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A SUMMARY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS: “THE INVESTIGATION ON CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY IN EFL READING CLASS”

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Abstract: Like many non-English speakers, English materials reading and the importance it brings in every higher education students, is one of the skills needed in order to have critical thinking abilities. Many previous researchers have tried different methods by assessing not only the students' reading skills and critical thinking abilities but also finding about the different ways regarding to overcoming reading difficulties and struggle in order to become better critical thinkers. In this article, the critics make a detailed analysis and comment on the quantitative and qualitative research on improving Chinese students' English reading ability in EFL reading classes. While affirming the researcher's practice, the authors point out that if we can organically integrate Wil. (N. D.)'s methods, it can better balance the teaching and learning in the reading class, so that teachers can teach with ease, and students' critical thinking abilities can be improved and strengthened in the reading of English materials.

Keywords: *Critical Thinking Ability; English Reading materials; EFL Reading class; University non-English majors*

I. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is an ability of a person to adapt to different kinds of situations or events that may or may not be for survival but also caused by the drastic changes that the society and the world is going through. In the earlier times, people move from places to places where they will benefit the most. One good example of critical thinking is by cooking a dish. When a person realizes that the gas in the tank unexpectedly ran out while he or she is in the middle of cooking, the mind then will come up of an alternative solution. Will you set aside the dish first and buy a new gas tank or will you go to the backyard of the house to burn some paper and wood in order to continue cooking? This is an example of critical thinking. Which one of these alternative solutions is faster? Which one of these choices is more convenient? It is up to the person who is facing that kind of situation himself or herself. We tend to think critically in our everyday lives that we, most of the times, fail to notice.

Now let us proceed to culminating this into a school or a university. If we can already think critically subconsciously, why should we try to learn it further? Learning is a way to enlighten a person more for it was a series of new findings like the one series you have been fascinated and invested about because of new information and sick plot. Critical thinking is a skill that needs to be honed so that people can discover things conveniently and make their jobs, school works and other chores finish in an earlier timeline and a more successful way. Think of a student who is reviewing for an upcoming exam. There are plenty of ways to review but at the end of the day, what matters is where the student is most comfortable of. Some find recording their voice and listening to it better than taking notes and highlighting bits. Some, however, may find the latter easier while others prefer to mumble it to other person like they are just casually chatting.

The authors introduced a study about the critical thinking ability when it comes to English reading among non-English speaking students, or simply put, it covers the Chinese students from Southwest University. Reading comprehension and competency towards it, on the other hand, requires and involves proper and complete understanding for it to work out. The problem is that these students are non-English speakers. Moreover, Chinese people, as we all know, have their own way of writing that is different from the Alphabet that English people or English speakers use. That is why English reading takes a toll on their students' brains because the letters are difficult to understand in the first place. This is where the authors determine the critical thinking ability of the students in EFL Reading Class.

Some of the essential skills Chinese students need is English reading comprehension and competence as well as critical-thinking ability. This is proven to be true after looking into series of massive changes happening in our society as it was moving to a much more modern age and is filled with many information that serves great importance to many. Aiming to promote these students ability to criticize, evaluate, question and reflect can be a significant asset for them to accomplish the tasks given to them. However, the authors of the article states that the critical thinking ability between students of different genders, majors and grades

are weak. Meaning, non-English majors in English reading are considered are below the passing criteria in English as a foreign language reading class. In EFL reading class, most teachers put more emphasis on the explanation of new words, analysis of grammatical structures and difficult sentences, which leads to the very superficial understanding of reading materials. In fact this may seem like an absurd approach because critical thinking comes in the duration of the learning process. Nevertheless, some researchers analyze that introducing newfound things, difficult sentences and complicated English grammatical structures, even though they may shock these students like an ancient woman suddenly being dressed up using today's clothing, are still a way to further improve the students' ability to think critically in the given situation.

The article basically implies that students in higher education in China have to keep up with the cultivation of their critical thinking abilities as well as finding a further improvement with regards to their English reading comprehension, grammar understanding, learning strategies and overall fluency in English speaking. In other words, these students should be and are being prepped as a way to promote critical thinking ability and reading comprehension, competence as well as writing in English reading fully and harmoniously, as what is being emphasized by the authors in the article.

II. SUMMARY

The purpose of the article is for the teachers to improve their teaching method and to teach students according to their own unique characteristics in order to further enhance their strong points and lessen their weak points in studying. There are many coping strategies that can help the majority of the students to learn in a way that will not be stressful for their brain, in fact, if goes well, can be a source of entertainment for them. According to Kagwesage (2013), coping can be in large numbers, and by group. This will also help improve the students' critical thinking skills. For instance, grouping them into seven or eight and giving them an English word that they all have to have a say or at the very least explain it. For example, words like 'Serene', 'Tranquil', 'Personality' or maybe a simpler one will many meanings like 'Blue'. This will help the students to think critically and to perform teamwork as well while discussing it with their teammates.

