Doing Critical Reading in a TEFL Professional Development Classroom in Asia: Exploring Possibilities and Meeting Challenges

5th CELEA International Conference, 16-21 May 2007, Beijing, China, FLTRP International Convention Centre
Lawrence Jun Zhang, PhD
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
lawrence.zhang@nie.edu.sg
Abstract

Can EFL teachers teach critical reading in the classroom? What are the possibilities and challenges for such an unorthodox pedagogy? This paper will examine these two strands of pivotal knowledge and practices in relation to a reading pedagogical course offered on an advanced teacher professional development program in Singapore. Despite the widely acknowledged importance (Pennycook, 1999), critical reading as part of the critical pedagogy being debated in the field of language education has not gained sufficient ground and there is a tendency to neglect it in many ESL/EFL programs (Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Various reasons are given for such neglect, with the major one being that EFL learners need to develop decoding and word-recognition or vocabulary skills in order to read better. The pedagogy of reading is usually reductionist in orientation and a possibility that the teaching of language proficiency can be done simultaneously with teaching critical reading and thinking skills is not considered. With a sociocultural turn in teacher education in recent years (Johnson, 2006; Zhang, 2005), in this presentation I argue that teaching critical reading pedagogy to EFL teachers should be an equally important component of teacher professional development programs where teachers-in-training should be given chances to exercise agency in the process, as, upon completion of the training, they are to be agents for change in classrooms (Wallace, 2005).
The time when they are on the training programme is an opportune platform where reflexivity, reciprocity and responsibility are crucial to their making further progress in their professional life towards becoming critical practitioners in and outside language classrooms. Given the fact that, in Asian cultures of learning, reverence for knowledge and lack of inclination to challenge printed texts are commonplace, this paper reports a study of 35 English Language teachers taking a one-year postgraduate diploma program in ELT as part of their professional development. I make an effort to interpret and frame the inservice teachers’ resistance to and gradual acceptance of some of the basic principles of critical pedagogy. I also examine their nascent awareness of the significance of critically approaching texts both as readers themselves and reading teachers. By analyzing the process of their negotiating identities, repositionings and other related issues, I focus on a pedagogy grounded in sociocultural theory and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Pennycook, 1994, 2000; Wallace, 1999) using “community texts” (Luke et al., 1994) as the major materials of input. I describe, interpret and discuss excerpts of the step-by-step movements of critical reading lessons and possibilities for change in language teaching pedagogy. I conclude the presentation with an emphasis on the intent of this paper—to raise awareness among teachers as well as to bring ashore challenges facing critical pedagogy for ESL/EFL reading teachers in classrooms in Asia.
Conundrums/problems in EFL reading classrooms (in the PRC)

- Students will have little opportunity for performing reading tasks involving higher order thinking skills such as applying, hypothesizing, analyzing, synthesizing, comparing/contrasting and evaluating. Consequently, they will not learn to read critically, reach evaluative understanding of the text, or develop their thinking ability.

- Students may lack motivation or get frustrated in independent reading, as they get used to receiving input from the teacher. In other words, lecturing on the text sentence by sentence makes listening to the lecture the student's reading strategy. This is unfortunately true of many students, as also pointed out by Wallace (2005).
Conundrums/problems in EFL reading classrooms (esp. in the PRC)

- As the interaction mode is characterized with teacher talk, students are not actively engaged in the meaning-making process. Therefore, the existing knowledge of students is not effectively drawn out for the benefit of the whole class.

- There is a lack of richness or diversity in classroom activities. As the overwhelming goal is to comprehend the text, coupled with word analysis, syntactic analysis and translation practice, reading tends to be isolated from knowledge expansion as well as development of other language skills. As a result, classroom dynamism is weak.
Luke (2004) maintains that “to be critical is to call up for scrutiny, whether through embodied action or discourse practice, the rules of exchange within a social field. To do so requires an analytic move to self-position oneself as Other even in a market or field that might not necessarily construe or structurally position one as Other . . . . This doubling and positioning of the self from dominant text and discourse can be cognate, analytic, expository, and hypothetical, and it can, indeed, be already lived, narrated, embodied, and experienced.” (Luke, 2004, p. 26)
Reading as a social process

- Social context
  - Role of the author
  - Social authorship
  - Role of the text
  - Social text

- Role of the reader
  - Social role of the reader
  - Identities and role of L2 readers
    - Schema theory
    - Response, interpretation, analysis
Critical pedagogy is ...

