

Analysis of Upper Primary Students' Critical Reading Skills in Surakarta Based on School Accreditation

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Abstract. This study aims to describe the critical reading skills of upper primary students in elementary schools of Surakarta City. The researchers also analyzed the differences in critical reading skills of upper primary students from A-accredited and B-accredited elementary schools. This type of research is descriptive qualitative research. Informants in the study come from 4 A-accredited elementary schools and 4 B-accredited elementary schools consisting of 2 fourth grade students, 2 fifth grade students and 2 sixth grade students per school (6 students per school). Critical reading ability was measured by using a written test instrument followed by in-depth interviews to explore six aspects of critical reading skills, namely: accuracy, clarity, precision, depth, relevance and logic. Competency analysis of students refers to Bahasa Indonesia Basic Competencies for primary students of Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Number 37 of 2018. The result of the study shows that the students in A-accredited schools have better critical reading skills in the aspects of accuracy, clarity and relevance. Students in sixth grade master the aspects of critical reading more than the students in fourth grade and fifth grade.

Keywords: critical reading skills, upper primary students, school accreditation, students performance

1 Introduction

Critical reading skill is one of the important skills students have in this 21st century. In increasingly sophisticated technological developments, it allows students to access many readings from various media. In fact, not all the reading from various media is factual. There are some readings that are not in accordance with the facts, but intentionally made for certain purposes. In reading activity, students must be able to analyze the truth of the information contained in the reading. Therefore, it is very important that critical reading is taught to students early on, so that students are able to analyze whether the information is true or false¹.

¹ S. Yildirim, "The Effect of Performing Reading Activities with Critical Reading Questions on Critical Thinking and Reading Skills," *Asian J. Educ.*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 326–335, 2018.

In fact, the teacher has not maximally taught critical reading skills. Many teachers think that children's critical reading skills will develop automatically as they grow older. However, this perception has been challenged by various studies. The result of several studies shows that critical thinking skills taught early on to primary school students can work as it is taught to adults²³. There is also research that emphasizes that the development of students' critical thinking must begin in primary school^{4 5}. The earlier students are taught critical reading, the more students' abilities are developed compared to students who are not taught earlier.

Teachers need to provide supplies to students in the form of critical reading skills. "When we teach critical reading skills to students we will develop them to be critical thinkers ... " ⁶. These reading skills will support critical thinking skills, including skills to interpret ⁷, to assess opinions ⁸ and to determine the truth behind the news or text ⁹. Critical reading and information literacy will fortify readers not to be deceived by invalid text content ¹⁰. According to Hardcastle in Sarikaya, critical reading is a reading activity that involves critical thinking which consists of several steps. The steps of critical reading are described as follows: (1) examining the text title before reading; (2) determining the time, the purposes and the author of the text; (3) asking questions about the text; (4) identifying one's own feelings and thoughts about the text; (5) determining the text that has been read; (6) identifying ideas conveyed in the text; (7) evaluating ideas presented in the text; and (8) comparing text with other texts ¹¹. Critical reading skills include the activity of looking for sources of information, recognizing the purpose of the author, distinguishing between opinions and facts, and making conclusion ¹².

Critical reading ability are influenced by several factors, but basically it is divided into 2 types, namely internal and external ¹³. External factors include the environment, the facilities, and the frequency of critical reading teaching in primary schools. Various factors of school quality affect the development and the success of students in the future. School quality indicators have been determined based on school accreditation standards. Accreditation is an assessment process based on certain indicators according to the facts. Assessors conduct an

² S. A. Gelman and E. M. Markman, "Young children's inductions from natural kinds: the role of categories and appearances.," *Child Dev.*, 1987.

³ D. T. Willingham, "Critical Thinking: Why Is It So Hard to Teach?," *Arts Educ. Policy Rev.*, 2008.

⁴ M. G. Hickey, "Developing Critical Reading Readiness in Primary Grades," *Read. Teach.*, 1988.

⁵ L. M. McMillan, M. M., & Gentile, "Children's literature: Teaching critical thinking and ethics," *Read. Teach.*, vol. 41, no. 9, pp. 876–878, 1988.

⁶ N. A. Kadir, R. N. Subki, F. Haneem, A. Jamal, and J. Ismail, "The Importance of Teaching Critical Reading Skills In A Malaysian Reading Classroom," pp. 208–219, 2014.

