Ethnocentrism, Theoretical Awareness, and Intellectual Resistance in University Students' Reading Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the insightful and illuminating findings of teaching critical reading within the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy. More specifically, this paper examines the impact of a critical-reading course on students' reading skills and beliefs about discourse production and interpretation. The course was conducted according to the principles of transformative participatory action research and, thus, a corpus of 50 essays, written by a convenience sample of 25 post-graduate students in the pre-test and post-test phases, was analyzed to examine the effect of the course on students' reading-habits and their representations of different discourses. Pretest findings showed that most students used to think that discourses are innocent and ideology-free and that reading a text consists in understanding its general idea, extracting its writer's viewpoint, making sense of its vocabulary, and paraphrasing it. As far as text's function is concerned, most students used to believe that a text's basic function is delivering information. In addition, most of them were unaware of the fact that a text has ideological and socio-political functions. Post-test findings revealed that students' discourse awareness and reading habits have become more critical and developed at two levels: the worldview level and the meta-language level. The t-test statistics suggest that there is a significant difference of p<.001 between students' reading scores before and after the intervention. Therefore, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between studying critical reading from a critical pedagogy perspective and studying it from a functional or conventional perspective is false.

Key words: Critical Pedagogy, Critical Reading, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse Awareness

"I am not a teacher, but an awakener."
Robert Frost

INTRODUCTION

The world we live in seems to have two major problems. These two problems are neither the scarcity of natural resources nor the cultural and ethnic barriers between counties. The world's two major problems are *power abuse* and the *misuse of meaning-making* to serve political interests. The danger of power in the modern world is that power is no longer materialistic, but it is symbolic. Hegemonic groups and organizations do not engage in war by tanks and rifles anymore. Now, they engage in wars by ideas, symbols, and metaphors. So, the classical wars carried out by iron and fire are mere ramifications of symbolic and discursive wars that take place at the level of discourse and narrative long time before they take place on the land or in the sea.

Almost every day, the mass media and social institutions bombard us with discourses and narratives about how we should see and deal with the world around us. The problem with these discourses and narratives is that many of them are not *innocent*. Some of them are biased, manipulative, oppressive, and involved in the game of power. What is worse is that schools do not seem to be well-prepared for equipping students to deal with these kinds of discourses and narratives. In Morocco, the press and social networks are full of stories about educated people, engineers, technicians, and even teachers who join fundamentalist and extremist organizations. Some people wonder why people with such high levels of education join these organizations and adopt their extremist ideologies. A part of the answer to this question lies, as this study will argue, in the nature of the Moroccan educational system itself. Even in the industrialized world, many education experts think that schools are becoming *exam factories*. As a result, students are very often trained to pass exams, but they are rarely trained to cope with real-life problems behind the walls of their schools.

It is highly probable that reading practice in most Moroccan schools is more *functional* than being critical. Functional reading is a predominantly pragmatic model in which students are guided to focus on grammar, learn new vocabulary items, look for specific information, and sometimes classify the text within a literary tradition or explore its aesthetic characteristics (Freire & Macedo, 2005, pp. 101-2).

However, the hidden elements of the text such as its ideological loading, its cultural colour, its official pronouncements, its traditional clichés, and its received wisdom remain unquestioned (Shor, 1992, p. 129).

For this reason, many scholars (Freire, 2005; Giroux, 2010; Shor, 1992) have long been calling for an alternative educational system to conventional education that would empower students and enable them to cope with the challenges of the post-modern world. This alternative educational system is critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005). Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and a social movement which integrates education with critical social theory (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 24).

Freire (2005, pp. 72-73) distinguishes between two models of education: *banking education* and *problem-posing education*. In the former, teachers are seen as banks of knowledge; they know everything, and their role consists in filling students' heads with knowledge. The teacher deposits knowledge, the students, who barely know anything, receives it. Students are not encouraged to establish links between the discourses they receive in the classroom and the world beyond school's walls. For this reason, a lot of critical-pedagogy scholars suggest that education should make students think *critically* about the discourses they receive at school.

It is claimed that studying critical reading within critical pedagogy's theoretical framework helps students "develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action" (Giroux, 2010). Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to test this theory of critical pedagogy and see if teaching critical reading within the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy is more fruitful than teaching it from a functional or traditional pedagogy perspective (Freire, 1970; Harste, 2003; Lewison et al., 2002).

Studies about teaching critical reading are rich and diverse. However, those that have been conducted from a critical pedagogy perspective are rare and have many gaps and limitations. For instance, at the level of teaching critical reading approaches, most researchers used only one approach in their interventions. Moreover, most of these approaches focused only on language analysis which is based on critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA). Wallace's (2003) study, for example, did not move beyond using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. In Ko's (2013) and Correia's (2006) studies, students were not exposed to any form of pre-teaching of critical reading theories or discourse analysis approaches. Correia (2006) used only three questions to encourage students to read and think critically about texts. These questions were about the verbs' tenses, passive and active voice, and the metaphors. All these three questions were used to enable students to see whether a text's function is to inform, to influence, or to entertain.