- a pedagogical approach is one that
  - "... seeks to understand and critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop pedagogical practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling, but also the wider society." (Pennycook, 1990: 24)
Critical pedagogy is ...

- Two notions are distinguished:
  - *Banking education*
    - teacher transfers knowledge from his/her heads to those of the students
  - *Transformative education*
    - it develops when education proceeds by means of dialogue between students and teacher
Critical Pedagogy cannot be pinned down in a single definition (Crookes & Lehner, n.d.)

**Theoretical Sources**

- Critical theory tradition: Freire (1997),
- Main stream education: Giroux (1985); Shor (1990),
- ESL (how about EFL?)
  - Pennycook (1990, 1994, 1999)
Background

1. Critical Language Awareness (CLA)

- It is a pedagogic procedure indebted to critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Language Awareness (LA)
- From CDA is derived a view of discourse as shaped by relations of power
- From orthodox LA is an interest in studying language in its own right; i.e. language is the objective of study
- CLA illuminates and exemplifies CDA in teaching contexts while enriching and strengthening basic tenets of orthodox
- CLA needs to be located within some understanding of Critical Pedagogy
II. Critical Literacy and Critical Pedagogy

- Norton (1997: 212) says that “theory construction is often associated with male scholars and application is associated with female scholars”

- Pennycook (1994) conceptualises critical pedagogy, but does not provide enough concrete illustrations, as commented by Wallace (1999: 100)
Critical Literacy and Critical Pedagogy

- “a critical pedagogy of English needs to embrace a position oppositional to the central language norms and to the central discursive constructs” (Pennycook, 1994: 269)

- Ellsworth (1989: 309) states that “the concept of critical pedagogy assumes a commitment on the part of the professor/teacher toward ending the student’s oppression”
Critical Literacy and Critical Pedagogy

- Orientations to Critical Pedagogy (CP)
  - Wallace makes an effort to have classified the orientations to CP into three main strands
    - Emancipatory (empowerment)
    - Difference-oriented (distance oneself from text)
    - Oppositional (resistance from the margins)
III. Critical discourse analysis based on SFG (Halliday, 1990)

- Field of discourse (ideational meaning)
- Tenor of discourse (interpersonal meanings)
- Mode of discourse (textual meanings)
Recent research Studies

- **Crookes’ work on teacher education** (Crookes & Lehner, 1998)
- **Wallace’s Work** (1999, 2005)
  - Wallace (1999) conducted a critical reading course in which she dealt with literacy practices before moving on to the scrutiny of specific texts in increasingly greater length.
Macro and micro levels of CLA (Wallace, 1999:105)

- Observation of reading and writing practices, within particular everyday contexts, such as in homes or on public transport;
- Observation of the presence and physical location of text e.g. hoardings, community leaflets (e.g., in libraries, shops, educational institutions and other public places);
Macro and micro levels of CLA (Wallace, 1999:105)

- Classification of community texts into genres in order to identify culturally significant text types and to locate cross-cultural differences in genres and their defining features;
- Preliminary discussion of the cultural significance of both the practices observed and the nature and range of the genres observed.
A Conceptual Diagrammatic Representation of Instructional Design in Teaching EFL Reading

(Copyright 2004 Lawrence Jun Zhang, National Institute of Education, Singapore)

**Levels of Instruction**
- Level 1
- Level 2

**Reading for understanding-Meaning-driven classroom activities**

**Stage One** (macro-level comprehension) (before detailed text analysis completes)
- Focus on main ideas of text
- Organisation of text/text structure/text type
- Summarising
- Critical comprehension of the text based on whatever information understood

**Stage Two** (micro-level comprehension) (after detailed text analysis completes)
- Question and answer-based instructional procedures where meaning is paramount (questions are inserted instead of asked at the end of text)
- Specific comprehension questions pertaining to text at three levels
  - literal,
  - inferential and
  - evaluative
- Other exercises designed by the text writer included in the textbook used

**Intensive Study of Text** (no specific sequence required)
- Word recognition practice
- Syntactic parsing practice
- Semantic processing of sentences
- Vocabulary/word study
- Grammar/syntax analysis if needed
- Critical reading of text based on thorough literal comprehension of text
- Translation practice if needs arise
- Oral skill/pronunciation/reading aloud practice
- Listening/speaking practice
- Skills and strategies in solving problems in reading
- Teacher modelling of reading strategies
- Strategic training for possible transfers
- Task-based communication-oriented extensions of the text
- Paraphrasing, explanation, etc.