⁷ BAĞCI, H. and ŞAHBAZ, N., 2012. Türkçe öğretmeni adaylarının eleştirel düşünme becerileri üzerine bir değerlendirme. *Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 8(1), pp.1-12.

⁸ E. Duran and E. Yalçıntaş, "Review of the Critical Reading Education in the Primary Schools1," *Procedia - Soc. Behav. Sci.*, vol. 174, pp. 1560–1566, 2015.

⁹ E. Özdemir, *The Critical Reading*. Ankara: Ümit Publishing, 1997.

¹⁰ M. Azwar, "Universitas Indonesia Kemampuan Mahasiswa Dalam Menelusuri Dan Mengevaluasi Informasi Berbasis Internet : Studi Kasus Mahasiswa Jip Uin Syarif Hidayatullah , Jakarta Angkatan 2007 Tesis Depok," 2011.

¹¹ B. Sarikaya, "An Investigation of Secondary School Students' Critical Visual Reading Skills Depending on Different Variables," *Educ. Policy Anal. Strateg. Res.*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 26–36, 2018.

¹² G. Cervetti, M. J. Pardales, and J. S. Damico, "A Tale of Differences A Tale of Differences : Comparing the Traditions , Perspectives , and Educational Goals of Critical Reading and Critical Literacy," *Read. Online*, vol. 4, no. 2001, pp. 1–14, 2010.

¹³ S. Pujiono, "Metode K-W-L Dalam Pembelajaran Membaca Kritis," *Yogyakarta*, 2008.

observation and judgment according to reality, without any manipulation¹⁴. The quality of learning in A-accredited and B-accredited schools has differences. Therefore, it will have an impact on learning output.

This is the background of the researchers to investigate the differences in critical reading skills in A-accredited and B-accredited primary schools. Researchers assessed that so far there had never been any research on critical reading skills based on school accreditation. The purpose of this study is to describe and to analyze the critical reading skills of students in A-accredited and B-accredited primary schools. This research is important to do because it will add to the scientific repertoire, especially in critical reading learning in primary schools.

2 Research Methods

This research is descriptive qualitative research with analytical methods. This study was conducted in eight primary schools in Surakarta, Indonesia, which consist of four A-accredited primary schools and four B-accredited primary schools. The study started on March 2019 and conducted for 5 months. The purpose of this study is to describe the differences in critical reading skills of upper primary students from A-accredited and B-accredited primary schools. Four A-accredited and four B-Accredited primary schools were randomly selected. The data sources in the study are Indonesia language learning in 24 classes from eight primary schools, documents from students' learning, informants and respondents consisting of teachers and students of upper primary: 2 fourth grade students, 2 fifth grade students and 2 sixth grade students (6 students per school). Random sampling technique was implemented in choosing the students. The data were collected using observation, document analysis, and test instrument technique. Students' critical reading ability was measured using a written test instrument followed by in-depth interviews to explore six aspects of critical reading skills, namely: accuracy, clarity, precision, depth, relevance and logic. The data were validated using data triangulation and method triangulation techniques. The data obtained were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis techniques, namely: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusions¹⁵.

3 Research Methods

The ability to read critically between students in A-accredited schools and B-accredited schools can be seen in the following diagram.

¹⁴ J. M. Asmani, *Tips Efektif Menjadi Sekolah Berstandar Nasional dan Internasional*. Jakarta: Harmoni, 2011.

¹⁵ M. B. Miles and A. Michael Hubberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif*. Jakarta: UI-Press, 2009.

