Students' Critical Thinking and IRF Sequence in English Literature Class

Setiawan Furqoni*, Mirjam Anugerahwati, M. Misbahul Amri
Department of English-Universitas Negeri Malang
setiawanfurqoni2502@gmail.com*
*Corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Abstract: This study is intended to investigate the communication using IRF sequence, issues occurred during teaching-process, and critical thinking in *Basic Analysis of Poetry* class. The result indicates that the faculty member used questions to build ELT students' critical thinking and ELT students believe that by reading a lot of poems will help them to develop their critical thinking. In conclusion IRF sequence with certain modification will help the faculty member to communicate with the students.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most needed skills is critical thinking (CT). It can be set in language learning for dealing four major skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In particular situation, ELT students are designed to be a teacher, instructor, or lecturer. Therefore, it is important to develop their critical thinking so that they will have competency in teaching English. 21st century skills is focusing on innovation and learning skills to separate students who are well-prepared to face complex life and work in 21st century. In 21st century, the skills are divided into four elements; creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration (4Cs). Thus, CT is essential for 21st century skills. There are also five processes in identifying, measuring, and promoting critical thinking; recognise, understand, analyse, evaluate, and create (Murphy, 2004).

The ELT students who study English literature would consider that CT is also has important role since literary works involved critical thinking to understand the symbolism in each work. Moreover, the texts of classical literature are considerable to be taught as language - teaching materials because they are able to deal with reality of issues i.e. in country, its geography, and history (Zerkina et al., 2015). However, ELT students would find some difficulties such as learning complicated form of English writing and reading takes time so probably will affect their motivation into less-motivated.

In all genre of literature, the researchers focuse on poetry for ELT students. Poetry gives students a big project. Contextually, big project means demanding the students to be more highly emphasized particularly on punctuation, rhythm of words, and a willingness to take time for reading a poem. In this era, this type of reading is a challenge for students, and even for adults. Moreover, in the today's world where social media is highly used to gain information, the type of reading we commonly used is skimming. Skimming or "power browse" is a common reading strategy for scholar as they read many pages of texts, literature, journals articles, lab reports, research studies, and etc (Burgess, 2017)

IRF sequence is essential in this study as IRF sequence will be the main aspect to investigate the classroom and how the faculty member communicate with the ELT students during teaching process. In general, IRF consists of an *initiation* by the teacher continued by a *response* presented by the students, and followed by a *feedback* from the teacher (Dahal, 1970). In terms of usage, IRF has been proven to successfully analyse classroom discourse (Iskandar, 2009).

METHOD

This research focused on faculty member's interaction in building students' critical thinking based on classroom discourse observation and interview. For the participants, the researchers conducted this study in Universitas Negeri Malang and chose undergraduate or Sarjana (B.A) in English Language Teaching program from English Department in Faculty of Letters particularly students who take *Basic Analysis of Poetry* as the compulsory course. For choosing the students as the interviewee, the researchers used

convenience sampling. Convenience sampling will be more effective because the criteria supports the researchers in terms of availability of time and accessibility, and willingness to volunteer (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, the researchers chose the interviewee based on their willingness. For the first step of procedure, the researchers made an instrument in the form of observation sheet. The following step of procedure was validating the instrument. If there is no revision, the observation checklist can be used directly to collect the data through class observation and the interview for the participants. However, if there is revision from the validator, the researchers need to revise the instrument until it is validated. The next step was conducting the observation and interview. For observation, the researchers came to the class and observed the teaching process. For time length, the observation has to be fulfilled based on the criteria of researchers' expectations about classroom discourse seen from IRF sequence. The researchers conducted pre-observation interview for the participants before the first meeting and for post-observation interview, it will be conducted after last meeting observation. Data analysis will be performed after the data has been collected based on observation and interview.

The instruments used in this study are observation checklist, field notes, video recording device, interview, and expert validation. The objective for using observation is to investigate the teaching-process which involves classroom discourse particularly the IRF sequence and how classroom discourse influences students' critical thinking who mainly ELT students in learning literature. The objective for using interview is to expect the observation result and re-check the observation result. Interactive model is a proper to analyse this study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There are four stages in interactive model; data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In order to validate this research, the researchers manage the trustworthiness of the research. Since the research involves interview and observation, the method must be significantly trusted to help the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the interview with the faculty member has given some explanation on the importance of literature for students, how IRF implemented in the class, and how to deal with less-motivated students. The faculty member believed that the method used in classroom was inquiry-based learning in which the faculty member raised one question although the students were not active. Even though, the faculty member did not state the strategy or method in teaching yet the concept of IRF was implemented in the classroom. Theoretically, IRF was implemented because the interaction was started by raising a question from the faculty member and the student had to respond by answering the question. Teaching effectively will be achieved if the objectives also achieved in term of hard skills, soft skills, awareness, and phenomena. More importantly, she emphasized on using any methods as long as the goals achieved. The faculty member believed that a good teacher is the one who brings change and students' attitude toward good deeds.

