

DEVELOPING READING MATERIALS TOWARD CRITICAL DISCOURSE APPROACH (CDA) IN READING COMPREHENSION OF EFL LEARNERS

Rahayu Prasetyaningsih
(yayukprasetya@yahoo.com)

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Tomakaka

Abstract: Reading comprehension is commonly implemented in classroom only focus on language features without any interact with the written text in meaningful ways. Some teachers guide their students in analyzing linguistics structure or new vocabulary items in reading class, while reading actually not only focus on those activities. By reading, the learners as readers should also consider about the implicit meaning of the text and the way the writers express their ideas and thoughts toward a particular topic. Nabi. AEbrahimi and Ali Rahimi's article "*Toward a more efficient EFL reading comprehension classroom environment: The Role of content and critical reading*" in 2013 clearly state that most of EFL teachers were often to select the reading text which is only present the survival or without involving the general interest material for their students. They also state that, in selecting the reading passage the teachers should contextually such as social, discursive and textual. Ebrahimi and Rahimi's research was conducted to investigate the effect of a change in reading content and in structure but also lot of enjoyment and information of particular topic could be gained in order to improve their knowledge in many kinds of reading text which is teaching reading via a Critical Discourse Approach (CDA) framework on students' perceptions of their reading classroom environment. But, they did not provide some criteria toward a good reading passage and close to the contextual meaning for the students. In order to help teachers in selecting or developing their own reading passage which is involved some social aspects, latent message of the text and also writers' ideologies and thoughts, the writer suggest that EFL teachers should consider about some criteria deal with a good reading passage to enrich students awareness that a reading passage not only study about words and interesting.

Key words: Reading materials, Critical Discourse Approach (CDA)

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension becomes one of the important parts for students in learning English language. Research shows that reading comprehension is a complex process and students usually have difficulties in constructing meaning from writing text (Grabe&Stoller in Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah,2013: 235). In supporting the previous statement Nunan, 2003: 68 defines

reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning and the goal of reading is comprehension. However, sometimes teachers especially the EFL teachers only focus on teaching the reading skill which presents the functional survival, give reading tasks include analyzing linguistics structure or new vocabulary items without giving any interest material that makes students can interact with written text in meaningful ways. As a result, learners are not really interested and motivated by the text reading is given by the teacher.

By reading students actually can take information as much as possible or for enjoyment without any burden to analyze structure or memorizing new vocabulary. According to Alfassi in Naseri, 2012: 64 “Reading is a complex cognitive activity essential for sufficient functioning and for obtaining information in modern society”. Hence, dealing with that statement Ebrahimi&Rahimi in their journal “*Toward a more efficient EFL reading comprehension classroom environment: The Role of content and critical reading*” in 2013 they proposed a critical discourse approach (CDA) at aims to change the situation of students’ problem in low motivation in reading a text by offering students the means by which they can become more assertive and more confident readers. Thus, by reading students can recognize the importance of reading text such as aware of the latent layers meaning and to know the ways people try to express their ideologies and thought or feeling.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CDA IN READING MATERIALS AND TEACHING READING SKILLS

By implementing the critical discourse analysis (CDA), it can be assumed that the implementation is able to give significant input as a model to improve students’ critical reading skills. The function of CDA is to critically investigate social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, signaled and legitimized by language use (Wodak in Ebrahimi & Rahimi, 2013: 2). The CDA also involves theorizing the social process and in particular, the power structure which gives rise to and are maintained by, discourse. Ebrahmimi and Rahimi tried to investigate the effects of a change in reading materials content along with a change in teaching reading via CDA on some Iranian EFL students’ perception of their reading comprehension classroom environment. In examining the effects of CDA in changing the reading material and teaching reading skill, Ebrahimi&Rahimi used questioner as an instrument in collecting data from

students about their opinion in reading class (how the teacher teach reading skills) and how the content of the reading material is.

A REVIEW ON RECENT STUDY

Ebrahimi and Rahimi research was involved 41 Iranian EFL students (Female: 23 and Male: 18), in the age of 21 and 27, who were studying advanced reading comprehension in Parto English Institute, Arsanjan, Iran. The sample was selected from a group with an advanced proficiency level of English. Most of the students attended the class in order to improve their reading comprehension as the preparation to get the better results in mainly reading-based English part of the Iranian PhD and master's degree entrance exams and also for preparation to get better score in reading module of the academic IELTS.