**Possible classroom procedure differences perceived by the teacher**

**Teachers' Focus in Classroom Procedures**

**Integration**

**Teachers' Focus in Classroom Procedures**
Critical Reading Pedagogy Questions
(Tasmania Dept. of Education)

- These questions can be asked of most spoken, written, visual, multimedia and performance texts. They encourage students to question beliefs that are often taken for granted.

- Critical Literacy Questions

- Textual purpose(s)
  - What is this text about? How do we know?
  - Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?
  - Why are we reading and/or viewing this text?
  - What does the composer of the text want us to know?
Critical Reading Pedagogy Questions

Textual structures and features
What are the structures and features of the text?
What sort of genre does the text belong to?
What do the images suggest?
What do the words suggest?
What kind of language is used in the text?

Construction of characters
How are children, teenagers or young adults constructed in this text?
How are adults constructed in this text?
Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?
Critical Reading Pedagogy Questions

- **Gaps and silences**
  - Are there gaps and silences in the text?
  - Who is missing from the text?
  - What has been left out of the text?
  - What questions about itself does the text not raise?

- **Power and interest**
  - In whose interest is the text?
  - Who benefits from the text?
  - Is the text fair?
  - What knowledge does the reader/viewer need to bring to this text in order to understand it?
  - Which positions, voices and interests are at play in the text?
  - How is the reader or viewer positioned in relation to the composer of the text?
  - How does the text depict age, gender and/or cultural groups?
  - Whose views are excluded or privileged in the text?
  - Who is allowed to speak? Who is quoted?
  - Why is the text written the way it is?
Critical Reading Pedagogy Questions

- Whose view: whose reality?
  What view of the world is the text presenting?
  What kinds of social realities does the text portray?
  How does the text construct a version of reality?
  What is real in the text?
  How would the text be different if it were told in another time, place or culture?

- Interrogating the composer
  What kind of person, and with what interests and values, composed the text?
  What view of the world and values does the composer of the text assume that the reader/viewer holds? How do we know?
Critical Reading Pedagogy Questions

Multiple meanings
- What different interpretations of the text are possible?
- How do contextual factors influence how the text is interpreted?
- How does the text mean?
- How else could the text have been written?
- How does the text rely on inter-textuality to create its meaning?
The Present Study

- **Purpose of the study**
- Encouraging a stance in the spirit of resistance rather than opposition
- Wallace has this to say regarding offering a critical reading course to ESL students at University of London Institute of Education:
  - “a capacity to gain some distance from one’s own identities, experiences and circumstances in light of greater understanding of those of others;
The Present Study

- an understanding of the nature of disadvantage and injustice beyond that personally experienced; being able to collaborate in discussion and debate to reach positions of consensus or agreement to disagree and, finally,
- having tools to articulate views rationally and coherently
- a critical pedagogy that looks beyond ‘empowerment’ in the personal and individual sense; it values commonality as much as difference and fosters resistance rather than opposition
The Present Study

- **Context of the study**
  - Participants
    - 35 tertiary-level EFL teachers
  - Materials
    - Various newspaper articles (“community texts”)
Framework for Data Analysis

- Tools for text analysis
  - SFG
  - Critical theory
- Discursive and evaluative tools
  - Classification
    - Audience
    - Purpose
    - Context
    - culture
A framework for data analysis 
(based on Wallace, 2005)

Classifying the texts according to whether they are:
- Requests?
- Public information leaflets?
- News reports?
- Professional reading materials?
- Entertainment/leisure reading materials?

