



## **The Effect of Critical Discourse-Based Instruction on Iranian English Major Students' Reading Comprehension**

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This contribution was an attempt to study the impact of critical discourse-based instruction on Iranian English major language learners' in-depth reading. To this target, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, with an emphasis on the 10-question model was used. To this end, all undergraduate foreign language students (n=146) including Teaching English as a Foreign Language, English Translation and English Literature at the University of Mazandaran, participated in the study as a sample of Iranian EFL classrooms. The procedure was designed according to the usual pre-test/post-test experimental studies. The experimental groups were taught to explore the masked and covered meanings of the texts in order to explore and discover interrelation of discourse structures and ideological structures of the texts, meanwhile the control groups were studying the same materials conventionally. A post reading ability test was conducted at the end of the course study. The post-test was designed according to the course materials they studied during the instruction. The given scores were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics and showed that CDA-based instruction significantly affects EFL learners' reading comprehension. And responses to the motivation-related questionnaire depicted that experimental EFL students became very motivated after being familiar with CDA skills.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, critical discourse analysis, the 10-question model, EFL students, covered meaning

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the curriculum designated by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the course titles of Reading Comprehension 1, 2 and 3, as well as Reading Journalistic Texts, the following specifications are provided:

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Table 1  
Course titles of reading comprehension and reading journalistic text (translated and designed by the author)

Courses	Course Titles	Credit	Semester	The Main Educational Goals
English Translation BA Program	Reading Comprehension 1	4	1	Reading comprehension enhancement, Enhancement of semantic competency through linguistic context, Guessing meanings of the unfamiliar words,
English Literature BA Program	Reading Comprehension 2	4	2	Ability to reach the implicit and explicit meanings,
	Reading Comprehension 3	4	3	Ability to reach the main idea of the texts, Ability to analyze the detailed meaning, Reading speed, Ability to Text analysis
Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) BA Program	Reading Journalistic Text	2	7	Familiarity with different kinds of media e.g. newspapers, magazines, internet sites, etc. Familiarity with different genres of political, economic social, sport, art and even advertisement texts Text analysis ability

An overview of the above table clearly shows the great importance of "Reading comprehension" and "Reading Journalistic Text" in the educational system. Although teaching methods being used in reading classes at schools and universities, have changed much from the traditional teaching methods, teaching reading is still facing serious problems. For instance, according to the author's own personal experiences, as a university lecturer at various universities, he has come across a myriad number of occasions that Iranian EFL learners are not capable to understand the deep or unmasked meaning of the texts. Furthermore, reading classes are boring, repetitive and above all, has a little value for the students. Almost all of them are not familiar with the critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques to realize the implicit and explicit meaning of texts. They just remain on the surface meaning of a text. The above-mentioned claims are supported by some Iranian context studies such as Hashemi & Ghanizadeh (2012), Rashidi & Asgharzadeh (2012), Akbarzadeh Haromi (2014), and Abbasian & Malae (2016).

The novelty of the current study lies in its new points of view on critical functions especially applying the 10-question model as a basic device for the CDA-based approach. Despite the importance of this model, the previous studies in the field of language instruction was either ignored or rarely attended to. So, the current study tried to introduce a reading strategy based on the CDA techniques in order to equip EFL learners to be able to analyze a text critically. This provides and motivates them to enhance their ability in reading comprehension and reading journalistic text.

CDA approach focuses on three dimensions of discourse: 1. text (linguistic characteristics and organization of the text, 2. discourse practice (the process of text production, distribution, and consumption, according to social factors, and 3. socio-cultural practice. These three dimensions of discourse will be analyzed at three levels of description, interpretation and explanation.

### **The Ten-Question Model (Fairclough, 1996: 110-111)**

For text analysis on the level of description, Fairclough (1996) presents the ten-question model to analyze the text to reveal the covered meaning implies in the language used. There is a list of ten main questions and a number of sub-questions, which could be implemented to analyze the texts. This model works on three levels pertaining to vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. Understanding of three terms; experiential, relational and expressive values, are of great importance for applying the framework. Experiential value is to do with contents, knowledge and beliefs. It “focuses on the ideological significant meaning relations (synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy) between the words” (1996, 113). Relational value “focuses on how a text's choice of wordings depends on, and helps create, social relationships between participants” (1996, 116) and expressive value, provides an insight into “the producer’s evaluation (in the widest sense) of the bit of the reality it relates to.” (p. 112). “A speaker expresses evaluations through drawing on classification schemes which are in part systems of evaluation, and there are ideologically contrastive schemes embodying different values in different discourse types” (p.119). Grammatical features also convey experiential, relational and expressive values. Experiential values of the grammatical features can be found through the types of process and participant domination, the clear or unclear of the agency, how and why nominalization are used, the sentences are passive or negative, positive or negative. There is a variety of grammatical features of texts which have relational values. These values can be shown through the elements of modes of sentence, modality, and pronouns. Expressive and relational modality features overlap and they cannot be separated easily. Features of the expressive modality show the expressive values of the text. And finally, question 10 indicates what larger-scale structures the text has.

