

HARNESSING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN LITERATURE BY USING GOOGLE GEO TOOLS

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Abstract

The UN's education agency, Unesco, released an official statement in 2013 highlighting the fact that only 1 in 1,000 Indonesian people read books on a regular basis. It creates problems in Literature class since it mainly consists of reading and writing activities. Those activities are difficult for some students who seldom read and write. Therefore teacher needs to find better strategies to draw students to immerse themselves in Literature. The method of this research is literature review. The use of technology has benefited teachers and students because integrating technology in their classrooms make teachers become more creative and students involved more deeply in learning. In researcher's Literature class, researcher use digital tools for giving students opportunities to exercise their freedom to think and to engage. Students use Google Geo tools to map out new knowledge, tell stories, and make the stories relevant to their cultures. This study explores how students critical thinking skills develop when they engage in lessons more actively.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Digital technology, Google Geo Tools, Literature

Introduction

BOI is a company which is registered as the member of the Dutch Market Research Association or Markt Onderzoek Associatie (MOA). In 2016, BOI stated that Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, has 173 malls. Furthermore, BOI informed that though the number of malls in Jakarta is huge, this metropolitan area's level of consumerism is not the highest in Indonesia.

Consumption is not necessarily bad but this sign of extreme consumerism possibly is a clue that there is something 'wrong' going on. Unfortunately, yes, it is. A study released in 2016 by Central Connecticut State University in US showed that Indonesia ranks 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest. It is confirmed by a research conducted by the Education Sector Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP). This organization found that only 47.2 percent of 4,812 second-grade students tested nationwide could read fluently with comprehension.

Reading comprehension is instrumental for a rich academic, professional and personal life. Thus, the above findings speak volume. There is more to the research than just numbers. It gives us a hint of what the nation's future will be like.

There is no one-size fits all answer available to almost all open-ended questions posed in the world of education. However, to this particular question, we can be

quite certain that exposing students to stories will be one of a potential way out. Stories is one of the most valuable intangible cultural heritages owned by Indonesian people. Indonesians love stories.

The researcher was given an opportunity to teach Introduction to Literature to students of a private university in Banten. Literature has been excluded from language learning at most schools despite the benefit it brings, both culturally and linguistically. Many students found that the lesson is hard and boring. It did not occur only in Indonesia. Kateregga (2014) observed that many Ugandan students are reluctant to learn literature because they think that unlike language, learning literature does not help them get employment.

It is necessary for the researcher to find ways to cope with the problems in literature teaching. Yes, exposing students to stories is a potential solution but in fact, there is another obstacle lies along the way: How to make the lesson interesting yet also harness the students' critical thinking skills?

The question has multiple answers. The researcher creates a final examination which accommodates a variety of students' talents, for example. They are required to make a response to the story they have analyzed but they are free to choose how they are going to do it. One group drew comic strips, some individuals compose songs or sequels.

Assignments are designed in an unconventional way. They generate WhatsApp chats between two characters and modify folktales. These are two examples of activities conducted in class. Using educational technology as a constructivist tool could aid students to represent their ideas, articulate what they know, and explore, manipulate, and process information, while actively collaborating with each other (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999).

Thus, digital technology is frequently used and in this paper, the researcher will focus on the students' use of Google Geo Tools for working on Literature's assignment and analyze its connection to critical thinking skills.

Method

The methodology employed in this study is literature research. A range of information sources will be analyzed to answer the research question.

The sources used, but not limited to, are firstly, scholarly papers which provide a review of all of the recent work related to this study. Secondly, professional and practitioner articles which supply the researcher with current information, and last but not least is books. All are intelligently reviewed and explored.

Findings and Discussion

Critical Thinking

Current research in education system has identified several basic competencies that should be acquired by students in this modern era. Kaufmann suggested that there are at least 21 skills to master in order to function in this modern world (Kaufman, 2013), one of the skills described in the 21st century skills is critical thinking (Greenberg, 2020).

There are multiple definitions and interpretations about critical thinking. In Bloom's taxonomy, the term used for defining critical thinking is "intellectual abilities and skills" (Bloom, Krathwohl, & Masia, 1986). A growing body of

research has taken this topic as a focus since this skill is captured by the 21st century Sustainable Goals. Care, Kim, Vista, and Anderson (2018) explains that those goals require education systems to equip learners with competencies such as problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication (p. 3).

Indeed, communication is an aspect that can not be separated from critical thinking because teaching critical thinking also claimed to have a significant impact on the students' interpersonal skills (Tatsumi, 2018). Tatsumi mentioned that through critical thinking skills and by introducing students to see problems with wider angles, students are going to be more impartial and broadminded students, empathetic people, and it is going to help the students to communicate and cooperate better.

