

Suggested Strategy for Developing Critical Literacy

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Abstract

This research aimed at suggesting a strategy and measuring its effectiveness in promoting critical literacy, research experience take full semester 3 months. 4 hours per week, and the research group consisted of 24 students used strategy –read, Note (Bias- religion, Gender-) Answer, Ask, summarize, Writ. Using modeling, and scaffolding, results revealed that there is significant difference between pre and post average for students, the suggested strategy is effective.

Keywords: critical literacy, modeling, teaching strategies, scaffolding

1-Introduction

The Arabic world passes exceptional circumstances known as Arabic spring revolutions which makes the citizen puzzled about what he hear from the news, information, and which direction to take. What is provided by social network sites, broadcasts newspapers and magazines, economic, political and social circumstances analysis is make the reader and listener spend effort to evaluate what reads and determines its view point based on his vision, understanding context of the writer, his background, economic conditions and historical context of the events. One must look at students in literacy education as student's language users, not language recipients" critical literacy should be vital component of all classroom practices, students in the 21st century have to be able to interrogate text for purposes of understanding how authors position readers. There is significant need for continued search for strategies to develop critical literacy. Behrman (2006) conducted a review of the research on classroom practices that support critical literacy. To identify teaching and learning strategies consistent with critical literacy. There are many strategies and approaches to develop critical literacy, this research attempt to suggest a strategy and determine its effectiveness in developing it.

2-Theoretical Framework

2-1Critical Literacy Definition

The term "critical literacy" was developed by social critical theorists concerned with dismantling social injustice and inequalities. These critical theorists contend that unequal power relationships are prevalent. Mahwah et al (1995) states further that critical literacy is literacy that brings with it the freedom to explore and act on our past, present, and future. Many researchers advocate an expanded definition of literacy: Like Siegel (1995), Unsworth (2001), Pappas, Kiefer, & Levstik (2005) and others in language teaching field, Critical literacy ,on the other hand, refers to an emancipatory process in which one not only reads the 'word' but also the 'world' , a process whereby a person becomes empowered to be able to unveil and decode 'the ideological dimensions of texts, institutions, social practices and cultural forms such as television and film, in order to reveal their selective interests' Harste (2003) suggests that two of the most recent insights about literacy are "multiple literacies" and "literacy as social practice" (p. 8). Instead of one literacy, there are multiple literacies that include: art, music, visual text literacies, etc. Literacy should viewed from an expanded perspective, no longer concerned with isolated skills but deals with diverse social practices that have an impact on understanding of literacy.

Shor define critical literacy as: analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking, or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clichés; understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context. Ciardiello (2004) suggests that critical literacy is a “set of practices and civic competencies that help the learner develop a critical awareness that texts represent particular points of view while often silencing others” (p.138). Critical literacy is the practice of challenging texts through an analysis of the roles that power, culture, class, and gender play in the message. Texts are approached with an understanding that multiple perspectives exist and can be influenced by the author’s and by the reader’s experiences. Critical literacy is broader in scope. It is a crucial skill for surviving in the information-dense twenty first century.(Coffey,2008). The critical literacy perspective that i assume in this paper based on sociological perspective of reading, writing in which “teaching and learning to read and write is about teaching and learning multiple viewpoints, cultural norms, bias for religion, Gender, asthenic, author's attitudes.

2-2-Critical Literacy Importance

Critical literacy plays a crucial role for students' live. It assist them understanding the world from different perspectives, getting gains in achievement, language learning, questioning , understanding political, economic, social, problems. Many researchers’ states its importance, Blanton (1999) believes that critical literacy makes a crucial difference in academic success because it involves more than learning to read and write. It demands that students be able to engage in questioning, discussing, evaluating, and writing about what they have read. Comber (2001) adds that it is the use of language in powerful ways to get things done in the world, enhance life in school, and to question privilege and injustice. Knobel and Lankshear (2002) suggest that when students become critically literate, they can examine on-going development, the parts they play in the world, and how they make sense of experiences. Rios (2007) students demonstrated significant gains in achievement in writing and critical literacy, participating in this social justice curriculum design increased students’ overall level of student engagement, level of student awareness and student agency. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) argue that Critical literacy practices encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice (p. 3) critical literacy provides students the opportunity to come to their own understanding of new cultures through thoughtful inquiry and exploration that emphasizes deconstructing preconceived notions about culture, moving beyond surface knowledge of the target culture to becoming thoughtful, respectful world citizens(Malamut,2011)

