

THE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ESL TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Despite the recognized role that race and class play in second language acquisition (SLA) and instruction, little attention is paid to how to evaluate and analyze these issues in ESL texts. Drawing on examples from two adult ESL texts, this article presents a text evaluation method based upon the concept of critical language awareness which allows curriculum developers and teachers to examine issues of race and class.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A TEXT: A METHOD FOR TEACHERS AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

Textbooks, according to Rubdy (2003), have become the defining element in adult English as a second language (ESL) programs, and, according to Hutchinson (1987), have become synonymous with the aims, objectives and methods of a course. The curricular thrust of contemporary texts used in intensive English programs (IEPs) is to bridge the gap between the student's still emerging English language skills and the challenges of succeeding academically in an American university. For beginning and intermediate students, who will need two or three years before their second language skills are sufficiently advanced to enter an American university, texts largely focus on developing control of the second language. This can be seen in any number of beginning texts (e.g., Jones, 2002; McCarthy, McCarthen & Sandiford, 2005; Richards, 1999) where the content that students learn is second to exercises which focus on syntax, pronunciation and vocabulary.

For advanced students, the curricular focus of texts shifts from an emphasis on mastering the basics of the second language to the academic skills associated with succeeding in a traditional content-driven class. The associated techniques and theoretical base of such of such texts is often referred to as content-based instruction (CBI) by scholars in the ESL field such as Anderson (1999), Snow (2001) and Echevarria, Vogt and Short (2004). Within a content-based approach, language is not taught as an isolated subject but within the context of a particular content area. The

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teacher employs a variety of techniques in order to reduce the linguistic demands placed on the students by the particular academic task. For instance, in "Academic Encounters: Life in Society," Brown and Hood (2003) include such strategies as reading for the main idea, skimming and scanning, using citations, using grammatical clues to work out unknown words and writing topic sentences.

The instructional techniques within CBI are well described within Anderson (1999), Snow (2001), Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2003), and Echevarria, Vogt and Short (2004). When texts are used, the common approach is to divide the reading process into pre-reading instruction, instruction during reading and post-reading instruction. Within pre-reading, Peregoy and Boyle (2005) suggest that teachers build background knowledge, set the purpose of the reading, and build motivation. Thought-provoking opening questions, vocabulary building, or an overview are all common techniques. During reading, teachers monitor the students' comprehension through questioning, various written assignments, annotating texts and drawing attention to the headings and illustrations. Post-reading may involve activities or exercises which will help students to extend what they have learned through a project or an interesting activity.

CBI is based on two strands of second language acquisition research. The first is a sociocultural orientation and borrows heavily from what is often first language literacy research. The emphasis is on defining how the individual language learner's contact with groups across different settings influences opportunities to acquire English as a second language. Findings are described in terms of Vygotskyian concepts such as zone of proximal development (e.g., Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Anton, 1999; DiCamilla & Anton, 1997; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Ohta, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998), inner speech, (e.g., Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; McCafferty, 1994, 2004a, 2004b) and activity theory (e.g., Coughlan & Duff, 1994; McCafferty, Roebuck, & Wayland, 2001; Parks, 2000; Storch, 2004; Thorne, 2003).

The second strand is cognitive in orientation. The role of context and social groups is reduced or not examined at all in favor describing the stages and psychological features of SLA. The dominant phenomenon within CBI instruction is noticing. It emerged from researchers' recognition that simple exposure to academic skills does not provide adequate opportunity for students to learn a language (Izumi & Bigelow, 2000). Learners also have to attend to the particular features of the target language. That is, while it is helpful for students to receive input slightly above their level of competence, it is not a sufficient condition for language learning. Students must also notice the discrepancy between the target language and their current interlanguage (Robinson, 1995, 2001). Moreover, these researchers argue that

a focus on academic skills alone is not enough for students to notice the gap. Teachers must point it out.