1) Who produced the text (public bodies, news agency, local authorities, international agencies)?
2) For whom were they produced, i.e., who were the consumers or the expected readers of the material?
3) Why has the text been produced?
4) Is this type of text of interest or relevance to you?
5) Choose one text from each category which particularly appeals to you, either because of its style or content and discuss with other members of the group.
**Parallel Discourse Task** (based on Wallace, 2005)

Complete the columns below, making reference to the key text and the Halliday framework for text analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Interpersonal meanings</th>
<th>2. Ideational Meanings</th>
<th>3. Text Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note any use of:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal pronouns or ways the reader/writer or main participants are referred to</td>
<td>Note who the major participants are and what verbs collocate with what nouns</td>
<td>Note what kind of text this is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood and modality</td>
<td></td>
<td>How is information presented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language items such as nouns which reflect writer attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>What comes first?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Critical Reading Pedagogy Questions
(Tasmania Dept of Ed., Australia)

- Textual purpose(s)
- Textual structures and features
- Construction of characters
- Gaps and silences
- Power and interest
- Whose view: whose reality?
- Interrogating the composer
- Multiple meanings
Features of a segment of a critical-pedagogy-oriented lesson

- Following Wallace’s recommendation
  - We deconstruct the structures and features of texts. We ask questions of the text. We consider the structure and style of the text and ask: For what purpose has the text been constructed in this way?
Features of a segment of a critical-pedagogy-oriented lesson

- We no longer consider texts to be timeless, universal or unbiased. Texts are social constructs that reflect some of the ideas and beliefs held by some groups of people at the time of their creation. As we examine the underlying values and consider the ways in which we, as readers and viewers, are positioned to view the world, we are able to develop opposing interpretations.
Features of a segment of a critical-pedagogy-oriented lesson

- Like Wallace, we focused on
- the beliefs and values of the writer
- the time and culture in which the text was created
- Similarity to and differences from the views we hold today
- psychological, social, cultural and/or political reasons for the differences
- social equity and change
- analyze the powerful ways in which visual, spoken, written, multimedia and performance texts work and we discover the ways in which our feelings, attitudes and values are manipulated by language
- we are able to operate powerfully within our world
- We are able to become agents of social change working towards the removal of inequalities and injustices
Focus on pro-family plans

Moves to make S'pore a great place for all, but citizens will come first

BY LYNN LEE

PRO-FAMILY policies will constantly be reviewed and refined to encourage Singaporeans to have children.

And while the Government will continue to welcome talented foreigners, its first responsibility will always be to its citizens, who form the "core" of the nation, an addendum to the President's Address from the Prime Minister's Office said.

The statement, released yesterday by Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng, who is also minister-in-charge of population issues, said Singapore needs to be a place where people can build their future.

It reaffirmed President S R Nathan's call to make Singapore a "great place for families, for citizens as well as permanent residents and others who live and work here", so that they will not only develop their careers but raise families and "develop deep social bonds".

Mr Wong said that while families here enjoy a safe living environment and sound education system, among other things, the Government aims to increase support for parents.

It launched a slew of measures last August to boost the flagging birth rate, which fell to an all-time low of 1.26 in 2003 — way below the replacement rate of 2.1 a year needed to renew the population.

These included extending maternity leave to three months, tax breaks for parents, lower maid levies and infant care subsidies.

Mr Wong said the Government would also focus on improving infant and child-care services and work with unions and employers to help workers juggle work and family commitments.

The civil service has taken the lead, with three-quarters of officers now on a five-day week. Those with children below 12 can now take up to five days of child-care leave per child, or up to 15 days altogether if they have three or more children.

Some 9,000 officers made use of this leave last year.

The addendum also spelled out plans to attract more talented foreigners, which the President had earlier said would augment Singapore's population and develop the country's economic strengths, among other things.

Work-pass criteria and processes would be relooked, and the pool of skilled foreigners who can contribute to Singapore's growth, expanded. Those who embrace Singapore's values and lifestyle would be encouraged to take up permanent residency or citizenship.

But, the Government would still put the welfare of Singaporeans first. "The Government will ensure that it will always look after our citizens better than permanent residents and foreigners," Mr Wong said.
2 billion senior citizens in the world by 2050

The developed world will face an economic and political crisis when those in their 60s and above begin to outnumber taxpayers, warns a report.

MADRID — The predictions are almost cataclysmic. In 50 years, if trends continue, the number of people older than 60 will triple, outnumbering taxpayers and turning the entire developed world into “one big Argentina.”