Since the spread of Coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the class was cancelled until the end of semester. Therefore, the researchers only had a chance to visit and observe the class once. However, in conducting the interview with the students, the researchers changed the interview with the list of questions that has to be answered by the students. The answers will be sent through e-mail. There are four ELT students who became the respondents. Each student's identity has been hidden in order to protect their identity. The researchers have summarized the interview results from each student. The results was categorized into 5 numbers which based on topic from all the questions. This is the example of the interview result done by the researchers with subject 1.

Interview results

Subject 1

Name: A.D.F

Gender: Male

1. Learning method and preferred teaching method (**1&2**): Subject 1's learning method focuses mostly on reading and writing. He prefers 2013 curriculum method because the teacher emphasizes on independent study.

2. Information about IRF (**3-9**): He knows about IRF. He believes IRF makes the communication or classroom bonding between teacher and students better. He thinks that IRF will strengthen the bond among them and make the class more enjoyable. However, he is not sure how to implement IRF sequence. He also realizes that the difficulty in the class is improving his English proficiency particularly in reading. Regarding in "response" about IRF, he believes that students' response could be in a form of pro or contra against teacher's explanation. In his opinion, response is related to critical thinking as a student needs to think from many perspective in order to understand a problem or an issue.

3.   Opinion on critical thinking (**10-15**): He thinks that critical thinking makes students to think efficiently and makes better decisions. Analyzing poem helps students to develop critical thinking because you need to think from many perspectives. Subject 1 feels that if a student is not able to respond teacher's question or statement, that student will feel shame and it will motivate them to develop their critical thinking. Regarding response and follow-up activity, he believes that students have to pay attention and think critically. Based on his opinion the only to develop critical thinking in *Basic Analysis of Poetry* is reading and analyze a lot of poems.

4.   Opinion on English literature class from ELT students' perspective (**16-18**): Subject 1 believes that there is no difference between ELT and English literature in term of using critical thinking because critical thinking will be effectively used in every subject. As an ELT student, reading poems will help you to develop your English skills particularly on vocabulary.

5.   Expectation from *Basic Analysis of Poetry* (**19**): He expects that he will analyze a lot of poems.

During the observation, the researchers also record the teaching-process in the class with audio and video. The use of audio and video is to record and transcribe the dialog between the faculty member and students. The transcription was adopted from Dahal (2010). So in order to make the transcript more easily read, the researchers use used code **Fm** for faculty member and **S/Os** for students or one student. The student in this dialog is a male student.

In each statement of the speakers which contains of IRF will be marked with **I** for initiation, **R** for response, and **F** for follow-up. If there is a grammatical incorrect **(grammatically incorrect)** and an unfinished statement (**doubt to continue the statement**), the researchers would use a bold sentence to mark the specific statement that showed those situations.

Transcript between faculty member and a student

Fm	**:**	**so anyone, can you…can you explain what we discussed last week about the meaning in…or retell…retell in "I wandered lonely as a cloud"? Raise your hand please… (I)**
Fm	:	Anyone…can you explain? (**I**)
Fm	:	Retell…(**I**) **(**one student responded)
Fm	:	Yes…what…
Os	:	Yes…what…(**R**)
Fm	:	Ah yah…please explain what…retell what is in the voice daffodils please (**I**)
Os	:	(mumbling)
Fm	:	Retell…with your own word…what is it…what is it about…how is this story (**I**)
Os	:	Okay, so this story about a man…(**R**)
Fm	:	Who?...when? (**I**)
Os	:	A man who is lonely (**R**)
Fm	:	Yeah (**I**)
Os	:	Ah yeah…
Fm	:	Okay, so what…(**I**)
Os	:	Eh…the story is about a man who is lonely and he is doing…so he's going to the place and he see a golden daffodils like a lot daffodils that he say that a lot…like proud…yeah…and then eh…he also… eh explain more about this daffodils like…eh…a star that shine…and the daffodils is like a star shine…and twinkle on (continues mumbling)…and stretched in never-ending means that the daffodils is you know that so much they can see (continues mumbling)…and the stretched is the margin way (continues mumbling) **(R) (grammatically incorrect)**
Fm	:	Hmm yes **(F)**
Os	:	He added that the daffodils…the movement of the daffodils is like the people that dance…and…**(R) (doubt to continue the statement)**
Fm	:	Yeah **(F)**
Os	:	And…hmm…(**doubt to continue the statement**)

The faculty member focused on character building that was reflected in literary works particularly in poems. However, she believed that IRF was implemented because she used inquiry-based learning which involved interaction consisted of initiation, response, and follow-up. In fact, it took several attempts to trigger students to be more active in the class. From interview results with the students, most of them agreed that developing critical thinking through English literature class helped them in ELT subjects. Most of them believed critical thinking as a thinking skill which will accommodate their mind dealing with every subject, either ELT or Literature subjects. However, there is one student who thought that critical thinking in English literature class and ELT subject is different because he believed that literature involved illogical and unrealistic imagination.