To date, evaluations of both beginning and advanced ESL texts (e.g., Brook-Hart, 2006; Carey, 2006; Eskey, 2006; Hughes, 2005) have focused on assessing how consistent the design of the questions, activities and exercises are with either the cognitive or sociocultural strands of research within second language acquisition. While valuable, this article argues that there is a missing third strand of SLA research rooted in the work of critical linguistics (e.g., Case, 2004; Fairclough, 1989; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1997; Peirce, 1995) which can inform textbook evaluations. These researchers acknowledge that while cognitively-based concerns such as noticing and socioculturally-based notions such as the zone of proximal development are necessary conditions for SLA to occur, alone, they are not sufficient explanations. The social context in which SLA takes place must also be accounted for and problematized. When students interact within groups in an attempt to acquire English as a second language, social factors such as race, ethnicity and culture can limit or enhance the students' opportunities to acquire a second language.

By extension, textbook evaluations from critical perspective allow the teacher or curriculum developer to move beyond the question of how clearly text exercises scaffold a student's learning or the kinds of opportunities students have to notice a particular linguistic form to thinking about the ways that issues of power are implied in opportunities to learn a language. Within a critical evaluation, the text holds more responsibility than simply introducing new linguistic forms. It must also challenge the students to think about how language and power are connected to opportunities to learn a second language. Teachers who make these connections, according to Case (2004), can help ESL students to see the ways in which their own lives are reflected in the curriculum.

This article illustrates how to conduct an evaluation of an adult ESL text from a critical perspective and speaks to the larger role that textbook evaluation can play in curriculum development. While the results of a critical evaluation of a text are discussed, this article is not intended to be a study. The data is limited to findings from just two textbooks and is included as a way of illustrating how to conduct a critical evaluation of a text. The intended audience is teachers or curriculum developers who wish to learn the basics of conducting a critical evaluation of a textbook. The method of evaluation builds upon previous work done by Case, Ndura and Righetini (2005) who describe how to evaluate ESL texts based upon Fairclough's (1989) concept of critical language awareness (CLA), a theory of language and sociology widely used to guide instruction. Examples are drawn from two widely used ELT texts for adults: 1) *A Writer's Workbook: A Writing Text with Readings*,

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written by Trudy Smoke and published by Cambridge University Press in 2005, 2) *North Star: Reading and Writing*, written by Robert F. Cohen and Judy L. Miller and published by Longman Press in 2004. The texts are for advanced adult students of ESL and widely used throughout adult ESL programs in the United States. An introduction to the critical theory and SLA as well as an explanation of Fairclough's (1989) concept of critical language awareness opens the article. An evaluation of the above textbooks follows. The article closes with a discussion of the implications the analysis of texts through a critical language perspective holds for curriculum development.

CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

According to Zuengler and Miller (2006), critical theory represents an extension of the sociocultural framework. While the emphasis in both is on exploring the role of the learner in the group, sociocultural theorists concentrate on exploring the ways that learners are socialized into communities of practice. Critical theorists, on the other hand, argue that research must extend beyond simple accountings of how students are socialized into different communities of practice. Researchers must identify the power relations students face in trying to enter those groups--ways in which they are blocked from entering different social groups--in order to gain a clearer understanding of SLA. The result has been a plethora of critically-based SLA studies which have ferreted out different features of the social landscape and then explored how these particular features intersect with opportunities to acquire a second language. Particular areas of investigation include social identity (e.g., Case, 2004; Harklau, 2000; Leung, Harris & Rampton, 1997; McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Thesen, 1997), gender (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004) sexual identities (Nelson, 1999, 2006), class (Vandrick, 1995) and race (Kubota, 2002, 2003, 2004).

