

# ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH SIGNS IN EXTENSIVE READING CLASS AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF STKIP PGRI JOMBANG; EDUSEMIOTIC

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## Abstract

The true challenge in academic setting is how to transform values and guide students' mind growth with no excessive words. This is how edusemiotic plays important role and how it becomes a dominant in teaching and learning communication. Edusemiotic represents a new conceptual framework of theoretical study and the empirical one. This study aims at investigating how English Education Department Students of STKIP PGRI Jombang elaborate ideas in interpreting sequences of signs on the image to reflect their critical thinking ability. The data was taken from 10 English Education Department students of 2017 A based on convenience sampling. The research design is in qualitative and uses case study method. The students in Extensive Reading class are asked to freely interpret the image based on their background knowledge. There are three important findings; *students' chosen image, students' reading habit, and also students' critical thinking ability*. The result shows that 7 of students' critical thinking level are in developing level while the 3 of students' are in mastering level. Most of them are having a reading habit before getting Extensive Reading class and it increased a little right afterwards. So, their interpretations are actually shown from how they elaborate ideas in interpreting sequences of signs in the picture to reflect their critical thinking ability and understand the meaning or values that lie within.

**Keywords:** *critical thinking, edusemiotic, extensive reading, semiotic*

## A. INTRODUCTION

In educational settings, having students who are able to think critically is one of the ultimate goals for many of professionals in all stages of education especially in higher education. According to Paul (1990, cited in Karimi & Veisi, 2016: 1) in most educational settings, students struggle a lot in facing some conventional techniques of short term, particularly in memorization. This can be such a destruction and block their mind to think deeply about what they have read. As the consideration, educators need to realize that students are not born with critical thinking and it should be developed as well. Based on Goldsmith's (2013: 10) exploration, Dr. Michael Bishop of Florida State University concluded that there is no certain definition of critical thinking, but he simplified the idea that critical thinking is the implementation of good reasoning to reasoning problem. Egege

and Kutieleh (2004, cited in Djiwandono, 201: 33) asserted that Asian students are disappointedly lack of critical thinking attitude and becoming ignorant of analysis principles and critique. Under a Thailand 4.0 vision, Jones & Pimdee (2017, cited in Changwong, Sukkamart, Sisan, 2018: 38) stated that critical thinking is the key pillar of knowledge-based economy goals. Along with this assumption, Rujivanarom (2016, cited in Changwong, Sukkamart, Sisan, 2018: 38) evaluated the logical thinking and analytical skill of 6,235 students in ten provinces of Thailand. It showed the results of average final score was just 36,5%, with only 2,09% passing the exam.

Soeherman (2004, cited in Djiwandono, 2013: 33) also show the result of college student respondents toward critical thinking ability was lower than the average of college students in USA. In line with this, Priadi (2016: 264) strengthen the fact that Indonesian students normally ask the things before trying to figure out by themselves. Even they often get confused finishing some tasks then tend to check their mates' work. Along the same line, Indah & Kusuma (2016: 86) revealed how poor college students' reflection in UIN Maliki Ibrahim, Malang, regarding to critical thinking. They stated that the students' argumentation level is still in the scale of elementary since unsupported by the sufficient reasoning. Furthermore, based on the researcher academic experience, her college mates sometimes become so apathetic in the class. They do not often deliver arguments or critique something in certain subjects they sign up for. They barely become sceptical on everything they listen or even see. In fact, we do such cliché without questioning, asking whys or making assumptions. We ignore the fact of mind-growth to improve. It will simply kill the sense of curiosity. In case of reading course book text or accomplishing the task by reading instruction, they sometimes miss the points.

This can be an entry point for the researcher to introduce how edusemiotics as the way of thinking that semiotics is fundamentally become the pedagogical theory which encourage and develop the students' cognitive in the university. To think in 'semiotic' means agreed that life is a matter of semiotic engagement process, particularly in education field. Somehow, we are unconsciously use signs in teaching and learning. Regarding to the university background, the researcher provides students' worksheet that consist of several pictures related to education. However, the messages conveyed in the pictures will be implicitly meaningful for the future educators to understand what is happening and what education is like. In case of revealing the picture messages by

elaborating ideas into arguments, the students are supposed to have reflective and sceptical attitude. So that, their interpretation reflects their critical thinking ability.

