

Teachers' Perceptions and Instructional Practices Regarding the Effects of Social, Discursive and Textual Practices on Students' Development of Critical Thinking: Applying CDA Approach in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract:

Teachers have a crucial role in EFL education in fostering critical thinking skills among learners. The current research delves into investigating teachers' use of discursive, textual, and social practices in developing critical thinking skills in EFL students. In doing so, the authors employed a parallel convergent mixed methods design, selecting 30 Translation-major students who were enrolled in reading comprehension course at Applied Scientific University (Rad) in Tehran. Participants were chosen through criterion sampling for the study. All individuals completed a modified version of a questionnaire, and teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured format to discuss their perceptions and practices related to CDA-based instruction. Additionally, researchers observed four classes to gain insight into the actual classroom practices. The data analysis results were triangulated, and the findings showed that using CDA can contribute to the development of students' critical thinking by promoting awareness of language as a social construct, enhancing critical reading comprehension skills, and encouraging critical reflection and discussion. The findings are useful for syllabus designers, EFL instructors, policy-makers, and materials developers to enhance the existing English language teaching curricula by giving greater consideration to CDA instruction.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Critical thinking, discursive practice, Social practice, Textual practice

INTRODUCTION

In the context of second and foreign language acquisition, critical thinking assumes a pivotal role in learners' language development for several reasons. It facilitates a deeper and more meaningful analysis and interpretation of language (Facione, 2013). Critical thinkers possess the ability to reflect upon their own thoughts and beliefs, consider diverse perspectives, and articulate their ideas effectively, thereby enabling them to identify errors, inconsistencies, or logical fallacies in their language use (Wale & Bishaw, 2020). This reflective process leads to enhanced accuracy in grammar, vocabulary, and overall language proficiency (Facione, 2013). Furthermore, critical thinking skills contribute to the promotion of learners' cultural sensitivity and awareness. By critically examining the cultural norms, values, and practices embedded in language use, learners are better equipped to communicate effectively and respectfully with native speakers of the target language (Zhou & Lin, 2019). Despite its significance, the development of critical thinking skills in second or foreign language contexts remains challenging, which explains why many EFL learners struggle to comprehend the intended meanings expressed in texts. According to Wale and Bishaw (2020), critical thinking skills empower learners to take ownership of their language learning journey by enabling them to critically evaluate learning resources, strategies, and techniques, and to make informed decisions regarding their learning goals and progress. Consequently, language scholars have been exploring innovative approaches to facilitate the development of critical thinking, one of which is critical discourse analysis (CDA)-based instruction. CDA is a theoretical framework that investigates the interplay between language use, power relations, and social structures (Fairclough, 1995). It examines how texts and discourses reflect and perpetuate dominant ideologies within specific contexts, such as the power dynamics between teachers and students. By analyzing teachers' social, discursive, and textual practices through the lens of CDA, researchers can gain deeper insights into how these practices influence student engagement with reading materials, comprehension of texts, and ultimately, the development of their critical thinking skills. Additionally, CDA enhances language proficiency by fostering text analysis skills, thereby improving reading, writing,

listening, and speaking competencies (Kashkuli et al., 2016; Rahimi & Sharififar, 2015).

Previous studies on the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in language education can be categorized into international research and investigations conducted within Iran. A substantial body of research aims to address the challenges associated with teaching CDA in language classrooms, thereby enabling EFL/ESL learners to enhance their abilities to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions across various domains beyond language acquisition (Facione, 2013). Fairclough (2001) developed a comprehensive tripartite model for discourse analysis, comprising three interrelated dimensions that build upon one another. Kapanadze (2018) examined the effects of employing discourse analysis methods in language and literature instruction on the cognitive and affective skills of 11th-grade students.

Hidayati (2019) explored the application of CDA in language classrooms to improve students' language proficiency and critical thinking skills through an action research project conducted in a response writing class at the English Language Education Study Program of Pakuan University in Indonesia. In higher education contexts, Wang and Ma (2022) investigated the utilization of CDA in teaching English reading at the college level, presenting CDA as a valuable theoretical framework and research methodology for analyzing discourse, particularly news discourse, which significantly influences individuals' attitudes and ideologies. Additionally, Dini (2022) highlighted the use of CDA as a pedagogical tool to develop critical thinking skills in early childhood education, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking in 21st-century learning and demonstrating how CDA can enhance children's language awareness and analytical abilities.

Within the Iranian context, Najarzadegan et al. (2018) assessed the impact of applying van Dijk's model of CDA on the critical thinking abilities of Iranian EFL undergraduates across different proficiency levels. Bonyadi (2019), through a literature review, elaborated on the current research regarding the integration of discourse analysis into language teaching practices, identifying three primary approaches adopted by language practitioners in educational settings. Furthermore, Najarzadegan (2022) investigated the effects of learning a CDA model on the reading comprehension skills of EFL university students at various proficiency levels. Abbasian and Malaei (2015) noted that implementing CDA-based instruction can be challenging due to the varying language proficiency levels of EFL learners.

Social, discursive, and textual practices grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) instruction have emerged as primary areas of focus for researchers in English Language Teaching (ELT). These dimensions encompass the examination of textual representations, the discursive practices involved in the processes of production, distribution, and consumption, and the societal practices that govern the utilization of discourse within various social contexts. Scholarly work indicates a growing consensus, particularly within the language research community, that cultivating students' critical thinking skills is not only advantageous but also essential. Critical thinking is regarded as a cross-disciplinary democratic tool, crucial for elucidating the relationship between literacy and CDA, as well as for combating powerlessness and enhancing the empowerment of individuals and groups.

Wu (2017) introduced discourse analysis as a potential approach to address these issues, explaining that it involves the study of language use beyond the sentence level, examining factors such as text structure, cohesion, and rhetorical organization. Two broad categories of discourse analysis are identified: macrostructure research, which focuses on the overall organization of the text, and microstructure research, which examines inter-sentence relationships. Several scholars have actively categorized and detailed the array of techniques available for a critical pedagogical approach, likely in response to critiques that vague methodologies could undermine the efficacy of critical discourse analysis.