3-2-Approaches Developing Critical Literacy

There are a number of approaches and strategies can be used to develop critical literacy, including textual analysis, story time, technology, the use of texts for social action and critical writing. Researchers studied , such: Comber, (2001)study discusses how children’s writing can be a key element in developing “critical literacies” in elementary settings and how such classroom writing can mediate emotions, intellectual and academic learning, social practice, and political activism. Heffernan & Lewison, (2003) study provides a rich description of what happened when third-grade children moved from personal to social narratives in writing workshop. Students shared cultural resources as they took on the identities, dilemmas, and obstacles of self and others; used writing as a means for constructing and analyzing shared social worlds; and created stories as tools for social action in their school lives. Lam, (2004) use Internet chat room and examines the social and discursive practices in a Chinese/English bilingual for two teenage Chinese immigrants in the US. Analysis of discourse, interview, and observational data reveals that a mixed-code variety of English is adopted and developed among the focal youth and their peers around the globe to construct their relationships as bilingual speakers of English and Cantonese. Leland, et al.(2005) describe Kim Huberuses story time to open up space for building awareness of critical literacy with rural white children. Noticed changes in the quality of her children’s writing when they were responding to books in the critical text set. Students explore critical picture books and take actions to change the community around them. Using software programs for video editing, hyperlinked knowledge bases, and asynchronous virtual communication helped students define inter textual connections, pose questions about the basis for meaning, integrate multiple voices and perspectives, and adopt a collaborative inquiry stance. (Myers & Beach 2004)

4-2-Modeling

Modeling refers to the patterning of thoughts, beliefs, strategies, and actions after those displayed by one or more models—usually teachers or parents who explain and demonstrate skills Schunk, & Zimmerman, (1997). Most studies have been content to establish the relationship between teacher modeling and student reading, writing Cucina. (1999). modeling was effective in reflective writing. Recksiek (2005) found Positive effects of modelling on attitudes, reading behaviours, and progress in reading resulted. Sudaryat (2010) proved that the Text based modeling could overcome the hindrance of writing, and it was also effective in increasing the student's competence of writing an essay aspect's competence (substantive, textual, lexical, syntactic, and *graphemic*).

5-2-Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. When scaffolding is done correctly, students are encouraged to develop their own creativity, motivation, and resourcefulness. As students gather knowledge and increase their skills on their own, fundamentals of the framework are dismantled. At the completion of the lesson, the scaffolding is removed altogether; students no longer need it (Lawson, 2002)

McKenzie (1999), listed eight characteristics of scaffolding:

1. Scaffolding provides clear directions—To make sure that our students do not wander aimlessly, lessons should have directions to explain just what students must do in order to meet the expectations for the learning activity.
2. Scaffolding clarifies purpose Students frequently ask, “Why are we doing this?”
3. Scaffolding keeps students on task by providing a pathway or route for the learner.
4. Scaffolding offers assessment to clarify expectations from the very start; scaffolded lessons provide examples of quality work done by others. Right from the beginning, students are shown rubrics and standards that define excellence.
5. Scaffolding points students to worthy sources It identifies the best sources so that students know what information is most relevant to the concept being discussed.
6. Scaffolding reduces uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment The goal is to maximize learning and efficiency. Once the lesson is ready for trial with students, the lesson is refined at least one more time based on the new insights gained by watching students actually try the activities.
7. Scaffolding delivers efficiency If done well; a scaffolded lesson should be efficient.

Teachers and students should shake their heads in disbelief.

8. Scaffolding creates momentum in contrast to traditional research experiences in which much student energy is dispersed and dissipated during the wandering phases, the channeling achieved through scaffolding concentrates and directs energy in ways that actually build momentum.