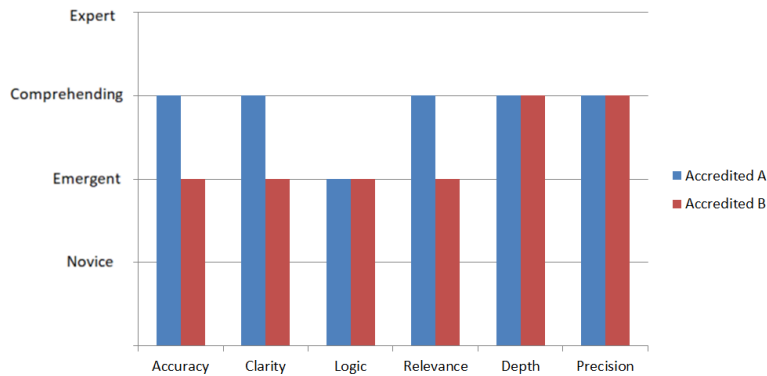


Fig. 1. Students' Critical Reading Skill Based on School Accreditation

Based on the diagram there is a difference between A-accredited and B-accredited schools on the aspect of accuracy. The students in A-accredited schools are at the comprehending stage, while students in B-accredited schools are at the emergent stage. In the aspect of clarity, the students in A-accredited primary schools are at higher stage which is at comprehending stage, while the students in B-accredited primary schools are at the emergent stage. In the aspect of logic, students in A-accredited primary schools and B-accredited primary schools are equal, which are at the emergent stage. In the aspect of relevance, students in A-accredited schools are at comprehending stage, while students in B-accredited schools are at emergent stage. In the aspect of depth A-accredited and B-accredited primary school students are at comprehending stage. In the aspect of precision, students in A-accredited and B-accredited schools are at comprehending stage.

The results of the study above indicate that students who are in A-accredited schools have a higher ability compared to B-accredited schools as it is proven by the number of critical reading aspects that they master. This is in line with the theory of factors that affect the quality of education, including curriculum, human resources, facilities, school management, funding for education and leadership¹⁶. The school accreditation is included in school management, thus accreditation is a factor that determines differences in learning outcomes. Quality schools carry out quality, efficient, relevant and high productivity of learning processes¹⁷.

Optimal learning is also influenced by the availability of the facilities and infrastructure that the school has. School facilities have important roles, both symbolic and functional, in supporting the educational process. Symbolically, school building represents the values given by each community to education. Functionally, building acts as a stage for learning, both supporting and limiting teaching and learning activities¹⁸. Well-designed, well-lit, well-ventilated and well-equipped rooms improve the activity of student learning, regardless the subject matter. Quality space also has a very pleasant impact on moods, attitudes, and, increases student's attention over the subjects. Well-designed and carefully articulated classrooms

¹⁶ Syafaruddin, *Manajemen Mutu Terpadu dalam Pendidikan*. Jakarta: PT. Grasindo, 2002.

¹⁷ T. Suyatno, "Faktor-faktor Penentu Kualitas Pendidikan Sekolah Menengah Umum di Jakarta," 2013.

¹⁸ J. De Chiara and M. J. Crosbie, *Time-Saver Standards for Building Types* (4th Edition). New York: McGraw Hill, 2001.

positively influence the ability of teachers as well, which ultimately contributes to student's academic achievement ¹⁹.

Another factor that distinguishes the results of critical reading skills in schools with different accreditation is the quality of the teacher. There are results of research to determine the effect of school resources on students' achievement. They found a total of nine studies that analyze the influence of teacher abilities on students' achievement. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between the two attributes ²⁰. Other findings indicate that teacher education courses have a positive effect on students' achievement ²¹. The results of other studies also compare professional education and academic subjects to determine the relationship between the two variables and teaching effectiveness ²². The study provides that there is a positive relationship between professional education and subjects to the effectiveness of learning.

Knowledge and professional skills of teachers can be developed through professional development and service programs to achieve optimal student learning outcomes ²³. Teacher's opportunities to participate in professional development in a specific field of subjects related to the curriculum have an impact on teaching and students' achievement²⁴. Therefore, education courses the teachers have are keen in improving the level of education. The skills of the teachers make learning process happen for students. In general, effective teachers can adjust their teaching style to suit the needs and styles of different students because they have broad approaches and strategies, such as direct teaching, modeling interactive teaching strategies, cooperative learning techniques, experience-based. and skill-based approach. So, quality learning depends on the competencies and attitudes of each teacher.

For a more detailed explanation of the differences between fourth, fifth and sixth grade students in A-accredited and B-accredited schools can be seen in the following diagram.

¹⁹ R. Laiqa, R. U. Shah, and S. M. Khan, "Impact of quality space on students' academic achievement," *Int. J. Acad. Res.*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 706–711, 2011.

²⁰ R. Greenwald, L. V. Hedges, and R. D. Laine, "The effect of school resources on student achievement," *Rev. Educ. Res.*, 1996.