In the educational context, the introduction of CDA across various settings necessitates meticulous attention to several factors: learners' enthusiasm, preferences, requirements, expectations, and aspirations; the compatibility of instructional content and strategies; institutional directives; and the cultural milieu. Although students generally find study materials and activities accessible and engaging, certain aspects of the lessons remain notably challenging, particularly tasks that require conceptual thinking, which pose difficulties for learners at intermediate levels or lower. CDA serves as a vital tool for enhancing communication, comprehension, and societal interaction by teaching individuals to interpret underlying meanings, listen more attentively to the true messages being

conveyed, and reflect deeply before expressing their thoughts verbally or in writing. However, there exists the potential for teacher practices to inadvertently impede the development of critical thinking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. While teachers may not intend to do so, their instructional strategies can unintentionally limit student engagement, discourage questioning, and reinforce a passive approach to critical thinking. In the specific context of EFL education, where students navigate linguistic and cultural boundaries, the influence of teachers' social, discursive, and textual practices on critical thinking abilities becomes particularly significant.

The current research holds significant implications for various stakeholders in the field of education, including learners, teachers, material developers, curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policymakers. It underscores the necessity for teachers to carefully scaffold instruction and provide appropriate support to bridge existing gaps, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the development of critical thinking skills through CDA-based instruction. Hence, the following research questions were addressed as follows:

RQ1. What are EFL learners' perceptions regarding the effects of CDA-based instruction through social, discursive, and textual practices on their development of critical thinking ability?

RQ2. What are EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the effects of CDA-based instruction through social, discursive and textual practices in developing EFL students' critical thinking ability?

METHOD

Participants

The present study encompasses both qualitative and quantitative phases, employing a parallel convergent mixed-methods approach for data collection. A total of 30 English language learners from the Applied Scientific University (Raad) were selected as research participants using criterion sampling. These participants comprised Iranian intermediate-level EFL learners of both genders, aged between 18 and 30 years. According to Creswell (2007), a population consists of individuals with similar characteristics from which a representative sample is drawn. Initially, the TOEFL test was administered as a placement criterion, and based on the test results, a homogeneous sample of 30 learners was chosen as the primary participants. In the quantitative phase, participants completed a critical thinking questionnaire in their respective classes. Subsequently, in the qualitative phase, all instructors from the reading classes participated in in-depth interviews to explore their perceptions of CDA-based treatments. Additionally, three instructors' classes were randomly designed for observation sessions.

Instruments

Three research instruments were utilized in this study. The first was a questionnaire designed to evaluate learners' perceptions regarding the teaching and learning of discursive, textual, and social practices based on CDA methodologies employed in their courses. Data collected from the questionnaire were integrated with information obtained from the second instrument, the interviews, to address the first research question. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview aimed at exploring instructors' beliefs and reported practices concerning the implementation of CDA approaches and the development of students' critical thinking abilities. The third instrument was an observation protocol used to assess the teaching of CDA approaches, as well as social, discursive, and textual exercises in foreign language classes, alongside evaluating students' critical thinking skills. The results from the interviews were combined with data from the observation protocol, and these findings were further integrated with the questionnaire data.

Instrument 1

The first instrument was a questionnaire (appendix A) derived from Abbasian & Malaei (2015) and developed by the authors, comprising 24 items designed to assess learners' perceptions of teaching social practices (items 1–6), discursive practices (items 7–12), and textual practices (items 13–18) based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches in reading classes. Additionally, the questionnaire included six items (items 19–24) related to the approaches and strategies were employed in courses for teaching CDA methodologies. This instrument aimed to evaluate learners' insights into the teaching and learning of social, discursive, and textual practices underpinned

by CDA methods utilized in their courses.

Prior to administration, the questionnaire underwent a pilot assessment to evaluate its reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.86$, which is considered acceptable. According to Taguchi and Dornyei (2010), a reliability index exceeding 0.60 indicates satisfactory reliability. Furthermore, language experts reviewed the questionnaire to confirm its face validity and recommended modifications to enhance clarity, leading to revisions of certain items based on expert feedback.

Instrument 2

The second instrument utilized was a semi-structured interview, designed to explore participants' claims and practices regarding the implementation of social, discursive, and textual practices based on the CDA approach during the pilot phase. To ensure content validity, five Ph.D. holders in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) evaluated the interview protocol through expert judgment. Their collective assessment yielded an 82% consensus on the validity of the interview items, thereby affirming the instrument's appropriateness for capturing instructors' beliefs and reported practices concerning the deployment of CDA methodologies and the enhancement of students' critical thinking skills.

Instrument 3

The third instrument was an observation protocol used to assess the implementation of CDA approaches, as well as social, discursive, and textual exercises in foreign language classrooms, alongside evaluating students' critical thinking abilities. During observational sessions, observers meticulously monitored instructors' practices and other relevant aspects related to the study's focus. The researcher documented classroom activities using structured checklists and detailed notes to gain a comprehensive understanding of CDA implementation. An inter-coder reliability assessment of the observation protocol yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating a high level of agreement among raters. Additionally, during the pilot phase, five TEFL Ph.D. holders evaluated the content validity of the classroom observation protocol through expert judgment, achieving an 81.5% consensus on its validity.