One of the main benefits of scaffolded instruction is that it provides for a supportive learning environment. In a scaffolded learning environment, students are free to ask questions, provide feedback and support their peers in learning new material. Scaffolding has been applied to a number of learning areas. For example, O'Toole & Plummer (2004), investigate social interaction in teaching math, Siemon & Virgona (2003) and Clarke (2004) studied the characteristics of scaffolding in mathematics lessons. Dixon-Krauss (1996), Devlin (2000), and Donovan & Smolkin (2002) an increasing number of researchers apply it to teaching technology, math, science, reading, and writing. Alibali(2006) listed benefits of Instructional Scaffolding in the following:

- Challenges students through deep learning and discovery
- Engages students in meaningful and dynamic discussions in small and large classes
- Motivates learners to become better students (learning how to learn)
- Increases the likelihood for students to meet instructional objectives
- Provides individualized instruction (especially in smaller classrooms)
- affords the opportunity for peer-teaching and learning
- provides a welcoming and caring learning environment

Vacca, (2008).stated ways to use scaffolding:

- Establish continuity from one task to the next, and, if necessary, repeat some tasks with variations. Most of all make sure that the tasks are connected to one another according to the literal, interpretive, and applied levels of thinking.

- Provide contextual support for the learners by encouraging them to explore, access, and discuss the content that they are learning using a variety of different available resources.
- Establish rapport with the students and encourage mutual engagement among the learners. Motivate them to discuss the content with nonthreatening participation and practice in a positive sharing classroom environment.
- Adjust the task procedures depending on actions, contributions, and discussions of the learners.
- Observe carefully the learners' readiness to take over increasing parts of the tasks and then handover the role and responsibility of completing more rigorous tasks to the learners as their skills and confidence with the content increase.
- Establish a flow and balance with the skills and challenges of the tasks and make sure that the learners are focused on the tasks at all times and that they are respectful of one another when they are answering questions and discussing the content.

3-Suggested Strategy (RNAASW)

After reviewing critical literacy development approaches, I suggest the following strategy

- 1- Read: student read the passage silent,
- 2- Note :bias in religion, gender,
- 3- Ask :students ask the following: (Iyer, (2007)

How are the characters in the text presented? Whose voice is heard? Whose voice is not heard? Whose Voices are missing...or marginalized? What does the text want you to believe or do? Who is the author? What is text type? Why the author writ this text? What does the author want readers to believe? Whose viewpoint is expressed? What view of the world is the text presenting? How else could the text have been written? (Nicolini, 2008)Whose values are being promoted in these different versions? (Behrman, 2006) How does the text depict age, gender and/or cultural groups? What different interpretations of the text are possible? What are assumptions behind this statement? Who would benefit from text? What are the contradictions and unsuitable parts in the text? I also told students that this questions were only a beginning ;that it served to help us practice, but I reminded them they would come up with their own questions as well that might be even more meaningful and useful to our study.

- 4- Answer: student answer question from each other, and teacher's questions
- 5- Summarize: student summarize what they red.
- 6- Writ: student write critical essay represent his opinion.

4- Research Methodology

Research used Quasi-experimental approach, it takes a full semester 4 hours per a week, (3 months), two tests: critical literacy in two dimensions: reading and writing, the tests were administered to a group of 24student attending Faculty of education at al Majmaa.

5-Results

T-test revealed significant statistical differences in pretest and posttest of critical literacy test for students as shown in table (1) The Table no.1 provides the findings of the experiment:

It is clear that the suggested strategy is effective in developing critical literacy, This because it depended on:

- 1-Shared writing which lead students to writ independently using similar knowledge and skills to those demonstrated by the teacher.
- 2- Collaborative writing, where students work together. to compose a critical essay .
- 3-Using scaffold to facilitate and enhance the students' understanding of the critical literacy, to provide them with more opportunities to practice skills.
- 4- Modeling skills and give students ample time to practice it.

6-Conclusion

The suggested strategy has been effective in developing critical literacy, because: it invites readers to question, debate, consider other perspectives, and take action is consistent with his opinion by writing critical essay, it also followed the steps can be summarised in the acronym IDES: Immersion, Deconstruction, Exemplification, Scaffolding. (Wray, 2013) Students immersed in examples of persuasive and controversial writing, and taught to examine these texts critically, They also trained to deconstruct texts: that is, to explore how they are structured, how their style and choice of words make them persuasive Or controversial, Shared reading is a very useful tool. By closely examining a text together, many textual tricks and techniques were learnt. Exemplification I demonstrates to students how to write persuasive and controversial texts by modelling and thinking aloud. In writing and reading, they get support as they begin to work independently on producing critical writing.

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Table (1): The Findings of the Experiment

| Test | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | t |
|-----------|---------|----|----------------|----------|----------------|--------|
| pre-test | 6.7500 | 24 | 5.48714 | 1.612501 | 7.01125 | 11.267 |
| Post test | 22.8750 | | 4.55223 | | | |