The projected two billion seniors will outnumber the world’s youths half a century from now, and even before that, gains in longevity could bring a worldwide economic crisis as national budgets struggle to provide retirement and health benefits for the elderly, warn experts.

Developing nations’ fear

reducing the capital available for business investment and pushing up interest rates, a panel of 85 world figures commissioned by the centre warned in the report.

The panel, which included former vice-president Walter Mondale and former Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, said Europe, America and Japan would have to raise minimum ages for retirement considerably and switch to market-based, employer-financed pension plans.

“We’re going to have
UNIFIED NATIONS PRIMARY

reign pupils are bringing ich diversity to S'pore schools

BY JANE NG

A NDFUL of primary ils here are beginning to like a mini-Uni ted Na , with the list of national flocking to them almost ng as in some interna l schools.

ome of the schools are in es where many expatri ate. Others are tucked in ng Board estates.

le of them is Tanjong ng Primary, which has more than 200 pupils from 31 stries. Another, River ty Primary, has over 200 ng from 17 nations, e Kranji Primary in Choa Kang has about 100 chil from 15.

he United World College outh-east Asia’s 1,000 ary school pupils are from 41 countries.

The pupils at the Singa pore schools come from places as varied as North Korea, Mongolia, Nigeria, the Ukraine and Canada. They include children of embassy and trade commission offic ials, businessmen and bank executives.

Heads of these schools put their high foreign populations down to their proximity to condominiums and their pro grammes, such as ones introducing children to the arts.

Coincidentally, they also emphasise non-academic ar.

At Kranji Primary, pupils can switch co-curricular activi ties (CCAs) every 10 weeks if they want to. Theo retically, they may have taken up to 24 activities by the end of six years.

Principal Sam Wong, said, while this is logistically com plicated for the teachers, it allows them to see who the good players are.

“And the children have a wonderful time.”

At Tanjong Katong Primary, the school’s assembly pro gramme includes getting to know other cultures. Last month, the children were taught African rhythms and how to belly dance.

Principal Bucktha Seelan noted: “Foreign parents don’t want just academic rigour, but a holistic education which includes an emphasis on sports and the arts. They’re also interested in how their child develops socially.”

The arts are a major factor at River Valley Primary, where every child in Primary 3 has to take up one of its seven arts-related CCAs. These include rhythmic gymnastics, drama and choir.

Some expatriates enrol their children in local schools because they want them to mix with Singaporeans.

As Nigerian engineer Olu wolos Oyekanmi, 52, whose 11-year-old son Rolu is in Kranji Primary, puts it: “If we’re in Rome, we must live as the Romans do. It makes it easier for him to assimilate into the local culture.”

Some Singaporean par ents, seeing the cosm exposure they offer, come knocking.

Said Mr Seelan: “I ent told me her kid not get this exposure university.”

River Valley’s pi Mrs Sita Singh, poin “The foreign pupils certain richness to th tional experience, a dispel prejudices and views about others.”
Recap and summary of what students have said about this text

- **Text: 2 billion senior citizens in the world by 2005**
- LZ: What comes to your mind when you see “senior citizens”?  
  - ST: grey hair, physical disability to move around for food, inability to survive on their own, cannot contribute to society because of old-age, social burden
- LZ: Do you believe this is really the case? Why do you think the report is written in such a way? What is the purpose of the writer to do so?  
  - ST: I believe so. The writer wants warn the general public of the serious issue of the ageing population.
- LZ: Do you believe that the severity is really that much?  
  - ST: Yes, because that’s how the text says it
- ST: What kind of value systems do you think the writer has when you read this piece of writing?  
  - ST: I am not sure.
Just who is a S’porean?

Wearing Singaporean colours alone is not enough

by Simon Tay

MANY Singaporeans watched the Commonwealth women’s table tennis finals recently and cheered when we beat New Zealand.

Yet, some have noted that the two players wearing our colours, Junhong and Jiawei (picture), were originally from China.

Since there were Chinese players on both sides of the table, I wonder if New Zealanders had asked similar questions.

After all, New Zealand is associated with a white majority and a Maori heritage, like their famous rugby team. We might, therefore, understand if New Zealanders wondered why two Chinese were wearing the nation’s all black colours.

But why do some Singaporeans care about the mainland roots of our players?

