

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the background of the study. Identification and limitation of the study are added to make this study more specific. In order to make this study qualified, the researcher puts three research questions concerning the important issue which has arisen within the context of the study along with the purposes of the study. Lastly, the researcher writes down the significances of the study as to why this research is important to be conducted.

Background of the Study

Developing students' critical thinking has become one of the most prominent aspects in teaching and learning activity. According to Erceg, Aviani, and Mesic (2013), teaching higher order cognitive abilities such as critical thinking skill has always been the ultimate goal of education. It is because the future of nations is relied upon the effort in educating individuals to become creative people, be able to think logically, and have strong sense of judgment (Cubukcu, 2006). Consequently, it has become a responsibility for higher educational level such as universities to develop critical thinking in their students.

California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory (CCTDI) is a tool designed by Peter and Noreen Facione to measure critical thinking based on several dispositions. There are seven dispositions in total. They are truth-seeking, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, analyticity, systematicity, critical thinking self-confidence, and cognitive maturity. Students who show these dispositions inside

the classroom are likely able to think critically. In this study, the researcher is interested in investigating the level of students' critical thinking at English Education Department considering the importance of an individual to have critical thinking skills in the future.

To sustain a learning process for the students in which the main goal is to improve students' critical thinking, many factors should be carefully considered. The factors influencing student learning are cognitive factors, motivation, personality, and environment (Gallagher, 1964). Learning environment encompasses variety of components and activities where learning takes place (Basque & Dore, 1998). They are pedagogical, psychological (mental), physical, social, and cultural. A physical learning environment is regarded as a conventional classroom (OECD, 2011), which is composed of architectural designs, equipment, libraries, materials, etc. (Andere, 2014). Through learning process with supportive physical learning environment, it is possible that students' critical thinking will be able to be improved.

Faculty of Language Education has been recently moved to a new learning environment. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides valuable data and research related to education. The learning environment is one factor from many impacting student learning outcomes (OECD, 2010), which one of the outcomes is students' critical thinking. By providing new classrooms and useful equipment, it is expected to support students in learning. However, the issue rising up is whether or not the students will have better outcomes by learning in the new physical learning environment.

Based on those issues, the researcher is interested in observing further on how the learning environment and students' critical thinking takes place at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Identification and Limitation of the Problem

Based on the issues above, the researcher is interested in finding out the correlation between physical learning environment and students' critical thinking at English Education Department UMY. To improve students' critical thinking through learning, some factors such as cognitive factors, motivation, personality, and environment should be considered. In this study, the researcher takes interest in learning environment factor because recently the Faculty of Language Education is moved to a new learning environment. The new learning environment is different from the previous one. Aside from the location, the surrounding, the building, and the classrooms are also different. Therefore, the component of learning environment the researcher focuses only on the physical learning environment. The question rising up is whether or not critical thinking is properly developed in such learning environment context.

Formulation of the Problems

The formulation of the problems in this study is:

1. How is the learning environment at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta?

2. How is the students' critical thinking at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta?
3. What is the correlation between physical learning environment and students' critical thinking at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta?

Purposes of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problems, the purposes of this research can be framed as follows:

1. to find out how the learning environment at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta is
2. to find out how is students' critical thinking at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta is
3. to investigate the correlation between physical learning environment and students' critical thinking at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Significances of the Study

This research, which tries to find out the correlation between physical learning environment and students' critical thinking, is expected to give benefits for either theoretical and practical significances.

Theoretical significance. This study is hoped to give theoretical significance in term of the new findings that will give references, additional

theories and guidance for further research about the correlation between physical learning environment and students' critical thinking.

Practical significance. This study is expected to give knowledge for the researcher as a prospective teacher. Another significance of this research for the researcher is to obtain the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan. As for the institutions, this study is expected to give them knowledge so that they will know the importance of physical learning environment and provide supportive physical learning environment in order to enhance student learning inside the classroom. The significance of the study for the students is to raise their awareness of the importance of critical thinking so that they will become critical students in the future. This study is also expected to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of physical learning environment in aiding students learning process and students' critical thinking.

Outline of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction which consists of background of the study, identification and limitation of the problem, formulation of the problems, purposes of the study, significances of the study and the outline of the study. The second chapter includes the review of literature on learning environment, critical thinking, previous related study, conceptual framework and hypotheses. Then, methodology is in the third chapter consisting of research design, research population and sample, data collection instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis. The fourth chapter is

findings and discussion. In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of the research before later the findings are discussed further. The last chapter is conclusion of the whole study. Recommendations about the context of the study are provided in the last chapter for further reference.