Following Zuengler and Miller (2006), within a critical theory of SLA, teachers must develop curriculum which uncovers existing power relations and serves as a conduit for change in education. The concept of CLA, which was developed by Norman Fairclough as an instructional application of his work on critical discourse analysis, represents one conduit of change that is accessible to curriculum developers and teachers. Fairclough (1989) explains that the application of CLA began in England and later spread to the United States, Australia and South Africa. Fairclough argues that schools or school systems are unprepared to bridge the racial, linguistic and class gaps students encounter in the classrooms, and so students must be given the resources to take control of their own learning and change the inequities they face. Fairclough offers CLA as an instructional approach aimed at helping students

to read a text critically, uncover the ways in which ideologies in a text marginalize some groups while sustaining the power of others and, ultimately, to find opportunities in their own lives to change these inequities.

CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS

At the center of Fairclough's discussion of CLA are the relationships among language, ideology and discourse. In *Language and Power*, Fairclough (1989) does not separate discourse and ideology. When Fairclough describes discourse, he is referring to either text or oral language. Any piece of writing, whether it is a story, an advertisement or a narrative in a textbook, is grounded in a set of beliefs or ideology that are set forth by the author. Ideologies are used to establish an argument within a text and often structured around power relationships along race, class or gender lines. The most successful ideology operates as an invisible set of premises that leads readers to draw on and agree upon a shared set of conclusions.

Discursive acts represent the ways that writers use language to manipulate grammar, word meaning and larger rhetorical structures to advance their particular ideology. For instance, a writer might use the passive voice or subordination to reduce the importance of a selected point in a clause but then use the active voice to accentuate the relevance in the remaining clause. Similarly, formalized prose might be used to show the importance of a topic while informal writing or slang could be employed by the writer to show the lack of importance a topic holds. These are important to the teacher doing a discourse analysis because they offer landmarks which point to ideologies that the critical reader can use to uncover how ideology and discourse are linked.

Language, according to Fairclough (1989), resides in dialectical relationship to society. On one hand, language acts as a social phenomenon. When students read a text, they become a part of the larger discussion on that particular topic. On the other hand, social phenomena are also linguistic. Discussions, for instance, on how to best describe groups such as the homeless, the handicapped or linguistic minorities are often a war of words. The language itself is more than a reflection of the debate but a real and integral part of it. The words themselves become a part of the phenomenon.

EVALUATION TEMPLATE

A number of criteria were used to select the texts for this evaluation. First, the author selected texts which were driven by a content-based methodology and had a strong circulation. As data about circulation is often confidential and could not be obtained, the author selected texts based upon the publishing company. Texts from Oxford and Cambridge were selected as

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these are two of the largest publishers in adult ESL instruction and their texts would very likely have a large audience. Beginning language texts were not selected, as these were more centered on teaching language. Recommendations for specific texts were drawn from the faculty and staff at the university English as a second language program.

The evaluation of two texts for middle school ESL students by Case, Ndura & Righettoni (2005) provided the methods. Following Case, Ndura & Righettoni's (2005) work, this author paired Fairclough's (1989) four stages of CLA (reflection, systemizing, explanation and developing practice) with the stages of the reading process (pre-reading, during reading and post-reading) typically seen in content-based texts. Table 1 is a template adapted from Case, Ndura & Righettoni (2005) to evaluate the texts.

Table 1.

Evaluation Checklist for Critical Language Awareness

Stage 1. Reflection on Experience "Children are asked to reflect upon their own discourse and their experience of social constraints upon it and to share their reflections with the class" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 200).

1. *Do pre-questions raise relevant tensions, questions and concerns in the lives of ESL students?*
2. *Do pre-questions, activities and exercises call on students to reflect upon their own experiences in relationship to discourses presented in the story?*
3. *Do pre-questions, activities and exercises allow students to share experiences with the discourses in the story either through writing or speaking?*

Stage 2. Systemizing the Experience "The teacher shows the children how to express these reflections in a systematic form, giving them the status of 'knowledge'" (Fairclough, 1994, p. 200).

1. *Do during-reading questions, activities or exercises point the students' attention to specific linguistic features in the text?*
2. *Do the during-reading questions, activities or exercises ask the students to analyze the specific linguistic features in the text?*

Stage 3. Explanation "This knowledge becomes an object of further collective reflection and analysis by the class, and social explanations are sought" (Fairclough, 1994, p. 200).