Applying Fairclough’s CDA model (1996, 2001 & 2010) with an emphasis on the ten-question model of Fairclough (1996), the present contribution is going to find answers to the following three quantitative questions as well as one qualitative question:

Quantitative questions and related hypotheses:

1- To what extent does critical discourse-based instruction affect EFL learners’ reading comprehension?

H0: Critical discourse-based instruction does not affect students' reading comprehension

H1: Critical discourse-based instruction influences students’ reading comprehension

2- Does language proficiency level affect the level of students’ reading comprehension by using critical discourse-based instruction?

H0: Language proficiency does not affect students' Reading Comprehension by using critical discourse-based instruction.

H1: Language proficiency affects students' Reading Comprehension by using critical discourse-based instruction.

3- Does EFL learners’ gender differences impact on their level of reading comprehension by using CDA skills?

H0: Gender does not affect the level of reading comprehension through critical teaching methods

H1: Gender affects the level of students' reading comprehension by using critical teaching methods.

Qualitative question:

4-Does instruction through CDA significantly motivate the EFL learners to promote their reading comprehension?

### **Theoretical Background**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a *transdisciplinary* (Italic in original) form of analysis that emphasizes language as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995, 1996, 2001 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, & 2010). The ultimate end of CDA is to analyze texts in their social contexts (Fairclough, 1995 & Luke, 2000). Fairclough also articulates the theoretical relationship between language and ideology and discusses on the merits of locating ideology in language structures or language events (1995, 2010). He outlines a conception of discourse and discourse analysis and argues that “a more diverse range of linguistic features and levels may be ideologically invested than is usually assumed, including aspects of linguistic form and style as well as content” (1995, p. 56). Fairclough (1995, 2010) reiterates that ideology is a property of both structures and events, but the key problem is to find a satisfactory account of the dialectic of structures and events. According to him, language/ideology issues should be put into a more general framework of theories and analysis of power. In this regard, “the Gramscian theory of hegemony (1971) is very efficient and useful” (2010, p. 56).

Tune A. van Dijk views CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (2015, p. 352). He also articulates that there is a dialectical correlation between the text and context in discourse. He views CDA as a reaction against the dominant formal (often “asocial” or “uncritical”) paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s (2015). Van Dijk (1998) believes that the main task of ideology is to legitimize power and inequality in favor of the ruling class. Ideology is presumed to hide or obfuscate the reality to be at the service of dominant social formation. He also maintains that apart from the negative function of ideology, it should be noted that ideology has some positive effects, including social solidarity, organizing struggle or sustain oppositions.

Ruth Wodak (2011) provided a remarkable view on critical discourse analysis. She draws on the more extensive overviews of CDA:

“Most generally, CDA can be defined as a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research program, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agendas. What unites them is a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, identity politics and political-economic or cultural change in society” (p. 38).

Wodak (2001) also reiterates language does not contain power in itself, but it derives its power from the powers of dominant formations. This explains why critical discourse analysis deals with the relationship between language and power and analyzes the language use of dominant groups (Baker, et al. 2008). On the whole, analysis of the linguistic discourse plays an important role in the social, cultural, ethnographic, and comparative studies of languages (Shakarami, Hajhashemi & Caltabiano, 2018).

### **Related Studies**

As one of the initial research on Iranian context in this field, Rashidi & Asgharzadeh (2012) demonstrated an empirical study to reveal the impact of critical reading on reading comprehension among female high school students in Kermanshah, one of the western provinces in Iran. Their study was based on a model provided by Cots (2006). They selected the population of the study among one hundred participants in order to choose fifty students as subjects of their study. They made the students engage in “critical reading, problematized the status quo, deconstructed and analyzed the texts, and employed problem solving through meaningful discussions and practiced critical reading approach”. They also came to this result that critical reading can be done with any texts. In other words, the genre of the text is not as important as the way learners are taught. They also state that EFL learners should go beyond textual meaning to evaluate the purposes and intention implied in the text. According to the empirical data of their research study, the critical reading approach based on CDA has a significantly positive impact on female high school students’ reading comprehension.

Abbasian & Malaee (2016) planned a survey to investigate the effect of explicit teaching of some CDA techniques on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. They also tried to explore any change in the learners' views toward learning the English language. They distributed two news articles to the 60 undergraduate of non-major students in control and experimental groups. The result indicated that the experimental group which was instructed to read between the lines outperformed the control group. They claim that the other “genres like story is not as public as news and it is not also in the hands of groups with more power” (p. 8). On the other hand, the authenticity of text reflects real-life situations and events which happen in common daily life, and this, in its turn, motivates students to learn more. They claim there are some limitations to their study.