Procedure

To enhance the validity and credibility of the study, a parallel convergent mixed-methods design was employed. A triangulation approach was utilized to achieve the research objectives. A placement test was used to assign students to specific levels of language proficiency (Brown, 1994; Harmer, 2007; Hughs, 2003). A standardized TOEFL test was administered to determine a uniform group of participants based on their overall reading skills. First, the reliability of the TOEFL test was assessed via Cronbach's alpha, showing the value of .80, which can be considered acceptable. Generally, a reliability index above .60 can be adequate for a test (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Additionally, the face validity percentage of the TOEFL items was calculated by the reviews and comments of six experts in the field. The amount obtained was 84%, which is satisfactory. Afterward, based on the test results, a sample of 30 homogenous learners was designated as the main participants. Also, the criterion sampling was employed to select the sample. The criteria for selecting the sample here included the learners' majors, ages, and Language Proficiency levels. All participants majored in TEFL and Translation Studies. Their LP levels were upper-intermediate, and their ages ranged from 18 to 30. Learners completed a questionnaire in terms of perspectives concerning social, discursive, and textual practices based on CDA instruction. Subsequently, teachers participated in interviews to elaborate on their perspectives regarding CDA-based teaching within language courses as well as their opinions and practices about teaching social, discursive, and textual practices in reading classes. Additionally, three classes were observed on three separate occasions, each during a 90-minute instructional period. In all social, discursive, and textual classes, the instructors introduced a specific topic from the course book. This allowed the students to read the text throughout the week and carry out extra research on the topic. In all classes, discussions have been held regarding the topic and text of the lesson, but its strength and difficulty have been different. Using authentic material (PowerPoint, videos, based on real life issues related to chosen topic and text) as well as class text book is very important issue for instructors. All instructors participated in special workshop around the social, discursive, and textual practices through CDA instruction before the start of the academic semester in order to control the class intelligibly and effectively.

For example, in textual class teachers' focus was on individual words; grammar, examining combinations of words; cohesion, analyzing how phrases and clauses are interconnected and text structure, addressing the larger organizational properties of text. After that, students briefly analyzed the grammar used in the text and in the last step they discussed briefly around the topic and its content. In textual analysis confines its scope solely to the text itself, excluding considerations of social or contextual elements.

During the discursive practices class, in addition to linguistic analysis, students participated in discussions about the text and were assigned to write about the topic of the text. This activity allowed the students to take on the role of writers instead of readers. Additionally, this component serves as a crucial link connecting social practices with textual manifestations. Teachers were able to encourage a greater use of context, which came from the students' prior knowledge, of course, the function of language elements in this class was not ignored.

Finally, in the class centered on social practices, students examined the text using a series of questions deals with their own ideologies, belief systems, and worldviews to their interpretation of the text. The objective was to uncover the underlying ideologies and power dynamics within the text by challenging it and approaching it from a different perspective (Janks, 1997). The teacher also facilitated a discussion on how the social context influences readers' personal interpretations of the text and the writer's ideology.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data were processed with SPSS software, version 26, where descriptive statistics—including percentages, frequencies, standard deviations, and means—were calculated. For the qualitative data, which encompassed interviews and classroom observations, thematic analysis was employed. According to Ezzy (2002), coding involves the disassembling and reassembling of information. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurrent patterns within the qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2006).

FINDINGS

The findings of the questionnaire related to the learners' perceptions on teaching discursive, textual, and social practices based on CDA approach in their courses are presented in this part. The tables present the descriptive statistics related to the learners' perceptions on the CDA-based teaching.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: Learners' Perceptions towards Teaching Social Practices

Items	SD	D	A	SA	N	Mean	Standard D.
1. ' by using CDA principles namely social, practices in the reading classes' are you motivated more than before to have group discussion through English course?	-	-	18 60%	12 40%	30	4.40	.49
2. "By implementing CDA principle, namely social practices have you become more interested in analyzing text?"	-	5 16.6%	10 33.3%	15 50%	30	3.83	1.01
3 'After lerning CDA principles namely social practices' do you think you have reached an ability to analyze texts critically based on your own society?'	.82	-	5 16.7%	13 43.3%	12 40%	30	4.06
4. 'by providing the learners with general knowledge of CDA principles namely social practices ' are students	-	-	- 13	17	30	4.36	.49

motivated more to practice critical reading skill ?	43.3%	56.6%					
5"Is it essential for EFL teachers providing authentic materials, in teaching social practice based on CDA approach?"	-	-	-	7	5	30	4.10
							1.06
							23.3%
							16.6%
6. "In your opinion social practices along with textual and textual practices is effective in improving EFL learners' critical thinking ability?"	-	-		18	11	30	4.40
							.49
							63.3%
							36.6%

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree

As displayed in Table 1, concerning item 1 “ by using CDA principles namely social, practices in the reading classes’ are you motivated more than before to have group discussion through English course?”, all contributors approved or strongly agreed with it. The result is in line with the interview part. For example, instructor 2 has confessed:

“Social engagement is a valuable skill that fosters enduring proficiency in communication and group activities. Certainly, social literacy plays a pivotal role in an individual's achievement. Being able to express one's ideas and viewpoints in group discussion, along with the capacity to consider those of others, is fundamental to education”.

Half of the instructors 50.0 % strongly agreed with item 2 as “By implementing CDA principle, namely social practices have you become more interested in analyzing texts”, while 16.6 % disagreed with this idea. The result is in line with the findings of the interview. For example, instructor 1 mentioned that:

“Following the introduction of social practice, there has been a rise in analyzing most of the text and also engagement with explanatory activities. This is evident in various analytical practices such as employing personal and societal competencies, determining the genre and sociocultural intent of the text”.

Item 3 “by using CDA principles namely social practices in the reading classes” do you think you have reached an ability to criticize texts based on your own society” was accepted by most EFL learners and 43.3 % agreed, though 16.7 % disagreed. This result is also in line with the interview results as supported in the views presented by instructors. For example, instructor 3 mentioned that:

“Teachers can promote evaluative thinking is by providing students with opportunities for close reading and analysis of various texts. By guiding students through the process of critically analyzing these texts, teachers can help them identify underlying assumptions, biases, and persuasive techniques employed in the texts. This enables students to evaluate the credibility and reliability of the information presented and make informed judgments about its validity.”