Tamtam et al. (2010) added that the current globalization phenomenon has pushed many nations to adopt English as the language of teaching and learning that even in contexts where English is a second or foreign language to learners. This means that learning English became important as it was vastly used not just in English countries but in mostly, has been widely spread, all over the world. Also, learning English comes with many benefits as well. Since most people are learning to and are speaking English, it is easier to communicate with foreign people by speaking English instead of the both of you trying to communicate using personally invented sign language.

The data that the authors have gathered was observed that the critical thinking skill of the non-English-major freshmen and sophomores in the university was relatively weak, specifically on the aspects of the argument and self-regulation. Henceforth, students seldom expressed their opinions on English articles, found reasonable arguments to support their points of view and wrote comments on the reading text. In addition to that, students passively accepted the writer's opinion rather than question or correct because for them it is much safer and the simple and fast way to avoid further speaking out. The unreasonable inference of the article is also a point that they will be willingly to agree on while not properly checking their own points of view by searching literature and browsing the internet.

The gathered data above have shown that the results of this article made by the authors are on the weaker side. This happened because students lack enthusiasm to read English articles and study them with conviction unlike any of their subjects. Some of them even claim that they only read them when they 'have to' or when it is 'really needed'. After that, they would rather not care at all. For this problem the authors advised that adjusting the teaching content, together with the teaching methods of EFL reading class feasibly according to the characteristics of each major is a way to keep the students intelligence in English reading in surveillance. They also added that compared with the art majors, the majority of the science majors are inclined to think in a more reasonable and logical way. In real classroom settings, teachers need to combine critical thinking cultivation with the English reading text. For instance, the teacher may ask his or her students to find out details in reading to support their own ideas.

III. REVIEW/CRITIQUE

The authors of the article investigated the critical thinking skill of the students in terms of foreign reading materials. The idea of thinking critically is said to emerge and originate centuries ago from western countries that was known as, back then, as reflective thinking. The ability to think rationally and come up with ideas that are beneficial for the self and for others is important. According to the content of teaching or training students' critical thinking ability, there are generally four teaching approaches of cultivating critical thinking skills, general approach, immersion approach, infusion approach and mixed approach included (HUANG, 2013). The authors also insisted that critical thinking is much needed in the country they reside, China. Since it put Chinese educators to highlighting what schools would say 'quality education', many researchers like Liu & Guo (2006) who wrote a study on critical reading teaching model, Luo (2000) who wrote and published the cultivation on college students' own critical thinking, and others who focused on the importance of critical thinking and how students react and cope with it.

After addressing the issue, the authors found problems that hinder such quality education. First, students are unwilling to learn because it is considered difficult. Second, adjusting is also a huge challenge for the students. Lastly, Chinese letters are different from the Alphabet or English letters that is like a huge wall to climb. The first problem is the most common. You can literally find it in every school in the world. Once something is difficult, most of the students would be skeptical to learn or know more about it. The feeling of uncertainty whether they will improve or not is also present in the first obstacle. And, unfortunately, it is highly likely that they themselves think that the possibility of not getting any better is higher than the possibility of moving to the next stage. After all, once a boss fight in a difficult game is finally cleared, it just gets harder from there when the person playing barely has a clue on how many boss fights he or she has to clear in order to be done with it. In the students mentality, it is probably either 'I'll do my best' or 'I'll just go with the flow' kind of thing. Moving on to the second issue, adjusting is truly a huge challenge for these non-English speakers. This becomes an obstacle. It is similar to a fish learning how to fly or a snake wanting to walk without feet. First, it is extremely worrisome becoming a sore in the thumb or standing out because of negative reasons. The anxiety then comes in. Chinese students, already having a hard time to adjust, try their best to speak fluent English but it is nowhere near to what it is supposed to sound like. One may find it really hard to adjust. And that happens to many of

them as well. If I, myself, for example, try to speak Korean or Japanese, I will surely, without a doubt, butcher them as well. Then the other obstacle is not only the language barrier but the way of writing or the characters or letters. Chinese students do not write using Alphabet so it is difficult for them to quickly learn to read and write them. In countries like Philippines that adapt and officially use Alphabet as their way of writing have it much easier. In addition, they already speak English together with their own language, Filipino or Tagalog in every day routine. Unlike countries like China, it is more difficult since students have to recognize the letters first before learning how to read and understand, finally, creating their own set of sentences.