1. *Do during-reading questions, activities or exercises ask the students to examine the origins of the discourse? This might include an opportunity for students to examine the fundamental attitudes which perpetuate the discourse and why some discourses privilege some and marginalize others.*
2. *Do during-reading questions, activities or exercises ask the students to consider how language collected during systemizing contributes to an ideology or discourse within the reading?*

Stage 4. Developing Practice “The awareness resulting from (i-iii) is used to develop the child’s capacity for purposeful discourse” (Fairclough, 1994, p. 200).

1. *Is there opportunity within post or during-reading questions, activities or exercises to review, summarize and synthesize what has been learned in the first three stages?*
2. *Are students given opportunities in post or during-reading questions, activities or exercises to transform or change the discourse either in their school or local community? This may be in the form of an extended project which moves the students from what they have learned to action.*

The first stage of CLA, reflection, is paired with pre-reading questions, activities and exercises from the text. Three questions within stage one help the teacher to determine the extent to which the text asks the students to reflect on their experience with the discourse. The task is for the teacher or curriculum developer to determine the extent to which the questions, activities or exercises ask students to ponder over how discourses in the stories connect to their own lives.

The next stages of CLA, systemizing and description, draw on during-reading questions. Systemizing calls on the teacher or curriculum developer to sort and categorize linguistic features of a text for later analysis. In description, the reading becomes the object of analysis. Successful questions will point the reader’s attention to specific linguistic features of the text and ask the reader to consider how the writer uses language to establish discourse and ideology. The task is to use the linguistic features identified during systemizing and describe how the author uses that language to form an ideology.

Halliday’s (1994) concept of the relational features of language provides the interpretive framework for conducting the systemizing and the description of the reading. The relational use of language is one of three metafunctions of language and is used as a tool to explore social relations among people in

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interaction or between the reader and the writer. For instance, a sentence such as, “Would you mind if I borrow your car tonight?” has at least two parts. The content of the message is “if (or can) I borrow your car tonight?” The remaining text, “Would you mind” is the relational dimension of the message. The relational aspects of language serve to maintain an amicable relation between the speakers. Points of analysis within the relational metafunction are modals and other language used to soften a request, statement or demand. Modals, e.g., ‘would’, ‘could’, ‘should,’ ‘will,’ ‘shall,’ ‘might,’ ‘may,’ and the use of informal language such as slang help the speaker to define a space between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ while making a request, a statement or a demand.

In the final stage, Case, Ndura & Righettini (2005) examine questions, activities and exercises given during the post-reading. Successful questions will ask readers to reflect on how they are positioned by the discourses revealed in the reading as well as how they can fracture or change that discourse. Two questions within the template (See Table 1) speak to that purpose. Examples of breaking a discourse are given below.

Two changes in this article to the method that Case, Ndura & Righettini (2005) used are relevant. The organization of the Smoke (2005) and the Cohen and Miller (2005) texts differ from the text that Case, Ndura & Righettini (2005) used. Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005) examined a middle school text which is neatly divided into a pre-reading section, a during-reading section and a post-reading section. The Smoke (2005) and Miller and Cohen (2004) texts omit the during-reading section and instead divide the questions, activities and exercises into pre- and post-reading. This did not present a problem in the analysis, however, as it was clear that many of the post-reading questions, activities and exercises queried the students’ comprehension of the text and could be given during reading.

The second change is the addition of the evaluation template. Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005) analysis largely relied on broader goals and descriptions of how to evaluate reading and question, activities or exercises. As this article is intended for curriculum developers and teachers, the evaluation template is added as a way of operationalizing some of the broader principles that Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005) relied upon. A description of how to conduct an evaluation follows.

