

Izabela Dąbrowska

Cross-disciplinary literacy: supporting cultural content study through language analysis

1. Introduction

To function successfully in the present-day world people need to develop special literacies enabling them to move across various content fields. It is the more important as they increasingly wish to learn to understand the world on their own from their personal interactions with others, cultural conventions or the omnipresent exposure and interaction with public media, including the most powerful resource – the Internet (Wallace, 2003: 8). However, one's own independence in discovering how the world is structured and run and how it is described in the language sphere is very often illusionary. It thus becomes crucial to advocate solutions which highlight the need to read and reason with information of varying types and complexities. Such an attitude may help to engage with the broad knowledge that in today's world transcends national and cultural borders.

As indicated, the main mode through which most of the sources provide information is language in a written or spoken form. Accordingly, to strengthen one's understanding of the way it is used in different subject areas it is indispensable to develop the ability to discern how it is employed to mean and act. The most common form through which language works in different subject matters is text seen as “the primary medium through which disciplinary knowledge is produced, stored, communicated and critiqued” (Fang and Schleppegrell, 2011: 9). Its comprehension and critical evaluation may enhance one's “greater control over a wide range of language use in daily life” (Wallace, 2003: 48). It may further effectively influence one's future active participation in a society as reading and understanding texts is an integral part of everyday life.

2. Critical reading as an educational challenge

Having the above in mind, it may be said that comprehending advanced knowledge of numerous disciplines is a must in the present day world. However, acquiring such a skill requires apprenticeship that could develop one's expertise. Educational environment becomes a prime place to be involved in critical

literacy as it is where students most often engage with their first disciplinary texts, reflect on them and evaluate the points of specialised information. The same pertains to language learners who engage in instructional activities that simultaneously support academic literacy development and content-areas learning. These include, among others, interacting with text, asking and answering questions and focusing on textual structures or discourse features of different types (Fang and Shleppegrell, 2011: 3). Such efforts help students analyse the ways in which languages, be it national, vernacular or foreign, construct knowledge templates. Furthermore, these activities enrich content learning by fostering students' cognitive development and flexibility (Lyster, 2007: 3).

The rationale for more critical literacy in education is unquestionable. What makes it a challenge is the fact that at lower levels students are not ready to engage with texts constructed in complex language patterns. With time, as the instruction becomes more formalised, they encounter more sophisticated language structures (Halliday, 1993; Fang and Shleppegrell, 2011). It is not the linguistic complexity of the text though that becomes the main challenge. Instead, as Fang and Shleppegrell emphasise (2011: 4), it is how advanced textual markers are used to function in particular fields. Advanced disciplinary knowledge requires more specialised language patterns as complex meanings cannot be precisely conveyed in everyday language. Students need to recognise the way the information is packaged to build up larger meaningful units. This may further enable them to accumulate knowledge and advance in the field. Besides, by scrutinising content-specific linguistic forms, they can also learn how to discern authors' viewpoints; a crucial aspect of critical reading (ibidem).

3. Analytical models in education – Critical Discourse Analysis

There are several models that help increase students' proficiency by teaching content not *in*, but *with* and *through* the foreign language. One of the most popular is the functional language analysis approach (FLA). The approach was initially developed by linguist Michael Halliday (1978) to be later used by educators and researchers. With time, it provided a foundation for pedagogical principles in teaching culture, history, literature or science by showing how features enable the text to mean what it does (Wallace, 2003; Fang and Schleppegrell, 2011). The approach provides a meaning-based metalanguage that can be employed to talk about texts. Furthermore, FLA offers concrete strategies that enable teachers to be explicit about how language works to present complex, technical and abstract information in different content areas.

By showing students how language is designed to build up knowledge, the approach offers practical solutions for supporting their engagement with texts. It allows them to do detailed analysis and recognise language forms that are typical and functional in particular content fields. This way students simultaneously learn through language and about language. This in turn facilitates their better understanding of content matters as it engages them with the purpose and values of the discipline into which they are apprenticed. Finally, they may become independent readers in their disciplines (Fang and Schleppegrell, 2011: 12).