Visually, there is nothing unusual. While we are a multi-racial society, more than three quarters of us are ethnically Chinese. Add to this the fact that most of our parents or grandparents were born elsewhere.

Why should we quiz foreign talents, like these table-tennis players, who become citizens?

These questions may ring out louder in the wake of National Day. What does it mean to be Singaporean when many newcomers can become one too? What does nationalism mean when we live in such a globalised society?

Some argue that Singapore has always been open to immigrants and always should be. They point to the fact that many who contributed to Singapore came from elsewhere.

This argument fails to take into account that a sense of nationhood has been built up in the intervening decades. National Day, national songs and various campaigns have been among the markers and tools in making Singaporeans conscious of the fact that they are Singaporean.

A line is now drawn between Singaporean and non-Singaporean, like that between those who are members of a club and those who are not.

A club has its joining fees and dues, and membership has its privileges — or should have. Others who have not paid up therefore must be prevented from faking membership.

What are the joining fees for the Singapore “club”?

Being born here helps but is not a guarantee of citizenship. In Singapore, a child is only born Singaporean if the parents are already citizens.

In other cases, citizenship is applied for. Citizenship is not automatically granted to a foreigner who marries a Singaporean.

Whether or not an application for citizenship is granted depends on a number of criteria, including one’s economic worth to the country.

Once a citizen, there are

Where the field is obscure or the so-called talent is seen to be no better than a home-grown player, Singaporeans rightly question the preference given. They, too, want to be given the opportunities to shine.

There is a second reason why Singaporeans may question the entry of new members. Does the entry of new members displace the incumbents?

The question is not voiced strongly when Singapore is a centre of many opportunities. Better yet, we should recognise how foreign talents help create those opportunities.

But now that unemployment has risen, perceptions are less positive and more defensive. There is a populist sentiment that if there were fewer foreigners, there would be more for Singaporeans to share among themselves.

The facilities of the Singapore club seem somewhat overcrowded, a bit like the controversy over the Radleys Town Club. Members think they were promised “exclusivity” but now say the pool is too small.

Today’s globalised world is like the tricky hypothetical question of what law applies when an Indonesian marries an Australian in Singapore, has houses in Bukit Timah and Paris, works in Shanghai, owns a Cook Islands company that is listed in New York, and sues for divorce while on holiday in Jamaica.

The questions about who is, or is not, a Singaporean therefore cannot be settled by just looking at the colour of an identity card. There is a more multi-dimensional gut sense at work.

We ask where the real connections lie. Part of the solution is to think about domicile — where a person lives, or intends to live out, his life, and his...
LZ: Think of Chinese culture and how the aged are taken care of and how they contribute to society in some other ways, e.g., taking care of their grandchildren so that the working mums and dads can keep working and earning income to support the family. Don’t you think this is also one way of showing the value of being a senior citizen?

ST: Yes. But somehow I did not realise this point when I was reading it.

LZ: Look at the use of figures/statistics: 2 billion senior citizens in the world by 2050. What effect does the use of figures/stats have on you?

ST: Striking, amazingly fast-ageing society we are in. We will have to face various challenges such as shortage of workforce.

LZ: Do you see any social equity in the text when senior citizens are described as a burden and a challenge for society?
ST: At the start I didn’t, but I now realise that expressions such as “developing nations fear” give readers a strong impression that developing nations will have to face even worse problems.

LZ: We can see the inherent power relations in the text – everything is manipulated by the writer to serve his/her purpose – either to sensationalise the phenomenon, to promote the sale of the newspaper, to disadvantage a certain group of people in order to put another group at an advantageous position. In other words, readers are repositioned by the writer, and the ageing senior citizens are ‘Othered’ by the writer. We need to realise that our feelings, attitudes, and values are all manipulated by language and its use in various textual and cultural contexts. We are able to become agents of social change in order to remove inequalities and injustice.

Where are you and where are your identities in the text? Who are you in your reading of the text? What kind of schematic knowledge came to your mind when words such as ‘developed’ and ‘developing countries’ surfaced in the text?
ST: I did not know that the text had so much for us to look at. We thought in reading a text as long as words’ meanings became clear and that if syntactical difficulties were solved, textual meaning would become clear as well.