CONDUCTING THE EVALUATION

Work begins in the pre-reading section of the text with an activity that Fairclough (1989) terms reflection. In it, teachers determine the extent to which illustrations, pictures, questions and vocabulary work provide opportunities for students to reflect upon and share the discourses from the text they see reflected in their own lives. While Fairclough (1989) argues that

discourse and ideology are a part of every text, topics such as racial, class, cultural and gender differences are particularly well suited to a CLA analysis.

Both texts contained pre-reading sections suitable for analysis. Within the Smoke (2005) text, each pre-reading section opened with three to five key passages selected for vocabulary study and three to five questions with an accompanying drawing depicting a character or central theme intended to inspire discussion. Of the twelve chapters within the Smoke (2005) text, a total of 48 passages with key words and 36 pre-reading questions were included for pre-reading. While many of the passages were interesting points to reflect on, they were not included as part of the results. Following an analysis using the parameters described above of the 36 pre-reading passages and questions, three categories were established: 1) pre-reading prompts which did not engage the students in reflecting on the text, 2) pre-reading prompts which held the potential to engage students in reflection, and 3) pre-reading prompts which engaged the students in reflection.

Findings from the Smoke (2005) text revealed that of the 36 questions, 28 did not engage the students in reflecting on the discourse of the text. These were placed within the first category. Category two included five questions from chapters one, two, three, five and ten. These questions held the potential to engage students in critically reflecting on the parallels between the discourse of the text and their own lives.

Just one question engaged students in critical reflection of the text and could be placed in category three. The question came from chapter four. The essay from chapter four is titled, "Cultural Identity VS. Ethnic Fashion" by Sunita Puri. In it, Puri disagrees with the practice of how wearing a bindi – the colored dot between eyebrows to signify membership in the Hindu faith – has been popularized by celebrities without regard for its importance as a symbol of Indian culture and the Hindu faith. The question from chapter four opens this discussion for the students. It reads:

"In "Cultural Identity vs. Ethnic Fashions," Sunita Puri criticizes some popular music stars for wearing the bindi - the colored dot between the eyebrows - even though they are not Hindu and do not have a comprehensive understanding of South Asian culture. Why do you think she might be offended by this practice? (Smoke, 2005, p. 62)"

The question is successful because it encourages students to explore the ways in which religious symbols are translated across cultures-bindi, in this case-into new forms and how power is implied in these translations. Celebrities from western countries represent the more powerful group who borrow and then reinterpret religious and cultural symbols in a way which ignores the traditions behind the Hindu religion.

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The Cohen and Miller (2004) text contained ten units of study. The pre-reading section of each unit opened with an open-ended question to engage the students' interest in the topic. A short background reading followed, and a vocabulary exercise ended the pre-reading section. Twenty pre-reading questions were included for analysis. Findings revealed that of the 20 questions, just one question, from unit five, asks the students to reflect on how a discourse is present in their own lives. Unit five focuses on the struggles of learning a new language and adapting to a new culture, and the centerpiece of the unit is an excerpt from Eva Hoffman's autobiography, "Lost in Translation." The unit opens with a picture of four college-aged students sitting in a row giving each other a shoulder massage. The question asks, "What could be "lost in translation" for these young people?" (Cohen & Miller, 2004, pg. 97).

The question is successful because, when coupled with the readings from Hoffman's autobiography, it provides an excellent opportunity for students to engage in a discussion about the connections between language and power that international students encounter. Hoffman does a brilliant job of describing the process of learning English as one of translations. There is the translation she makes from Polish to English when she must speak and there is the translation between cultures which forces her to reconcile the values and expectations of her native culture with those of her new home in Canada.

Analysis of the remaining questions in the texts demonstrated that all of the questions introduced the issue of interest to the students and fell clearly within a CBI model of instruction, but stopped short of opening a discussion on the relationships between power and language. The second pre-reading question, for instance, from unit five of the Cohen and Miller (2004) text asked, "What are the advantages of living in a multicultural society?" (p. 97). While the question holds the potential of opening a discussion on life as an international student in the United States, it does not provide a venue for thinking about how language is tied to questions of power and language. It is too general and, if raised for class discussion, would likely only lead to a list of platitudes of the positive lessons learned from living abroad.