The research methods that the authors claimed to use are both qualitative and quantitative research method. It was done by making and giving questionnaire to their participants. These participants are 224 non-English majors in a university in China, in Southwest University. There are 105 male students (46.9%) while the others are 119 female ones (53.1%) who became the research participants. In addition, all the participants include 114 art majors (50.9%), who are respectively from School of History and Culture, School of Political Science and Public Administration and Institute of Marxism, as well as 110 science majors (49.1%) from School of Physical Science and Technology, College of Engineering and Technology, School of Life Science. Among all the participants, there are 109 freshmen (48.9%) and 115 sophomores (51.3%). The reason why their study only investigates the freshmen and sophomores is that "College English" course are only taken for the freshmen and sophomores in Chinese universities. This is all according to the article written by the authors.

The questions that they have included in the questionnaire are essential in not only finding each student's competence and comprehension in English reading but also help them think critically about themselves. Some of the questions include the overall command of university non-English majors' CT ability in EFL reading class. Here are some of the other questions that are attached to the article 'The Investigation in Critical Thinking Ability in EFL Reading Class' :

1. Do you like reading English articles?
2. What do you think of the importance of English? Why?
3. In English test, what kind of questions do you think is difficult? How about the easy ones?
4. How does your English teacher teach in your EFL reading class?
5. Do you know critical thinking in English reading or high-level reading? How do you understand it?
6. Do you think critical thinking is important? Why or why not?
7. How do you evaluate your own critical thinking?
8. As far as you are concerned, how to cultivate critical thinking? What are your suggestions for English teachers?

These questions will help the study gain more insight about what Chinese students think and do in EFL Reading Class. This will further give the authors something to work with and analyze, especially in coming up with an acceptable and useful solution for the problems that are already stated above. In the study, it says that in order for the authors to investigate this question, the study focuses on four distinct, yet related, sub-questions: first, do they have differences between the male and female students regarding critical thinking ability? If so, what are the differences? Second, do they have differences between the art and science majors? If so, what are the differences? Third, do they have differences between the freshmen and sophomores? If so, what are the differences? Forth, what are the key factors to influence university non-English majors' critical thinking ability? All the descriptions in the questionnaire are written in Chinese rather than English so that non-English majors have easier access to understanding. These are all done in hopes of finding the appropriate solution to the problem and to stop running in circles or to avoid a repeating cycle.

The first question is essential because reading English articles is only a must in English classes. Meaning, it asks and answers whether a student would read English articles as his or her past time or if he or she will only read so because it is a requirement in the university. After all, to excel at some things, utmost best must be given and great efforts must be done. The follow-up question is about the importance of learning English. This will be asked to the students in order to discern the reason why they are learning the language even if most of them are not enthusiastic in truly learning it. This will also make the participants who answer this question ponder about what is needed to be done. Asking about the type of question that puts them in a difficult situation is also a good question. By asking this, teachers can adjust their teaching strategy according to the students' points of view. This will make learning a lot easier if it was given the opportunity to attract the attention of the said university. Questions about critical thinking is also added in the questionnaires to determine what the participants think about high-level reading by learning how they understand critical thinking in general.

After the conduction of data gathering, the results shows that the mean score of students' general critical thinking ability in English reading is 2.719 Analysis (M=2.833) > Evaluation (M=2.789) > Interpretation (M=2.780) > Explanation (M=2.495) > Self-regulation (M=2.265). In other words, the students possess strong Inference and Analysis, while are weak on the aspects of Explanation and Self-regulation. Furthermore, the general critical thinking ability of the male students is 2.624, while that of the female students is 2.803, and the result of Independent-Samples T Test shows the extremely significant difference between two LUO, Q. X. (2000). On the cultivation of college students' critical thinking, Research on Education Tsinghua University. Analysis and Inference reaches the level of extremely significant difference ($P < 0.01$). Meaning, the female students' skill in critical thinking in English reading is significantly higher than that of the male students, specifically, on the aspects of Analysis and Inference. In conclusion, girls were better at refining the views, finding the relevant evidence, distinguishing fact from opinion and focusing on the implied meaning of the writer's attitude. In addition, the female students were even better at speculating and understanding the implicit conclusion from titles and contexts.

