis, defense for evaluation, language structure for inference, elaboration for the explanation, and intuition for self-regulation. It could be proven that critical thinking is very needed to be applied in assisting students' minds to formulate the ideas in speaking skills.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, English Speaking, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the globalization era, English has influenced all sectors, especially education. In Indonesia, English becomes a foreign language subject that is taught at school that should be mastered for the students. In learning English, students should master four language skills namely; Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. One of the most important skills to be mastered is speaking. Speaking is a way to communicate and to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Cameron¹ (2001) says that speaking is the active use of language to express meanings so that other people can make sense of them. In some cases, the students face difficulties in acquiring English Speaking because they often stuck to generating the ideas and formulating the sentences. It causes the students not to be able to decant their ideas into an oral form. Critical thinking plays an important role in language education. Critical thinking is needed to be applied and improved in English class room because one of the goals from the implementation of curriculum 2013 is metacognitive intelligence which consist of 4C (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, Collaboration, and Communication).

Critical thinking skills should be embedded in the subject matter and implemented into language education". Since language is an important tool for acquiring knowledge, therefore it is important to acquire on the way into the nature of the critical thinking ability of the students and its possible link to their language proficiency (Wallace², 2007).

Critical thinking is a high ability to think with some indicators such as being able to recognize problems, finding solutions to existing problems, collecting and compiling necessary information, recognizing assumptions, logical thinking, distinguishing factual and nonfactual news, evaluating, expressing, draw conclusions from existing data (Fisher³, 2001). Critical thinking can help students to organize in formulating ideas or thoughts. The critical thinking approach questions the students' minds and enables the students to work with the knowledge being learned. Acquiring speaking not only focuses on the grammar and fluency but how the students communicate their ideas which are still being abstract becomes a concrete way orally. This statement is supported by Krashen & Terrel⁴ (1983) who believes the best way to acquire a second language is through natural communication rather than repetition of words and grammar.

However, in fact the students do not use their critical thinking in acquiring English speaking. It becomes a big problem that make the students are not be able to master speaking skills. They always stuck in generating their ideas. Sometimes, they know

what they want to speak but they cannot express it in orally. They are still afraid about the mistakes that will be occurred from their sentences. They think too much about the grammar that should be use in their sentences. There is a language anxiety that make the students do not use their critical thinking well.

From the problem which arises above, the researcher intends to analyze students' critical thinking in acquiring English speaking. It aims to make the students are be able to formulate their ideas in orally well. Therefore, it does not make the students stuck in what they want to speak.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Setting

This research analyzes the students' critical thinking in acquiring English speaking for junior high school students. This research takes place at Yayasan Pendidikan Nurul Amaliyah Tanjung Morawa. The participant is the seventh grader at Yayasan Pendidikan Nurul Amaliyah Tanjung Morawa. The researcher undertakes this research from November 8th until November 15th, 2021.

2.2 Data and Data Source

The data are information or facts used in discussing or deciding the answer to the research question. The source of data in the study is the subjects from which the data can be collected for research (Arikunto⁵, 2010). The data of this study are the interview guide and the observation guide. The researcher takes the source of data from a key informant and supporting informant. A student as a key informant. Meanwhile, other students and parents as the supporting informant.

2.3 Research Method

This research is conducted by employing the qualitative research method with a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis is useful for summarizing key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handle data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report (King⁶, 2004). The goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that were important or interesting, and used these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This is much more than simply summarising the data; a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it. A common pitfall was to use the main interview questions as the themes (Clarke & Braun⁷, 2013). Typically, this reflects the fact that the data will be summarized and organized, rather than analyzed. In this case, the researcher will analyze the data which is gathered by observing and interviewing a seventh-grader at Yayasan Pendidikan Nurul Amaliyah Tanjung Morawa about the students' critical thinking in acquiring English speaking.

2.4 Technique of Collecting Data

To collect the data, the researcher utilizes observation, interview, and document. Observation is needed to make the data stronger. The interview is one of the most commonly used sources of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are adopted as the means of the data source. The questions are developed based on the six cores of critical thinking (Facione⁸, 1990). Facione⁸ (1990) categorizes six core critical thinking skills with some micro-skills as follows:

1. Interpretation (categorization, decoding significance, & clarifying meaning)
2. Analysis (examining ideas, identifying arguments, & analyzing arguments)
3. Evaluation (assessing claims & arguments)
4. Inference (querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, & concluding)
5. Explanation (stating results, justifying procedures, & presenting arguments)
6. Self-regulation (self-examination & self-correction).

Each parameter provides one question. Therefore, the total number of questions in six questions. Then, the document is one of the data collection techniques used by the researcher to inventory records, interview transcriptions, notes, etc. all the documents that can help the researcher to strengthen the credibility of this research.

2.5 Technique of Analyzing Data

The researcher uses a thematic-analysis approach to examine the data. The phases of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun & Clarke⁹ (2006) are used in this research.

