FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANALYTICAL AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN AN UNDERGRADUATE READING COURSE

Azize Boşnak
Department of American Culture and Literature
Fatih University
Istanbul, TURKEY
abosnak@fatih.edu.tr

Abstract: Language departments of most universities have a purpose in offering a reading course to freshmen. Students need to get prepared for heavy academic reading load, and learn how to tackle with texts of different lengths and genres. Reading, generally, is an analytical and critical process. It requires reflection and desicion-making. Reading comprehension enhances through better thinking skills. However, thinking skills are not explicitly taught in reading classes. Modern trends in teaching reading skills integrate explicit instruction of analythical thinking and critical thinking skills. This paper seeks the ways of designing a reading course for freshmen in which identifyable analythical and critical thinking skills are integrated into reading skills, and the reading subjects and activities emphatically foster thinking and reflection.

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate aim of reading is to develop better thinking skills while acquiring knowledge. Reading in a sense is more than covering the printed material. Francis Bacon warns against the mistake that people tend to make; either reading to dispute and reject, or reading and accepting it uncritically as if printed materials are all undisputable facts. For him the right way is "weighing and considering" what is read. "To read without reflection is like eating without digesting," says Edmund Burke to emphasize the importance of reasoning (cited in Adams: 1999, 196). Reasoning in reading sets the mind at work; examining, making decisions, interpreting, comparing, collating, questioning, criticizing and similar mental activities. Reasoning enforces reading to be an active and dynamic process.

Reading courses in ELT at college level aim at enabling students to acquire reading skills and strategies at cognitive and meta-cognitive levels. At the cognitive level, as Douglas Brown puts it, the reader uses strategies such as repetition, grouping, recombination, deduction, inferring and so forth. The aim is to manipulate the learning material. The meta-cognitive level is gained through planning, thinking about the learning process and evaluating it (Brown: 2000, 115). While developing the cognitive and meta-cognitive skills and strategies students are also supposed to acquire critical reading. Critical readers are also critical thinkers. They carefully evaluate the evidence presented in the written material, analyze the different views, and make sound judgments.

Teaching critical literacy means helping students "see and question dominant power themes (Wolk: 2003, 101)." These themes do not only exist in the text, but also in the society and world. Thus, in a broader sense, textual reading is also about reading the life. Students practice in seeing and questioning without being told what to think, but being encouraged to develop unfixed, versatile points of view with an inquisitive mind. Critical reading: Critical reading is an active, intellectually engaged process in which the reader participates in an inner dialogue with the writer. Most people read uncritically and so miss some part of what is expressed while distorting other parts. A critical reader realizes the way in which reading, by its very nature, means entering into a point of view other than our own, the point of view of the writer. A critical reader actively looks for assumptions, key concepts and ideas, reasons and justifications, supporting examples, parallel experiences, implications and consequences, and any other structural features of the written text, to interpret and assess it accurately and fairly. See elements of thought.

Teaching reading is about conveying the ardor for reading across students. Similarly, the joy of reasoning both analytical and critical is transferred into the classroom. However, reasoning, or better thinking are

not one of the concerns of traditional discipline-based teaching. Explicit instruction of thinking is unusual in most higher education institutions. Thinking is multi-dimensional and can be done in different ways and at different levels. Critical thinking as a higher level thinking in which one evaluates the processes and problems are identified and solved. Some colleges and universities offer specific courses in which models of efficient thinking are designed to be taught to students (Halpern: 1998, 449).