In a newest attempt, Hazaea & Alzubi (2017) conducted a study on the effect of CDA instruction on EFL analytical reading practices in a Saudi Arabian context. They claim that traditional method makes the students passive but discourse-based approaches to EFL reading make students become active and “text resistant”. They performed a quasi-experimental design, to collect data from a reading class before and after an interventional program. The results indicated there are significant effects in each analytical practice: description, interpretation and explanation. In discourse-based instruction stage, the participants were divided into three groups where each group instructed one stage of analysis. For instance, group A describes the linguistic features of the text, group B interprets the text, and group C explains the sociocultural analysis of the text. They argue that the statistical results of the study may be attributed to this fact that in a traditional non-critical method the students were mere readers of the text; they

were not equipped to reach the deep meaning of the texts, but teaching through discourse-based instruction fosters their abilities to go beyond the text.

Of course, it should be added that several valuable studies have been carried out on the effects of applying different models of critical discourse analysis on the educational achievement of the EFL learners (e.g., Koupaee Dar, Rahimi & Shams, 2011; Martinez, 2012; Ebrahimi & Rahimi, 2013; Marashi & Yavarzadeh, 2014, Karbalaeei, Bandarabbasi & Davar, 2015). By contrast with most other works, the present contribution has no limitations of the previous studies in this field, and most importantly, this research manipulated with a sufficient population of EFL-major students in an acceptable period of time. The novelty of the current study lies in its new points of view on critical functions especially applying the 10-question model as a basic device for the CDA-based approach. Despite the importance of this model, the previous studies in the field of language instruction either ignored or only mentioned in passing.

## **METHOD**

### **The Design of the Study**

The current study was a combination of quantitative and qualitative research method. This was a quantitative research with experimental pre-test, post-test design in which hypotheses followed by the quantification of data, and some sort of numerical analyses carried out. Furthermore, this was a qualitative research method, because a researcher-made questionnaire (a set of 3 questions to evoke response) used in which the data cannot be easily quantified, and data-analyses were interpretive rather than statistical. This study followed an explicit explanation of the CDA model to the experimental groups.

This study was conducted over 18 successive sessions from 15 April 2017 to 27 May 2017. The classes were composed of 18 sessions in 6 weeks (3 sessions in a week). Each session lasted 90 minutes.

### **Participants**

Considering the aforementioned statement, this study planned to investigate the effects of Iranian EFL learners' critical discourse analysis (CDA) on their reading comprehension. In so doing, all undergraduate foreign language students (N=146) including Teaching English as a Foreign Language, English Translation and English Literature at the University of Mazandaran, as a sample of Iranian EFL classrooms, participated in the study. First, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) version1 (as a homogeneity test) was administered to exclude the EFL students who obtained less than intermediate score (less than 37 out of 60). Second, a TOEFL reading proficiency test (as a pre-test) was administered to 112 participants who were included after the OPT implementation. According to the reading proficiency test as a pre-test, students who scored less than 70 out of 100 comprised the intermediate level and those who scored more than 70 to 100 comprised the advanced level. Based on the scores obtained by the participants, 62 subjects (26 males and 36 females) were comprised of intermediate levels and 50 (18 males and 32 females) were comprised of advanced levels. The

intermediate subjects were randomly divided into two control and experimental classes and advanced subjects were randomly divided into two control and experimental classes as well. Teachers in control groups run teaching reading comprehension according to the requirements of the usual and routine classes, based on the standards set forth by the authorities of the university. Students in the experimental groups were taught to analyze and explore in-depth meanings of the texts and sentences in order to discuss the ultimate purpose of what has been given to them. There was an additional duty for the experimental groups' teacher; he was requested to observe the learners' behavior very carefully and make notes the gradual changes in the learners' learning behavior and development to see if they could apply the treatment in their class activities.

The groups were of mixed gender. The participants in the experimental groups were taught to discuss reading texts based on Fairclough's CDA model (2010) especially the 10-question model to enhance their reading comprehension. But the participants in the control groups taught reading through the traditional approach. A post reading ability test was conducted at the end of the instruction. The post-test was designed according to the course materials they studied during the instruction. And also, in the present study, gender and motivation were considered as independent variables, relevant to the CDA application.

### **Instruments**

Five types of instruments were used in the present study in order to collect the requested data:

1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT) version 1
2. TOEFL Reading proficiency test (2016)
3. Course book (Inside Reading3)
4. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's Acceptance Speeches
5. A Motivation-related Questionnaire

### **Procedure and Tasks**

The classes were composed of 18 sessions in 6 weeks (3 sessions in a week). Each session lasted 90 minutes. The students in both the experimental and control groups were involved in different activities according to their same course materials to improve their overall language proficiency. Experimental classes were run by an experienced teacher who was aware of the nature of the study and also he was familiar with the principles of the critical discourse analysis approaches. The given scores and responses to the questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. To achieve the purpose of the study, the subsequent steps were pursued during the research process in order to collect the data.