²¹ P. Ferguson and S. T. Womack, "The Impact of Subject Matter and Education Coursework on Teaching Performance," *J. Teach. Educ.*, 1993.

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²³ M. B. King and F. M. Newmann, "Will teacher learning advance school goals?," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 2000.

²⁴ L. Darling-Hammond, "Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*. 2000.

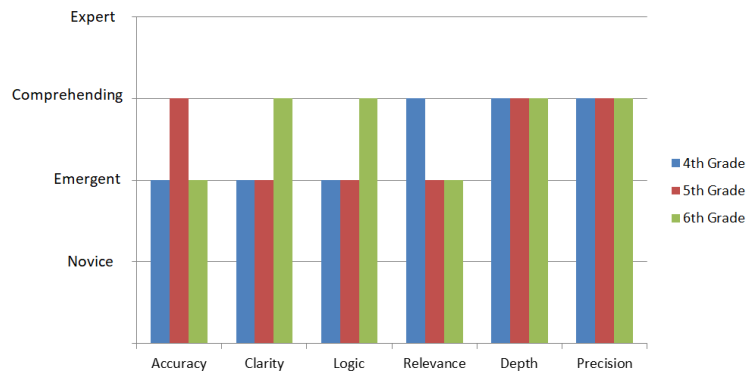


Fig. 2. Critical Reading Skill Based on Student's Level in Primary School

The diagram shows that upper primary students at A-accredited and B-accredited schools have similar levels on the aspects of depth, and precision. This is because the curriculum in primary schools in the learning of Bahasa Indonesia subject in the fourth grade has begun to apply basic competencies related to the aspects of relevance, depth, and precision. Basic competencies (BC) taught in fourth grade, namely BC 3.1 Comprehending the main ideas and supporting ideas obtained from oral, written, or visual texts; BC 3.3 Exploring information from a character through interviews using a questionnaire; BC 3.5 Describing personal opinions about the contents of literary books (stories, stories, etc.); and BC 3.8 Comparing things that are already known to those just known from nonfiction texts. Fifth grade students are more strengthened with competencies related to accuracy, depth and precision. The basic competencies of it are BC 3.1 Determining the main points in oral and written texts; BC 3.2 Classifying information obtained from books into the aspects: what, where, when, who, why, and how; BC 3.3 Summarizing the explanatory text (explanation) from print or electronic media; BC 3.4 Analyzing the information contained on an advertisements from print or electronic media. The sixth grade students are strengthened to understand explanatory texts, history books, and nonfiction texts, linking events that are read with personal experience, and concluding the contents of the text. Basic competencies in the sixth grade are in the form of BC 3.1 Summing up information based on the report text of observations that are heard and read; BC 3.2 Exploring the contents of scientific explanatory texts that are heard and read; BC 3.4 Digging important information from history books using aspects: what, where, when, who, why, and how; BC 3.8 Exploring information contained in nonfiction texts; and 3.10 Linking the events experienced by characters in fiction with personal experience. However, the similarities in the four aspects of students in the fourth, fifth and sixth grade are still in the comprehending stage.

Fourth and Fifth grade students at A-accredited and B-accredited schools are still weak in the logic aspect, which is at the emergent stage. This is because the teacher has a low frequency in facilitating students to associate the text with other contexts, in the curriculum of the fifth grade there are also no basic competencies to compare and look for similarities between the two texts. Meanwhile, the fourth and sixth grade have basic competencies to compare texts, such as fictional texts. The relevance aspect is developed supported by the concepts taught in fourth grade, i.e: BC 3.5 and 3.8. Describing personal opinions about the contents of literary books (stories, fables, etc.) and comparing things that are already known to those that are just known from non-fiction texts. In this BC students develop themselves to link themselves to concepts or content, so that when reading, they will be accustomed to linking concepts or content to their

context or themselves. The development of the logic aspect is not found in BC of fifth grade, so that the strengthening and development of the logic aspects do not develop. In sixth grade, the strengthening of the logic aspect reappear in BC 3.10, namely linking events experienced by characters in fiction with personal experience.