Regarding item 4 “by using CDA principles namely social practices through in the reading classes’ are you motivated more to practice reading skill? Most contributors 43.3% agreed with this perception. The result is in line with the interview findings as 80% of the instructors considered social practice strategies in their teaching. For example, as instructor 3 mentioned that:

“In my perspective of view, the short term effect of implantation of social practices in reading courses would be the incitation of learners’ sense of curiosity, as they were exposed to an interesting context for learning. Teachers can promote evaluative thinking is by providing students with opportunities for close reading and analysis of various texts”.

Considering item 5 “Is it essential for EFL teachers providing authentic materials, which is related to students ‘experience in reading classes? Most of the learners 60.0 % were impartial, whereas 23.3% agreed with that statement. The result supports the interview part. For example, instructor 9 proposed that:

“Authentic materials provide exposure to real and current language use, which can help students develop their all four skills in a more natural and meaningful way”. The result supports the interview part”

Concerning item 6 “in your opinion, social practices are effective in improving EFL learners ‘critical thinking ability?” most of the contributors (63.3%) agreed and the rest, strongly agreed. The result supports the interview part. For example, instructor 6 mentioned that:

“The objective of this model is to integrate three distinct analytical approaches: examination of language texts (whether spoken or written), scrutiny of discourse practices (encompassing the creation, dissemination, and reception of texts), and exploration of discursive occurrences as examples of socio-cultural activities. Therefore, it's crucial for educators to thoroughly comprehend this dimension to effectively apply in English classes especially in (EFL) reading classes”.

Table 2 presents the learners’ perceptions towards teaching discursive practiced based on CDA approach. As displayed in this table, with respect to item 7 “by using CDA principles namely discursive practices in the reading classes’ are you motivated more than before to have group discussion through English course?” all contributors approved or strongly agreed with it. The result is in line with the interview section. For example, instructor 1 proposed:

“In the realm of discursive practice, it is important for instructors to maintain an open-minded approach, appreciate the diversity among students, and show respect for varied opinions, perspectives, and proposals while being receptive to novel concepts. Teachers ought to consistently motivate their students to participate in group discussion, share their ideas and pursue their aspirations through cooperation”.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics: Learners’ Perceptions towards Teaching Discursive Practices

Items	SD	D	A	SA	N	Mean	Standard D.
7. ‘ by using CDA principles namely discursive practices in the reading classes’ are you motivated more than before to have group discussion through English course?	-	-	18	12	30	4.40	.49
	60%		40%				
8. "By implementing CDA principle, namely discursive practices have you become more interested in analyzing text?"	-	6	17	7	30	3.83	1.01
	20%	56.6%	23.3%				
9 ‘by using CDA principles namely discursive practices in the reading classes’ do you think you have reached an ability to analyze the texts critically based on your own society?’	-	3	19	8	30	4.06	.82
	10%	63.3%	26.6%				
10. ‘by providing the learners with general knowledge of CDA principles namely discursive practices’ are they motivated more to practice critical reading skill?	-	-	24	6	30	4.36	.49
	80%		20%				
11"Is it essential for EFL teachers							

<i>providing authentic materials, in teaching social practice based on CDA approach?".</i>	-	5	-	12	13	30	4.10	1.06
	16.7%		40%		43.3%			
12. <i>"In your opinion, discursive practices practice along with textual and social practices is effective in improving EFL learners' critical thinking ability?"</i>	-	-		19	11	30	4.40	.49
	63.3%			36.6%				

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree

The majority of the learners (56.6 %) concurred with Item 8 “By implementing CDA principle, namely discursive practices have you become more interested in analyzing text?, though 20.0 % showed disagreement with this item. This finding is in consistency with the results obtained from interview. For instance, Instructor 3 stated that:

“As conceptualized by Foucault, discursive practices pertain to the actions within discourses that contribute to the formation of knowledge, rather than the use of language itself. The emphasis is on the diverse and specific practices in analyzing the text that generate knowledge in various contexts”.

Concerning Item 9 ‘by using CDA principles namely discursive practices in the reading classes’ do you think you have reached an ability to criticize texts based on your own society?’ ‘Was agreed by majority of learners (63.3 %), while 10.0 % showed disagreement. This finding is in agreement with the results obtained in interview. For instance, Instructor 1 mentioned that:

“Discursive practice encouraged learners to actively engage with the text and critically analyze its content”.

EFL learners all showed agreement on Item 10 “. ‘by using CDA principles namely discursive practices in the reading classes’ are you motivated more to practice reading skill”

Most candidates (80.0%) considered discursive practices as an essential strategy to improve learners’ critical thinking ability and it motivated them more to practice reading in English courses. This finding is in agreement with the results obtained in interview. For example, instructor 2 mentioned that:

“Based on discursive practice, it is essential for teachers to maintain an open-minded approach, appreciate the diversity among students, and show respect for varied opinions, perspectives, and proposals while being receptive to novel concepts. Teachers ought to consistently motivate their students to remain optimistic and pursue their aspirations.”

The EFL instructors mostly (43.3 %) showed their agreement with Item 11 “Is it essential for EFL teachers providing authentic materials, which is related to students ‘experience in reading classes?’. However, 16.7 % showed disagreement with this concept. This finding is consistent with findings obtained in the interview. For instance, Instructor 1 mentioned:

“A major aspect of language is to use of authentic materials which is important to help learners involve in thinking process. Being involved in real situation, learners can easily identify and correct their mistakes”.

In addition, regarding Item 12 “In your opinion, discursive practices is effective in improving EFL learners’ critical thinking ability?” The findings align with the interview segment. For instance, Instructor 2 noted that:

“In my perspective of view, the short term effect of implantation of discursive practices in reading courses would be the incitation of learners’ sense of curiosity, and thinking critically. Teachers can promote evaluative thinking is by providing students with opportunities for close reading and analysis of various texts. By guiding students through the process of critically analyzing these texts, teachers can help them identify underlying assumptions, biases, and persuasive techniques employed in the texts. This enables students to evaluate the credibility and reliability of the information presented and make informed judgments about its validity.”