FLA has become an influential stand in education and has helped other analytical resources like a related Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which holds much promise for educational research. As Rogers (2003: 3) admits, those using CDA approach can describe, interpret and explain the relationship among language and important issues like economic trends, national policies or educational practices. Besides, it allows for identifying patterns of language use at the societal level, which are of educational and cultural significance (Wallace, 2003: 46).

The CDA model was widely accepted and popularised by Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003). His analytical procedures involve a three-tiered scheme which includes description, interpretation and explanation of discursive relations and social practices at the local, institutional and societal domains of analysis. At the local level, it relates to a particular text, i.e. a newspaper text, or a school board report. The institutional domain concerns a more abstract sphere and discusses how institutions facilitate or constrain the local level. Finally, the societal domain discusses policies and narratives that shape the lower levels (Fairclough, 2003: 10).

The presented analytical framework was further developed by incorporating elements of systematic functional linguistics. These comprised genre, discourse and style as the three properties of language that operate within and among the local, institutional and societal domains (Chouliarki and Fairclough, 1999: 7). Such a widened approach won the recognition as it let analysts move between a micro- and macro-investigation of texts. As Rogers (2003: 7) underlines, the procedures made CDA a systematic method rather than a haphazard analysis of discourse and power. Further, it became more accessible to apply than other alternative theoretical models (Richardson, 2007: 38). Undeniably, the method provides a metalanguage framework on which students can draw to sharpen their cultural awareness while analysing chosen languages stretches (Wallace, 2003: 37).

Fairclough's analyses were credited with considering such vital issues as the questions of social injustice or institutional power. They were primarily conducted at MBA courses and business environment to instruct marketing specialists, managers and businessmen how to design their specialised texts. However, they were criticised for their tending to focus on the critique of large-scale media and formal bureaucratic institutions and regularly neglecting to analyse context (Widdowson, 1998).

4. Gee's CDA model

A more practical and accessible strand in CDA was initiated by Gee's work (1999/2011). It became very influential in educational environment as it offers a range of creative analyses of stories, video-games, policy documents or other popular texts such as labels, advertisements and the like. Additionally, as Collins (2004: xxiii) admits, Gee's framework features a synthesis of insights from formal and functional linguistics, cognitive sciences and post-modern literary theory. It involves historical and sociological research on society, schooling and literacy, to which New Literacy Scholars refer as fast capitalism. In the approach, the top-down model of doing business or conducting classroom activities has been abandoned for a 'community of practice,' which is characterised by joined problem solving and flexible and creative working style in the construction and distribution of knowledge.

Gee (2004: 48) uses the term discourse with a small 'd' to talk about language in use, or the way language is used in social context to 'enact' activities and identities. Little 'd' refers to language bits or the grammar of what is said. In his view, the basic premise of the whole enterprise of discourse analysis is to understand **how** people write or say things (i.e. what **form** they use). This helps to constitute **what** they do (i.e. what **function** the text performs). In turn, what is written or said informs **who** the text's participants are at given time and about the place where the social practices take place (i.e. it determines participants' social identities). In short, texts are seen as choices, artefacts, made by authors and publishers about events or entities which highlight and foreground required information.

By analysing the wording that constructs the participants' roles and the place where the social practice happens, students can get access to more abstract levels of judgement and interpretation. They can identify "socially recognized ways of using language," which for Gee equals with improving literacy (cited in Lankshear and Knobel, 2007: 3). It is so as CDA involves, beside relating form and function, empirical analyses on how such form-function relationships

correlate to specific social practices and their nature. It thus seems logical to place main emphasis on grammatical and semantic analysis because it can be very productive in understanding social usage of linguistic messages (Fairclough, 2003: 6). It may help to see texts as strategies in which content is more or less explicit through the structure of their narratives.