LZ: In fact, when we read, and particularly when we teach EFL, we have to help students understand the text by asking three types of questions: literal, interpretive/inferential and evaluative …
Discussion

- *Views of society*
- CLA addresses social and political issues
- CLA is committed to the pursuit of social justice

- *Views of pedagogy*
- CLA is interventive/interventional (Wallace, 2005)
- CLA is dialogic in process or means towards outcome

- *Views of text*
- No texts are ideationally neutral or unbiased
- Texts arise out of social relationships, in particular relationships based on power
- Texts relate to each other intertextually; they have a history as do the discourses embedded within them
Views of reading

Reading is a social process
Meaning negotiation involves other social issues
Interpretations are negotiated within communities or communities of practice are essential
Interpretations may or may not be aligned with the model or expected reading
Cognitive accounts of reading need to be complemented by sociocultural interpretations to encode meaning to the text
Some Concluding Remarks

- **Empowerment**
  - Role of *transformation* as a salient aspect of empowerment – far from being empowered yet?

- **Critical Literacy**
  - Potential of critical pedagogy to contribute to the development of critical literacy

- **Success gained through hard effort**

- **Change: from resistance to gradual acceptance**

- **The module assignment**
  - Identifying a teaching problem
  - Suggesting a solution(s)
  - Discuss anticipated difficulties
Some other observations

“Based on my reflections on what I have learned from the PGDELT program and related readings, I regret to say the usual /traditional way of teaching and its underlying assumption represent a fettered understanding of reading and would invariably lead to an impoverished learning environment, as too much emphasis is placed on word analysis, grammar learning and so on.”

This responds well to Wallace says:

“The problems [in reading instruction] boil down to an insufficient understanding of the teaching of reading as well as reading itself. What I’m arguing here is that the teacher and students alike should not be confined to the hermetic bounds of the text and take whatever they read as true. Instead, they should exploit the text as a means to develop integrated language skills and critical thinking. To this end, critical reading can be introduced as a new dimension of the teaching of reading to cope with the above problems.”
I concur with Wallace and others and argue that:

critical reading should go beyond textual meaning to search, contextualize, compare/contrast, explain and evaluate the hidden grammar, including the author’s purpose, values and attitudes. To make this statement more concrete in a reading classroom, the teacher may ask students to put the text in its historical and cultural contexts, compare and contrast their own values and beliefs with those represented in the text, evaluate the logic and strength of arguments and draw analogy between what they read and the real-life world around them. In terms of class organization, the teacher may elicit responses from students spontaneously, conduct think-pair-share activities, arrange students into group discussions, stimulate brainstorming and debates or assign writing tasks such as argumentative writings or reviews.
It should be noted that critical reading is by no means incompatible with textual comprehension. As a matter of fact, without adequate textual comprehension as the basis, critical reading would be impossible and unnecessary. The whole point is, reading should not stop at textual comprehension and critical reading should be introduced as a response to current problems in teaching reading to create a richer learning environment. This is particularly so for English teaching on a more advanced level and with a stronger inclination towards ideology and content, such as Readings in International Business and Readings in English Newspapers and Magazines.”
“Critical pedagogy in ES/FL, then, takes as joint goals the simultaneous development of English communicative abilities together with the ability to apply them to developing a critical awareness of the world and the ability to act on it to improve matters (praxis; cf. Walsh, 1991).” (cited in Crookes & Lehner, n.d.)
In conclusion,

I would like to concur with Crookes and Lehner that

“critical pedagogy should be seen as a social and educational process, rather than as a pedagogical method. It is more concerned about how language can effect personal and social change than it is with "how to teach language" more effectively or in ways that simply encourage critical thinking on the part of the teacher and students."
In conclusion,

- Critical pedagogy results from personal and social choices that reflect a desire to understand both the word (i.e., language) and the world, and act upon these choices. Within EFL classrooms, language can become a primary medium by which this may occur; if this is an objective, teachers must experience the process themselves if they are to foster it in others.”
In conclusion,

- More importantly, by talking about social issues the teacher and the students can form a stronger community of practice.
- Teacher learning can occur in more interactive and socially meaningful ways.
- Learner engagement is easier to be garnered by virtue of the dialogic nature of the teaching and learning process.
- Reading comprehension can be a dialogic process where students and the teacher co-construct meaning with sociopolitical issues in mind.
Selected References