Introducing the Notions of Ideology and its strategies in EFL Critical Reading Classroom: an Alternative Way to Lead the Student Become a Critical Reader

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Abstract

Reading is an important activity for the students In the English Department Curriculum which is given from the basic to advanced level, *Inferential* Reading to *Critical* Reading. The students are taught from how to comprehend the text until how to criticize the text. The latter is considered as advanced level (Critical Reading) because the students practice not only comprehending of what is stated in the texts but also grasping the message behind the texts. Critical Reading is the process of reading that goes beyond just understanding a text. Being a critical reader, one has to be able to evaluate the reading text, and to identify the reading strengths, weaknesses and the text writer's purposes. This paper is aimed at introducing Thomson's ideological modes and strategies in discourse (1990). There are five strategies used by the text writer to disseminate its ideologies which can be identified as his goals and purposes in producing such discourse, such as legitimation, fragmentation, reification, dissimulation and unification. These strategies are expected to help the students identify the message and the purposes of the text writer which are stated implicitly so that they are hardly recognized by the readers.

Key Words: *Critical Reading, Ideological Strategies, Critical Readers, Ideology.*

Introduction

One of the subjects to be taken for the students of English department is Reading which is divided into literal reading, inferential reading, and critical reading. Critical Reading is reading actively with the goals of identifying arguments, weighing evidence, evaluating sources, looking for conflict of interest, and questioning underlying assumptions. It is the highest level. Therefore, compared to others, it becomes the most complicated skill that the students must learn. It is complicated since this skill requires students to recognize not only what a text says, but also how the text portrays the subject matter (Kurland, 2000). Thus, the students must recognize an author's purpose, understand tone and persuasive elements and recognize bias. It is an important skill that will help students become better informed and hopefully more critical citizens

Having students become critical readers is challenging since many freshman students have not been taught to read actively or critically, to construct knowledge as they read (Bosly, 2008), the students often read a text at surface level. If they do not get it, they give up rather than engage in the difficulty of

the task, thus critical reading strategies must be taught explicitly through practice. Strategies for critical reading can vary by discipline, text-type and the purpose of the particular reading assignment. Textbooks, research reports, epic poems, ethnographies, eyewitness journals and scholarly articles all demand different processes that we call "reading", and students may have never thought about employing different strategies. One of the strategies which is necessary for the students to know to recognize the author's purpose is Thomson's ideological theory. This theory introduces the students with the strategies of the authors in expressing their ideologies or purposes through the discourse, they operate.

There are five modes of ideological strategies Thomson introduces; legitimation which is the strategy of representing something as legitimate as just and worthy of support, dissimulation which is the strategy of establishing domination by concealing, denying or obscuring or by being represented in a way which deflects attention from or glosses over existing relations or processes, unification which is the strategy of establishing the domination constructing, a form of unity which embraces individuals in a collective identity, irrespective of the differences and divisions that may separate them, fragmentation which is the strategy of establishing the relation of domination not by unifying individuals in a collectivity but by fragmenting those individuals and groups that might be capable of mounting an effective challenge to dominant groups or by orienting forces of potential opposition towards a target which is projected as evil, harmful and threatening, and reification is the strategy of establishing the relation of domination by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time (Thomson, 1990).

Realizing that the text is not value free reflection of facts (Fowler, 1991), readers need to be critical in reading texts as knowing that language contain ideology, it is never neutral and even articles within newspaper must be regarded as constructed "stories" told from a particular point of view (Fowler, 1991).This paper is aimed at introducing the notion of ideology and modes of ideological strategies used in a discourse as one of strategies to lead the students to be critical readers.

Critical Reading

In real life, readers are largely exposed to written language, which are very often biased due to the complexity of the publishers or simply because of the writers' subjectivity, immaturity or limited ability. It is very important for the readers to realize that what they read must be written from a particular perspective, assumption, value and ideology; thus, it inevitably contains subjective opinion, value, attitude and ideology, which are implicitly or explicitly recorded. For this reason, readers need not only the fundamental ability to comprehend well, but also to possess the ability to develop critical sense, a means of judging the worth of what is being read (Milan, 1983). Readers are required to critically evaluate the opinions of the writer. They must keep an open mind as they read, not unquestioningly

accept everything they read just because it is in print. Besides, they may reject a writer's prose simply because they dislike or disagree with what he says or with the way he says it. As a results, they must be able to form their own judgment of the issue raised.

