

# Critical Discourse Analysis in English Language Teaching: Pragmatic Approaches

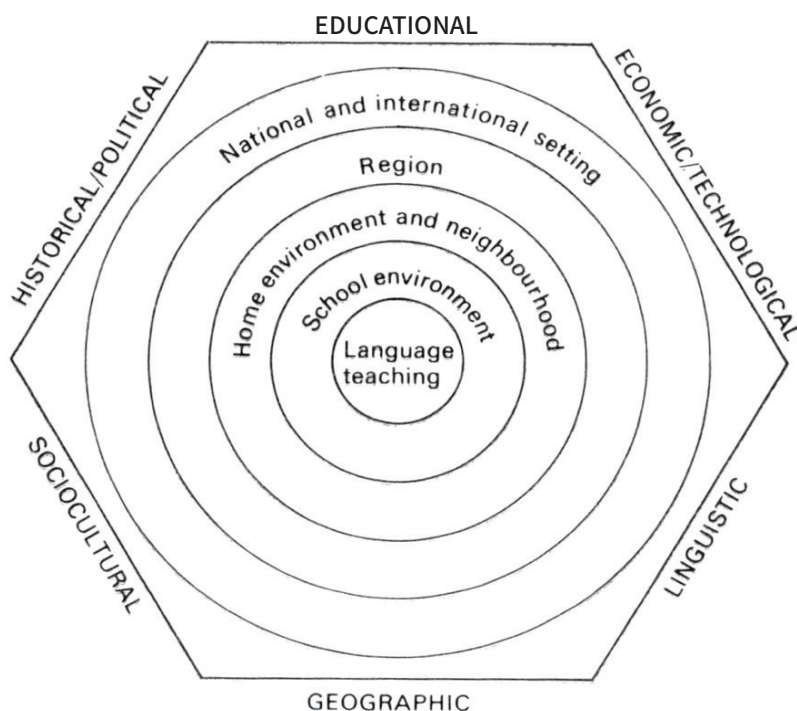
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## Abstract

この研究論文は、学術的・実践的ネットワークにおける経験によって定義されるようになった、第二言語習得と学習に関する様々な理論を探究する自身の継続的な試みを表している。具体的には、批判的談話分析を定義し、その原則を特に EFL の文脈における英語教育に適用したものである。研究の方法論は質的であり、大学院生のグループに文章を適用した後、そのデータを収集、分析している。その結果、批判的談話分析 (Critical Discourse Analysis) は、その枠組みや原則をグループとして議論することで、語学教室で効果を発揮することが示唆された。リスニング、スピーキング、リーディング、ライティングのすべての言語スキルに対して、グループ・アプローチなどが提案されている中、批判的談話分析を英語学習の文脈に位置づけることで、学習者は行間を読むという重要な冒険をする自由を与えられるのである。

## Introduction

This research paper represents my ongoing attempt to explore the pragmatic approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis in English language teaching and learning that have come to define my experience within academic and practitioner networks. It is therefore a contribution, or at least signposts a contribution, to a continued exploration of this essentially human and global phenomenon. Second language learning has increased in pre-eminence partly by the globalization of our species. Linguistic diversity and border-crossing has greatly influenced the context of language learning around the world. Second language teachers must then be wary of the social and political contexts that come with the profession. These contexts affect which languages are taught and how they are taught. Stern's framework (1983) illustrates the various contexts in which language teaching occurs and is influenced by, as seen in Figure 1 below:



*An adaptation of Mackey's and Spolsky's diagrams combined as an inventory of contextual factors in language teaching, taken from Stern, H.H. (1983:285)*

Pennycook agrees with Stern that language teaching goes beyond the classroom walls, and into complex social and cultural spaces (2000:89). Such 'spaces' include national and international settings. For English language teaching, it may be helpful to briefly examine Kachru's Three Circle Models, where countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom make up the Inner Circle; countries in the Outer Circle include India, Nigeria, and Singapore; while China, Japan, and Korea belong to the Expanding Circle. Understanding the status of English in most countries is an imperative, especially in Japan where English is chiefly learned and acquired through formal education.