I believe that Reading courses provide the good grounds for instructing thinking skills engraved into reading skills. Therefore in the following part of this paper, I am going to focus on some models of instruction in the Reading course, which will contribute to creating a syllabus that includes reading skills as well as analytical and critical thinking skills, . To be analytical is a prerequisite in critical reading; therefore analytical skills will be considered as inherent elements in critical reading

ABOUT THE DESIGN OF INSTRUCTION

The first and most important insight necessary for the appropriate design of instruction and curriculum is that content is, in the last analysis, nothing more nor less than a mode of thinking. There is no way to learn a body of content without learning the concepts which define and structure it. There is no way to learn a concept without learning how to use it in thinking something through. Hence, to learn the concept of democracy is to learn how to figure out whether some group is functioning democratically or not. To learn the concept of fair play is to learn how to figure out whether someone is being fair in the manner in which they are participating in a game. To learn the concept of a novel is to learn how to distinguish a novel from a play or short story. To learn the concept of a family is to learn how to distinguish a family from a gang or club. To learn anybody of content, therefore, it is necessary to learn to think accurately and reasonably with the concepts that define the content (DasBender: 2010, 38).

To this point the majority of teachers and students approach content, not as a mode of thinking, not as a system for thought, or even as a system of thought, but rather as a sequence of stuff to be routinely "covered" and committed to memory. When content is approached in this lower order way, there is no basis for intellectual growth, no deep structures of knowledge formed, no basis for long term grasp and control.

Instructional design involves a teacher thinking about instruction in both structural and tactical ways. Overall structural thinking-for example, about the concept for the course-can help free a teacher from the Didactic Model into which we have been conditioned and the ineffective teaching that invariably accompanies it. Simple and complex tactical thinking can provide the means by which we can follow through on our structural decisions in an effective way. Our teaching will not be transformed simply because we philosophically believe in the value of critical thinking. We must find practical ways to bring it into instruction, both structurally and tactically.

The following part includes some teaching techniques and subjects that are expected to improve thinking skills of students while improving their reading skills. The importance of thinking and good reasoning is reminded to students through these techniques and subject s throughout the reading process.

Teaching Students How to Question

Thinking is not driven by answers but by questions. Questions define tasks, express problems and delineate issues. Answers on the other hand, often signal a full stop in thought. Only when an answer generates a further question does thought continue its life as such. It is true that only students who have questions are really thinking and learning. It is possible to give students an examination on any subject by just asking them to list all of the questions that they have about a subject, including all questions generated by their first list of questions.

Unfortunately, most students ask virtually none of these thought-stimulating types of questions. They tend to stick to dead questions like "Is this going to be on the test?" The questions that imply the desire not to think. Most teachers in turn are not themselves generators of questions and answers of their own; that is, are not seriously engaged in thinking through or rethinking through their own subjects. Rather, they are purveyors of the questions and answers of others-usually those of a textbook.

We must continually remind ourselves that thinking begins with respect to some content only when questions are generated by both teachers and students. If we want thinking we must stimulate it with questions that lead students to further questions. We must overcome what previous schooling has done to the thinking of students. We must reactivate minds that are largely dead when we receive them. We must give our students what might be called "artificial cogitation" (the intellectual equivalent of artificial respiration).

An example of a preliminary technique to teach creating questions: SQR can be taught as a preliminary questioning technique in which students firstly surveys the main title and the sub-titles, and change them into question forms. After forming the questions they look for the answers by reading the text. This creates a sense of focus in the minds of the students.

Having Students Evaluate the Organization of the Text

All texts are bound to the organizational rules of the genre they belong to. Even if they do not conform perfectly to the rules, they still bear a sense of organization, and coherence. In Reading courses for freshmen in language departments, organizational rules for the paragraph, the essay and the narrative (the short story) are commonly taught. Students read the details of the text at the same time they analyze the cohesive devices that contributes to overall coherence and unity. In this way students learn to switch back and forth from overall structure of the text to the details in the meaning. This technique provides good grounds to trigger the students' evaluative faculties. The teacher should encourage them to criticize the organizational shortcomings of the text. They can also compare different texts of the same genre and evaluate their organizational qualities. For instance; while analyzing the way the thesis statement is presented in an essay, and how the supporting ideas match with the thesis, they can also compare the essay with another one that follows a different organizational system of its own. Another example is that when students analyze the elements of the short story, they can also evaluate which elements are stronger than others and how they contribute to the themes better. Thus, teaching the organization of a text, and having students consider the meaning and the organization together can create the opportunity of evaluating the text in a more intricate way, which would lead to more intensive thinking.