Following the analysis of the prereading questions, Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005) explore the extent to which the questions, activities and exercises call upon students to examine how authors use language in their writing to forward an ideology. This is an important change in emphasis from the pre-reading section. In the pre-reading section, teachers gauge the degree to which the questions ask the readers to reflect upon their own experiences with the discourses the text presents. The analysis begins with identifying the ways that the author uses language to establish an ideology in the text, and then moves to determining how well the questions engage the readers in interrogating those ideologies. According to Case, Ndura and Righettini

(2005), questions which reflect a critical perspective will point the students' attention to the specific ways in which language is used to advance the author's ideology.

The first step is to determine if the selected question directs the reader's attention to specific linguistic features of the reading. This process of sorting out and categorizing specific features of language for later use is what Fairclough (1989) calls systemizing. The next task is to analyze the language. In this particular example, the relational metafunction of language is informative. The question below from the Smoke (2005) text points the reader's attention to phrases such as "you know," "sort of like" and "like" in her essay. Within a relational analysis of language, these phrases offer cues as to how Puri (2005) uses language to establish a relationship with her readers and the classmate she quotes in her essay.

Q: In paragraph two, Puri quotes a male acquaintance who comments on her wearing of the bindi. Many writers edit and leave out words when they quote speakers, so why do you think Puri includes the speaker's "you know," "sort of like," and "like" in her quotation? What does she want us to think or know about this person? (Puri, 2005, p. 62)

A: "It's a, you know, convenient way to sort of like assert an identity. Like, you're making a statement, but it's not offensive or anything. It's actually fashionable... I was shocked, especially at his claim that many others agreed with him. I wear my bindis to demonstrate my adherence to and respect for my culture and religion and the large role that they occupy in my identity and everyday life — not to imitate a pop icon. (Puri, 2005, p. 63)

The excellent question draws the reader's attention to the contrast between Puri's (2005) highly formalized use of language and her classmate's informal use of language. Teachers and curriculum developers can continue with the process of searching for question which call on the students to systemize the language of the text. Analysis of the text for its relationship to discourse and ideology during systemizing is not necessary. Description follows. In it, the way that Puri (2005) uses language to establish her relationship with her classmate will become an important aspect of determining how Puri (2005) uses language to establish an ideology around identity and education.

In description, the focus turns from collecting and systemizing language samples to interpretation. Two questions make up the explanation stage of CLA and ask the teacher or curriculum developer to interpret the passages in terms of Fairclough's (1989) concepts of ideology, power and discourse. The

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goal of analyzing relational language from a critical perspective is to map how “representations of the world are coded in their (the writers’) vocabulary” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 94). The curriculum developer or teacher analyzes the ways in which the writer uses modals and informal language to attenuate requests or statements and establishes a relationship with the readers to forward a particular ideology.

The example above reveals an interesting split between the formal written language of Puri (2005) and the informal spoken language of her classmate. This split becomes a point where Puri distances herself from her classmate and establishes her ideology concerning education and ethnicity. The use of informal and formal vocabulary connote different messages about education and ethnic sensitivity and allow Puri (2005) to divide her audience into groups which align their beliefs about the relationship between bindi and ethnicity with either her classmate or her. Her use of words such as “identity”, “religion” and “culture” are formalized prose and connote a writer who is educated and invested in identity politics. She claims membership in American and Indian culture yet refuses to deal with any of the compromises that come with a transnational identity - such as her classmate’s lack of knowledge about the complexities of Hindu life.

Her classmate’s use of language is markedly informal and resides in direct opposition to Puri’s (2005). He stumbles through his ideas with hedges and fillers such as “you know,” “like” and “sort of ” and - at a denotative level - fails to establish his thinking about wearing bindi beyond the superficial world of fashion and pop icons. Connotatively, the reader encounters someone who, in clear contrast to Puri (2005), is inarticulate, shallow and unable to deal with the exigencies of life in a multicultural society. He does not hold the sense of a transnational identity that Puri (2005) does and appears to be unaware of the fact that he has been tried and convicted of being offensive in the court of identity politics.