It is in the realm of Kachru's Expanding Circle where language-in-education is paramount. Japan, as one of the Expanding Circle countries has been attempting to improve their citizen's English language abilities, by implementing their English Education Reform Plans catered to globalization (MEXT 2014, 2019). In this reform, Japanese students are introduced to English at an earlier age. In China, the Ministry of Education had presented a united English curriculum for their nation in 1978 (Hu, 2005). In 1985, the government permitted provinces to develop their own materials for a more learner-centered education.

Succinctly, the social, political, and cultural backgrounds of language learners have significant implications on what languages are taught and how they are taught. It is thus

important for both teachers and learners alike to understand the social reality of language learning. In this research, I offer theory, methods, research and practices of CDA. CDA approaches are defined, analyzed in the context of language teaching, and reviewed using various previous studies, in order to understand the importance of this interdisciplinary field in language teaching. Moreover, by drawing on my own classroom experiences and research, I am able to present novel approaches to the field.

### Critical Discourse Analysis – the Theoretical

Halliday (1987) states that the word choices, either spoken or written, of a person are systematic and ideologically based, whether this is done consciously or unconsciously. This belief is shared with critical discourse analysts and critical linguists alike (cf. Babaii & Sheikhi, 2018; Chalak & Ghasemi, 2017; García & Cerezo, 2020; Martínez, 2012; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Fan, 2019; Sadeghi, Ketabi, Tavakoli & Sadeghi, 2012; Kress, G. 1990; Lin, 2014). Critical Discourse Analysis though, argues that discourse is always mediated by power and ideology. Fairclough (2018:13) defines Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) as a “form of critical social analysis” for critiquing the wider social reality considering the betterment of society. Jorgensen and Philips (2002) define CDA as viewing ideology as a convention operating in everyday life in order to maintain relations of power.

I define CDA as Discourse Analysis with a capital “A”. This is Analysis that goes beyond the literal interpretation of the text, which can be described as discourse analysis with a small letter “a”. It is the Analysis of spoken or written text that can be placed at the far end of a continuum, one unrelentlessly metamorphosing into the other, existing at a point where for an ephemeral moment at least they each become indecipherable from the other

This is important in the dialectic relationship between discursive and social practices, because of the power of social institutions and the influence it has in shaping discourse. CDA attempts to find the golden mean between social structure and human agency: CDA argues that humans are agents of discursive and cultural change.

Language is thus implied to be a social practice and is socially shaped. CDA, therefore, explores the relationship between discursive texts and social and cultural structures (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough divides his analytical framework into three levels: text analysis, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis; that “it is a spoken or written language *text*, it is an instance of *discourse practice* involving the production and interpretations of texts, and it is a piece of *social practice*” respectively (Fairclough, 1995:94). Text analysis describes generic forms, such as the vocabulary, dialogic organization, and grammar. It is “form-and-meaning analysis” (Fairclough, 1995:94). Discourse practice interprets text production, while social practice explains an event or practice in the context of culture.

### Critical Discourse Analysis – Beyond the Theoretical

Cots (2006) suggests that incorporating CDA in language teaching will not overhaul all methods and approaches. Instead, CDA offers a new perspective on language, assessing language use as problematic and reflecting ideology. In the domain of applied linguistics, language teaching is regarded as *the* principal concern in the field (Pennycook 2001). Language teaching deals with not only grammar, but also the social and political contexts that come with teaching a foreign language. Pennycook refers to the work of Ibrahim (1999) that discusses the transformation of identity of students with non-English speaking African backgrounds studying in Canada. In the highly radicalized context of Canada and the United States, these students “become Black” as an effect of identifying themselves in the pop culture references tied to English. Lin (1999) analyzes the effect of the English language teaching in Hong Kong by discussing the dangers of the reproduction of class-based inequality.