Ebrahimi and Rahimi (2013) used only one model of critical reading. This model is Cots' (2006) critical-reading model. This model has three dimensions: (i) social practice (ii) discursive practice, and (iii) textual practice. In all these dimensions students were asked to explore issues such as the relationship between the text and the society from which

it came, the text's language style, and the text's genre and readership. Dar, Rahimi, and Shams, (2010) too used only one model of critical reading in their intervention, which was an adaptation of van Dijk's (2001) model of CDA.

Matin (2017) conducted a study in which he investigated the effects of using CDA on students' critical reading in an EFL classroom. Martin's (2017) critical reading course was based on developing students' critical reading skills by exposing students throughout the whole course to a set of questions that was adopted from Wallace (1992) and Systemic Functional Linguistics related framework for critical reading. This set of questions was comprised of questions such as "what ways are there in which we might write about the topic?" "why do you think the text was written?" During the course, students were offered ten topics to choose. These topics represent several genres, such as article, news item, speech, letter, and cover story. Texts also contained social and political issues that were opened to lively discussion. Matin's (2017) study resulted in students' critical reading improvement.

Hazaea's (2020) study was about the development of critical intercultural awareness among EFL students in the context of a critical reading enrichment course in the preparatory year at a Saudi university. The teacher equipped students with tools from CDA for analyzing intercultural texts. The study's data were collected from students' reflective writings in their portfolios. It was found that students demonstrated a balanced intercultural awareness associated with the discourse of food diversity. Students also effectively appreciated cultures of the self and others and demonstrated appropriate intercultural knowledge of the self and others. The study suggests the effectiveness of CDA as a teaching and learning strategy to increase critical intercultural awareness (CIA) among EFL students. The students were provided by linguistic tools which were taken from CDA and systemic functional grammar.

So, many researchers in the studies mentioned above depended only on one approach of teaching critical reading. Whether researchers used Cots' (2006) model, van Dijk's (2001) model, or Fairclough's (1989) model, all these models are based on CDA. So, most studies lacked theoretical multi-disciplinarity. Discourses are multi-dimensional and understanding a discourse is a complex process. So, an effective way of teaching critical reading should take into consideration two elements: theory and practice. Teaching critical reading without a clear theoretical framework is blind, practicing critical reading without a rich and diverse set of analytical tools is sterile.

Thus, this study will fill in two research gaps: a theory gap and a practice gap. The theoretical gap will be filled in by designing a syllabus for teaching critical reading within the framework of critical pedagogy and exploring its impact on students' discourse awareness and worldviews. Changing students' frames of reference or their ways of reading the word and the world is one of the main goals of critical pedagogy and transformative learning. Both schools call for working on students' consciousness. Thus, in his writings Freire (1970) calls for raising students' *conscientization*, whereas Mezirow (1997) calls for transforming students' *frames of*

reference. For Freire (1970), conscientization means "developing a critical awareness" which would enable students to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions [and therefore] take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, p.19). For Mezirow (1997), frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. Teachers, Mezirow (1997) claims, should work on their students' frames of reference because these frames are most of the time bad habits of mind and "are primarily the result of cultural assimilation and the idiosyncratic influences of primary caregivers" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6).

The practice gap in this study will be filled by using a multidisciplinary approach to teaching critical reading. Thus, in addition to CDA, this study will use a rich and diverse set of concepts borrowed from critical theory thinkers. I believe that teaching critical reading in the light of CDA is not enough. Critical-pedagogy teachers should move a step forward by giving students the chance to explore other theories. For this reason, in the context of this study, students' schemata and worldviews will also be worked on. More specifically, in this study students will not only be taught some techniques of critical thinking skills, but also students will be given the chance to revise and examine many concepts and perceptions they used to have before the intervention takes place.

By concepts and perceptions, I mean students' beliefs and opinions about issues such as discourse, ideology, power, false consciousness, and the relationship between discourse and society. This chance that will be given to students to re-examine their concepts and beliefs about the aforementioned issues would not be possible without an excessive exposure of students to the prominent figures of critical theory thinkers such as Nietzsche, Marx, Foucault, and Derrida.

As far as the theoretical framework of this study is concerned, the analysis and interpretation of findings and answering the research questions will be done in the light of the theory of critical pedagogy and its basic concepts such as *banking pedagogy*, *critical consciousness*, *discourse awareness*, and *empowerment.* The research questions and hypotheses that guided this study are as follows: (i) What representations and beliefs did students use to have about reading practice and discourse analysis before studying reading within the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy? (ii) Do students' frames of reference and reading habits change after being exposed to a critical-pedagogy-oriented reading class? And (iii) Is the dichotomy of critical pedagogy versus functional pedagogy found in the literature a true hypothesis?