## B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design which is conducted in 2017 A, one of English classes in STKIP PGRI Jombang. There are 10 students who were willing to participate based on the convenience sampling. In case of neutralize the bias of findings, there were two instruments in collecting the data in this study; document and interview. Meanwhile, the researcher holds the major role to obtain the sufficient data. The data needed is for revealing how English Education Department students elaborate ideas in interpreting signs to reflect their critical thinking. The primary data was taken in students' worksheet while the secondary one was the interview. There are several steps in collecting the data. The document was given to students in form of student's worksheet 'Image Reading and Interpretation'. The students are asked to generate ideas and interpret the image based on their background knowledge. When the student's worksheet submitted, the researcher conducted the interview. The students are asked for several questions related to their interpretation of the image chosen. In order to obtain rich and insightful data, students' mother language was used as a media to convey or express their thoughts and feelings regarded to the image they chose. After all the data collection was done, the researcher conducts the data analysis based on the students' interpretation in the worksheet and the audio recording which was generated into such a transcript. Then, the researcher presents all the finding and discussions.

## C. FINDING

### 1. Image Choice

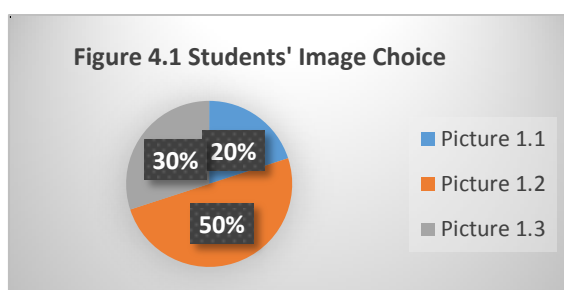


Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of student's image choice to be interpreted. There are three different images that can be seen in Table 3.4. For Picture 1.1 shows its percentage of 20% accumulated. It means, there are 2 students who chose Picture 1.1. Meanwhile, Picture 1.2 shows 50% percentage which means there are 5 students who interpreted the chosen image. For the next accumulation shows 30% percentage of Picture 1.3 which means there are 3 students who interpreted Picture 1.3. These all are chosen based on students' 2017 A personal

choice. For example, Student 8 asserted that, “I chose this picture (P2) because in my opinion, this is the most relevant issues and I often found this in my surrounding”.

## 2. Reading Habit in Extensive Reading Class

Table 4.1 Students’ Reading Habit in Extensive Reading Class

No.	Students	Reading Habit		Personal Experience in Extensive Reading Class		
		Before ER	After ER	Positive	Balance	Negative
1.	Student 1		√	√		
2.	Student 2	√	√		√	
3.	Student 3	√	√			√
4.	Student 4	√	√		√	
5.	Student 5	√	√	√		
6.	Student 6	√	√		√	
7.	Student 7		√	√		
8.	Student 8	√	√	√		
9.	Student 9	√	√		√	
10.	Student 10	√	√	√		

Table 4.2 shows students’ reading habit in English Education Department students of STKIP PGRI Jombang, academic year of 2017 A. Based on the table shown, there are two possible reading habits; *before and after getting Extensive Reading class*. The next rows show how they share personal experience in Extensive Reading class. Some of them may react positively and the rest may react both positive and negative by providing some acceptable reasons. And there is this one student who tend to react negatively. Negative here means something that the students dislike from the Extensive Reading class by providing some acceptable reason as well.

### a. Students’ Reading Image and Interpretation

Table 4.2 Students’ Critical Thinking Measurement of English Education Department students of 2017 A class in STKIP PGRI Jombang

No.	Student (s)	Picture Coding	Rating Criteria and Rating Scale							Overall Score	Number of Scale	Level
			A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7			
1.	Student 1	P2	5 (M)	3 (D)	5 (M)	4 (D)	4 (M)	2 (E)	4 (D)	27	64	D
2.	Student 2	P1	5 (M)	3 (D)	4 (D)	2 (E)	4 (D)	5 (M)	4 (D)	27	64	D
3.	Student 3	P2	6 (M)	5 (M)	6 (M)	6 (M)	5 (M)	4 (D)	6 (M)	38	90	M
4.	Student 4	P3	4 (D)	2 (E)	1 (E)	2 (E)	3 (D)	2 (E)	3 (D)	17	40	D