2.6 Technique of Establishing Trustworthiness

Gasson¹⁰ (2004) suggests the criterion of trustworthiness in qualitative research is credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this research, the researcher focuses only on the credibility of the data. There are nine kinds of credibility in the research namely; Adoption of appropriate, Random sampling, Triangulation, Iterative questioning, Negative case analysis, Reflective commentary, Member checks, Development of early familiarity with the culture, and examination of previous research. However, the researcher limits the triangulation technique. In the triangulation technique, the researcher chooses two kinds of triangulation techniques namely; source triangulation and method triangulation.

- a. Source Triangulation entails gathering the data from at least two informants namely; other students and parents. It aims to compare the data from the key informant and supporting informant. If the data are the same, the research will be credible.
- b. Method Triangulation entails gathering data from a different method. It aims to make the data are credible.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Results of Observation

There was one student from the seventh-grader chosen as the key informant of the research, namely: MAMF. Meanwhile, to compare the validation of the data. Two supporting informants are another student namely; MRAF and the parents of MAMF and MRAF. The researcher applied observations from 8th up to 11th November 2021. The researcher observed how the role of critical thinking in acquiring English speaking for the seventh-grader at Yayasan Pendidikan Nurul Amaliyah. The researcher used the observation guide to help her in analyzing the data. The aspects assessed when observing as seen in table 1.

Table 1 The Aspects Assessed of Observation Guide

No	Observed aspects	Students' condition	
		Yes	No
1	Students give their opinion in the class	✓	
2	Asking question	✓	
3	Answer the question	✓	
4	Make a conclusion	✓	
5	Talk to each other in the class use English		✓
6	Correct each other		✓
7	Self-evaluation		✓
8	Identify, define, enumerate, analyze something		✓
9	Generating ideas		✓
10	Recognizing the main information	✓	
11	Exploring a sentence		✓

Based on the observation it can be implied that the process of teaching and learning runs well. The students were active and easily conditioned during the lesson. As said by Richard¹¹ (2008), the success of the learning-teaching process was caused by some factors one of them was the teacher manages the class before the learning begins. She asked the students to give some opinions about some issues. She asked some questions to the students dealing with the topic. She also gave some sentences dealing with the topic to stimulate students for exploring the sentence and collecting the ideas. Questioning skills are important in learning, in addition, to stimulating students to be more active, in asking questions as well as making the situation warmer and focusing students' attention (Asril¹², 2010). Most students could answer the teacher's question but, some students cannot answer it and they felt difficult to speak English because they did not have ideas in their mind or cannot generate the ideas well. It is shown when the tutor asked them to write their opinion on the paper first but there were not a lot of written sentences on it. Other reasons were they could not correct each other, did self-evaluation, identify, define, enumerate, analyze something (Hughes¹³, 2014). By some indicators in the observation above the researcher concluded that students' speaking ability was low. One of the reasons was the low of students' critical thinking. There were other reasons why they could not speak English well which could be found in observation, those were vocabulary, lack of practice, and less motivation. The problem was mentioned by Brown¹⁴ (2000), it was classified into two kinds internal and external problems some of them were the mentioned problem in observation.

Some of the students could not explore, identify, and analyze sentences. They have no ideas to be spoken because they did not think deeper or critically and there was not enough knowledge so, they cannot find the idea. The explanation above shows that students' critical thinking and speaking activities were low.

3.1.2 Results of Interview

The interview was taken in three days which started from 12th up to 15th November 2021. The informants in this interview were two students at Yayasan Pendidikan Nurul Amaliyah Tanjung Morawa and parents of the students. There was one student from the seventh-grader chosen as the key informant of the research, namely: MAMF. Meanwhile, to compare the validation of the data. Two supporting informants are another student namely; MRAF and the parents of MAMF and MRAF. One informant would be interviewed for one day and it would finish on the third day.

Data I

Question 1: What do you do before speaking?

MAMF: First, I will think about what should I tell. After I got the idea, I will select the appropriate vocabulary. If I did not know the English word of a vocabulary that I want to use, I will open my dictionary or ask my friend. After I got the vocabulary, I will try to arrange it into a sentence and write it on my notes. Then, I read the sentence that I have written on my notes.

Through the explanation above, a key informant told that they designed planning to generate the ideas, chose the vocabulary, translated it, arranged it, and took his notes. It could be concluded that a key informant did a well pre-preparation speaking stage. He tried to use his critical thinking in decoding the meaning before speaking. In comparing the data, the researcher also interviewed another student as a supporting informant. The following was his answer.

Question 1: What do you do before speaking?

MRAF: Before speaking, I always write what I want to say. Then, I memorize it. I do not always use English, If I do not know the word in English, I will speak it in Indonesian because It will take a long time to search for the word first in the dictionary.