Table 3 gives insights of instructors concerning instructing discursive practices based on CDA approach.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics: Learners' Perceptions towards Teaching Textual Practices*

Items	SD	D	A	SA	N	Mean	Standard D.			
13. ‘ by using CDA principles namely textual practices in the reading classes’ are you motivated more than before to have group discussion through English course?	-	-	-	24	6	30	4.40	.49		
	80%		20%							
14. "By implementing CDA principle, namely textual practices have you become more interested in analyzing text?"	-	-	3	17	10	30	3.83	1.01		
	10%	56.6%		33.3%						
15 ‘by using CDA principles namely textual practices in the reading classes’ do you think you have reached an ability to analyze the texts critically based on your own society?’	-	-	5	13	12	30	4.06			
	16.7%		43.3%	40%						
16. ‘by providing the learners with general knowledge of CDA principles namely textual practices’ are they motivated more to practice reading skill critically?		-	-	-	21	5	4	30	4.36	.49
	70%	16.6%	13.3%							
17"Is it essential for EFL teachers providing authentic materials, in teaching textual practices based on CDAapproach?"		-	-	-	3	25	2	30	4.10	1.06
	83.3%		6.6%							
18. "In your opinion textual practice along with discursive and social practices are effective in improving EFL learners’ critical thinking ability?"	-	-	-	18	12	30	4.40	.49		
	60%		40%							

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree

As observed in Table 3, regarding Item 13, "by using CDA principles namely textual practices in the reading classes' are you motivated more than before to have group discussion through English course?", All participants either confirmed or strongly agreed with it. This outcome is consistent with the interview section. For instance, Instructor 1 stated that:

"Textual analysis, specifically the descriptive aspect, is demonstrated through analytical methods like aiding students in expanding their vocabulary and honing their language abilities among the group to fulfill their needs and desires, which is a crucial instructional objective in initial reading classes.

Similarly, majority of instructors (56.6 %) showed agreement with Item 14 "By implementing CDA principle, namely textual practices have you become more interested in analyzing text?", Meanwhile, 10.0% disagreed with this idea. This outcome aligns with the interview findings. For instance, Instructor 2 suggested that:

"Numerous essential developmental milestones are linked to the learners' proficiency in utilizing language

appropriately and timely. The ability to analyze the texts and also ink concepts both within and across sentences is vital for students to grasp the entirety of the text”.

Item 15 “by using CDA principles namely textual practices in the reading classes’ do you think you have reached an ability to criticize texts based on your own society?”, was accepted with by majority of EFL instructors, and 43.3 % showed agreement with it, while 16.6 % showed disagreement. The result aligns with the findings from the interview section. For instance, Instructor 13 stated that:

“The text serves as a written documentation of an event where communication occurred, presenting factual information and beliefs, often imbued with ideological underpinnings. Furthermore, it involves constructing identities of the participants conferred in the communication and employs approaches for framing the message content. But this dimension of analysis centers on the textual representation itself, emphasizing the formal and semantic aspects of the written language within the text under scrutiny.”

When responding item 16, “by using CDA principles namely textual practices through in the reading classes’ are you motivated more to practice reading skill?”, the majority of EFL instructors, 70.0%, disagreed, while 16.6% agreed with that idea. This section's results are consistent with the interview findings. For instance, Instructor 2 suggested that:

“The involvement and enthusiasm of students are essential for impactful instruction. Through the use of textual practices, adept educators frequently assess the classroom's dynamics to measure student interest in the content and determine if measures are needed to boost their engagement, curiosity and also critical thinking ability”.

Regarding item 17, “Is it essential for EFL teachers providing authentic materials, which is related to students ‘experience in reading classes?’” using authentic content is favored by EFL learners. Majority of instructors (83.3 %) declared their agreement, while 10.0 % reported disagreement on this idea. The result reinforces the interview section. For instance, Instructor 2 noted that:

“Learners desire to utilize authentic materials in learning process because it enables them to investigate, discuss, and profoundly develop relations and concepts within contexts involving real-world issues and projects related to the learners.”

Furthermore, concerning Item 18 ““in your opinion textual practice along with discursive and social practices is effective in improving EFL learners’ critical thinking ability?” Sixty percent of the contributors agreed. This outcome aligns with the interview section. For instance, Instructor 1 stated that:

“Critical thinking strategies encompass the deliberate and specific techniques employed to assist readers in interpreting text into understanding. Textual, discursive, and social practices enhance skills in decoding and understanding text are advantageous to all learners, yet they are crucial for novice readers, those who face thinking challenges, and students learning English as a new language.”

Table 4 presents the methods and approaches employed in teaching social, discursive, and textual practices based on CDA approach. According to this table, the EFL instructors mostly (66.66%) showed a preference on using general CDA knowledge in instructing social, discursive, and textual practices in each classes. The results of item 19 (use of general CDA knowledge) align with those of item 6 from the observation (refer to Table 5). For instance, they learn how language can be utilized as a tool to maintain or challenge existing power structures and they are encouraged to challenge to use language strategically to express their own perspectives and promote positive change, by instructor 1 from social practice class. Similarly, the majority of instructors (83.33%) indicated that they prefer using pair work when teaching CDA practices. The results of item 22 (use of pair work) correspond with item 1 from the observation checklist. For instance, instructor 3 employed pair work during the textual analysis class. Group discussions (item 20) are employed by 66.66% of teachers. This finding is in agreement with item 1 of the observation. For instance,

Instructor1 in social practice class employed group discussion activities to instruct social practice analysis of the texts. Teachers choose relevant texts that align with students’ interest and the topics being discussed in class.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics; Methods and Techniques Used in Teaching Social, Discursive, and Textual*