What is more, Gee's (1999: 28-29) analytic procedures include a set of connection-building activities that includes describing, interpreting and explaining the relationship between language bits (small 'd') and cultural models, situated identities and situated meanings (big 'D'). By starting with traditional sets of grammar units such as nouns, verbs or clauses, through analysing how they create patterns which signal **whos-doing-what** and finally how these collocate with one another in types of texts, students become confident in their discoveries. Further, when they see how these traditional language bits help to mark linguistic features like: deverbaised nouns, complex predicates, passive-active voice or agency, they learn distinctive features of academic language. This in turn enables them to understand longer stretches of social language use and their characteristics in big Discourse (Gee, 2011: 49-50).

Big 'D'iscourse refers to the ways of representing, believing, valuing and participating with the language bits. It includes language bits but also the identities and meanings that go along with particular ways of speaking. This distinction facilitates understanding that the form of language cannot exist independent of its function and speakers' intentions. In this respect, Discourse is not merely a pattern of social interactions but it is connected with identity and the way texts are distributed (Gee, 1999: 60). Seeing how Discourse operates can move students beyond mere 'reading off the effects' achieved due to particular grammar choices (Wallace, 2003:35).

In short, Gee (2004: 39) notes that language does not occur in isolation but in specific social contexts. It occurs between people, in particular places, in particular circumstances and at particular times. Most often it is accompanied by particular semiotic signs such as gestures, dress or symbols. Further, it is influenced by a range of values, beliefs, emotions or ideologies. So discourse occurs within Discourses. For Gee, Discourses are characteristic social and cultural ways of talking and writing about, as well as acting with and towards people and things. These ways are circulated and sustained within various texts, artefacts, images, social practices and institutions. Only then can they cause that certain perspectives or states of affairs seem to be taken as 'normal' and others as 'deviant' or 'marginal' (Gee, 2000).

The distinction between the little 'd' and the big 'D' is crucial for students as they may start with small semantic or grammar elements to successfully learn about more complex ideas like semantic change, representation, power or

ideology. Gee's scheme gives a few hints at how the small pieces develop one's ability to analyse social languages, situated meanings, cultural models and Discourses. As he emphasises, it is "a potentially powerful tool for research in education" (Gee, 2004: 40). Its skilful application can lead to certain sorts of hypotheses and consideration of certain issues. Such hypotheses and issues can in turn lead to fruitful discoveries between discourse analysis and other methods of research in areas like sociology, political theory, and so forth. In Rogers' view (2004: 3-8), hypothesising involves, for example, being critical, which the researcher sees as questioning and not taking for granted everything that language presupposes; being reflexive, i.e. considering how one's positionality impacts one's interpretation of things; or being comparative; that is paying attention to texts' similarities, differences and the implications which these may have.

Thus, it may be said that Gee's (2008) understanding of discourse analysis is agreeable with modern definition of learning. As he stresses "there is no knowing a language without knowing the cultural models that constitute the meaning of that language for some cultural groups" (p. 114). Also Rogers sees it as "a type of social interaction in which knowledge is distributed across people and their tools and technologies, dispersed at various sites and stored in links among people, their minds and bodies and specific affinity groups" (p. 138). Such a view of learning allows for an interrelation of work in CDA, situated cognition and socio-cultural approaches to language and literacy. In contrast, Fairclough (2004: 225) assumes learning to be part of a theoretical reflection on semiotic aspects of social transformation and as a general discussion of structural determinants and social change. Again, he appears to relate his work to grand issues, often unattainable at the lower academic level.

To test the applicability of the approach in the undergraduate context, some cultural texts were selected to be analysed from a two-fold perspective, i.e. one that combines traditional work with linguistic analysis. The following section attempts to find out whether providing instruction that goes beyond subject and content learning may lead to enhancing students' reading comprehension skills and raising their cultural awareness.