Reading can roughly be divided into three levels (Dale, 2013). The first level is simple, uncritical reproduction, a duplication of what has been read. It is reading the lines-literal comprehension. The readers know what the author 'said', no small accomplishment. The second and the higher level of reading involves drawing inferences from what is read-discovering the implications. It is reading between the lines. It requires critical thinking, an analysis of what the writer meant. Did he write ironically with tongue in meek? Was his tone hopeful? Cynical? A third level of reading involves evaluation and application of what is read and requires vigorous, critical judgement. It is reading beyond the lines. One asks-what relevance does this reading have on my ongoing work? How can I put these ideas to work?

Reading is considered as an active process – a dynamic meaning-making interaction between the page and brain. Understanding the reading process helps people become critical thinkers. Critical reading and critical thinking skills are indispensable (Taglieber, 2003) because basically critical reading is a reading process which involves critical thinking. Critical thinking is closely related to reading comprehension (Commeyras, 1990). Critical thinking, which involves reasoning, is the process the reader uses to determine which interpretations are consistent with textual evidence and background knowledge. This view is supported by Collin, et al in Taglieber (2003) who say that to read critically is to think critically. Thus, Critical Reading is defined an active and purposeful process of comprehending, questioning, and evaluating printed materials in order to react intelligently to the writer's ideas (Kurland, 2000), he further says that critical reading refers to a careful, active, reflective, analytic reading which involves reflecting the validity of what one has read in light of his prior knowledge and understanding of the world.

The Notion of Ideology

Ideology might be said as a text woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands; it is traced through by divergent histories (Eagleton, 1991). Thus nobody yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology. The term ideology itself has a whole range of different meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other such as stated below, Some definitions of ideology are currently used in circulation as Eagleton (1991) stated:

      a.   The process production of meanings, signs and values in social life;

      b.   A body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class

      c.   Ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power

      d.   Action oriented set of beliefs.

e. Forms of thought motivated by social interests

f. Socially necessary illusion

g. The medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world

There should be noted that these definitions are compatible with one another, pejorative, ambiguous, even not pejorative at all and involve epistemological questions.

People sometimes use the word ideology to refer to systematic belief in general this can be mean that ideology is related to power, as Thomson (1990) stated that ideology has to do with legitimating power of a dominant social group or class and to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination. However, not some people believe that this formation of ideology is always limited to dominance, or power because there are also professional ideology, this means that when talking about ideology, the terms does not only refers to power and dominance but might also refer to professional groups such as teachers, doctors, etc (Van Dijk, 2012). Furthermore he states that **firstly**, ideologies are not necessarily negative (there are racist as well as antiracist ideologies, communists and anticommunist ones). That is not only dominant groups may have ideologies used to legitimate their power or to manufacture consent or consensus but may also define resistance and opposition such as labor to the company owner. Therefore ideologies are not some kind of false consciousness. **Secondly**, ideologies need not be detailed, complex systems, such as those of nationalism, socialism, conservatism, fascism, anarchism, liberalism, communism or feminism. They may very well be limited to a few basic principles (Van Dijk, 2012). **Thirdly**, Octar, (2001) and Van Dijk, (1995a and 1995b) defines ideologies as "presentations of who we are, what we stand for, what our values are and what our relationships with others are". In other words ideologies disclose our identity, activities, Goals, Norms and values, social position and resources. In other words, ideologies show polarizing structure between Us/In and Them/Out. These ideologies are the same as the representation a group has of itself in the social structure. **Fifthly**, Van Dijk says that ideologies disclose our identities, as he says that ideological work of media language includes particular ways of representing the world, particular construction of social identities and particular constructions of social relations.

In political science, ideologies are called the belief systems or social representations of some kind (Augostinos, 1998). It means that they are not personal beliefs, but beliefs shared by groups which are more fundamental or axiomatic. It is assumed that ideologies form the basis of the belief systems or social representation of specific groups (Van Dijk, 1998). Thus, ideologies organize and control social groups' attitudes consisting of schematically organized general opinions about relevant issues such as abortion, nuclear energy.

Ideologies are defined in many different terms and before the readers start working with them, they have to decide precisely which interpretation they want to employ before evaluating the texts in their hands.

The Modes of Operation of Ideology

There are 5 modes of operation of ideology in a discourse (Thomson, 1990), such as legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification. Each of them is realized by using typical strategies of symbolic constructions.