Practices

Items	Very Much	Much	Moderate	A Little	Little	N
19. Providing learners with general knowledge of social, discursive, and textual practices based on class strategies	20 66.66%	10 33.3%	-	-	-	30
20. Employ non-lectured learning activities through CDA instruction. Learners are encouraged to have group discussion.	20 66.66%	10 33.3%	-	-	-	30
21. Enhancing cultural knowledge and explicit language use	25 83.33%	5 16.67%	-	-	-	30
22. pair work activity in well-organized content	25 83.33%	-	5 16.7%	-	-	30
23. Analyzing the texts with critical thinking view	5 16.67%	25 83.33%	-	-	-	30
24. Using awareness raising activities in analyzing the texts	25 83.33%	5 16.67%	-	-	-	30

N = Number of Participants

Observation checklist data were analyzed using frequency counts. Table 5 below shows the observation scheme regarding teaching CDA approaches through social practices in reading classes. Regarding the first item (see table 5) the majority of the instructors (100 %) used social practices through CDA , and based on the second item, the most of the instructors (88,83 %) used group discussion activities and non-lectured learning during the class activities, and according to the third item, (100%) of learners motivated to do social practice based on CDA. Also, (83.33 %) of the instructors applied authentic materials and well- organized content in class. Regarding the item 5 (see table 6) the majority of the instructors (83.33 %) used text analysis during the reading course and (100 %) of the instructors applied CDA strategies through reading course.

Table 5. *Observation Scheme Regarding Teachers' Use of Social Practices Based on CDA Approach*

Items	Never	Seldom	Moderate	Much	Very Much	N
1. Learners are encouraged to have group discussion by teachers 'power through social practices based on CDA approach on learners' CT in reading classes.	- 100%	-	-	-	3	3
2. Employ non-lectured learning activities through CDA instruction.	- 16.66	- 83.33%	-	1	2	3
3. Implementing CDA & CT in reading course to increase learners' motivation and interest."	- 100%	-	-	3	3	
4. Well-organized content presented through teachers' power based on CDA.	- 16.66 %	-	- 83.33%	-	1	2 3

5. Employ social, discursive, and textual practices through. CDA instruction to analyze the texts.	- 3 16.66	1 83.33%	2
6. Teaching CDA strategies and implementing those in the course.	- 100 %	- 3	- 3

The item 1 of the questionnaire result was in agreement with that of item 1 of the observation questions emphasizing on the application of CDA practices namely social practice among the students and encouraged to have group discussion as a critical thinking strategy. The majority of instructors (100%) endorsed the findings of this section, which indicated that learners' confidence was boosted and they were able to create more ideas related to the group discussion topics.

Consistent with the observation results, most of participants (80 %) maintained that through discussions and reflections, students share their interpretations, identify patterns, and discuss the underlying ideologies and power relations in the texts.

Besides, item 2 from the questionnaire results support Item 5 of the observation pattern that is associated with using the analysis of the texts through social, discursive and textual practices, students learn to identify biases, stereotypes, and hidden meaning in language use by engage in analysis process. Consistent with the observation results, most of participants (60 %) preferred to use text analysis strategies as a beneficial approach by which students learn how to effectively analyze and interpret different type of texts, enabling them to better understand and produce language in various contexts, can share information with one another and enhance their learning.

The result of item 5 of the questionnaire corresponded to that of the observation 6th item related to the strategies and approaches used in the class indicating that; by engaging with various written materials, learners encountered new words, idiomatic expressions, and sentence patterns, leading to improved overall language proficiency. The majority (100 %) of instructors preferred to use authentic materials as a beneficial approach via which students can share information with one another and enhance learning. Reading authentic texts exposed learners to the culture and customs of the target language community, instructor 1 used authentic text to practice social issue.

Table 6 below showed the descriptive statistics with regard to observation scheme pertained to teaching CDA through discursive practices. Regarding the first item of Table 4.21, majority of the instructors (83.33 %) used discursive practices, which establishes the rules and norms of socially acceptable conduct and defines specific roles or relationships used for producing and interpreting messages. and 100% of the instructors used group discussion activities. Most of the instructors (83.33 %) applied well –organized content and 100% of the instructors used CDA strategies in reading classes.

Table 6. Observation Scheme Regarding Teachers' Use of Discursive Practices Based on CDA Approach

Items	Never	Seldom	Moderate	Much	Very Much	N
7. Learners are encouraged to have group discussion by teachers 'use of discursive practices based on CDA approach in reading classes.	- 16.66	- 83.33%	-	1 2	3 3	
8. Employ non-lectured learning activities through CDA instruction.	- 16.66	- 83.33%		1	2	3
9. Implementing CDA in reading course to increase learners' motivation and interest."	- 100%	-	-	3	3	
10. Well-organized content presented through	-	-	-		1	2

teachers' power based on CDA.	3				
	16.66 %	83.33%			
11. Employ social, discursive, and textual practices through. CDA instruction to analyze the texts.	-	1	2	3	
	16.66	83.33%			
12. Teaching CDA strategies and implementing those in reading course.	-	-	-	3	3
	100 %				

The results of item 20 from the questionnaire support item 7 of the observation scheme, which examines the use of group discussion activities in discursive practice. Additionally, the majority of instructors (83.33%) endorsed the use of group discussions, believing that such activities help learners identify their mistakes and weaknesses.

Additionally, findings for the second item if the questionnaire is in line with Item 11 of the observation pattern, which studies the impact of CDA practices for instruction of text analysis. CDA practice encourages learners to actively engage with the text and critically analyze its content this idea also strongly supports item 8 of questionnaire. 83.33% of the teachers observed in this work supported the findings from this section; for instance, according to Instructor 3 from discursive practice class, one of the main goals of CDA-based instruction is to develop students' critical thinking by engaging them in the analysis of texts and discourses.

Moreover, findings for Items 21-22 of the questionnaire concerning approaches and strategies are in consistency with Item 12 in the observation pattern, which examines the impact of authentic materials, well organized content, and also cultural knowledge on instruction of CDA practices. 100% of the observed instructors support the findings in this part. Also, most of interviewees (66.7 %) agreed on using authentic material tasks in instruction of CDA approach that results in the learners' development in reading classes.