METHODS

Research Design and Sampling

This research is a transformative participatory action research (PAR). More specifically, the action research model that was adopted in this study was Stringer's model (2007, p. 9). This model contains three phases: look, think, and act. The spiral aspect of this model entails that action research

is not a one-direction, and linear process, but it is a process of repeating and revising procedures (Creswell, 2012). Implementing this three-step process of looking, thinking, and acting in this study means that after being given a discourse or text to read, students reading-and-thinking behavior was observed, then notes about their critical-reading difficulties were taken, after that students' difficulties were analyzed. Finally, action was taken on my part to enable my students to overcome those difficulties. Taking action means providing my students with extra exercises, new analytical concepts and reading theories, and enlightening them about new analytical strategies for thinking about discourses and dismantling them.

The intervention in this research was carried out through the implementation of a critical-reading course, which was given to an English master's class in the English department in Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh, Morocco. The course was given on a time span of 18 weeks, 2 hours each week. So, students were exposed to 36 hours of learning critical-reading and critical thinking. The participants were the teacher, who was the researcher himself, and 25 post-graduate students. As far as gender is concerned, the students were 11 males and 14 females. Students' average age was 23. The youngest student was 20 years old and the oldest one was 30. Twenty-three students were linguistics majored and two of them were literature majored. The students came from different universities in different Moroccan cities. Thus, eight students were from the South of Morocco, nine from the Mid-west, five from the North, but three students were from Senegal, Mauritania, and Yemen. Students' English language proficiency was near native. As far as the religious and ethnic backgrounds of students are concerned, all students came from an Arabo-Islamic background, except one Senegalese student who was a Muslim, but not an Arab.

The study's sampling strategy was convenience sampling. It was impossible to opt for a random sampling strategy because the students in the English department were very busy with exams and do not have much free time. It was almost impossible to find any voluntary students to participate in the critical-reading course. So, this class underwent this pedagogical experiment because it was the only available class.

Course Description

The course had two dimensions: a theoretical dimension and a practical dimension. In the theoretical dimension, the teacher gave presentations and organized class discussions about critical-reading basic concepts, whereas students were asked to do some extensive readings in CDA (Fairclough, 1989) and critical reading theory (Dobie, 2011) before coming to class.

Thus, week 1 and week 18 of the course were allotted to pre-testing and post-testing. Week 2, 3, and 4 were dedicated to discussing Foucault's (1979) concept of power, Marx's concept of *ideology* and *false consciousness* (Ponzio, 1993), and Fairclough's (1989) concept of *discourse*. In week 5, 6, and 7 students were exposed to the concept of empty signifiers (Chandler, 2007, p. 78), and *hiding agency* (Fairclough,

1989, pp. 124-5). Week 8 was for studying Halliday's concept of *transitivity* (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 104-131). Form week 9 to week 11, students were introduced to *critical metaphor analysis* (Charteris-Black, 2005). Weeks 12 and 13 were about analysing informal fallacies (van Eemeren, 2001). From week 14 to week 17 students were exposed to Derrida's concept of deconstruction (Dobie, 2011).

As far as the practical dimension is concerned, each time students were exposed to a critical-reading concept or theory they were also given a text and were asked to apply that concept to the text. When it comes to reading materials, students were given texts that differ in terms of genre and function. In addition to newspaper articles and political speeches other text genres such as songs, advertisements, videos, religious sermons, and administrative documents were also used during the course. The rationale behind such textual diversity is to expose students to the variety of language use in every text genre and to inculcate in students' minds the idea that the ideological use of language and meaning is not limited to a specific genre.

The teaching methods used in the course were the Socratic Method (Boghossian, 2006) which consists of the teacher's role of *problematizing* texts under study and *Juxtaposition* which is about giving students two texts tackling the same issue but written by two different writers. In this case, students were asked to read the two texts and analyze how the writer deals with the issue under investigation. *Juxtaposition* was used to draw students' attention to the *relativity of point of views* in discourses and to teach students that people do not see the world with the same lens.

Another teaching technique that was used in class is using *risky texts*. In contrast with functional or traditional pedagogy in which students are given texts of formal English or canonical literature, in this course students were usually provided with texts that tackle quite unusual issues to be found in a conventional reading class such as racism, atheism, extremism, sexism, homosexuality, and chauvinism. The rationale behind using risky-texts was to create hot debates in the classroom and give students a chance to hone their critical-reading skills.

Data Analysis

To measure the impact of the course on students' reading habits and discourse awareness, students were given, in the pretest and post-test, an article by Monckton (2014) (from now onwards he will be referred to as Monckton) and were asked to write a critical essay about it in the classroom. Students' pretest and post-test essays were read in their entirety several times to get familiar with them. Then, common ideas and patterns of meaning that occurred frequently were identified. Next, these patterns were coded; that is significant phrases or sentences in students' essays were highlighted and given labels or "codes" to describe their content. Once the codes were created, the codes that are semantically or thematically related were classified into broad themes. Finally, when the final list of themes was complete, each one of the themes was defined and interpreted within critical pedagogy's theory and the difference between the pre-test and post-test.