In continuation, the authors also conducted a study between art and science majors, comparing their critical thinking ability in English reading. They also considered conducting the same research between sophomores and freshmen. After tallying, the outcome shows that the former the art majors' critical thinking in English reading is significantly higher than that of the science majors, especially on the aspects of Inference and Explanation. The article also mentioned that the art majors were doing better regarding predicting from the title and context compared with the science majors. Moreover, the former ones were better at finding out reasonable arguments to support his idea, making and writing comments according to the content of the reading materials. As for the latter, it resulted to the sophomores' critical thinking in English reading is significantly higher than that of the freshmen, especially on the aspects of Interpretation, Evaluation, Explanation and Self-regulation.

Knowing that the students of Southwest University is relatively weak when it comes to English reading classes, the authors have learned, after interviewing 16 students, that teachers mainly focused on the language knowledge and skills, adopting the traditional English teaching methods of 'memorizing the words', 'reading the text', 'imparting the grammar', 'doing the

exercises', neglecting the overall cultivation of students' critical thinking ability. It is similar to a baby teaching itself to understand others and speak by what he or she hears in the environment without knowing how to write. It is an incomplete education, which similar to water without a container. The result of the interview also states that students tend to read the words written in the article they are reading and understand them in a literal way that only confuses them. For example, the words 'I feel blue' may be taken as a color and 'quit being a potato head' may invoke a different meaning to them that bring forth confusion. In doing this, they all have failed to develop their critical thinking skills.

Letting the students' laziness take over them, some students were content with the literal understanding of the reading materials and ignored evaluating, questioning and reflecting the writer's opinions so that they could not put forward their own views. More than half of students said that they were not aware of developing critical thinking ability because they were so busy dealing with various English test, such as English final exam. The authors emphasized that although 16 interviewees said that it was important to fully understand the articles, cultivate good reading habits and think from different perspectives, they all admitted that English test score was their top priority.

The study helps students to further understand the significance and the benefits of learning the foreign language, which is, English. This also invokes teachers to develop their teaching method in a way that critical thinking will not be left behind as it was an important element in studying, whether learning English reading or other subject such as Science and Mathematics. Most of the students also rather stick on what the teachers have taught instead of researching it all by themselves. Therefore, what the teacher have taught in class is what the knowledge of each one of the students is limited to. This truly leaving behind the development of their critical thinking ability when it comes to English reading. This would not help in their comprehension and most likely misunderstand more things instead of understanding them thoroughly.

Although some of the studies investigate foreign students trying to adjust to the demands of English as a medium of instruction in main Anglophone countries such as the US and Australia (Andrade 2006, 2009; Jones and Baker 2007; Ramsey 1999; Ramsey, Raven and Hall 2005), their findings seem to be in line with those studies carried out in less English speaking contexts (Björkman 2011; Evans and Morrisson 2010, 2011; Ljlsland 2010; Praxton 2009; Van der Walt and Dornbrack 2011). This is stating that foreigners need to learn the English language more than English speaking people. The authors are thorough in conducting their study. Through advising that teachers should change their teaching beliefs and should consciously choose critical reading materials, and design various critical reading activities to raise students' critical awareness. The example of the solution they gave is divided into three categories: 'before reading', 'while reading', and the 'after reading'. Before reading, teachers selectively explain the background information of the reading text and new words, phrases, sentence patterns to arouse the students' interest in English reading. While reading, teachers need to guide students to analyze and infer the reading materials with various critical reading strategies. After reading, students are suggested to comment on the reading materials, find out the related supporting arguments, and even question or correct unreasonable inferences of the article under teachers' guidance so as to strengthen their critical thinking ability.

The authors also mentioned that teachers should teach according to their students' aptitude. In doing this, both sides are to be expected to adjust. The teacher will set the standards of the lessons according to his or her students' capability and, in return, the student will be responsible for further honing what his or her teacher has given him or her. One good instance, if the non-English speaking female students have more advantages in English learning than the non-English speaking males and still remain this priority when they are in college, the authors states that teachers are suggested to spend more time helping boys expand their vocabulary and deepen the literal understanding of English reading text. In this way, both parties will be learning at the same pace with less students falling behind and allowing more of them to keep up with the subject at hand.

Furthermore, this study has listed four key factors based on the data collected and analyzed from questionnaires and interviews. They equate to the students' overall command in English. One participant claims that when reading bilingually, checking the Chinese meaning of the English word helps in understanding English better when it was translated to Chinese and it makes comprehension, as well as, finding new words a lot easier as it was being carefully analyzed. The only obstacle in this matter is the time limit given to the students. According to the participant, the time given to them to analyze is too short or lacking. This leads to failure of completely understanding the article given to them. The participant questioned, "How can I express my own idea if I cannot understand them?" Some of the participants came up with an idea of how to solve the main issue that the former participant has given. They follow the authors' idea and focus of the main idea. This solution, however, only limits them to agreeing in whatever the author has written in his or her article. This limits opinion giving as well. Since the students can only agree to what is written in the article, it hinders them from giving opinions and writing their own thoughts about the article. It is as if they are a 'nodding machine'. What if the author is pro-abortion? Since not many of them can completely understand what the article is about, most of them will agree to the thought the author wrote since they have limited time to analyze the article.