For the first stage, some lessons from the Inside Reading3 (Unit 3, Unit8 and Unit 9), which were ideologically loaded and biased, were selected as teaching materials for both the control and experimental groups. For the control groups, the lessons were taught

traditionally, but for the experimental classes, as described before, the lessons were taught through Furlough's CDA model. The 10-question model for text analysis or description level was very useful and fairly easy as well, because the learners had a previous acquaintance with the traditional analysis of the texts, and it helped them apply the new model, so there were no particular problems. But for the interpretation and explanation processes, the process of teaching encountered many problems. This can be explained by the fact that students had little acquaintance with the main concepts of the CDA approach in macro-level. Problems were fixed under the guidance of the experienced teacher. Besides, choosing the right texts helped the teacher and students to overcome the difficulties. The first stage lasted 10 sessions for the intermediate and advanced learners in the experimental groups.

For the second stage, when the students were well equipped with the critical analysis method, the teacher offered two political speeches. The main reason for choosing Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's speeches as a sample for the current study is that their speeches are controversial. They addressed a lot about the extremely important national and global issues such as terrorism, immigration, economy, etc. So both speeches covered a wide diversity of different and controversial issues. Moreover, "political speeches are highly constructed pieces of discourse" (Jensen, Jakobsen & Pichler, 2016 p. 32). Performing the acceptance speech would enable detailed exploration of the central themes and questions which the researchers wish to study. So, it provided a good sample of methodological instrument pertaining and including most of the linguistic components which were fruitful for the purposes of the present study. Donald Trump's speech (text) is comprised of the total amount of 5144 words. This speech lasted 75 minutes. Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech is comprised of the total amount of 5202 words and it was 15 minutes shorter than Trump's acceptance speech. In the following, the outline and outcome of the students' analysis of the two texts are presented:

1. The two Presidential nominees tried to draw upon some classification schemes through ideologically contested words. By using synonymy, hyponymy and antonymy they tried to convey ideological significant meaning relations. For instance "crime", "gangs" and "violence" are hyponyms and also synonyms of "terrorism" in Trump's speech. Besides the students' analysis revealed that in what ways they tried to show their dominance (power) by using very simple sentences in which the agent is explicitly clear. How they used nominalization in active sentences, and how they applied inclusive and exclusive pronouns.

2. Both of them applied simple vocabularies and short sentences to make a very provocative and intimately language use, because their audiences were all Americans, either educated or uneducated people. And this helped them minimize the social distance between the speakers and the audiences. Another reason for applying simple sentences especially in the form of (SVO), (SV) and (SVC) is that this kind of sentences convey the experiential values which in turn can help the speaker attack directly the opponent and also help them to put the blame of catastrophically situation on the other side. So, most of the sentences were in the active voice. Most of the sentences were

declarative. In a declarative form the speaker can show his/her power very easily. Applying simple declarative sentences (SVO), they tried to put them in the same position of the audience. Furthermore, it would be a persuasive tool to introduce themselves very sympathetic and responsible to the main nations' problems. Both of them applied an idiosyncratic pattern of emphatic speech style but in different wordings full of experiential, relational and expressive values.

3. Both of the two rivals tried to utilize different kinds of foregrounding and back-grounding strategies. Halliday (1973) introduced foregrounding as the phenomenon of linguistic highlighting, whereby some features of the language of a text stand out in some way. Analysis of the text showed that Donald Trump applied this kind of strategy more than Hillary Clinton. Trump frequently applied opposing and aggressive language through parallelism as a form of foregrounding, "*Mass amnesty, mass immigration, and mass lawlessness*". Scrutinizing the texts critically, depicted how they used positive sentences for foregrounding and negative sentences for back-grounding to an US/THEM relations.

4. Levinson (2012) emphasizes the importance of deictic pronouns as the most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of language themselves. In both speeches, there are a lot of pronouns which make a dichotomy between "I/we" and "She/they". Both of them tried to utilize "I" or "We" to get on intimate terms with their audiences as well as making a feeling of unity and togetherness. Trump specifically use "she" and "they" to show a decrepit picture full of negative evaluation of the other side meanwhile, Hillary applies "he" to show a scary picture of Trump who wants to destroy the unity of the nation. Both of them tried to apply "I" and "We" not only to shorten the distance between them and their audiences but also to make a close relationship between the addresser and addressee.

