

Strengthening students' pragmatic awareness by analyzing texts through Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA)

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Abstract

Developing pragmatic awareness is a major goal in language education because learners need to interpret implied meanings, recognize communicative intentions, and use language appropriately in social contexts. However, pragmatic instruction in many EFL classrooms often remains limited to formulaic expressions and speech act patterns. This conceptual article explores how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can strengthen students' pragmatic awareness through the analysis of authentic texts. The article argues that integrating CDA into classroom practice helps learners analyze implicatures, presuppositions, politeness strategies, ideology, and power relations embedded in discourse. The paper discusses pedagogical implications for language teaching and concludes that CDA can serve as an effective linguodidactic tool for developing critical pragmatic awareness.

Keywords: *pragmatic awareness, critical discourse analysis, authentic texts, critical literacy, pragmatics*

Introduction

Pragmatic awareness refers to learners' ability to recognize how meaning is shaped by context, speaker intention, and sociocultural norms (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

It includes understanding speech acts, implicatures, politeness strategies, and indirect meanings.

In many EFL contexts, students may know grammar but struggle with interpreting implied meanings or identifying hidden assumptions in authentic discourse. This suggests the need for instructional approaches that move beyond structural language teaching.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers such an approach. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse reflects and constructs social relations and ideology. Similarly, van Dijk (2008) emphasizes the connection between discourse, cognition, and power. Through CDA, students can analyze not only what texts say, but how they position readers, represent reality, and encode pragmatic meanings.

This article aims to examine how analyzing texts through CDA can strengthen students' pragmatic awareness.

Methods

This study uses conceptual analysis based on theoretical synthesis from pragmatics and CDA.

The framework combines:

Pragmatics Theory

- Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969)
- Gricean implicature (Grice, 1975)
- Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Critical Discourse Analysis

- Fairclough's three-dimensional model
- van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach

Students analyze authentic texts such as media articles, advertisements, and speeches through three stages:

1. Pragmatic noticing

Identifying speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions, and politeness strategies.

2. Critical discourse analysis

Examining lexical choices, framing, ideology, and power relations.

3. Reflective application

Using discussion, role-play, and response tasks to apply pragmatic interpretations.

Results

Conceptual analysis suggests several outcomes.

Enhanced Pragmatic Interpretation

CDA helps learners identify:

- implied meanings
- indirect intentions
- hidden assumptions
- pragmatic ambiguity

This improves inferential interpretation.

Development of Critical Pragmatic Awareness

Students learn not only what speakers mean but how discourse constructs power, ideology, and social positioning.

This expands pragmatic awareness beyond interpersonal appropriateness.

Improved Critical Thinking

CDA-based analysis promotes:

- interpretation
- evaluation
- reflection
- argumentation

Greater Intercultural Awareness

Authentic texts expose students to culturally embedded pragmatic norms and support intercultural communicative competence.

Discussion

The analysis suggests that CDA enriches pragmatic instruction by linking language use with ideology and discourse power.

Traditional pragmatics teaching often focuses on formulas and appropriateness. CDA broadens this by helping learners critically examine how meaning is shaped socially.

Pedagogically, teachers can use:

- discourse analysis tasks
- critical questioning
- pragmatic noticing activities
- authentic text discussions

Such tasks integrate pragmatics with critical literacy.

Challenges may include complexity of CDA concepts and teacher preparedness, but scaffolded instruction can address these issues.

Conclusion

This article has argued that analyzing texts through Critical Discourse Analysis can strengthen students' pragmatic awareness.

By combining pragmatics and CDA, learners can develop:

- pragmatic competence
- critical literacy
- discourse awareness
- intercultural sensitivity

Authentic texts become resources for both language learning and critical inquiry.

Future research may empirically investigate the effectiveness of CDA-based pragmatic instruction in EFL classrooms.

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