The first mode of ideology operation is legitimation, This legitimation mode reveals that the relations of domination may be established and sustained by being represented as legitimate that is as just and worthy support, which will be called as claim of legitimacy. This claim is expressed firstly, in rationalization strategy in which a chain of reasoning is used to defend or justify a set of social relations or institutions to persuade an audience that it is worthy of support, secondly, in universalization, by means of this strategy, institutional arrangements which serves the interests of all, and this arrangement are regarded as being open in principle to anyone who has the ability and the inclination to succeed within them. Claims to legitimacy may also be expressed by means of the strategy of narrativization; claims are embedded in stories which recount the past and treat present as part of a timeless and cherished tradition. It is necessary to do since traditions are sometimes invented in order to create a sense of belonging to a community and to a history which transcends the experience of conflict, difference and division.

The second modes operandi of ideology is dissimulation. Relations of domination may be established and sustained by being concealed, denied or obscured or by being represented in a way which deflects attention from or glosses over existing relations or processes. This mode of ideology operation is expressed in the strategy of displacement; a term customarily used to refer to one object or individual is used to refer to another, and thereby the positive or negative connotations of the term are transferred to the other object or individual. This kind of strategy is employed by Napoleon Bonaparte who managed to reactive a tradition of reverent respect to imperial hero by presenting himself as the legitimate heir of the great Napoleon (Thomson, 1990). Another strategy which facilitates the dissimulation of social relations is euphemization in which actions, institutions or social relations are described or redescribed in terms which elicit positive valuations such as the violent suppression of protest is described as restoration of orders, a prison is described as a rehabilitation centre. The last strategy used to express ideology operated in dissimulation is trope (general label). Trope means the figurative use of language of symbolic forms such as synecdoche, metonymy, and metaphor.

The third modus of operandi of ideology is unification. Relations of domination may be established and sustained by constructing, at the symbolic level, a form of unity which embraces

individuals in collective identity, irrespective of the differences and divisions that may separate them. The typical strategy by means of which this mode is expressed in symbolic forms is the strategy of standardization. Symbolic forms are adapted to a standard framework which is promoted as the shared and acceptable basis of symbolic exchange; therefore, this strategy is pursued by state authorities seeking to develop a national language in the context of diverse and linguistically differentiated groups. The next strategy employed to achieve unification is symbolization of unity. This strategy involves the construction of symbols of unity, of collective identity and identification, which are diffused throughout a group or plurality of groups. This construction of symbols of national unity, of collective identity and identification is expressed through the national anthems, flags, emblems, etc.

The fourth mode through which ideology may operate is fragmentation. This mode believes that relation of domination is maintained not by unifying individuals in a collectivity but by fragmenting those individuals and groups that might be capable of mounting an effective challenge to dominant groups or by orienting forces of potential opposition towards a target which is projected as evil, harmful or threatening. The typical symbolic construction is differentiation which is emphasizing the distinctions, differences and divisions between individuals and groups. Another strategy is the expurgation of the other. This involves the construction of an enemy either within or without, which is portrayed as evil, harmful, or threatening or which individuals are called upon collectively to resist or to expurgate.

The fifth modus operandi of ideology is reification in which relation of domination is established and sustained by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time. This mode may be expressed in symbolic forms by means of the strategy of naturalization. A state of affairs which is a social and historical creation may be treated as a natural event. Eternatization is the strategy employed to achieve reification. This is the strategy which states that socio-historical phenomena are deprived of their historical character by being portrayed as permanent, unchanging and ever recurring. This operation of ideology may also be expressed in nominalization and passivization.

The Selected Material in Critical Reading Class

Selecting critical reading instructions must be done carefully to reinforce the students to read the text. The characteristics of ideological discourse which are clearly stated by Van Dijk can be the underlying consideration to choose these kinds of teaching instructions. Dijk (Nd:146) stated that the micro level of lexicalization, sentence meaning and local sentence coherence as well as macro level of topics and overall meaning, discourse semantics may be multiply affected by underlying ideologies. That means that meanings are manipulated, structurally, by the principle of In groups favouritism and Out groups derogation which is familiar in social cognition, hence also in the analysis of ideologies. If that so,

ideological discourse will typically be semantically oriented towards the followings such as self-identity descriptions, activity descriptions, goal descriptions, norm and value descriptions, position and relation description and resource descriptions.

Considering those characteristics, the possible and suitable authentic instructions are newspapers. Newspapers may have interesting features for students who practice reading text critically for the language used either in news report or editorial can never be neutral or value free, rather it is shaped by a mosaic of cultural assumptions, political beliefs and institutional practices, in other words, ideologies (Simpson, 1993: 176). News is one of the genres surrounded in students' daily life and this genre has the potential of being manipulated (Dar, *et al*, 2010)

Within the pages of a newspaper, A wide variety of writing style can be found. These styles vary depending on the type of information and the purpose of the message (http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/Education/PeopleParliament/newspaper2-e.asp). Therefore, for the use of this newspaper in Critical reading class, the lecturer can choose one of the styles such as hard news stories, Columns, Editorial page, Features, Comics, Advertisement, Cutlines, or Letters to the editor. Each of these styles has different purposes to the readers.