Casting a glance on the outcome of the two text analysis remarkably shows the differences between reading through the conventional method and critical In-depth reading through CDA text analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Quantitative Results**

The main purpose of this study was to find out the impact of instructing reading comprehension through the CDA principles on the basis of the questions and assumptions raised in the previous section of this study. To this end, various statistical tools such as descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as normality test, Levene's homogeneity-of-variance test, analysis of variance with repeated measures, and t-test, were used to analyze and interpret the data.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Out of the 112 students which were included as the research population, 68 students were females (61%) and 44 students were males (39%). The bar plot of the frequency distribution of the individuals by gender ratio is shown in the following figure:

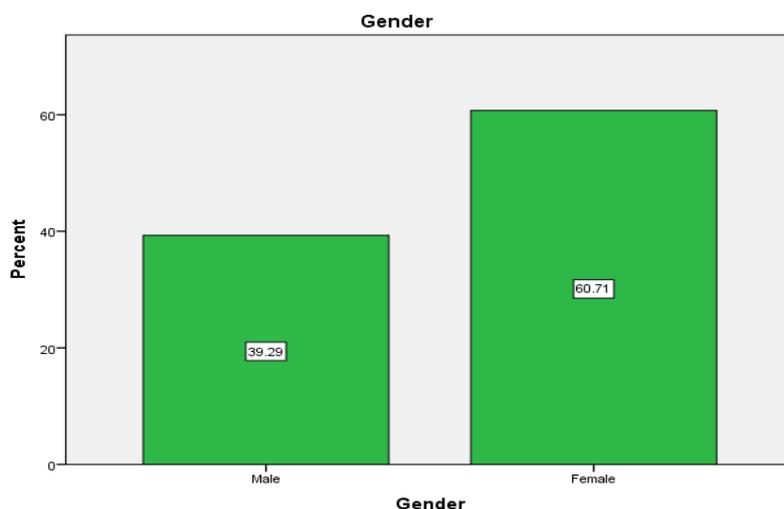


Figure 1  
Frequency distribution of gender

All 112 students participated in a pre-test to determine their level of proficiency. Students who scored less than 70 out of 100 in the pre-test comprised the intermediate level and those who scored more than 70 to 100 comprised the advanced level. Based on the scores obtained by the participants, 62 subjects (26 males and 36 females) were at the intermediate level and 50 (18 male and 32 female) were at the advanced level. The subjects were randomly divided into two groups of control and two groups of experimental in both equal numbers. The distribution of the number of students in each group by gender and proficiency level is summarized in the table below.

Table 2  
Distribution of gender and proficiency level

Group		Gender	Level		Total
			Intermediate	Advanced	
Control	Gender	Male	13	9	22
		Female	18	16	34
	Total		31	25	56
Experimental	Gender	Male	13	9	22
		Female	18	16	34
	Total		31	25	56
Total	Gender	Male	26	18	44
		Female	36	32	68
	Total		62	50	112

This table can be viewed graphically in the following figure.

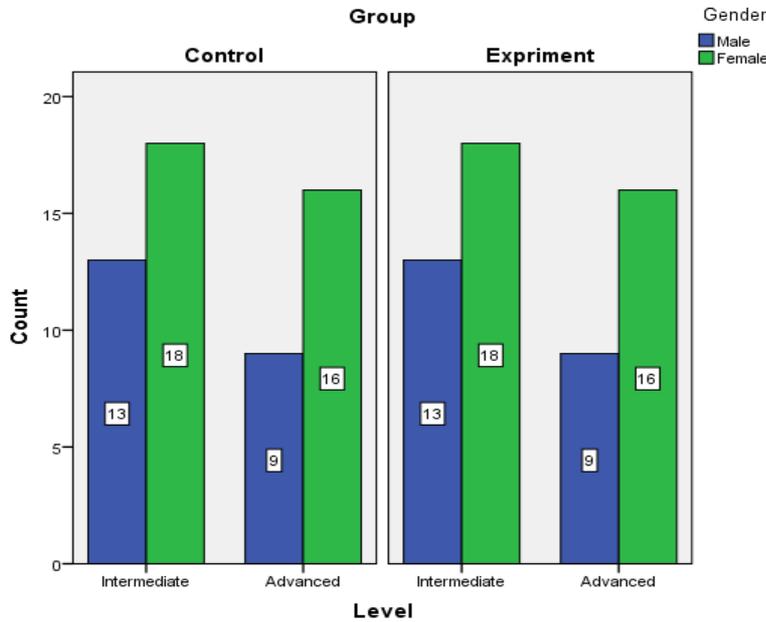


Figure 2  
Distribution of gender and proficiency level

The participants in the experimental groups were taught using a critical teaching method, and conventional teaching methods were used to teach participants for the control groups. In total, 18 training sessions during 6 weeks, which is in total equal to 27 training hours, were held for each classes. After conducting training classes, another test (post-test) was used to measure the impact of the teaching method on EFL learners of all groups. In addition, participants in experimental groups were asked to attend a follow-up test a month after the end of the course to measure the stability of the materials learned in the classes. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, minimum, and the maximum score of students in the control and experimental groups are recorded in the following table.