Focusing on English as an International Language (EIL), Pennycook (2002) insists that colonial discourse is a main contributor for the spread of EIL. English education in postcolonial countries such as Nigeria and Hong Kong is structured and oriented the way it is because of this colonial foundation. Pennycook believes that critical discourse in language teaching is the key to understanding the political and cultural implications of its spread; that English may not have spread naturally, neutrally, nor beneficially in some countries. Olagboyega (2011) has applied these notions to the Japanese context in particular, in a lucidly analytical paper.

Olagboyega (2011) explores whether English language teaching and learning is natural, neutral and beneficial in Japan. The paper discusses English Language Teaching (ELT) practices as cultural practices. He describes how the teaching practices themselves represent particular visions of the world and thus make the English language classroom a site of cultural politics, and a place where different versions of how the world is and should be are struggled over. The paper includes an analysis of the wide cultural gaps between North American or European approaches to language teaching and those in Japan. He explores the understanding of these in relationship to one particular aspect of the discourse of English as an International Language (EIL), namely the view of English language teaching as development aid, a view which often carries with it an unquestioned belief in the innate superiority of Western teaching practices and the innate inferiority of local practices such as the practices in Japan. Language teaching, then, is not just simply learning another language, but it “becomes a process of making the unfamiliar familiar” (Pennycook, 2002:52). Pennycook in no way disregards standard applied linguistics discourses and methods. Rather, he cautions researchers with their use of decontextualized contexts.

In the language classroom, it is important to show the students that materials and activities done in class can be critically analyzed. Cots (2002) uses Oxenden’s (1970:30) teaching activity as an example. The text is called *an unusual community*, highlighting

the lives of the Amish community in the United States. Using CDA as a way to analyze the text, Cots suggests using Fairclough's three levels of analytic framework: **social practice**, **discursive practice**, and **textual practice**. Firstly, **social practice** may be done by analyzing whether this representation of the Amish goes against their own representations. The students are asked to understand who the writer of the text is; are they Amish or not? Secondly, **discursive practice** allows the students to analyze the genre of the text, the overall coherence of it, and their prior knowledge of the Amish. Lastly, textual practice gives students the opportunity to reflect on the semantic and formal features of the text – grammar, punctuation, connectors and vocabulary to name a few. The text goes thus:

#### An Unusual Community

The Amish live in Pennsylvania, USA. They came from Switzerland and Germany in the eighteenth century and live together on farms. Although they live just 240 kilometres from New York City, their lifestyle hasn't really changed in the last 250 years. They've turned their backs on modern materialism: cars, high technology, videos, fax machines, etc., and they have very strict rules which they all have to follow. They can't use electricity, so they have to use oil lamps to light their houses. They are allowed to use banks and go to the doctor's but they can't have phones in their houses. They use horses for transport because they aren't allowed to fly or drive cars or tractors. They can play baseball and eat hot dogs but they can't have TVs, radios, carpets, flowers, or photos in their houses. Although the Amish don't have churches they are very religious. (p.30)

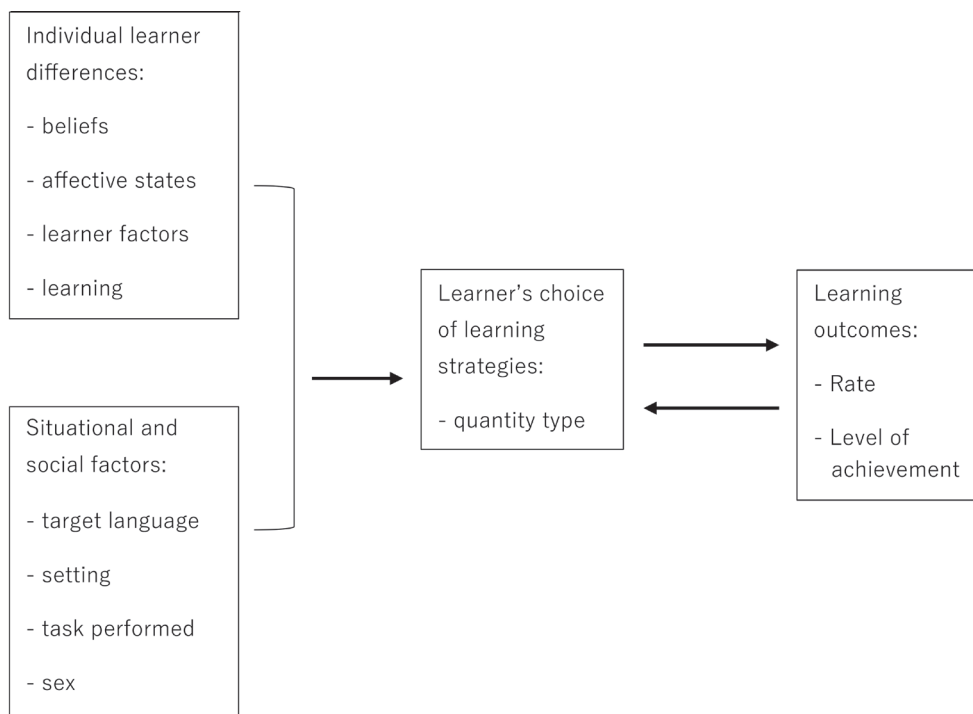
By incorporating CDA in existing materials, the students were not only able to cover the grammar, punctuation, cohesive features of the text, but also the social and cultural features that may affect meaning.