In teaching critical reading Ebrahimi and Rahimi used a model that proposed by Cots (2006) which considers discourse as the result with three different types of practice: social, discursive and textual. Each part has its own aim such as in social practice stage, the purpose is to discover the extent to which discourse is shaped by and, at the same time, influences social structures and nature of social activity. In discursive practice, the goal specified in communicative situation, material and cognitive aspects related to production and interpretation. In the last part, the textual practice focuses on formal and semantic features of text construction, such as grammar or vocabulary which are needed in conveying or interpreting specific message or information.

One of the instruments was used in collecting data in Ebrahimi and Rahimi's research was questionnaire. The questionnaire involves the questions about the situation which happens in classroom when the learners learn reading skills. The researchers conducted the treatment in 10 seasons, where those 10 seasons divided into two parts of treatment. On the first five seasons, the researchers chose a non-critical approach to reading comprehension. Expository reading text which presented functional survival or non-challenging interest material which involves linguistics structure and vocabulary items were chosen by the teacher who also as the researcher. At the first stage, the students are introduced by new vocabulary then, continued by analyzing the structure of the reading text by guidance from the teacher. The last stage, the students are asked to answer the question based on the text given. From the sixth seasons on, the researchers implemented the CDA in classroom, it was named critical reading comprehension class. The

texts were selected from new reports, magazine articles and political speech, where the passages title were selected such as Dialogue among Civilization and Right and Duties. The process in this class, students were directed read the passage and teacher help the students if they have problem in structure. The social, discursive and textual were discussed during the lesson. At the first, the learners discussed about social context which involves social belief of the author and social consequences in the text. Next, the discursive dimension discussed about the specificity of the communicative situation and interpretation. Last, in textual aspect the students discussed about the genre, framing, foregrounding, backgrounding, presupposition and connotation of the text, thus they can identify the characteristics of textual aspects, types of text and different way the authors deliver their ideas. After all the 10 seasons were done, the researchers asked the students to give their opinion through questionnaire.

After Ebrahimi&Rahimi computing the data they got from questionnaire, they define the finding that implementing a critical reading approach (CDA) and more challenging reading materials in the target reading comprehension class helped the Iranian EFL students participating in this study to find their classroom as a better and more efficient place for learning.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT CDA TO DEVELOP READING MATERIALS

Has been proven that by implementing CDA in reading class which involves theorizing the social process and in particular, the power structure which gives rise to and are maintained by, discourse such as social, discursive and textual aspects helped students participating during the lesson, enjoy the reading text which is interested and to find their classroom as an efficient place for learning. Nevertheless, Ebrahimi and Rahimi's proposal is not completed by the criteria of reading material deals with discourse content. Hence, it is necessary to provide some criteria toward a good reading passage and close to the contextual meaning for the students based on CDA, in order to help teachers in developing their own reading passage. Thus, the EFL teachers should consider some criteria to deal with a good reading passage to enrich students awareness that a reading passage is not only study about words and structure but also lot of enjoyment and information of particular topic could be gained in order to improve their knowledge in many kinds of reading text which is interesting.

Reading comprehension has come to be the essence of reading, essential not only to academic learning in all subject areas but also to professional success and, indeed, to lifelong

learning (Zhang in Yao, 2012: 50). Commonly in school, when a teacher teaches reading skills to the students, it lays more focus on the mastery of the feature of the language in the text. At the first stage, the teacher will help the students in grammatical points, new vocabulary and sentence structure. Sometimes the teacher analyzes the material into some parts, thus learners can recognize the structure of each parts of the text. After that, students learn the target language or the second language by translating word by word and verb tense by verb tense. As a result the learners are good analyzing the sentence, but they do not really understand what actually the content talks about or how the author think and deliver his or her idea into written form.

During the reading class, students are taught at the micro-skill level of word recognition, toward reading as a way of practicing grammar to approximate correctness. They do discrete point exercises, for example, filling in the blanks, and decoding materials in their textbook with controlled or guided writing. This certainly limits students' language abilities and understanding at a sentence level. It is the so-called phenomenon of "not seeing the wood for the trees" in the process of foreign language teaching (Yao, 2012: 51). Hence, teacher should give the students a good atmosphere in reading classroom by encouraging them with kinds of reading strategy or approach for instance CDA (critical discourse approach) as proposed by Ebrahimi and Rahimi in 2013, and also provide some reading material which students interested in. Thus, students not only focus on structure and new vocabulary items but also enjoying the way they decode the information in reading text.