As far as the grading of students' essays is concerned, the grading-scale was between zero points and twenty points. A student was given ten points for applying Fairclough's model of CDA (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 26-27) in his/her essay. Five points were given for using Derrida's deconstruction and five other points were given for originality and writing quality. Students' scores in essay writing were analysed through the use of the repeated-measures t-test to see if the difference between students' scores in the pre- and post-test was statistically significant. For this reason, a statistical comparison between the pre-test and post-test was also conducted.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Pre-test

The analysis of students' twenty-five essays revealed the emergence of two main themes, which are "*emotional reaction*" and "*critical analysis.*" The first major theme has three sub-themes, whereas the second major theme has six sub-themes.

Major Theme 1: Emotional Reaction

In the pre-test, most of students' reactions to Monckton's article were more emotional than critical. This emotionality consisted in students reacting to the article as Muslims rather than critical thinkers. Students' emotional reaction took the shape of three sub-themes. The first sub-theme is called "*Islam is Good.*" For this reason, 7 out of 25 students wrote that Islam is a religion of love, peace, and has nothing to do with terrorism. One student pointed out that "the Prophet is a man of peace and love, a protector of humanity and tolerance." Another student claimed that "Islam is a religion of peace which is badly misunderstood by people in this time." In the same context, another student wrote that "the Koran, in comparison with other holy books, is the only book which is written only in one language and the only book that didn't undergo any kind of distortion." This "Islam-is-Good" sub-theme reflects students' sympathy and identification with their own religion, and this identification was seen at the level of quotations used by these students in their essays; these students used a lot of quotations from the Koran to support the claim that the Koran is a book of peace and love and not, as Monckton suggests, that the Koran is a dangerous book to be banned.

The second sub-theme is "*Us and Them*" and it appeared in 8 essays. Students' sympathy and identification with Islam was also clear by students' frequent use of *inclusive pronouns* and *possessive adjectives* such as "we" and "our". These pronouns occurred in expressions such as "our religion," "our Prophet," "We Muslims," and "We Arabs." Students' use of these pronouns can be explained by the fact that students did not establish a *critical distance* with Monckton's article. In this phase, students still involve their emotions in the process of critical reading. The presence of the "Us-and-Them" sub-theme also reflects that these students, just like Monckton, still have a *polarizing discourse* about what is happening around them in the world. In other words, students still divide the world into two major poles: the pole of

innocent Muslims and the pole of evil Westerners. One major characteristic of polarization in discourse is that it over-simplifies the complexity of the real world and substitutes it with an imaginary dichotomy in which the world is made of white and black powers.

The third sub-theme is "*True Muslims vs. False Muslims*" and it occurred in 6 essays. Students wrote that the terrorists mentioned in the article are not true Muslims. One student asserted that "terrorists do not represent Islam." Another student pointed out that "terrorists are not Muslims, but liars using Islam as a cover or mask." The third student wrote that "those who commit terrorism are no longer Muslims even if they used to be so because terrorism is a harming term to be used with Islam as a peaceful religion," whereas the fourth student pointed out that "Muslims are not [true] representations of their holy book; they are followers which means strictness varies depending on their understanding of the actual teaching of the Koran." In this stage of analysis, students still believe in an *ideal Islam*; an Islam which is pure, peaceful, and clean. According to these six students, Islam is good and all the negative images that some people associate with Islam do not come from Islam itself, but they come from some Muslims who are not "true followers" of the Quran. This "True Muslims vs. False Muslims" sub-theme, just like the other two previous sub-themes mentioned above, is another manifestation of students' emotionally-driven reading of Monckton's article. In Nietzschean terms, Students' will to creed still overwhelm their will to truth and knowledge. In plain words, students still cannot detach themselves from their Islamic identity and conduct an analysis free of subjective feelings and emotional reactions.

Major Theme 2: Critical Analysis Glimpses

Although many students reacted emotionally to Monckton's article, many other students tried to read it critically. Thus, these students pointed out that Monckton tried to manipulate his readers by using many discursive strategies. The critical analysis theme took the form of six sub-themes that appeared in students' essays. Although rare and sometimes not very clear, these sub-themes were the first germs or glimpses of students' critical discourse analysis abilities. These sub-themes are "De-contextualization," "Information Deletion," "Sword-verses Metaphor," "Contradictions," "Sweeping Overgeneralizations," and "Irrelevant Information."

The "De-contextualization" sub-theme was the first glimpse or germ of students' CDA skills and was found in 8 out of 25 essays. These students noticed Monckton's fallacious use of Quranic verses and pointed out that his use of verses from the Quran was biased in the sense that the Quranic verses he cited were used out of their historical contexts and were used to demonize Islam's holy book.