Wallace (1992:61) describes critical reading as not only a critical response to a text, but as involving critical awareness, considering the cultural and social aspects about "who reads what and why in what situations". In the EFL context such as Japan, Wallace believes that learners are marginalized as readers, as there is a conventional avoidance of controversial reading materials. This would mean that learners are not given the opportunity to place the reading material into social, cultural and political contexts, nor are they able to form ideological assumptions.

### CDA in English Language Teaching – The Professional Pragmatism

My epistemology, sense-making preferences are firmly rooted within a qualitative paradigm. Tenny, Brannan & Brannan (2022) define qualitative research as "a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems". They go on further to assert that instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate

hypotheses to further investigate and understand quantitative data. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. The participants' perceptions of a text and their critical analysis of it is of interest to me in this research. To pave the way for my analysis, I have adopted Rod Ellis' (1985) "framework for examining the components of SLA", represented in Figure 2 below:



(Figure 2: Adapted from Ellis, Rod 1985. A framework for examining the components of SLA)

The participants are a group of first and second year graduate students studying English language and literature. The specific section of a broader course is 'Written Discourse and Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis'. The students were tutored in terms such as **reference**, **presupposition**, **implicature** and **inference** (cf. Brown and Yule, 1983).

Lyons (1968:404) states that **reference** is "the relationship which holds between words and things". As for **presupposition**, we take the view of pragmatic presupposition in the same sense as Brown and Yule (ibid.), defined "in terms of assumptions the speaker makes about what the hearer is likely to accept without challenge" (Givón, 1979a:50). For **implicature**, I would again like to defer to my former professor at the University of Cambridge (Prof. Gillian Brown) and her writing partner, (Prof. George Yule) fully: "The term 'implicature' is used by Grice (1975) to account for what a speaker can imply, suggest or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says. There are **conventional implicatures** which are, according to Grice, determined by 'the conventional meaning of the words used'" (Grice, 1975, cited in Brown and Yule, 1983:31). As for **inference**, we

define it as a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning. Inferences are common in research and will be used in analyzing and discussing many salient points of this research.

The participants were given a text to analyze. The text was taken from Janet Holmes, (2013) and it goes thus:

Every afternoon my friend packs her bag and leaves Cardiff office at about 5 o'clock. As she leaves, her business partner says, "*goodbye Margaret*", (she replies "*goodbye Mike*") her secretary says, "*goodbye Ms. Walker*", (she replies "*Goodbye Jill*") and the caretaker says, "*Bye Mrs. Walker*" (to which she responds "*goodbye Andy*"). As she arrives home, she is greeted by "*Hi mum*" from her daughter, Jenny, "*hello dear, have a good day?*", from her mother, and simply "*you're late again!*" from her husband. Later in the evening the president of the local flower club calls to ask if she would like to join. "*Good evening, is that Mrs. Billington?*" she asks. "*No, it's Ms. Walker, but my husband's name is David Billington*", she answers. "*What can I do for you?*" Finally, a friend calls "*Hello Meg, sut wyt ti?*"