From the supporting informant above, it can be concluded that MRAF did not have a good preparation before speaking. He did not do a big effort to generate the ideas well. He did not use his critical thinking to translate the word and open the dictionary. He just memorized what he has written on his notes.

Data II

Question II: Have you ever felt difficult to find ideas? Why?

MAMF: Yes, I have. Sometimes, I know what I want to speak but it is difficult to deliver it. I am lack grammar. It makes me confused and takes a long time to think about what grammar that should I use. After I decide a grammar, my ideas were lost suddenly because I just think about the grammar. So, I forget what should I say.

Through the explanation above, it could be concluded that MAMF was getting lost his ideas sometimes because he thought too much about grammar. In comparing the data, the researcher also interviewed another student as a supporting informant. The following was his answer.

Question II: Have you ever felt difficult to find ideas? Why?

MRAF: Yes, I have. I am lack vocabulary. It makes me difficult to organize the sentences that should I speak.

Through the explanation above, it could be concluded that MRAF had a very lack of vocabulary. It made it difficult to organize a sentence. Therefore, it made him could not express his ideas.

Data III

Question III: Do you always think about grammar, pronunciation, and fluency in acquiring English speaking?

MAMF: Yes, of course. I always think about those kinds of things. Sometimes, it makes me difficult to explore my ideas because I am afraid is the grammar and my pronunciation correct. However, I often cover up my anxiety by just speaking what I want to speak. I will try to create a simple sentence in avoiding grammar mistakes and use the vocabulary that I know well how to pronounce. So, it can make me generate my ideas easily and not stuck.

Through the explanation above, it can be concluded that MAMF also had language anxiety. He often thought about the language structure and pronunciation. He said that those things could disturb him while he tried to elaborate his ideas. However, he used his critical thinking to solve those problems. He made simple sentences and well-known vocabulary to avoid language mistakes and stuck ideas. In comparing the data, the researcher also interviewed another student as a supporting informant. The following was his answer.

Question III: Do you always think about grammar, pronunciation, and fluency in acquiring English speaking?

MRAF: Yes, I always. Especially in grammar. I'm afraid if I speak with the wrong grammar or pronunciation, My friends will laugh. That is why I will not speak English fully if I do not know well the grammar or pronunciation. I prefer to be silent or even speak in Indonesian.

Through the explanation above, it can be concluded that MAMF and MRAF had language anxiety but they had different thoughts in solving those problems. MAMF used his critical thinking to minimize the mistakes. However, MRAF did not use his critical thinking. He did not an effort to cover it. He was just silent or even used Indonesian.

Data VI

Question VI: What do you do if your ideas are lost suddenly?

MAMF: If my ideas are lost suddenly I will think about something which is fun then I try to speak in Indonesian. It will help me to find other ideas while speaking.

Through the explanation above, it could be concluded that MAMF would keep speaking although in the Indonesian language. He thought that changing the language can decrease the anxiety which caused the ideas block. It also could create new inspiration for what he was going to say. In comparing the data, the researcher also interviewed another student as a supporting informant. The following was his answer.

Question VI: What do you do if your ideas are lost suddenly?

MRAF: I will keep silent until I find new ideas.

Through the explanation above, it could be concluded that MRAF would keep silent until he found new ideas.

From the results of the interview, it can be concluded that critical thinking plays an important role in acquiring speaking. It will give a big impact on the students' minds in formulating and elaborating the ideas. However, the critical thinking of the students is still low. It needs to be improved and developed. The comparison between a key informant and a supporting informant

shows that the students who always try to utilize their critical thinking will be able to speak English well. Meanwhile, the students who do not implement their critical thinking will face difficulties in speaking and are often silent when the teacher asks them.

3.2 Discussion

After doing the interview, the researcher found the theme of each parameter. The themes were found from the students' answers in the interview session. The first parameter was interpretation. For this parameter, the theme was brainstorming. The researcher found that informants needed very well prepared before finding the ideas. The second parameter was analysis. For this parameter, the theme was reluctance. The researcher found that informants often considered the grammar, pronunciation, and fluency but it did not make them stop or stuck in generating the ideas. The third parameter was evaluation. For this parameter, the theme was ideas defense. The researcher found that informants could defend their ideas into a long story by using a common vocabulary. The fourth parameter was the inference. For this parameter, the theme was language structure. The researcher found that informants told that thinking too much about grammar could make their ideas lost. The fifth parameter was the explanation. For this parameter, the theme was meant elaboration. The researcher found that informants focus on the delivered meaning rather than the structure of a language. It would make them keep trying to speak. The last parameter was self-regulation. For this parameter, the theme was intuitive. The researcher found that informants would use their intuition to find inspiration when they got ideas blocking.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the result of observation and interview guide, the researcher concluded that the critical thinking at seventh graders at YP. Nurul Amaliyah was still low. It can be seen from how they prepared in generating the ideas. Also, the student still did a little effort when their ideas lost.

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