The "Information-Deletion" sub-theme was found in 8 essays. Students remarked that while quoting the Koran Monckton strategically and manipulatively deleted a lot of information to serve his ideological agenda. One student wrote that "when you look up the entire verse in the Koran you figure out that much information that are necessary for the good understanding of the verse was intentionally

deleted [by Monckton] to serve his agenda." Another student noticed that Monckton "included only the verses that serve his purpose."

The "Sword-verses Metaphor" sub-theme appeared in 6 essays. Students wrote that Monckton labelled some verses in the Quran as "sword verses," hence the use of the "sword" metaphor. These students pointed out that this metaphor suggests "killing and slaughtering" and was used by Monckton to inculcate in his readers' minds the idea that the Koran is a violent book which "incites to murder."

The fourth sub-theme is about contradictions within discourse. Some students spotted some contradictions in the argumentative structure of the article. For example, a student remarked that Monckton calls for freedom of speech for everybody, but at the same time he claims that "anyone who reads any of these passages [from the Quran] out loud is to be charged with crime." On the other hand, another student discovered another type of contradiction and she wrote that Monckton "claims that the majority of Muslims make their utmost to live in peace and only a minority is turned to violence. If such is the case, this student argued, then the Koran should be acquitted of its interrelationship with violence; all Muslims read the same version of Koran." This sub-theme of contradictions within the article's structure was found in five essays.

The fifth sub-theme is "Sweeping Overgeneralizations". In his article, Monckton claimed that 62 % of Quran incites to murder and whatever page you open in the Quran you would find verses of hatred and violence. This claim was considered by some students as a baseless sweeping-over-generalization fallacy. However, the allusion to this fallacy appeared in no more than 3 out of 25 essays. The students who spotted this fallacy neither mentioned the concept of "fallacy" in their essays nor did they label the fallacy as a "sweeping-overgeneralization." Students simply wrote that Monckton's reasoning was wrong.

The sixth and last sub-theme is "Irrelevant Information". Among all the much information Monckton included in his article, some students claimed that a great part of this information is irrelevant to the issue he wanted to tackle. Monckton endeavoured to criticize the Quran and tried to make readers believe that the Quran is a book which "incites to murder". However, he included much information about his friend's experience of Christian evangelism in Saudi Arabia and Australia. By putting this kind of information in his article, Monckton, students argued, used irrelevant information to the issue he tackled. And this explains the appearance of the "Irrelevant-Information" sub-theme in students' essays. This sub-theme, however, was found in only 2 out of 25 essays.

Post-test

In comparison with the pretest, three major themes appeared in students' post-test essays. Each one of these major themes has a few sub-themes and concepts that are associated with it.

Major Theme 1: Theoretical Framework Emergence

The emergence of a theoretical framework for reading

texts is a striking feature of students' post-test essays. This theoretical framework theme took the shape of two basic concepts. The first concept is "*language as a social practice*" and the second one is "*preferred reading.*" As far as the first concept is concerned, 14 out of 25 students have drawn upon some theories of the sociology of language and discourse. Thus, these students referred to prominent CDA analysts such as Fairclough, van Dijk, Foucault, and Derrida. The presence of these theoretical elements in students' writings reflects the fact that these students are now more aware than before of the relation between discourse and society and how one shapes the other. In comparison with the pretest, in which students tackled the article without any clear theoretical framework, these 14 students showed that they now have under their hands a sophisticated tool-kit of analytical concepts and a rich theoretical background. Hence, these students no longer see language and discourse as innocent tools through which people transmit their ideas, but they see language or discourse as "*a social practice*" which serves the interests and ideology of the person using it.

The second concept is "*preferred reading.*" In their essays, 14 out of 25 students started their analyses of Monckton's article by presenting a *preferred reading* of the article and drawing about the "*ideal reader*" for whom Monckton is writing his article. Preferred reading refers to the way the producer of a text wants his audience or ideal readers to read or interpret his text (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 101).

On the first days of the course, whenever I give students a text to read it critically, students automatically started looking for weak points, gaps or contradictions in the text. However, after some days of theoretical instruction and critical-reading practice students learnt that the first thing they should start with while doing a critical reading of a given text is to do a *preferred reading* of the text. In other words, students should, first, present the main thesis of the text, then how its author wants his or her text to be read, and finally, they have to think about the text's ideal reader or target audience who would consume the text and take its thesis for granted. On the contrary, in the pretest students did not mention anything about the preferred reading of Monckton's article. Students just "jumped on" the article and started critiquing it.