Table 7 showed the descriptive statistics regarding observation scheme related to the CDA instruction. In relation to Item 1 in this table, all teachers (100 %) utilized textual practices via CDA strategies. In addition, another 83.33% of the teachers employed group discussion tasks although not very much. Majority of instructors (83.33 %) focused on well-organized content and analyzing texts in reading classes in moderate way. In addition, 83.33% % of the instructors used CDA based strategy through textual practices.

Table 7. Observation Scheme Regarding Teachers' Use of Textual Practices Based on CDA Approach

Items	Never	Seldom	Moderate	Much	Very Much	N
13. Learners are encouraged to have group discussion by teachers 'use of textual practices based on CDA approach in reading classes.	-	-	-	3	3	
	100%					
14. Employ non-lectured learning activities through CDA instruction.	-	-	-	2	1	3
	83.33%		16.66			
15. Implementing CDA in reading course to increase learners' motivation and interest."	-	-	-	2	1	3
	83.33%		16.66%			
16. Well-organized content presented based on CDA.	-	-	-	1	2	3
	16.66 %		83.33%			
17. Employ social, discursive, and textual practices through. CDA instruction to analyze the texts and also	-	-	2	1	--	3
	83.33%		16.66			

awareness raising activities.	
18. Teaching CDA strategies and implementing those in reading course.	- - 2 1 -- 3 83.33% 16.66 %

Results of Item 22 of the questionnaire are in line with Item 18 of the observation pattern that examines the influence of instructing CDA strategies in reading course and 83.33% of the instructors presented instructional practices supporting findings of this section. For instance, Instructor 3 in textual practices class clarified about CDA strategies, and also pair working in well-organized content through the analysis of real-life texts. Likewise, results of item 1,7,13, and 20 of the questionnaire are in agreement with Item 13 of the observation scheme, focusing on group discussion through CDA-based activities. Furthermore, all instructors (100%) advocated for the use of group discussions. Consistent with the observation results, the majority (83.33%) of interviewees supported employing group discussions through explicit teaching strategies related to social, discursive, and textual practices based on the CDA approach. They believed that group discussions enhanced learners' knowledge of the CDA approach and improved their understanding of the subject matter. Similarly, the findings of Item 24 of the questionnaire are in line with Item 17 of the observation scheme that surveys the effect of application of awareness raising tasks in analyzing the texts, and instructional practices of 83.33 % of the instructors observed in this study. Furthermore, consistent with the observation findings, most (66.7 %) of the participants believed in applying text analysis in instruction of CDA-based practices that results in the better understanding of the hidden meaning in language use.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the quantitative results addressing the first research question—pertaining to learners' perceptions of CDA instruction through social, discursive, and textual practices—demonstrated a significant enhancement in the critical thinking abilities of Iranian EFL learners compared to the control group, which exhibited no notable improvement. Additionally, findings from the observation scheme and semi-structured interviews related to the second research question confirmed that instructors predominantly employed social, discursive, and textual strategies based on the CDA approach. These strategies facilitated a deeper comprehension of the texts and contributed to the enhancement of critical thinking abilities within the EFL classroom.

A majority of instructors concurred that social practices inspired by CDA-based instruction could develop learners' critical thinking skills in multiple ways. These findings align with previous research (Bonyadi, 2019; Wu, 2017), which suggests that social practices encourage learners to engage in meaningful interactions, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the text. Furthermore, observations and interviews regarding the implementation of group discussion tasks corroborate studies by Kapanadze (2018), indicating that through discussing and sharing interpretations, learners are exposed to diverse perspectives and are motivated to critically analyze content. This collaborative construction of meaning and consideration of alternative viewpoints leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the text.

Moreover, through discussions, debates, and group activities, learners are able to apply critical thinking strategies in real-life contexts. This not only reinforces their comprehension of the material but also aids in the development of language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Consistent with Hamdi (2022), the study found that social practices foster a sense of community and belonging among learners. Collaborative learning and mutual support enhance motivation and engagement in the reading process.

The results from questionnaires, observations, and interviews regarding the use of authentic materials in social practice classes are consistent with findings by Wang and Ma (2022), who emphasized that social practices provide learners with opportunities to use language in authentic contexts. Most instructors highlighted that a positive social environment creates a safe space for learners to take risks, ask questions, and explore various interpretations, thereby augmenting their critical thinking abilities.

Therefore, the findings from the questionnaires, observations, and interviews align with previous studies (Abbasian & Malae, 2015; Hidayati, 2019), indicating that teachers' utilization of social practices inspired by

the CDA-based instruction effectively develops learners' critical thinking abilities by promoting meaningful interactions, providing opportunities for authentic language use, and encouraging the cultivation of critical thinking skills.

The majority of instructors participating in this study concentrated on analyzing texts through discursive practices within EFL classrooms, thereby facilitating the development of learners' critical thinking abilities. The findings from observations and interviews corroborate prior research by Wu (2017) and Hazaea and Alzubi (2017), which demonstrated that discursive practices encourage learners to actively engage with texts and critically analyze their content. Additionally, the use of group discussions and pair-work activities within discursive practices aligns with studies by Javadi and Mohammadi (2019), Wang and Ma (2022), and Hashemi and Ghanizadeh (2012). These studies emphasize that discussions and debates prompt learners to question underlying assumptions, biases, and power dynamics within texts.

Discursive practices assist learners in establishing the rules and norms of socially acceptable conduct and in defining specific roles or relationships used for producing, receiving, and interpreting messages. Furthermore, these practices foster a collaborative learning environment where learners can support each other's critical thinking skills. The results of this investigation support previous findings by Abbasian and Malaee (2015) and Esquivel (2019), who observed that engaging in discussions and sharing interpretations enables learners to collectively construct meaning and deepen their understanding of texts. Therefore, discursive practices inspired by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)-based instruction effectively develop learners' critical thinking by promoting critical analysis, encouraging multiple perspectives, providing language practice opportunities, fostering collaboration, and creating a supportive learning environment.