This finding indicates that there is a lack of perfection in the curriculum. The curriculum currently used is not continuum development which is shown in Basic Competencies of fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade. If the constant curriculum development process does not pay attention to the importance of material that is continuous in each level, it will make the learning process ineffective. For this reason, it is necessary to refer to the outline of a learning continuum that functions as a learning target²⁵. The mastery of material qualifications that occur in Indonesia is now considered to be unstructured because the developing curriculum has not paid attention to the importance of sustainable learning. Determination of basic competencies also pay attention to the depth of aspects of the material so that the content of the material presented in the teacher handbook and student handbook becomes the main learning resource that guides students to achieve their competencies. Conformity between the measurement process and the presentation of the material in the learning process is a factor that needs to be considered considering these conditions affect the achievements obtained by students²⁶. The form of equalization carried out can pay attention to the material in the curriculum with the learning objectives²⁷. Basically, students are the human being that will continue to develop and change. Therefore the learning continuum needs to be developed to adjust the abilities of students according to their respective developments. As a teacher, it is necessary to map basic competencies and materials so that they are adaptable to the abilities of students so that they will develop continuously.

Sixth grade students have better abilities in the stage of clarity, understanding text supported by facts, data, or examples. The advantages of sixth grade students are because in the fourth and fifth grade, they have learned basic competencies related to the development of clarity aspects, namely in fourth grade: BC 3.1 and 3.2 Comprehending the main ideas and supporting ideas, as well as the interrelationships of ideas obtained from the oral, written, or visual text, while in fifth grade, 3.5. Exploring important information from historical narrative texts presented orally and in writing is done by using aspects of what, where, when, who, why, and how. As the experience of students increases in practicing critical reading skills, the ability of these students in critical reading will increase. Critical thinking must be taught to students early on²⁸. The critical thinking and critical reading skills of students does not automatically develop by themselves when they grow up, but they must be trained with critical thinking experience both at school and outside of school. This perception is supported by various studies in the field^{29 30}.

However, based on the results of the research, the sixth grade students are just at comprehending level. This is because they have not been exposed to the concept of "observing

²⁵ B. Subali, "Pengembangan Tes Pengukur Keterampilan Proses Sains Pola Divergen Mata Pelajaran Biologi SMA," *Pros. Semin. Nas. Biol. Lingkung. dan Pembelajarannya, Jurdik Biol. FMIPA, Univ. Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta*, no. 4 Juli 2009, pp. 581–593, 2009.

²⁶ W. A. Mehrens, "Preparing students to take standardized achievement tests," *Pract. Assessment, Res. Eval.*, 1989.

²⁷ M. B. Puckett and J. K. Black, *Authentic Assessment of The Young Child: Celebrating Development and Learning*. New York: Merrill, and imprint of Macmillan College Publishing Company, 1994.

²⁸ R. G. Stauffer, *Directing the Reading-thinking process*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

²⁹ M. Wilson, "Critical Thinking: Repackaging or Revolution?," *Lang. Arts*, vol. 65, no. 6, pp. 543–551, 1988.

³⁰ C. Reading, L. Kr, U. Federal, and D. S. Catarina, "Critical Reading And Critical Thinking The State of the Art," pp. 141–163, 2003.

facts, data, or examples" in texts other than narrative and descriptive texts. The results of the study are due to the type of text learned by students in elementary schools with more types of fiction and non-fiction (narrative) text and descriptive narrative texts in history books. When they are in fifth grade and sixth grade, the students began to be taught explanatory texts, reports, and other more complex texts. However, students are only exposed to printed text from students' textbook and lacked of experience in reading different type of text and resources.

4 Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the critical reading ability of students in A-accredited and B-accredited schools is different. Students who are in A-accredited schools have higher critical reading skills than students who are in B-accredited schools. The aspects that prove the fact are the aspects of accuracy, clarity, and relevance. Meanwhile, in the aspects of logic, depth and precision of students, A-accredited and B-accredited schools have similarities on the results. When they are viewed from the grade level, students in the sixth grade experience decreases in the aspects of accuracy and relevance. This is because some basic competencies related to reading in fifth grade curriculum are not continuing from BC in fourth grade. Therefore, students' skills, for example skill related to relevance aspect does not develop. In the sixth grade, basic competencies related to clarity and logic aspects of critical reading are growing even though they are still at the comprehending stage. A continuous monitoring and identification on students' language skills should become a reference on intervention program's adjustment³¹, teaching models and media. Teachers need to make basic competency mapping and arrange the material suited to the students' critical reading skills that can increase along with their progress to the next grade.

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