Table 3  
Descriptive statistics of the control and experimental groups

Time	Control group				Experimental group			
	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Pre	72.07	8.59	60	86	71.89	8.94	60	86
Post	71.93	9.02	58	88	79.32	9.02	60	96
Follow up	72.07	8.90	59	90	79.73	9.15	60	96

The graph of the mean scores obtained in the two groups of control and experimental is plotted in the following way. This diagram is known as the profile plot.

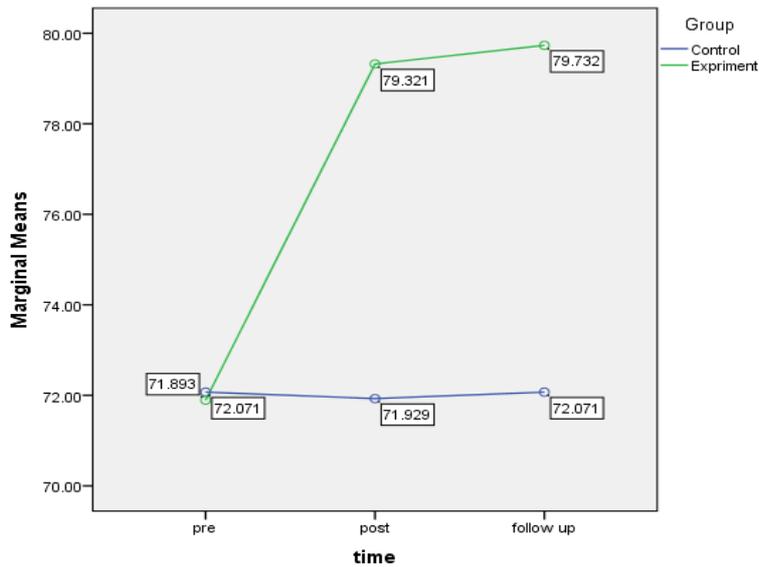


Figure 3  
Descriptive statistics of the control and experimental groups

A quick glance at the chart and table given above would illustrate that the mean scores in the experimental group have increased in the post-test. However, is this increase in the form of an accident or is it really meaningful? This is a question this study is going to answer in the next section via the use of appropriate statistical analyses. In addition, the follow-up test is observed in the experimental group, which means that the mean scores are not diminished, and in fact the training is fixed in the individuals.

### **Inferential Statistics**

First, we used appropriate statistical tests to find answers to the questions raised in the first section of this study. Before performing the statistical analysis, the normal distribution of the recorded scores of the participants was tested to decide on whether to use parametric methods or to go to nonparametric methods. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows that the scores obtained from each of the three tests in both groups are significantly higher than the level of 0.05. Since, the assumption of the normal distribution of scores is accepted, therefore, it can be continued to use conventional methods of statistical analysis for data analysis.

Another issue that needs to be considered before the analysis is the homogeneity of variances in the control and experimental groups. To do this, it's better to use the Levene's homogeneity-of-variance test. The results show the probability level is significantly higher than 0.05. Therefore, homogeneity of the variances is acceptable in both the control and experimental groups. Now the hypotheses can be analyzed.

Question1. To what extent does critical discourse-based instruction affect EFL learners' reading comprehension?

H0: Critical discourse-based instruction does not affect students' reading comprehension.

H1: Critical discourse-based instruction influences students' reading comprehension.

In order to study the effect of critical teaching methods on students' reading comprehension, a variance analysis with repeated measures considering the assumption of normal and homogeneity of variances was implemented. In this analysis, "Sphericity" assumption was not confirmed (P-value <0.0001). So the Greenhouse-Geisser method to perform this test was used. In the table below, the main effects of the analysis of the variance are recorded.

Table 4  
The effect of teaching CDA method on students' reading comprehension

Effect		Mean	F	P-value
Time	Pre	71.982	164.172	< 0.001
	Post	75.625		
	Follow up	75.902		
Group	Control	72.024	8.856	0.004
	Experimental	76.928		
Teaching Method	Group	-	169.905	< 0.001

The results of the above table indicate that there is a significant difference between the mean scores in the three tests obtained from the students. In other words, the effect of time is significant. The effect of the group is also significant. The effect of the group is, in fact, the same effect as the teaching method. In other words, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of both the control and experimental groups. In addition, due to the fact that the significance of the interaction between time and group is less than 0.05, the interaction between time and group could be significant. Since, according to the above table, the interaction between time and group is meaningful, the analysis of the variance with the repeated measures by the control and experimental groups was repeated. The effect of time in the control group was not significant, but in the experimental group, the effect of time was significant because the p-value was less than 0.05. In other words, the mean scores of students in the experimental group were significantly different in the three exam periods (pre-test, post-test and follow-up). To find out how the differences in the experimental group were compared, Bonferroni pairwise comparisons were compared. The mean scores of students in the experimental groups (both intermediate and advanced) have increased significantly in the post test compared to the pre-test. It means that the students' reading comprehension after passing the course through critical teaching has increased. In addition, the comparison of the post-test and follow-up score did not show a significant difference. The p-value is higher than the level of 0.05. Therefore, after a month, the students' learning has been stabilized.