Teaching Writing / Discourse Patterns

Teaching the discourse patterns of a text separately is another technique to contribute to the thinking skills. By examining the way a writer develops the argument, the reader can better penetrate into the reasoning in the argument. To evaluate what the writer is saying by looking into how the writer is saying it whether through:

_ using examples, statistics, or anecdotes,

_ comparing and contrasting two or more ideas of subjects,

_ using definitions,

_ showing the effect of some cause or action,

_ classifying,

_ persuasive argumentation or objective exposition

Analysis of the writing / discourse patterns can enable students to think more distinctly about the argumentation style of the writer. It can facilitate better reasoning about the main idea of the text, and also pave the way for building up to more critical evaluation of the style and the meaning.

Teaching Further Analysis towards Making Analytic Distinctions

When we analyze, we break a whole into parts. We do this because understanding complex wholes requires understanding them through the interplay of their parts. Success in thinking requires developing, first of all, an analytic mind. The structures that define the parts of thinking include goals and purposes, problems and issues, information and data, inferences and conclusions, concepts and theories, assumptions and beliefs, implications and consequences, viewpoints and perspectives.

To assess thinking, we apply universal intellectual standards to both parts and whole. These standards are the criteria by which thinking is judged by educated and reasonable persons. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of these standards. These standards include, but are not limited to, clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, logicalness, and fairness.

Analysis and evaluation are crucial skills for all students to master. They are required in learning any significant body of content in a non-trivial way. Students are commonly asked to analyze poems, chapters in textbooks, concepts and ideas, essays, novels, and articles. Other than these teachers can have their students get aware of some further analytic distinctions that will lead to critical thinking. For instance, the distinction

_ between facts and interpretations, which emphasizes that interpretations or opinions should not be taken as facts;

_ between matters of taste and matters of judgment, which is to show that opinion, can be based on a taste, or on a judgment. The former while expressing a preference that may not need strong evidence to support, the latter needs sound argumentation with supportive evidence. What if the controversial issues like any sort of discrimination, mercy killings, voting for a candidate, laws concerning different issues and etc. are being discussed as a matter of taste rather than matters of judgment;

_between the author's ideological stance and her/his ideas, which is to make students aware that people sometimes display rejection towards the writer without knowing what s/he is saying due to some preconceived ideas about the writer, or contrary to this, they may be inclined to accept whatever exposed by a certain writer.

_between the quality of the expression and the validity of the meaning, which is to raise the awareness that some pompous eloquent expressions can evoke a great response the validity of the meaning of which can be quite questionable. On the other hand, poorly expressed realities may not take enough attention (Adams: 1999, 197-199).

These further analytic distinctions teachers make together with students can motivate students to invest more into thinking, changing their position towards the text from being more receptive and submissive to being more evaluative and dominant.

Teaching about Authors' Attitude, Tone and Bias

An author's personal way of approaching a subject is the indication of his/her attitude. Sometimes authors sound objective, sometimes quite subjective by letting their personal feelings known by the reader. The author's likes, dislikes, agreements, disagreements, and biases are revealed. The tone of an author becomes conspicuous through his/her choices of words, expressions, and the way the author makes up sentences. For instance, the tone of an author about a serious issue like war can be so humorous that the reader cannot help laughing. This does not mean that the author finds wars funny. Quite opposite, s/he might be trying to show the absurdity of the reasons that sometimes cause the war.

An author's attitude and tone traced in the text reveal whether s/he is biased for or against a subject. Bias is the mental leaning or inclination. We must clearly distinguish two different senses of the word ''bias''. One is neutral, the other negative. In the neutral sense we are referring simply to the fact that, because of one's point of view, one notices some things rather than others, emphasizes some points rather than others, and thinks in one direction rather than others. This is not in itself a criticism because thinking within a point of view is unavoidable. In the negative sense, we are implying blindness or irrational resistance to weaknesses within one's own point of view or to the strength or insight within a point of view one opposes.