5.	Student 5	P2	5 (M)	2 (E)	2 (E)	4 (D)	4 (D)	2 (E)	3 (D)	22	52	D
6.	Student 6	P1	5 (M)	3 (D)	3 (D)	2 (E)	4 (D)	2 (E)	3 (D)	22	52	D
7.	Student 7	P2	6 (M)	5 (M)	4 (D)	4 (D)	4 (D)	3 (D)	4 (D)	30	71	M
8.	Student 8	P2	6 (M)	5 (M)	5 (M)	4 (D)	4 (D)	5 (M)	5 (M)	34	81	M
9.	Student 9	P3	6 (M)	2 (D)	6 (M)	3 (D)	2 (D)	3 (E)	4 (D)	26	62	D
10.	Student 10	P3	6 (M)	3 (D)	3 (D)	2 (E)	3 (D)	4 (D)	4 (D)	24	57	D

$$\text{Individual score} = \frac{\text{Overall Score} \times 100}{42}$$

B

Number of Scale:

*Emerging* =  $0 \leq \text{score} \leq 30$

*Developing* =  $31 \leq \text{score} \leq 70$

*Mastering* =  $71 \leq \text{score} \leq 100$

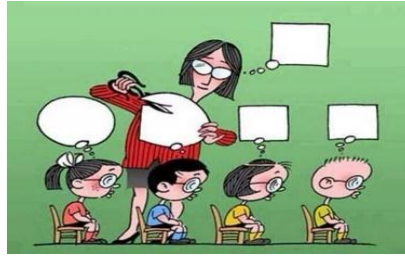
a

Based on the Table 4.1, the researcher presents the data obtained of students' critical thinking of 2017 A class English Education Department students in STKIP PGRI Jombang. The finding shows there are 10 students who are willing to participate. The researcher uses the Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric (Table 3.1) and its calculation to determine the students' critical thinking level. They are free choosing one of the pictures (Table 3.4) then interpret based on their background knowledge. However, they got different points regarding to each rating criteria and rating scale. The data shown that the critical thinking level of those 10 students are in developing level and just the three of them are in mastering level. The data is first obtained through students' worksheet and supported by the data interview.

#### D. DISCUSSION

In this part of the study, the researcher concerned on each image. Based on Figure 4.1, it shows that there is 20% of students chose Picture 1.1 to interpret which means that there are 2 students out 10 chose this picture. Those two students are *Student 2* and *Student 6*. Additionally, there is 50% of students chose Picture 1.2 to interpret which means that there are 5 students out 10 chose this picture. Those five students are *Student 1*, *Student 3*, *Student 5*, *Student 7* and *Student 8*. And also, there is 30% of students chose Picture 1.3 to interpret which means that there are 3 students out 10 chose this picture. Those three students are *Student 4*, *Student 9* and *Student 10*.

Picture 1.1



*Student 2* confirmed that Picture 1.1 explains the education system in Indonesia. She claimed that by cutting the *bubble mind* of students, it means the teacher wishes for the students having the same thoughts like her. It is truly contradictory with the opinion of *Student 6*. What she figured out is how these bubble minds interpreted as knowledge transferred which construct the same understanding between teacher and students. *Student 6* delivered her deeper understanding and assumed that by this process (bubble minds cutting), those who have nothing in mind or something different will get the same understanding as the teacher after getting the knowledge transformed. Unfortunately, both *Student 2* and *Student 6* did not truly give more details about the image meaning-making while it consists several of modes including color, facial expression, spaces and other entities. They were just concerning on the subjects within the image without even trying to look out of it. The used of green layout must be having meaning to communicate. Moreover, the way the students illustrated sitting on the image can be widely explored as well. Like, why do they seem sitting lethargically? Even before and after their bubble mind being cut by the teacher. This one is actually questionable. Additionally, no one smiles there. The teacher seems unhappy and it is more like being irritate while cutting. It can be assumed that teacher is following her own ego for wishing things run as the way she wishes to be, especially in academic setting.