Another view about critical thinking is expressed by Santrock. His studies show that critical thinking is highly related to reflective thinking, productive thinking and evaluating evidence (Santrock, 2018).

Google Geo Tools

Google Geo Tools allow students, teachers and others a way to learn about our planet. Anyone can easily use these tools to explore and discover places in the World, map out new knowledge, tell stories and immerse themselves in other landscapes and cultures (Google, 2018). The tools consist of Google Earth, Google Tour Builder, Street View, MyMaps, Geo VR, and Google Earth Engine. In Literature class, as a final examination the students are asked to share their opinions about the stories they have read using Google Tour Builder.

Google Tour Builder is a free digital storytelling tool originally created by Google to provide military personnel with a way to document and share their experiences and stories with others (Google Tour Builder, 2018). Students are able to pinpoint an exact location on the map, add text, and link photos, videos, and online resources to help tell their stories. Students can select a sequence of locations on the map to take the user through a journey and add up to 25 images and videos for each pinpointed location. Google Tour Builder contains a search feature that allows creators to find free use and stock photos, as well as YouTube videos.

Discussions

With Google Geo Tools, in this case Google Tour Builder, students do not solely consume content; they create it.

For Indonesian students, who generally have low-level of reading comprehension ability, engaging with the characters in the stories are surely difficult. The students taught by the author is university students and they will be teachers. Their students will be digital natives so it is important in Literature class for the author to be an exemplary model for them of how to help their future students make sense of the text and engage with the characters. Making the text relevant to their lives will enable them, both the researchers' students and their future students, to grasp the values more easily.

Google Tour Builder provides the students with the opportunity to create their own learning experiences that support comprehension and visualization. For Final Examination, the students share their opinions about the stories by creating at least

10 boxes in Tour Builder, each consists of several lines of explanation. They pour out their thoughts about at least 3 stories and connect them to their life.

They drop a pin to a particular place and tell stories about the text they read, they movie they watch, and share what they have got from them. They upload pictures as well as video and Youtube links.

Encouraging the students to relate the stories to their lives make Literature class become a channel to connect their past and present to somebody else's past. The students and the characters are relatable. Literature is no longer an alienated subject, it has connection with the readers although the characters and the stories are perhaps hundred years and thousand kilometres apart.



Take Debora's work as an example. She adores *Les Misrables* and is quickly able to relate the French Revolution to a political event that occurred in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, back in 1998. Debora's reflection confirms what Santrock's studies show: Critical thinking is highly related to reflective thinking, productive thinking and evaluating evidence (Santrock, 2018).

The students show Literature class potentially provides the readers with myriad opportunities to learn about themselves and the world. It is crucial for civilization and their future but English Literature has still declined and grown less popular. Students nowadays are much more visual: They prefer browsing internet and watching movies or Youtube. Showing the students that they can relate their stories to anything they love will help them enjoy the Literature class. As mentioned in the earlier part of this research, Care, Kim, Vista, and Anderson (2018) explains that the 21st century Sustainable Goals require education systems to equip learners with competencies such as problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication (p. 3). The use of Google Geo Tools have enabled the students to communicate in relaxed and undemanding setting. The tool is instinctive and it allows students to post stories in several formats: Texts, pictures, and videos.

Another examples of how articulative the students might be when they are equipped with freedom to choose and the proper tool for learning is Kethy who sets a good example of how students can relate something they love with the story. Kethy loves fiction so she moves from one story to another by pretending being a bookworm who spends her holiday in Austria.

She sits in Austria National Library and tells us what she thinks about the short story that she picks, "The Gift of the Magi." After that she moves to a cafe and has dinner in a fancy restaurant, still talking about her favourite short story. When the holiday is over, she goes back to Indonesia and begins to connect *Les Miserables* with love, a theme that occupy the mind of all teenagers.

Conclusion

Google Geo Tool, in this case Google Tour Builder, gives students a comprehensive story telling experiences and enhances their critical thinking skills. They talk about their favourite stories and connect them with places they like and plan to visit, their families, their other loved ones such as friend, as well as with topics they love. This project is also a good platform to exercise their creative writing skills.

Using Google Tour Builder gives students a sense of ownership because their stories are not even close with others. Students respond positively toward the use of Google Tour Builder and their stories are all significantly different one to another.

This writing serves as a preliminary study and open to act as a springboard for discussion or further researches. More Google Geo Tools can be utilized in the future while Tour Builder will stay as a tool that can assist students develop their creativity and grow their love for reading and writing.

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