In sum, according to all the mentioned issues, it can be asserted that critical discourse-based instruction has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension. This outcome is similar and in line with the research done by Hazaea & Alzubi (2017).

Question2. Does language proficiency level affect the level of students' reading comprehension by using critical discourse-based instruction?

H0: Language proficiency does not affect students' Reading Comprehension by using critical discourse-based instruction.

H1: Language proficiency affects students' Reading Comprehension by using critical discourse-based instruction.

In this section, this study is going to answer whether the positive impact of the critical teaching method between the two levels of Intermediate and Advanced is the same or different. In other words, does language proficiency has an effect on the improvement of the students' reading comprehension after being instructed by CDA-based approach? Before performing the appropriate statistical analysis, we summarize the mean scores of the students in the experimental groups by the level or language proficiency shown in the following table.

Table 5  
Language proficiency and language level

Level	Time		Mean difference	T	P-value
	Pre	Post			
Intermediate	64.52	72.84	8.32	2.285	0.026
Advanced	81.04	87.36	6.32		

An inspection of table 5 would indicate that the mean scores of the intermediate students in the experimental groups increased by 08.32 and the average scores of the advanced level students increased by 06.32. Actually, reading comprehension of the intermediate level students has increased more than reading comprehension of the advanced level students. To examine this precisely, an independent t-test was used. Since the significance probability level is less than 0.05, it means that there is a significant difference between the two levels. In a nutshell, it can be asserted that the effect of critical teaching method in the intermediate group is more than the effect of critical teaching in the advanced level. The interpretation of why the impact of this method on an intermediate level is more than an advanced level requires an independent survey, which is not within the realm of the present study.

Question3. Are the males' and females' reading comprehension proficiency significantly different through the use of critical discourse-based instruction?

H0: Critical discourse-based instruction does not vary between genders.

H1: Critical discourse-based instruction varies between genders.

It was found that the critical teaching method has a positive impact on the students' reading comprehension. Now, it can be examined whether this positive impact is different between males and females. In other words, whether critical discourse-based instruction varies between genders?

Table 6  
Gender Differences and reading comprehension proficiency

Gender	Time		Mean difference	t	P-value
	Pre	Post			
Male	71.27	79	7.73	0.528	0.600
Female	72.29	79.53	7.23		

A quick glance at the table above shows that the mean scores of males in the experimental groups (both the intermediate and advanced) increased by 07.73 and the average score of female increased by 07.23. In fact, the level of males' reading score is slightly higher than that of females'. To examine this precisely, an independent t-test was run. Since the probability level is significantly higher than 0.05, there is no significant difference between the two groups. In a nutshell, it cannot be said that critical discourse-based instruction varies between genders.

#### Qualitative Results

Question 4. Does instruction through CDA significantly motivate the EFL learners to promote their reading comprehension?

In order to reveal the impact of critical teaching on increasing students' motivation in reading comprehension as well as reading journalistic texts, the participants of the intermediate and advanced courses in the experimental groups were requested to respond in writing to a questionnaire containing 3 questions at the end of the training period. The questionnaire was structured so that the questions were clear and transparent, and also was designed to cover the objectives of the research. The students answered these questions in yes-no choice and also they provided their answers in details in simple English sentences?

Yes  No  Please provide your answer in detail.

For the first question, 98/3% of the students believed that critical instruction had changes their attitudes in reading texts. The detailed responses of the first question in both the intermediate and advanced levels of the experimental groups can be summarized in the following headings:

- Having familiarized with the principles of the critical discourse analysis, my attitude toward reading texts, speeches, interviews and news has completely changed.
- These skills and principles have taught me not to stop at the level of surface meanings of words and sentences.
- These skills and principles have taught me not to believe anything easily.
- These skills and principles have taught me that every utterance or written texts convey an ideological burden.
- These skills and principles have taught me to focus more precisely on the goals of an author or speaker.
- The texts are biased. So a report or news should not be judged soon.

- I realized that I have to have a lot of information about linguistics, sociology, political science, literature, literary criticism, anthropology, and even philosophy in order to increase my understanding of the texts.

Motivation-related Q2: After learning the principles of critical discourse analysis are you motivated more than before to practice on reading comprehension and reading journalistic texts?

Yes  No  Please explain extensively.

For the second question, 91.5% of the students chose yes. So through their responses, it can be said that their motivation has significantly increased. The detailed responses in both the intermediate and advanced level of the experimental groups can be summarized in the following headings:

- Having familiarized with the principles of critical discourse analysis, my motivation for reading comprehension either ordinary texts or ideologically burdened texts has been much increased.
- My motivation has been much higher because reading the texts were very boring and frustrating for me, but now I read them with enthusiasm and I try to understand the deep and ideological meaning of the texts which are hidden in the appearance of the word.
- My motivation has increased because I learned the things that I did not know before.