By drawing on the preferred-reading concept, in the post-test, students showed a kind of critical distance between them and Monckton's article. By doing this kind of preferred reading, students, in contrast with the pretest, emotionally detached themselves from the article, even though it attacks their religion, and tactically read it almost exactly as Monckton wanted it to be read. This emotional detachment from the article is one of the basic manifestations of critical reading. In comparison with the pretest essays, in the post-test essays students did not identify themselves with Islam, though it is the object of attack in Monckton's article, and they did not use any kind of *inclusive pronouns* such as "we" and "our" which refer to their social identity and cultural belonging. Moreover, by providing this kind of reading, students made it clear that, as we will see in the next sections, they no longer believe in one ideal and *static reading* of the

text, but instead of that they now think that a text, any text, is open to multiple readings and diverse interpretations.

Major Theme 2: The Rise of Resistant Reading

Resistant reading is the second major theme. Thanks to the critical-reading course, students managed to produce a *resistant reading* of Monckton's article. Resistant reading is the reading which goes against the grain; it is a critical reading which contests the intended meanings of the text and the subject positions the text proffers (Baker and Ellece, 2011, pp. 120-21). Students' resistant reading mainly took the form of a CDA analysis of Monckton's article. Hence, 25 out of 25 students tried more or less successfully to uncover how language and ideology work in the article. In this respect, many CDA concepts such as *metaphorization*, *transitivity*, *passivization*, *modality*, *pronominalization*, *presupposition*, *intertextuality*, *misquoting,* and *manipulation* appeared in all students' essays. In pretest essays, CDA analysis appeared only in few essays and focused on three or four forms of discursive manipulation such as de-contextualization, information-deletion, sword-verses metaphors, contradictions, sweeping-over-generalizations, and irrelevant-information. These discursive techniques that were used by Monckton were spotted by students only 8, 8, 6, 5, 3, and 2 times respectively. However, in the post-test these same discursive strategies were spotted by most students. Moreover, these strategies were described by students in a subtle technical language. For instance, decontextualization was called misquoting, sword-verses metaphor was called metaphorization, and sweeping-overgeneralizations were described as fallacies. From a statistical point of view, the above-mentioned discursive strategies, that is decontextualization, information-deletion, sword-verses metaphor, contradictions, and sweeping-overgeneralizations were predominant in students' post-test essays and were spotted by students 13, 10, 7, 4, and 17 times respectively.

However, even if these two sub-themes, which are the contradiction sub-theme and the irrelevant-information sub-theme, statistically decreased in comparison with the pretest, in the post-test essays students focused more on another form of critical reading. This form, as we shall see in the next section, is Derrida's Deconstruction.

Major Theme 3: Subverting Text's Logos

In the post-test, students tried to use a new approach of discourse analysis other than Fairclough's (1989) CDA model. This approach is Derrida's deconstruction and it appeared in 13 out of 25 essays. However, if deconstruction is the third major theme in students' analyses, this theme took the form of many different concepts that students borrowed from Derrida.

The first concept is the "*transcendental signified*" and it appeared in 7 essays. In Derrida's deconstruction, the transcendental signified is any external point of reference or meaning upon which one may build a concept, a worldview, or a whole signifying system. Humanity has known, throughout its history, many transcendental signifieds such as God, Reason, Science, and Modernity. Thus, a transcendental signified is considered by people who believe in it

as absolute, irreducible, stable, timeless and transparent (Chandler, 2007, p. 263).

These seven students, mentioned above, argued in their essays that Christianity is Monckton's transcendental signified, which means that the discourse in his article derives its meaning from and dissect the world according to the logic and metaphysics of Christianity. Thus, these students maintained that Christianity is the *semantic centre* of the article and, consequently, any non-Christian element or perspective, in this case it is Islam, is to be pushed to the margin of the article and considered as strange, savage, weird, uncivilized, and inferior.

The second concept is "*voice distribution*" and it appeared in 6 essays. In these essays, students argued that since power relationships in the article are asymmetrical, and Monckton occupies the article's centre, and Muslims, his opponents, occupy the margin, the result of this asymmetry is that the only heard voice in the article is the voice of Monckton himself, whereas Muslims are silenced. One of these six students pointed out that "Muslims views are excluded [from the article] and only Monckton has the right to voice out his evidence and arguments. The absence of Muslims' voice makes the text unbalanced."

Recognizing the *unbalanced distribution of voice* within the article is another manifestation of students' discourse awareness becoming more critical. Recognizing how voice is distributed within a discourse is a crucial element in understanding how people are positioned by discourse and how such positioning influences the way readers see the issue being tackled by that discourse.

The third and last concept is "*gaps and loose stones*" and it appeared in 3 essays. Students argued that Monckton's article contains many loose stones if pulled out the logic or the whole construction of his article would collapse. A loose stone in a text is "the thread which if pulled the whole of text's texture would be unravelled." Thus, a loose stone is a contradiction, an illogical element or a fissure within the structure of the text. Drawing upon the loose stones in Monckton's article, a student remarked that "[the article's] discourse is self-problematic: the writer believes in peace but uses a violent discourse against Muslims." On the other hand, another student wrote that "[another] loose stone in this discourse is that freedom is exclusive to Muslims. Christians have the right to worship wherever they go. Muslims mustn't. If they do, they will be penalized." Moreover, a third student even tried to subvert the text's logos by writing that

> [The article's] binary opposition holds the ideology that Christianity is a religion of peace whereas Islam is a religion of savagery and sword verses. Ironically, when we reverse this binary opposition we [get] the same result, having in mind that the bible, also, has similar verses to those in the Quran.