Picture 1.2

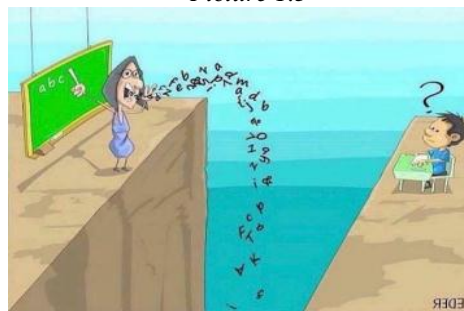


*Student 1* assumed that the picture illustrates the struggle of a father in sending his child to the higher education. He does not care of how much money will be spent. In line with this, *Student 5* also interpreted that getting higher education will

cost much. Meanwhile, *Student 8* delivered arguments that financial issues are less important than parents' main priority which is their children's education. So, they may sacrifice for anything for the sake of their children. This idea is balanced by *Student 3* who assumes that the picture illustrates whoever wants to get education or needs a proper education has to pay much but it is not always that easy to get, due to financial issues. For the same point, *Student 7* confirmed that the issue of Picture 1.2 is commonly happened in Indonesia – education and financial issues – and cause such a huge gap, especially in zoning system case. The multiple implications do exist from this policy.

From these 5 students, no one tries to correlate each mode within the image. They concern on financial issues and struggle of parents only. Even so, *Student 7* drawn a different perspective out of image context. It is good but she only mentioned the consequence of it. Instead of limiting context, other students did not correlate each items as well. Let's see the man's expression. He seems restless while pouring out the money. What if he could not afford for it? Will the child go up and walk toward the school door? This is not merely about financial issues or how much money will be spent upon education but how education is being capitalized. By wondering its fundamental right of everyone, education that ideally should be accessible for anyone, practically become a promising business. As a result, it created many social inequalities as elaborated above by these 5 students.

Picture 1.3



Unfortunately, *Student 4* did not truly specify the issues. She missed some supporting points of why those words are wasted away and how could it be. It is not clearly stated in advance. In fact, she could have given more explanations and precisely state her own position. For the next interpretation comes from *Student 9*. She determined her own position and clearly stated the issues. She assumed that the teaching method is such an odd thing. She also noticed the question mark that pops up onto the student's head. It highly probably means that the student cannot understand

well to what is spoken by the teacher. *Student 10* also explains the picture meaning based on her perception that teacher goes out of the topic while giving material. It caused the students having lack of understanding. She identified the issue by giving an example in advance.

Unfortunately, these three students did not explore further nor notice each entities of the image. They only focus on the subjects' consequences. Meanwhile, the gradation of blue is not merely meaningless. The darker it becomes, the deeper it gets. This can cause a huge gap between the student and teacher while standing on the edge of ravine. It shows how quiet the education actually is. In addition, the student is illustrated all alone, with no friends but his own confusion.

Regardless to inappropriate method used by the teacher, the wasted words spoken can be interpreted that school materials are actually irrelevant to students' life. The theories do not always fit to the reality as well. Consequently, students learn abstract things without a single understanding. This is symbolized from the question mark onto student's head. It can also be seen from his expression that he gets nothing in the class. That huge gap is real. Meanwhile, the teacher has no attention at all – seen from her facial expression. Additionally, it can be seen from her gesture and how she keeps on talking even though it is all overwhelming.

In line with this, Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006, cited in Liu, 2013; 1260) assumed that “image and other visual modes can represent objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system, they have the capacity to form texts, complexes of signs which internally cohere with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced.”.

This is how social semiotic works and offers meaning in diversity. We can see from how the same object is seen differently based on the social context arises. It can be from the influence of environments or social interactions. But multimodality offers a way to communicate meaning through several modes in the same time that requires dialogic engagement. It means that each part of the object, especially the image is a media to communicate meaning that consist of different modes. It corresponds to Iedema's confession (2003; 39) that, “the term multimodality, as used here, is a technical one aiming to highlight that the meaning work we do at all times exploits various semiotics. In talk, we mobilize language as sounded speech, and we further ‘mean’ through gestures, posture, facial expression, and other embodied resources such as physical distance, stance, movement or stasis”.



From these interpretations, the three of students who actually chose the same picture, absolutely have different reasoning based on their ability to communicate meaning. Each student has different style in expressing their mind even though in the most limited way while they ought to analyze it deeper by correlate all the entities in detail. In Table 4.1, among *Student 4*, *Student 9* and *Student 10* have certain reading habit. They love reading before getting Extensive Reading class. It's all related to fictional books. As what *Student 10* confessed, she felt her reading habit increased a little after getting the Extensive Reading class.

In fact, Table 4.2 shows the result of students' rating criteria and rating scale. The overall score of *Student 4* shows 17 with its number scale of 40 from its calculation. The critical thinking level is in developing level. Meanwhile, the overall score of *Student 9* is 26 with its number scale of 62. It means that the critical thinking level of *Student 9* is in developing level. The last result is the overall score of *Student 10*. It shows the number of 24 with its number of scale written 57. It means that the critical thinking level is in developing level.