To be able to spot the biases is a higher level awareness which require critical reading. Introducing this skill to students can improve their critical look at the text.

Teaching the Logical Fallacies and Propaganda Commonly used in the text

Fallacies are defects that weaken arguments. By learning to look for them in one's own and others' writings, one can strengthen his/her ability to evaluate the arguments they make, read, and hear. It is important to realize two things about fallacies: First, fallacious arguments are very common and can be quite persuasive, at least to the casual reader or listener. One can find dozens of examples of fallacious reasoning in newspapers, advertisements, and other sources. Second, it is sometimes hard to evaluate whether an argument is fallacious. An argument might be very weak, somewhat weak, somewhat strong, or very strong. An argument that has several stages or parts might have some strong sections and some weak ones. The goal of teaching this subject is not only to teach how to label arguments as fallacious or fallacy-free, but to help students look critically at their own arguments. Some of the most common examples of these fallacies are as follows (Hurley: 2008, 149-173):

Hasty generalization: Making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate (usually because it is atypical or just too small). Stereotypes about people ("librarians are shy and smart," "wealthy people are snobs," etc.) are a common example of the principle underlying hasty generalization.

Missing the point: The premises of an argument do support a particular conclusion—but not the conclusion that the arguer actually draws. For example: "The seriousness of a punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. Right now, the punishment for drunk driving may simply be a fine. But drunk driving is a very serious crime that can kill innocent people. So the death penalty should be the punishment for drunk driving." The argument actually supports several conclusions—"The punishment for drunk driving should be very serious," in particular—but it doesn't support the claim that the death penalty, specifically, is warranted. In such cases one should ask himself/herself what kind of evidence would be required to support such a conclusion, and then see if you've actually given that evidence. Missing the point often occurs when a sweeping or extreme conclusion is being drawn.

Post hoc (also called false cause): This fallacy gets its name from the Latin phrase "post hoc, ergo propter hoc," which translates as "after this, therefore because of this." Assuming that because B comes after A, A caused B. Of course, sometimes one event really does cause another one that comes later—for example, if I register for a class, and my name later appears on the roll, it's true that the first event caused the one that came later. But sometimes two events that seem related in time aren't really related as cause and event. That is, correlation isn't the same thing as causation. For example, "This government raised taxes, and then the rate of violent crime went up. The president is responsible for the rise in crime." The increase in taxes might or might not be one factor in the rising crime rates, but the argument hasn't shown us that one caused the other.

Weak Analogy: Many arguments rely on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas, or situations. If the two things that are being compared aren't really alike in the relevant respects, the analogy is a weak one, and the argument that relies on it commits the fallacy of weak analogy. For example: "Guns are like hammers—they're both tools with metal parts that could be used to kill someone. And yet it would be ridiculous to restrict the purchase of hammers—so restrictions on purchasing guns are equally ridiculous." While guns and hammers do share certain features, these features (having metal parts, being tools, and being potentially useful for violence) are not the ones at stake in deciding whether to restrict guns. Rather, we restrict guns because they can easily be used to kill large numbers of people at a distance. This is a feature hammers do not share—it'd be hard to kill a crowd with a hammer. Thus, the analogy is weak, and so is the argument based on it.

If you think about it, you can make an analogy of some kind between almost any two things in the world: "My paper is like a mud puddle because they both get bigger when it rains (I work more when I'm stuck inside) and they're both kind of murky." So the mere fact that one draws an analogy between two things doesn't prove much, by itself. It is needed to think more analytically to identify what properties are important to the claim one is making, and see whether the two things being compared both share those properties.