THE READING MATERIALS

According to Yao (2012: 53) "Raising students' awareness of the cultural differences help to improve their communicative competence". Thus, the learners as readers can be made aware of the values and cultural norms of a specific community through studying illustrations of speech acts in literary texts.

According to Kurland in his website page at www.criticalreading.com/criticalreading.htm, to improve students' critical reading skills, the teachers should first know the purpose of the critical reading itself, the goals are as follows:

1. recognizing purpose involves inferring a basis for choices of content and language

2. recognizing tone and persuasive elements involves classifying the nature of language choices
3. recognizing bias involves classifying the nature of patterns of choice of content and language

Furthermore, there are also some aspects to be considered in doing critical reading skills (as retrieved from www.uefap.com/reading/crit/critfram.htm):

1. Purpose and background
 - a. Why are you reading this text? What is your purpose?
 - b. What type of text is it: research report, essay, textbook, book review?
 - c. What do you know about the subject of the text?
 - d. What else has been written on the subject of the text?
 - e. What controversies exist in this area? How does this text fit in?
2. The author and the text
 - a. Who is the author? What do you know about the author? What authority does the author have?
 - b. Who is the intended audience?
 - c. What is the author's purpose? Why has the text been written?
 - d. What is the source of the text? Is it reputable? Who is the publisher? What reputation they have?
 - e. What is the date of publication? Is it appropriate to the argument?
 - f. What is the writer's attitude towards the topic?
 - g. What conclusions are drawn?
3. Evidence used
 - a. Is there a clear distinction between fact and opinion?
 - b. Is evidence used to support arguments? How good is the evidence? Are all the points supported?
 - c. In an experimental study, was the sample size adequate and are the statistics reliable?
 - d. Are there any unsupported points? Are they well-known facts or generally accepted opinions?
 - e. How does the writer use other texts and other people's ideas?

- f. Are the writer's conclusions reasonable in the light of the evidence presented?
 - g. How do the conclusions relate to other similar research?
4. Assumptions made
- a. What assumptions has the writer made? Are they valid?
 - b. What beliefs or values does the writer hold? Are they explicit?
 - c. Look at the language that is used, e.g. active/passive verbs, nominalizations, pronouns, ergative verbs, articles, etc. Is it always possible to identify participants and processes? e.g. compare: the government increased taxes; they increased the taxes, taxes were increased; taxes increased; the taxes increased, there was an increase in taxes
 - d. Look for emphatic words such as it is obvious, definitely and of course.
 - e. Look for hedges: possible, might, perhaps.
 - f. Look for emotional arguments, use of maximizers: completely, absolutely, entirely, or minimizers: only, just, hardly, simply, merely.
 - g. How else could the text have been written?

After recognizing the purpose of critical reading, then teacher should provide the reading materials where the content of the reading text include some aspects of the critical reading such as social, discursive and textual. In social aspects, the reading materials consisting of several categories and analyses social structure, power, politics, and agency (<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/blackmon/engl360k/critical.html>). Teacher can compile some reading texts from newspaper or magazine where the topic relates to the social aspects have been mention above.

According to Steele (<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/how-approach-discursive-writing>) there are some steps of discursive aspect in reading, as follows:

1. Brainstorming. In this stage, students might discuss an idea, the answer to or reasons for a problem
2. Assessing ideas. Encouraging students to extend their ideas into a mind map, or spider gram.

3. A model text. The purpose on this stage is to subjugate the students' ideas to their organization, but so as to make students aware that there is a particular way to express their ideas.
4. Focus on model text coherence. It refers to the logical development of ideas within a text and it is an important sub skill for students to be aware of.
5. Cohesion. In this stage, the students focus on the grammatical and lexical connections between individual clauses.
6. Organizing ideas. It gives an opportunity for the students to further sift and/or logically connect their ideas, to focus them on the precise function of each paragraph, which will help to clarify their writing.
7. Groups. All of the above activities work best if carried out in groups as groupings make the tasks livelier and more enjoyable.
8. Writing. The next stage involves the learners in writing the first draft of their texts with a partner. This pair work will help students see that writing really is co-operative, a relationship between writer and reader.
9. Correction and reading. The first draft could be corrected in a number of ways, depending on your aims. The teacher could code-correct, or simply underline errors, then help the students to reformulate their first drafts with the aid of the model text. Once the final drafts are written, the students should then exchange their compositions so that they become readers of each other's work.