Motivation-related Q3: Have you become more interested in analyzing texts having been familiar with the CDA principles?

Yes  No  Please provide your answer in detail.

For the third question, 90.5% of the students had positive answers by choosing yes. According to their statements, they became more interested in analyzing texts having had familiarity with the CDA principles. The detailed responses in both the intermediate and advanced levels of the experimental groups, can be summarized in the following headings:

- After learning the principles of critical discourse analysis, it's easier for me to analyze the text.
- Using the principles of critical discourse analysis, I can not only analyze Persian and English texts, but I can go beyond the level of comprehension and engage in a kind of discussion of social, political, and cultural contexts.
- My interest in analyzing the text has been further enhanced by the profound understanding of the texts.

At the end of the questionnaire the students were requested to add their own opinion or even suggestion about the course study. "Please add any extra points you like to write about the course study."

Students' extra points or free views on the importance of the principles of critical discourse analysis in learning English language can be summarized as follows:

- In my opinion, it is necessary to assign a minimum of 2 credit course title to meet undergraduate English majors with the principles of critical discourse analysis.
- The acquisition of the principles of critical discourse analysis increases students' self-awareness and self-esteem.
- It is very good that students gain the ability to recognize the obvious and hidden ideological biases in the context of the texts.
- Critical ability is not only effective on language teaching but also increases the level of understanding and ability to analyze the important life issues.

Of the students' responses, it can be easily seen that familiarity with the principles of critical discourse analysis increased the motivation of students to learn English, especially reading comprehension and journalistic texts. Students' attitudes toward reading have been changed, and students' ability to analyze texts increased dramatically. These motivation related outcomes are very similar and in line with the research done by Gholami & Maleki (2014) and also in line with the research conducted by Abbasian & Malaee (2016). It is worth mentioning that Rashidi, Rahimi & Alimoradi (2014) provided a study on Iranian EFL learners' discursive demotivation construction. The findings of their study will give the EFL teachers a better understanding of motivation and demotivation among students.

## CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to make an In-depth reading through Critical Discourse Analysis, based on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. The previous studies, as it was explained in the literature review, conducted studies using Cots' (2006) or Wallace's (2005) framework of CDA approach or they tried to implement their studies with an attitude of critical thinking and language awareness. The current contribution is the first in its own turn to investigate the effect of critical discourse-based instruction on English major students which has hitherto been faded into oblivion in the context of the present study.

Considering the first research question, this study tried to investigate the impact of critical teaching method on the students' reading comprehension. Based on the results obtained, it can be asserted that critical teaching method has a positive impact on the students' reading comprehension and journalistic texts.

To answer the second question: the impact of language proficiency on students' the reading comprehension through critical teaching, the results indicated that the effect of critical teaching method on the intermediate group is more than the effect of critical teaching on the advanced level. As it was mentioned before, the interpretation of why the impact of CDA method on an intermediate level is more than on an advanced level, requires an independent survey.

As far as the third research question is concerned, according to the data analysis, it can be claimed that critical discourse-based instruction does not vary between genders.

Apart from quantitative questions in the survey, there was a qualitative question to investigate on EFL students' motivation. For this purpose a researcher made motivation-

related questionnaire composed of 3 questions offered to the students after the end of the course study. Through their responses, it can be inferred that their motivation has significantly increased. There were also some fantabulous students' extra points of free views on the importance of the principles of critical discourse analysis in learning English. The students' views and responses reiterate that it is absolutely necessary to assign a 2 credit course title to meet undergraduate English students with the principles of CDA.

The current study can be utilized for English foreign language learners to promote their critical ability to analyze the reading comprehension and reading journalistic texts and this; in turn can increase the EFL learners' motivation in reading comprehension.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

Teachers kindly asked to pay attention to this point that highlighting concepts such as ideology, power, social and political issues may distract the students from the main educational goal of enhancing reading comprehension skills. Hence, more attention should be given to the educational goal, not to drown into the political and ideological discussions. Limitations of the current study mainly refer to the followings: first, reading samples were limited to the political and social issues whereas, a broad range of genres may lead to more reliable outcomes.

Second, regarding the available time and facilities, the present study tried not to have the limitations of the previous surveys, however, the research was conducted among EFL students in only one university. Therefore, it is suggested that more extensive surveys need to be done, for example, among students of different English language courses at several universities simultaneously, in order to gain more robust in reliability.

Third, it is clear that some concepts of CDA, such as the classification scheme was relatively difficult for the students to understand, hence, easier classification with rather simpler ideological terms should be provided to learners in order to lower the workload in their brains. Therefore, it is suggested that the 10-question model needs to be simplified by the experts and further studies should be conducted on the effectiveness of the application of CDA model in the development of critical reading for the EFL learners in order to generalize the findings and have learners exposed to such materials accordingly.

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