Based on image reading and interpretation, there are 7 students whose critical thinking level is in developing level. Meanwhile, the other 3 students whose critical thinking level is in mastering level. As the result of interview section, there are those who feel like getting better and become more insightful right after extensive reading class and there are those who basically love reading so they still have reading habit well even after extensive reading class is over. This reading habit is actually unconscious for them in how they generate ideas and deliver arguments very well. It can be seen from the level gotten that those who actually love reading no matter what material reading it is, it helps them much in fitting words and express actually what they felt especially in reading images. A few of them may be deliver written arguments very well in the worksheet but most of them are truly fluent and well enough in expressing thought orally.

This is actually confirming the benefits of extensive reading, a study conducted by Richards and Schmidt (2010, cited Ferdila, 2014: 69). They demonstrated that extensive reading tends to build students' positive attitude toward reading habits apart from the other benefits. It means that a habit should go on further even after the program is over. The more they read, the better they express feelings and thoughts. In case of interpreting meaning, the positive reading habit also helps students to read an image and interpret the meaning of it.

These meanings that lie within the image is being interpreted based on social construction. This is also confirming the social semiotic theory and multimodality that meaning is socially and culturally constructed. Each mode has its own role playing such as image that will show what takes too long to read. Throughout the image, the abstract thoughts can be simply to communicate but powerful. We need no excessive words to convey meaning and get better understanding.

From this point of analysis, it can be a new way to introduce edusemiotic in the recent decades of education. It corresponds to Lev S. Vygotsky who remarked that, “the very essence of human memory is that human beings actively remember with the help of sign’. This is obviously confirming the concept of edusemiotic as the new direction of educational philosophy and theory as well. It demonstrates semiotic as the main feature to mediate meaning and transform values. This integration of conceptual framework promotes real-life as the considerable signs to interpret which compromise particular human-experiences that we can learn in academic setting (Semestky, 2015; 131)

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Considering live as a multimodal, means requiring the ability and understanding of modes in diversity particularly in academic setting. In this study, image becomes the media to communicate meaning and transform values as well. At least, by having an understanding of the image will not get us depending or rely meaning on the image maker. Multimodality and social semiotic actually help someone’s to think critically and observe things in more details. In sum, the result of this study shows how reading image and extensively may encourage students’ critical thinking ability. Even though the result shows that there are 7 students out of 10 whose critical thinking level is in developing level. Meanwhile, the critical thinking level of the 3 students out of 10 is in mastering level. Most of them are basically love reading and keeps on reading even though extensive reading course is over long time ago. But for those who are not interested in reading is still able to communicate the meaning of the image by elaborating ideas very well. Students chose the picture based on their personal choice and correlate it to their personal experience. It shows how social semiotic plays important role in education which later be best called as edusemiotics. Two fields are merged into one and become as the fundamental theory in education. Moreover, multimodality guides us to understand that language is not

the central way to communicate meaning. Besides language has its own limitation. Signs that involved in each mode in multimodality has its power to communicate as best asserted by Kress (2010: 1). He declared that, “Each mode does a specific thing: *image* shows what takes too long to *read*, and *writing* says what would be difficult to *show*”. In order to make a better learning process and guiding students’ mind growth, implementing edusemiotics is very well recommended. In practice, textbooks do not always give much for the students growing. So the researcher provides some suggestions for the teacher, student and further researcher. Teachers tend to be more creative and having bunch of innovations to set out the most fun-learning activities. Through reading image that consists of sequences of signs and meaning may help teachers to ease student’s boredom in the class. They will still keep on learning without even realizing it – simply fun learning. In case of understanding images meaning, it requires teacher’s guide for such an evaluation or feedbacks as well. Moreover, students may find it fun to discuss sequences of signs that lie within the image. Even they can also learn everywhere and interpret meaning to whatever image they see. It does not always have to be in the class but it will be better if having such partner to talk to and discuss with. This research becomes an interesting topic to be discussed and can be used as a reference for the future researchers. The researcher hopes that the other researchers will have the interest in this topic to be used and to make it better. The researcher hopes for the future researcher to be able to encourage the research related to critical thinking in the concept of edusemiotics.

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