The fact that students did manage to apply a Derridian deconstructive reading to Monckton's article is a strong argument that students not only acquired discourse awareness, that is being aware how mechanically a discourse makes meaning, but also this discourse awareness has become *critical*. In other words, students have started seeing how

meaning in discourse is organically related to the socio-political context in which it is produced.

When students tried, more or less successfully, to draw upon textual dimensions such as text's metaphysics, that is its transcendental signified, and also explore other dimensions such as the distribution of voice, silence, and gaps in Monckton's article, this means that students' reading behaviour has undergone a *paradigm shift*. Students have moved from *functional reading,* which sees meaning in texts as universal, static, and neutral to *resistant reading* which aims at "unmasking internal contradictions, or inconsistencies in the text [and] to show the disunity which underlies its apparent unity" (Barry, 2002, p. 72).

Pretest Post-test Comparison

In the pretest, two major themes and nine subthemes appeared in students' essays, whereas three major themes and six basic concepts appeared in the post-test essays. However, the appearance of nine sub-themes in the pretest does not mean that students' pretest essays were better than their post-test essays. For among the nine sub-themes that emerged in the pretest, only six of them can be considered as manifestations of CDA, the other three sub-themes namely the "Islam-is-Good" sub-theme, the "Us-and-Them" sub-theme, and the "True-Muslims-vs.-False-Muslims" sub-theme are manifestations of students subjective reading and emotional reaction to Monckton's article. These three sub-themes revealed that students still at that time involve their subjective feelings and their Islamic identity in the process of critical reading. Second, the frequency of all the nine sub-themes was not strong; in most cases the sub-themes did not occur more than eight times in students' essays.

In the post-test, only three major themes emerged in students' analyses. However, there are some remarks that should be made clear here. First, all the three major themes are manifestations of high-order critical thinking and critical reading. In their analyses, most students drew upon scholarly reading approaches such as post-structuralism, Marxism, critical theory and CDA. Second, the mode of the frequency of these three major themes in the post-test was higher than in the pretest. For instance, CDA was found in 25 out of 25 essays. The concepts of "preferred reading" and "language as a social practice" appeared in fourteen essays. In addition to that, the concept of CDA which appeared in the post-test is in fact an umbrella term which contained approximately between seven and ten concepts and analytical techniques that were used by students in their essays. However, because these concepts and techniques were numerous and diverse, they were put under one umbrella term, which is CDA.

As far as students' essays grades are concerned, in the pretest the mean grade of the whole class was 10.76 over 20 points, whereas in the post-test the mean reached 13.66 over 20 points. Thanks to the critical reading class, the class's mean increased for about 3 points or degrees. The mode in the pretest was 11.00 points, whereas in the post-test this mode reached 14.00 points. Again, students' mode increased for 3 grades. The maximum grade or mark in the pretest did

not go beyond 12.00 points. However, in the post-test this grade reached 15.50 points.

The study's dependent t-test also showed remarkable results. As Table 1 below shows, there was a statistically significant increase in students' grades from pretest (M = 10.76, SD =.59) to post-test (M = 13.66, SD = 1.10, t (24) = -13.93, p<.001 (two-tailed). The mean increase in students' grades, as Table 2 below shows, was -2.90 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -3.32 to -2.47. The eta squared statistic (.88) indicated a large effect size.

The differences between the pre-test and the post-test might be as large as three points or as small as about two points and a half with 95% confidence. The CI is large since it is much further from zero; we can statistically conclude that the students improved in their performance. The null hypothesis that there is no difference in means could be rejected and the alternative hypothesis that teaching reading within critical pedagogy's framework is more fruitful than in a functional pedagogy is very probably true.

Now, what have the findings mentioned above to do with the study's questions and its theoretical framework; especially with concepts such as *functional pedagogy*, *problem-posing pedagogy*, *empowerment*, and *conscientization*? To answer this question, we have to look at the study's pretest findings. The findings showed that more than half of students did not show any sign of situating their reading habits in any social or philosophical theory. Students used to have a traditional or functional view of reading; they viewed reading as no more than understanding the text's general idea, its writer's viewpoint, and vocabulary. They were not very aware of the ideological functions of discourses and, thus, they used to take things for granted without questioning them. These findings suggest that reading practice in the Moroccan educational system is more functional than critical. Therefore, the dichotomy of functional or banking pedagogy versus critical pedagogy found in the literature is probably a true hypothesis.