The majority of instructors in this study emphasized enhancing learners' abilities to critically evaluate reading texts, which led to a deeper understanding of the material and improved capacities to interpret and analyze complex ideas. The results from interviews and observations revealed that discursive practices offer learners opportunities to explore multiple perspectives and consider alternative viewpoints. This exposure to diverse perspectives facilitates the development of a more comprehensive and critical understanding of the reading material.

Moreover, the present study found that textual practices within CDA-based instruction also contribute significantly to the development of learners' critical thinking abilities. Textual practice involves engaging in close reading and textual analysis, encouraging learners to examine the structure, organization, and coherence of texts, as well as the relationships between different parts of a text. The findings support previous research by Abbasian and Malaee (2015), who indicated that close reading promotes attention to detail and the ability to critically evaluate the logical flow and coherence of arguments presented in texts. Additionally, textual practices often encourage learners to critically assess multiple perspectives, identify contradictions or inconsistencies, and recognize the limitations or biases present in different texts.

In summary, the results of this investigation corroborate previous studies by Johnstone (2018), Wu (2017), and Karagiannaki & Stamou (2018), which emphasize that CDA-based instruction focuses on uncovering the underlying power dynamics, assumptions, and biases within texts. This approach aids learners in developing a deeper understanding of the author's intentions and the social context in which the text was produced. By engaging in discursive practices, learners are encouraged to actively question and challenge the content of the text. This critical examination fosters higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing and evaluating information, which are essential for comprehending complex texts. Additionally, through conversations with others, learners are exposed to diverse perspectives that challenge their own assumptions and broaden their understanding of the material (Dini, 2022).

Regarding the use of CDA-based instruction, the findings align with previous studies by Alsoraihi (2019) and Karagiannaki & Stamou (2018), which highlight the effectiveness of teachers employing social, discursive, and textual practices rooted in the CDA approach. Active engagement with texts through activities like group discussions, debates, and role-plays encourages learners to construct meaning actively, fostering critical thinking skills and promoting a deeper understanding of the content. This approach emphasizes the development of critical literacy skills that extend beyond surface-level comprehension (Esquivel, 2019; Xiong & Qian, 2012). Learners

are prompted to question dominant discourses and challenge social injustices through their reading and interpretation of texts, empowering them to become active societal participants capable of critically analyzing and evaluating information (Stamou, 2018; Wu, 2017).

CONCLUSION

To summarize, this study aimed to investigate the perceptions and practices of EFL instructors and learners regarding the use of social, discursive, and textual practices through CDA-based instruction within the Iranian context. The findings indicate that both instructors and learners largely endorsed CDA-based instruction in reading classes for teaching these practices. Consequently, this study underscores the significance of CDA as a pedagogical approach for fostering critical thinking and emphasizes the role of educators in utilizing social, discursive, and textual practices to facilitate this cognitive process.

The results pertaining to the first research question revealed that the implementation of social practices grounded in CDA instruction enhances learners' critical thinking abilities. These findings align with previous studies (e.g., Abbasian & Malae, 2015; Hidayati, 2019), which suggest that teachers' integration of social practices inspired by CDA can cultivate critical thinking by promoting meaningful interactions, providing opportunities for authentic language use, fostering a sense of community, and encouraging the development of critical analytical skills. Additionally, the study found that an emphasis on discursive practices can further facilitate learners' critical thinking development. This is consistent with the perspectives of advocates who have highlighted the effectiveness of discursive practices in enhancing learners' critical thinking capabilities (Javadi & Mohammadi, 2019; Wu, 2017; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2017; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012). Furthermore, the findings indicate that the use of textual practices within CDA instruction also contributes to improved critical thinking abilities among learners. These outcomes are corroborated by earlier research (Abbasian & Malae, 2015), which noted that the language proficiency levels of EFL learners can present challenges in implementing CDA-based instruction. Developing critical thinking skills necessitates a robust foundation in language proficiency, encompassing vocabulary and grammar. EFL learners who are still in the early stages of language acquisition may encounter difficulties in engaging with complex texts and effectively applying critical analysis (Hazaea & Alzubi, 2017).

Regarding the second research question, results from interviews and observations indicated that a majority of teachers favored CDA-based instruction as a means to enhance learners' critical thinking. The findings demonstrated that teachers held positive attitudes toward the incorporation of social, discursive, and textual practices informed by CDA instruction in higher educational contexts. These results support previous research that reflects teachers' favorable dispositions toward CDA-based instruction in educational settings (e.g., Alsoraihi, 2019; Karagiannaki & Stamou, 2018; Esquivel, 2019; Xiong & Qian, 2012; Johnstone, 2018; Wu, 2017).

The findings of the current study offer valuable insights into the content of syllabi and textbooks, thereby providing guidance for syllabus designers, material developers, and educational administrators, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This research aims to enrich existing English language teaching curricula.

However, this study is not without limitations. It focused exclusively on the development of critical thinking skills among EFL learners. Future research should consider incorporating additional language skills to provide a more comprehensive understanding of language acquisition. To enhance the applicability of the findings, subsequent studies could involve a larger and more diverse sample of EFL learners.

Moreover, this investigation was conducted specifically among Iranian EFL learners and instructors. Future research could benefit from exploring the perspectives and practices of learners and instructors in non-Iranian contexts, thereby broadening the scope of the findings. The participants in this study were drawn from English language instructors and learners at the Applied Scientific University (Raad), which may limit the generalizability of the results regarding the perceptions and instructional practices of all Iranian English language instructors and learners.

Last but not least, the participants were selected through criterion sampling, suggesting that alternative sampling methods could yield more generalizable results. Future studies employing varied methodologies would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of critical thinking development in EFL contexts.

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