Without the question to focus attention the reader’s on why Puri (2005) decided to leave the informal language in her essay, how Puri (2005) uses language to advance her argument would go unexamined. Teachers who wish to expand the debate on Puri’s (2005) essay could divide students into two groups-one supporting Puri (2005) and the other critiquing her - and call for debate, but the activity only plays into Puri’s (2005) hand. While the teacher may ask the students to debate the issue of how bindi are worn, the students also conduct their critique as members of oppositional groups whose memberships reside in a set of co-opted beliefs. They do not question how Puri uses the contrast between the informal and formal use of language to establish those groups, assign the groups a set of beliefs and form a discourse around ethnicity and education.

Findings reveal that while there are many examples of excellent content-

based based questions, just 3 of the 120 questions examined in the Smoke (2005) text engage the students in examining how the author uses language to advance an ideology. All three are from Puri's (2005) "Cultural Identity VS. Ethnic Fashion." None of the 210 questions within the Miller and Cohen (2004) text provide a comparable example of a critically-based question. The questions more clearly reflected a content-based approach.

The processes of systemizing and description involve teachers and curriculum developers in learning to identify the ways in which authors use language discursively and the extent to which textbook questions accomplish that task. For the curriculum developer or teacher, using this kind of analysis provides an envoy to a type of analysis rarely used with texts. It opens up questions for their students around power and language that are just beneath the surface but invisible with a content-based lens.

The final stage of CLA (Developing Practice) is for the teacher to examine the post reading questions, activities, exercises and illustrations for their potential to inspire what Fairclough (1983) terms "emancipatory discourse" (p. 242). From an instructional perspective, this moves students from awareness or consciousness of how they are positioned by discourse into changing that discourse and thereby finding agency or participating in emancipatory discourse. This is crucial. According to Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic and Martin-Jones (1987), awareness of how one is positioned by discourse "is a necessary but not sufficient condition for emancipation" (46). Students must also find ways for their voices, viewpoints and experiences to be heard and for those views to impact marginalizing discourses and social practices.

Evaluating texts for their potential to engage students in emancipatory discourse requires teachers to search for activities which focus the students' attention on changing the ways in which discourse positions their students. Texts must create opportunities for students to reposition themselves in society and become legitimate speakers. Exercises from ESL texts will vary but might include students writing their poetry in their native languages or writing letters of protest about the ways in which the media positions speakers of English as a second language. The most powerful exercises will build from a firm foundation laid in the first three stages. The teacher will have assisted the students in creating a systematic account of the interconnections driving discourse, social practice and ideology, thus giving what they have learned the status of knowledge. Moreover, students will be aware of the origins of the discourse, its constraints on them and others.

The post-reading sections for each text are included. Within the Smoke (2005) text, the previous 210 questions were used for analysis. Questions from the Cohen and Miller (2004) text were collected from a section titled, "Research Topics." This section ended each of the 10 units of study in the

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text with a topic related to the reading for the students to research. The same format was repeated throughout the text: 1) preparation for the research project, 2) the research activity, and 3) presentation of the research activity. Successful questions involved the students in changing the discourse around a particular subject. This means that questions must be more than just investigation or an extension of the reading. It must focus on how the language surrounding the particular topic of study can be changed to reposition and empower less powerful groups.