In this study the course's main objective was to develop students' *critical discourse awareness*. Discourse awareness has been acquired by students when they started realizing that discourses are varied, complex, subtle, man-made,

multi-dimensional, contextual, and historical. However, the ultimate objective of the course was not only acquiring discourse awareness, but also that this discourse awareness should be *critical*. In *a problem-posing education*, students are trained to acquire *conscientization*, which means "developing a critical awareness" that would enable students to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions [and therefore] take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, p.19). Implementing this concept in a critical-reading course would mean enabling students to demystify how social structures, ideology, and asymmetrical power relationships work in discourses and how discourses are produced, interpreted, and reproduced in society.

Thanks to the course, students developed a new critical awareness of what critical reading, language, and discourse stand for. The critical dimension has been achieved when students started establishing a bridge between discourse and society. Students learned that discourses are not innocent, but that they are biased, problematic, ideologically driven, and deeply embedded in social and political structures. The post-test's results showed that the change in students' reading and thinking behaviour took place at two levels: (i) reading paradigm, and (ii) meta-language. In their post-test essays, most students drew upon scholarly reading approaches such as post-structuralism, Marxism, and CDA. Moreover, the subjective and emotional reactions to Monckton's article, which appeared in the pretest, have almost disappeared in the post-test. In other words, students became more aware of the ideological functions of texts and the asymmetrical power-relationships that underpin them. In addition to that, students showed a tendency to place texts in their political and economic contexts and interpret them according to the social interests they serve. Accordingly, these findings show strong evidence that Freire's (1970) concept of *conscientization* does have strong theoretical and practical credibility; and if it is to be taken seriously by teachers in their reading activities, it would empower their students by leading them to more intellectual and political independence.

This study's findings have pedagogical implications for teaching critical-reading and for making critical reading textbooks. While developing students' reading skills, teachers should not forget developing students' critical discourse awareness. Teachers should help students understand that meanings and attitudes in discourses have *social consequences* and that they either empower or dis-empower people's positions in society. To the best of my knowledge, in Morocco there are no textbooks for teaching reading within critical pedagogy's framework. Therefore, making and developing critical-pedagogy-oriented textbooks is urgently needed.

Unlike other studies in the literature such as Wallace (2003), Ebrahimi and Rahimi (2013), and Dar et al. (2010) who used CDA as the sole critical reading in their interventions, or Ko (2013) and Correia (2006) whose interventions were not conducted within any clear paradigm or grand theory, the findings of this study indicate that making an empowering and emancipatory critical-reading course should take into consideration two elements: the theoretical framework

Table 1. Paired samples statistics

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	**N**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Pair 1			.	
The Quran Is Illegal (before intervention)	10.76	25	59722	.11944
The Quran Is Illegal (after intervention)	13.66	25	1.10604	.22121

Table 2. Paired samples test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	The Quran is Illegal (Before intervention) - The Quran is Illegal (after intervention)	-2.90000-	1.04083	.20817	-3.32963-	-2.47037-	-13.931-	24	.000

element and the epistemological element. Reading is a social practice; that is, it has political, social, and career objectives. In the context of this study, the theoretical framework was critical pedagogy. Therefore, the objective was endowing students with an awareness that would enable them see when and how discourses empower and dis-empower individuals in society. The epistemological element was realized by teaching a diverse, but at the same theoretically homogenous, set of critical reading techniques and concepts. Thus, CDA was used to show students how language works in discourse and critical theory was used to enable them to situate discourse in its socio-political context and how that discourse affects, positively or negatively, individuals' positions in the hierarchical structures of society.

This study does, however, have three limitations. The first limitation is that it is a repeated-measures study, which means no control group was used, and the second limitation is that participants were not randomly selected. The third limitation is that the text which was used in the pretest was the same one that was used in the post-test. However, this study does have some strengths and contributions. First, the difference between students' reading behavior in the pretest and the post is very large. Second, in comparison with the literature, this study is unique in its conception of how a critical-reading syllabus might be designed. This study provides the community of critical pedagogy's practitioners with a unique syllabus in which three perspectives were fused together. These perspectives are critical pedagogy, critical theory, and CDA. Finally, what distinguishes this study from the studies in the literature is that it aimed not only at changing students' critical-reading skills, but also their worldviews. So, despite the study's weaknesses at the level of validity and reliability, the value of this study should be seen from the perspectives of the transferability and applicability of its insights rather than the replicability and generalizability of its findings. However, conducting another study like this, but within a true experimental research design would probably give more valid and more reliable findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study show that teaching critical reading within critical pedagogy's framework has caused a paradigm shift in students' reading habits and worldviews. Their reading habits have become more critical, and they have developed ontologically and epistemologically. Students have learned the habit of reading a text in the light of a theory which explains its political and socio-historical context. Finally, students have also discarded the bad reading habit of engaging their emotions, cultural identity, and common sense in their analyses of discourses and narratives. To sum up, students' ethnocentrism has retreated, and their reading behaviour has become more theoretically oriented and intellectually more resistant.

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