Appeal to authority: Often we add strength to our arguments by referring to respected sources or authorities and explaining their positions on the issues we're discussing. If, however, we try to get readers to agree with us simply by impressing them with a famous name or by appealing to a supposed authority who really isn't much of an expert, we commit the fallacy of appeal to authority. For example: "We should abolish the death penalty. Many respected people, such as actor Guy Handsome, have publicly stated their opposition to it." While Guy Handsome may be an authority on matters having to do with acting, there's no particular reason why anyone should be moved by his political opinions—he is probably no more of an authority on the death penalty than the person writing the paper .

Other than logical fallacies, teaching how to detect the propaganda techniques used in the text provide good means to empowering students thinking skills. The following can be chosen to teach among the most commonly used propaganda techniques (Adams: 1999, 218-220).

Name Calling: This technique uses words, or labels that have bad or negative meanings to certain people. A propaganda that uses the negative labels against others call for the biases against those people. “Sexist”, “leftist”, “yuppie”, “terrorist” can be used to sway people to be for or against a person or a group.

Glittering Generalities: This technique is the opposite of name calling. It is used to win the reader / listener over by using words or phrases that are acceptable to most people: "motherhood," "faith in God," "honesty," "the wisdom of our founding fathers," "family- man," "freedom fighters". The fallacy is that they are used in vague and meaningless way, in the hope that the nice words will become associated with the person. The words here glitter with nice sounds, but their sparkle is not real because the meaning is empty.

Distortion or Twisting: This technique uses only half-truths or part-truths. Rather than telling the whole truth, propagandists and advertisers sometimes only pick what sounds good or bad and "twist" the facts in a way that best suits the purpose. The materials which include distorted or twisted arguments can be a good material while teaching students thinking better. Good reasoning, alert readers will certainly enjoy not falling into the trap easily.

Sloagans: The use of catchy words or phrases is another technique of propagandists. During World War II, the slogan "Remember Pearl Harbor" was used to get people to buy war bonds and to make certain sacrifices needed for the war effort. Phrases such as "In God We Trust" and "United We Stand" are all used to influence our thinking and to make us feel we are together and of one mind. This method can be good or bad. As with all propaganda methods, we need to read or think beyond the words and seek the facts.

CONCLUSION

We now recognize that analytical and critical thinking, by its very nature, requires, for example, the recognition that all reasoning occurs within points of view and frames of reference; that all reasoning proceeds from some goals and objectives, has an informational base; that all data when used in reasoning must be interpreted, that interpretation involves concepts; that concepts entail assumptions, and that all basic inferences in thought have implications. We now recognize that each of these dimensions of thinking need to be monitored and that problems of thinking can occur in any of them.

Independent of the subject studied, students need to be able to articulate thinking about thinking that reflects basic command of the intellectual dimensions of thought: "Let's see, what is the most fundamental issue here?" "From what point of view should I approach this problem?" "Does it make sense for me to assume this?" "From these data may I infer this?" "What is implied in this graph?" "What is the fundamental concept here?" "Is this consistent with that?" "What makes this question complex?" "How could I check the accuracy of these data?" "If this is so, what else is implied?" "Is this a credible source of information?"

In teaching and learning that focuses on analytical and critical thinking is the recognition that critical thinking instruction can be explicitly done, and be facilitated including some teaching items into the syllabus such as questioning techniques, organizational inquiries combined with comprehension of content, analysis of writing/ discourse patterns, some certain analytical distinctions that are made in connection to the biases about the writer and his/her ideas, the validity of the quality expressions, facts and interpretations, issues of taste and issues of judgment and so on. Other than teaching to make these distinctions, students can be equipped with the ability of recognizing logical fallacies and propagandist languages hidden in the text. In addition they can be explicitly taught how to question the attitude, and biases of authors that are revealed in between the lines.

With intellectual language, students can be taught thinking skills that moves within any subject field. What is more, there is no reason in principle that students cannot take the basic tools of critical thought which they learn in one domain of study and extend it (with appropriate adjustments) to all the other domains and subjects which they study. As for FLT departments, analytical and critical thinking of the students empowered in reading classes will definitely contribute to students' intellectual performance in other classes.

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