The next stage is textual aspects in reading material. There are some organizations of instruction textual reading text according to (www.odelleducation.com), as follows:

1. Understanding close reading: Students learn what it means to read a text closely by attending to and analyzing textual details. Students analyze visual-based text
2. Questioning text: Students learn to use question to guide their approach to, reading, and deeper analysis of texts. Students read and analyze information text.
3. Analyzing Details: Students learn to analyze textual details as a key to discovering meaning. Students read, analyze, and compare text.

4. Explaining Understanding: Students learn how to summarize and explain what they have learned from their reading, questioning, and analysis of texts. Students read and analyze three related texts.
5. Discussing Ideas: Students learn the characteristics of an effective text-based discussion and demonstrate skills in reading and participating in one.

In addition, in textual practice teacher may also ask about the syntactic structure as well as the lexical choice effects the meaning. Thus, by implementing CDA, students can learn reading text by discourse analysis without neglecting the structure of the text, because learning structure also needed in order to formula students' speaking or writing, even though in understanding the reading text itself.

By reviewing some theoretical and empirical data from some previous articles, then the writer tried to propose some criteria of reading material toward critical reading which consist of discourse aspects such as, social, discursive and textual practice as follows:

1. Select a topic of the text, in order to enrich students' general knowledge about situation around the world teacher can chose the update information or any other but still interesting to be read. Define the purpose of giving certain topic (politics, environment and global news update) of reading text by considering the content (appropriate with students' age), language features which appropriate with the level of the students (sentence structure and vocabulary items) and language style (formal and informal). Students can do comparison about the same topic with different year of publisher. They can exchange information by doing comparison of the text. Both comprehension and motivation are often enhanced when students can activate relevant background knowledge as they read, connecting their personal experiences with vicarious experiences (<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/selectingelamaterial>). This process does not deny the value of reading about the unfamiliar and even the fantastic. However, the relevance of a work to students' daily lives or to the lives of their imaginations is worthy of consideration in the selection process.
2. Divide the type of the reading text organization will be given for the students. By understanding the overall organization of the reading text also facilitate students' comprehension of a text such an unfamiliar topic. Teacher can give students kinds of

reading text that appropriate to rhetorical organization patterns such as problem - solution and cause -effect are easier for students as readers to recall and thus have a higher degree of readability. Shortly, structural features provide a scaffolding that can help readers to gain access to texts on unfamiliar topics, while interest and motivation can keep them on task.

3. Select a text which the content of the topic involves some controversies. At the first stage, teacher can introduce about a certain controversy topic that actually happens in real life, thus students can extend their ideas about one topic. By giving the controversy topic also can create good attitude to the students (tolerant). However, in selecting the controversies materials should avoid bias in culture, religion, races etc. It purposes, to prevent some sentimentalisms among students when they give their opinion about particular aspect of life which the text talks about.
4. Select the text which the content consists of both opinion and factual information, whether from author or others' ideas. Hopefully, by giving the text which consist both opinion and factual information can train students distinguish the differences both opinion and fact in a text and improving their ability in writing or speaking skills when they have to share their ideas toward factual information they get.

By those criteria of reading material towards critical reading, teachers are expected to be able to develop their reading material which appropriate with the students ability and level of proficiency. Even though teachers cannot develop their own reading material, hopefully the criteria of reading material which consists of discourse content provided above can help teachers in selecting the reading material easier.

CONCLUSION

Teaching reading should not merely focus on sentence structure and memorizing new vocabulary items. Teachers should encourage students to read through the content. By approach which proposed by Ebrahimi and Rahimi in 2012, Critical Discourse Approach (CDA) in critical reading skills where the purpose to make the students read based on the discourse aspects: social, discursive and textual, hopefully can help the students as readers enjoying their reading and make reading as a habit. By reading the readers can take as much as possible information from the text, can recognize how the way the writers share their ideas, distinguish opinion and factual

information and how to extend ideas based on the text without negligible the structure and vocabulary items. For teachers, in providing the reading materials they should consider some criteria such as, topic of the reading text, type organization of the text, involve some controversies which do not give bias information, and include factual information and opinion of the text. Thus, teachers can develop their own reading material towards critical reading skills for students.

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