Findings revealed that despite the controversial topics each text covered neither asked the students to change how language is used around a particular subject. Of the two, the Cohen and Miller (2004) was the most interesting as it consistently ignored a discussion of how language was used or how it could be changed in favor of a simple descriptive investigation of the topic. Hoffman's article "Lost in Translation" provides a good example of an exercise which could be deepened through the examination of how language is used. Within the research section, Cohen and Miller (2004) ask the students to explore how their family lives have affected them. Students select from a set of seven different aspects of their family history or, if appropriate, their immigration to the United States. They largely call on students to describe the experience and its impact on them. As an example, the second question asks, "Has your country undergone any great changes in the last 50 years? Wars? Revolutions? Divisions? Reunifications? Changes in the political system?" (Cohen & Miller, 2004, p. 123).

While the questions are intended to help students to personalize what they have learned about immigration through an exploration of their own experiences, they stop short of engaging them in an exploration of the connections between discourse and power that Hoffman (2005) describes:

I learn that certain kinds of truth are impolite. One shouldn't criticize the person one is with, at least not directly. You shouldn't say, "You are wrong about that"-although you may say, "On the other hand, there is that to consider." You shouldn't say, "This doesn't look good on you'-though you may say, "I like you better in that other outfit." I learn to tone down my sharpness, to do a more careful conversational minuet. (p. 102)

A research question focused on the task of developing practice would ask the students to investigate how they too have changed the conversations in their lives. They could prepare interviews with families, friends or relatives and collect examples of conversations and various interactions which illustrate the intersection between language and culture. From there, they could talk about ways to transform the language in those interactions.

Examples might include holding an international student party which celebrates the language and culture of international students. As international students are given the right to speak about their cultures, this inverts the power relation between native and foreign-born. The international student is now the expert and defines the conversational minuet.

Data indicate that, with few exceptions, the texts do not address the stages of CLA (See Table 1). Just eight questions from the Smoke (2005) text and one from the Cohen and Miller (2005) text are reflection questions. Analysis questions are limited to three in the Smoke (2005) text and not present in the Cohen and Miller (2005) text. Neither text offered any questions which could be counted as developing practice. Notwithstanding the fact that these are content-based texts not organized around the stages of CLA, it should not be overlooked that the content-based questions that these texts pose exclude students and teachers from exploring the reasons and ways that power relations exclude or block opportunities for students to acquire English. Each text touches on the issues that are key within the SLA literature, e.g., gender, social class, culture, race and identity, but fails to problematize them within a critical framework

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

According to Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005), one possibility for using the instrument above (See Table 1) as a supplement to a content-based text is to focus on just one point in the reading process. As an example, a teacher may decide that while the story “Lost in Translation” has relevant pre- and during-reading questions, he/she would like to build upon the idea of developing practice. As mentioned above, the students can talk about how the conversations in their lives have changed. Students can describe conversations across such dichotomous categories as immigrant/native-speaker or teacher/student and discuss ways in which they can change the conversations.

Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005) note that while CLA evaluation represents a way to change or deconstruct the ideology and discourse of a text, it also provides an opportunity to reconstruct ideology and discourse. Teachers who lead their students through a reading of “Lost in Translation” can supplement the text with examples of the different ways in which language and identity interact when one learns a second language. A ethnographic account by Danling Fu of a Lau family that immigrates to the United States in search of a better life titled, “My Trouble is My English” would provide an interesting alternative account of how succeeding in American schools is intimately linked to ethnicity, religion and gender.

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Using a CLA approach to evaluate texts is a complex undertaking for teachers and curriculum developers alike. Despite this author's efforts at narrowing the evaluation method to a list of questions, conducting a critical evaluation of a text still requires a strong knowledge of SLA, discourse analysis and the broader social issues in ESL students' lives. Yet as Case, Ndura and Righettini (2005) note, teachers or curriculum developers who decide to pioneer it in their practice are taking the first step towards writing their own students' lived experiences into the curriculum. A text written from a content-based perspective, while valuable and needed, stops short of that task. CLA, even as a supplement to the curriculum, presses teachers and students alike into a dynamic relationship with the reading in which they must ultimately find ways to write their own experiences into the curriculum. "This is the work of critical theory in general and CLA in particular, and it is a needed step" (Case, Ndura & Righettini 2005, p. 154).

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