Moreover, the sequence of IRF could not literally perform sequentially because there will be several exchanging processes consisted of initiation from the faculty member and response from the students. After exchanging processes, the faculty member ended it with follow-up activity.

so anyone, can you…can you explain what we discussed last week about the meaning in…or retell…<u>*retell*</u> *in "I wandered lonely as a cloud"? Raise your hand please…*
Anyone…can you explain?
<u>**Retell…**</u>

The table indicated that the faculty member used a shorter version of her first statement. As the students did not respond her initiation, the initiation got shorter and shorter. There was similarities in the first and third statement. She used the word *retell*. The word *retell* indicated something needed to be reported from last week. The last initiation was in a form of strong confirmation or could be a sarcastic form since faculty member chose *retell* which was simpler than the first initiation. It was a simple word for students to be understood since they were all English students who knew and practically studied English.

Once the faculty member tried three times initiation, one student raised his hand. In assumption that the FM made a clear statement so the students must know the answer. Therefore, the FM only said "*Yes…what…*". However, the student was still confused as he responded by saying exactly what FM said earlier "*Yes…what…*". The FM responded by saying "*Ah yah…please explain what…retell what is in the voice daffodils please*". The first thing that FM said was "*ah yah…***"** , it was clearly or could be a kind of irritated response from the FM as the FM attempted initiation three times and they finally responded the last initiation while they did not know how to respond properly. Therefore, the FM began a new initiation by saying "*please explain what…retell what is in the voice daffodils please*".

The student's response was not clear enough as it written in the box with (mumbling) that is why the FM began a new initiation again by saying "*Retell…with your own word…what is it…what is it about…how is this story*". The student responded the initiation by explaining about "*a man who is lonely*" then the FM instantly gave follow-up by saying "*yeah*" than the student ended his statement by saying "*ah yeah*". The interaction between them seemed indicating a good start however from those parties either the student or the FM have different understanding of communication because when the student explained the story, the FM assumed that he would continue his argument. The phrase of "**yeah**" specified the agreement to listen and agreed about his statement while the student assumed that was a correct answer and ended his argument by saying "*ah yeah*". In order to continue their open discussion, the FM began an initiation by saying "*Okay, so what…*". Following that initiation, the student responded it by specifying her answer.

The student mentioned some grammatical errors such as "*he* <u>see</u>", "*he* <u>say</u>", and "*he also…eh* <u>explain</u> *more about this daffodils*". Those suggested that he might be having some mistakes or errors in which mistakes are kind of errors but the person knows where he/she makes an errors and they can fix it while errors are the permanent version of mistakes so they do not know which in is incorrect. Following the process, the FM gave follow-up of agreement by saying "*hmm yes*" and the student explained again about her argument by saying "*He added that the daffodils…the movement of the daffodils is like the people that dance…and…*". Even though he was doubt to continue his statement, the FM still gave the follow-up because the researchers believed that that was a good start and good interaction.

CONCLUSION

The faculty member applied inquiry-based learning which focused on discussion. She emphasized on developing character building and students' awareness in their social life. She believed that IRF was not literally implemented in her teaching method but IRF was the basic teaching method because it involved interaction between faculty member and students. In addition, most of ELT students believed that developing critical thinking in English literature class was helpful to them because it made them to understand and see

many perspective from a problem. However, a student argued that English literature and ELT subjects are different therefore developing critical thinking did not determine critical thinking development in ELT.

Based on this study, the implementation of IRF could not perform sequentially because the interaction between the faculty member and students or student and student is expanding. Therefore, when someone initiates something, the other one will respond it. However, when they agree on what they have been discussed, the initiator will end the interaction as it is called follow-up. This situation can be explored by academics because it may develop the form of classroom communication and interaction. In addition, this study also mainly focused on how ELT students deal with English literature materials and how they develop their critical thinking. Therefore, issue related to ELT students and English literature can be investigated more deeply as there are two function of language; for teaching (ELT) and language in literature which is mainly for leisure time.

REFERENCES

Burgess, S. (2017). *The Development of Critical Reading through the Reading and Writing of Poetry.* Morgan Park Academy. https://www.morganparkacademy.org/2017/the-development-of-critical-reading-through-the-reading-and-writing-of-poetry/

Dahal, B. (1970). Analysis of Spoken Discourse Pattern in Nepali ELT Classes. *Journal of NELTA*, *15*(1–2), 22–27. https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v15i1-2.4606

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies.* OUP Oxford.

Iskandar, T. (2009). *TEACHERS'QUESTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP IN IRF SEQUENCE: A STUDY OF EFL TEACHERS'BELIEFS AND PRACTICES* [PhD Thesis]. SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook, 2nd ed* (pp. xiv, 338). Sage Publications, Inc.

Murphy, E. (2004). An instrument to support thinking critically about critical thinking in online asynchronous discussions. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *20*(3). https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.1349

Zerkina, N., Lomakina, Y., & Kostina, N. (2015). Place and Role of English Classical Literature in Modern Educational Discourse. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *199*, 459–463. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.532