Given as an individual task, the responses were very disappointing. The entire class could be given a score of just about 60%, which within the educational establishment where the research took place just managed to reach a pass mark. However, when the group came together to re-examine the text critically, the result was amazing. It improved the students' understanding of the text to about a score of 90%. Basically, the referent in the text, called Margaret, was called nine (9) different names by different people viz: "Margaret", "Ms. Walker", "Mrs, Walker", "mum", "dear", "you", "Mrs, Billington", "Meg", and "Sut wyt ti".

Whereas the references are for the same person, the **presuppositions**, **implicatures** and **inferences** are different depending on the addresser. For example, being addressed simply as "you" by her husband indicates a power dynamics between the two of them. It also suggests a sense of "frustration" which her husband must be feeling about her habitual lateness. Perhaps, Margaret prepares the dinner for the family.

We are thus able to conclude that CDA is effective in EFL contexts, especially if the text is discussed as a whole group rather than left to the individual student to analyze.

Of relevance to my research are other studies conducted by some other researchers in other relatively similar contexts. Hazea and Alzubi (2017) examined ESL university students in their reading courses in Saudi Arabia, analyzing how CDA may aid in enhancing students' analytical reading skills. A pre-test and a questionnaire were collected prior to the intervention of CDA-based instruction, after which the treatment stage was conducted using CDA approaches to English reading. Comparing the results of pre-test and post-tests, Hazea and Alzubi (ibid.) found a significant statistical difference in students' critical discourse analysis scores of 0.19. CDA may then be used to aid students in ideologically-loaded reading materials.



Abbasian and Malaee (2016) investigated the effects of CDA instruction on university students in Iran. Like the previous study, Abbasian and Malaee (*ibid.*) focus on learners' reading comprehension. Sixty (60) students were divided into two groups - one conducting class using the conventional approaches used in the university, while the experimental group conducted class using CDA instruction. The researchers stated that the experimental group out-performed the control group in skills acquisition and learners' orientation toward language. They conclude that incorporating critical literacy in reading classes allows students to create meaningful analysis of the text. Students not only read the words as words, but as seen in the context of the world.

Hammond (2006) focused on the critical discourse analysis of racial inequality in Japan. With 43 Japanese first-year EFL students, the study used simulations as the methodology. Students' written reflections, as well as group discussions and essays, were evaluated. The data was analyzed thematically showing students published narratives or people who experienced racism. The students were very engaged in the simulation and discussed their own experiences similar to what they have read. Hammond concludes that this critical exercise was as effective with Japanese EFL students as with white Americans.

## Conclusion

This research paper discusses CDA and its implications for English Language Teaching. By positioning CDA in the English language learning context, learners are given the freedom to undertake a cliché yet vital venture to read between the lines. According to Renner (1996), expounding learners' higher-order thinking skills is directly proportional to enhancing their higher-order learning skills, consequently affecting language proficiency positively.

The original research, which I conducted using Rod Ellis' (*ibid.*) framework and Brown and Yule's (*ibid.*) terminologies concluded that CDA will definitely enhance understanding of reading materials when it is conducted in groups and discussed in terms of the discourse analysis terminologies. I also reviewed studies on the use of CDA in EFL classrooms. Most research available on this subject promoted speaking and reading skills specifically. The papers reviewed exhibited positive results for the use of CDA in the university setting, as well as with older English language learners pursuing their graduate studies.

It should be stated that CDA does not seek to displace other methods of English language teaching, but offers a new perspective in the field. This researcher also believes that language is best studied when "communication is meaningful, socially purposeful, and challenging academically" (Renner, 1996:3). Language is the principal ethos of human connection and communication, and must thus be taught conjointly with its social, cultural, and political contexts. Only then will learners be accorded a comprehensive language education. As Noam Chomsky (1968) puts it, 'when we study human language, we are approaching what some people might call the "human essence", the distinctive qualities of



mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man’.

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