The Procedures

To start the activity, the teacher has crucial roles. The important things the teacher should do are firstly, reading instructions selection. The teacher can choose one of the styles in newspaper; however the most popular and easiest one is the editorial. This is the easiest one compared to other styles because of the more emotive and evaluative language the writer employed (Fowler, 1991). Secondly, the topic selection is done. It should be noted that since historical aspect is important in critical discourse analysis (Titscher, at al, 2000), the students and teacher should be aware of the background of the editorial writing. Thirdly, the language and culture are closely related, vocabulary, an important element of language is bound up with culture. Words are loaded with cultural factors. From the words the writer chooses, the readers can know the writer's feelings, and purposes (Halliday, M.A.K, 1985). Therefore, the students and teacher should be aware of the culture of the country where the editorial is written from, and for which newspaper is the writer working for. In the next part, the teacher starts introducing what ideology is to the students along with its strategies. It is not an easy way because this is new things for the students; therefore, careful and comprehensive explanation must be done.

The next activity will be explaining the steps that students must be done. Since this activity is about analyzing the text critically, then the steps in Critical Discourse Analysis is adapted such as description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 1989). In the stage of description, students just describe what they read in the text such as mentioning the modes of operation of ideologies and the

typical strategies of symbolic constructions, in the stage of interpretation, students must make an interpretation with the findings and the situational context and intertextual context must be involved in this process of analysis. This will answer the questions such as when and where was the text written; what is it about and what is its purpose, who are the sender and the receiver of the text and what are the power relation between them, what assumption can be made about the background knowledge (MR) of the sender and the receiver that may have influenced the production and interpretation of the text? And what is the role of the language and how does it determine the genre or discourse type? (Fairclough,1989). The stage of explanation involves a specific perspective on the background knowledge which are seen as ideologies. This stage of explanation is related to the interpretation stage because at the interpretation stage, the MR of both the sender and receiver are analyzed to reveal what background knowledge assumptions both participants brings to the process of production and reception and the explanation stage is concerned with analyzing how these MR are reproduced in the production of discourse and how either maintain or change existing power relations and ideologies in society (Fairclough, 1989). Those three steps can be given to students implicitly through questions the teacher makes.

In the main activities, the teaching activities are done within two steps: firstly comprehension and explanation of the text. In this case, the teacher introduces the students with the topic of editorial chosen and to help them comprehend the text, some questions stimulating text comprehension are given such as what questions, secondly, the process of critical reading. Therefore, some discussions might be done about the topic of the text especially if the topic is not too familiar to the students. This is done to give brief description about the content of the text so that the students will have the same background knowledge about the story. As Martin, (2001) and Butt, et al, (1995) argues that context should be seen from two parts namely from linguistic context and non-linguistic context. The linguistics context includes intratextual context or intertextual context while non-linguistics context include context of situation and context of culture. The last process should be done is analyze the modes of operation of ideologies and its strategies in the text writer. There are five modes of operation of ideology. It might be possible that not all the modes are found in the text. The students must describe them and interpret them. If they have finished those activities, the students can start answering the questions such as what the purpose of writing the text is, is it to inform, to persuade or to stimulate the reader's action and why such formulation is used by the text writer. The students can also be asked to see whether the writer is biased, whether he/she belong to any group that might influence his/her point of view. All these questions can lead to the activities of digging the text deeply or critically.

Finally, as critical readers, the students should then present their own point of view towards the topic discussed in the text and give opinions to the writer's attitude. Do they agree or disagree? This should be followed with the logical argumentations with the reasonable reasons and evidence such as

facts, examples, statistics and authorities and as critical readers, the students should not accept anything on face value but to recognize every assertion as an argument that must be carefully evaluated.

Closing

A language class is an ideal place for offering information on different topics. Therefore, the objective of the curriculum should also include the critical thinking. Critical reading is a skill which needs students' critical thinking. It is a complex system due to the great number of sub skills the students must have, hence, it is not an easy thing to be done. However, with the right strategies, these difficulties can be minimized. To help the students become critical readers, the teacher should have courage to introduce the critical and social domain to the students in analyzing the text. By using the authentic teaching instructions and strategies such as newspaper and Thomson's five modes of operations of ideologies, it is hoped that the students' critical reading skills will improve.

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