Students' awareness of critical thinking skills should be treated as an important foundation. The problem is, not many of them are aware of critical reading. The lack of critical reading makes barriers that they find extremely hard to break. Wil (n.d.), a writer, teacher, learning technologist and a keen language learner, stated in his article that learning English reading can also be done at home. This will help boost the students' coping and learning faster and easier. Here are the ten tips that he included that may or can help these struggling students:

1. Surround yourself with English.
2. Make English friends.
3. Find study partners.
4. Use authentic materials.
5. Get online.
6. Set yourself realistic goals.
7. Listen to real English.
8. Find fun ways to learn new words.
9. Learn about culture.
10. Have fun.

Breaking it down one by one, this proposed solution is indeed a good one. The first one promotes listening, writing and speaking English. If, by chance, you find speaking English awkward, an alternative way is to listen to English music. In this way, you can sing along without feeling anxious and awkward, plus, it was English. It will aid in pronunciation, analyze proper

grammar and invoke meaning. Making English friends is not an issue as well. If you can find a foreigner who can speak both Chinese and English, then it was good, but if you cannot, there's no need to stress out. You can always find music partners since many people all over the world bob to English music. Finding study partners with the use of authentic materials is another way to further develop understanding in English reading. The following tips are for assisting the first five. These will help improve critical reading skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study is well presented from the beginning to end. The beginning of the article quickly tackled the main problem at hand and before proposing a possible solution, the authors first talked about the importance of critical thinking abilities in EFL reading class. They also mentioned the significance of critical reading and understanding of English language. It was then followed by the data gathering and result that lead to them, the authors, identifying the problem at hand, its root, and formulate a possible solution to the aforementioned problem. After doing so, it can smoothly transition to the solution of the problem. Moreover, the structure of the article is well written, it is neither out of the place nor excessive, it was kept professional from the introduction until the last topic that was discussed. The title was given thought in the content of the study that will invoke a unified opinion between the authors and the readers of the article as it was a problem addressing many students, not just in a single school where they have conducted the study.

The format of the article is also correct. It followed the APA format and an article format. Furthermore, there are no grammatical errors present throughout the article, giving it a clean and professional atmosphere. Besides, it also did not fail to give proper citations using APA format version 6 and every claims are supported by a good amount of strong evidences that follows after each claim. The study successfully captures the main issue and presented an acceptable solution where both students and teachers have to adjust in order to fully integrate quality education when it comes to English reading classes. Teachers will have to change their teaching methods in a way that can perfectly fit with their students while students have to develop and hone their own critical thinking strategies in order to cope up with the teaching and learning process. This will surely progress well if successfully implemented.

The article focused on an important topic within EFL Reading class. Comparing male to female students, art to science majors and sophomores to freshmen shows that even if some are deemed above the others, it is still overall, weaker. They all still lack the needed level of intelligence when it comes to English reading. It also focused on the critical thinking of the students when it comes to English reading. How they adapt to it and how they use their brains in coping to a class they are having difficulty. The three barriers that hinders further successful development is the students' unwillingness to learn because it is considered difficult, adjusting is also a huge challenge for the students and Chinese letters are different from the Alphabet or English letters that is like a huge wall to climb. These are the reasons why the authors conducted the study. In order to eliminate the current problem at hand, they mentioned that teachers should teach according to their students' aptitude. In doing this, both sides are to be expected to adjust. Overall, the article is highly persuasive in tone and way of conversing to the readers.

For the further development of the article, one must not forget to look for the authors' perspective and interests as to why they decided to conduct this particular study in order to determine the need of a new method in teaching. However, widen the delimitation that they set. For example, find article that is almost similar to the authors' work, not just in one school but in general, to check whether students from other universities struggle in critical thinking because of the lack of teaching method. Check different sources, references and other citations attached in the study that may help in expanding the development of the given study.

The future reviewers or critiques of the article can also suggest a different method in the study that is as effective as the proposed one or one that can be more effective and less time and energy consuming. This critique paper added the idea of Wil (n.d.) in order to balance the effort that teachers and students have to make. The article only proposed a solution by making the educators adjust their teaching methods. Adding the information Wil (n.d.) wrote in his article makes learning and teaching easier for both teachers and students.

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