5. The study

5.1 The purpose of the study

The action research study reported in this chapter concerns the issue of maximising students' competencies through introducing a varied methodology of teaching British culture. It introduces a framework where work on some chosen

current cultural issues is supplemented with linguistic analyses of authentic materials devoted to the selected topics. It was assumed that the learning process might become more interesting and efficient through the application of cross-curricular tasks engaging students in different levels of text comprehension.

The main objectives of the project were:

- to enhance students' reading comprehension skills through the application of CDA strategies in approaching culture-related texts;
- to investigate whether multiple activity classes involving a close reading of cultural texts would be beneficial to students' understanding of authentic materials seen as socially and culturally constructed texts communicating desired messages.

5.2 Participants

The tested group included 11 second-year undergraduate students of English in the Department of Neophilology in Pope John II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska. All of them had some prior experience in learning basic linguistic terminology covered in the introductory linguistics course as well as the most important issues in the course on British culture. Further, they all had chosen the translation specialisation, which made their participation in the project more meaningful. Their future Diploma Projects were also to involve doing a thorough linguistic enquiry into selected cultural or specialised texts.

5.3 Materials

The classes utilised authentic British cultural materials (**texts**) which, beside traditional content textbook excerpts or articles, included accompanying subject-related texts in the form of a speech, blog sample, advertisement or newspaper article (app.1). Besides, before the project was administered, the students were asked to fulfil **the pre-study questionnaire** (app. 2), whose aim was to check their reading exposure to different authentic cultural texts and to investigate their familiarity with basic linguistic concepts which are encountered in texts to achieve required meanings. In order to help the students focus on discursive markers, a specially designed **worksheet** enumerating most common linguistic features was provided during each class. **The post-study questionnaire** (app. 3) was to collect information on the conducted classes and the functionality of the applied methodology as perceived by students. It was also meant to check whether the practical work done on authentic materials enriched the students' skills and understanding of the applied linguistic strategies in creation of the

intended meanings. Most of the questions were close-ended although both in the pre-study and post-study questionnaires there appeared options for students to add some supplementary remarks and express their opinions.

As for the following **homework** activity, it was aimed at making the students apply newly practised skills of critical reading and showing that they were capable of discerning the acquired concepts in new materials. Additionally, they were supposed to demonstrate that they were able to understand how discourses may influence people's opinions or enhance messages meanings by making texts become clearer, more persuasive, emotional, etc.

5.4 Design and procedure

The study comprised an introductory class, during which the study's objectives were presented and the pre-study questionnaire was filled in. The questions concerned the students' attitudes and exposure to authentic materials and their familiarity with basic linguistic concepts. What followed was a four-class programme of dual-focused approach to culture. Each class, lasting an hour and a half, consisted of two distinct parts, i.e. one focusing on content issue and the other one on language analysis. Such a framework allowed for an introduction of British culture texts directly related to content-based work which included tasks activating and extending prior knowledge, exploiting reading strategies, learning and practising specialised vocabulary. The other part of the class introduced authentic materials related to the subject matter, where students were supposed to identify discourse markers characteristic of a particular cultural genre. Then, they were to argue about the form of the material, its structural means; its function, i.e. an expression of persuasion, approval or criticism; and the author's perspective towards the particular issue. Both content and language parts were explored through the techniques exploiting reading texts and identifying structures of the text types. Such a dual or multiple focus approach fosters learning and teaching of both content and language (Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols, 2008: 29).

All the classes the students participated in involved some traditional work on the texts, i.e. reading, answering questions, learning new vocabulary and concepts. The activities were designed to check the students' previous knowledge, practice content and language through talking and arguing about the matter as well as expanding vocabulary in the form of newly encountered terms and concepts. The other part of the class involved doing some CDA on a text relating to the main theme. The purpose of this activity was to show the students how meaning is created in order to correlate the form with the function of the text and exemplify the perspective from which the text is to be understood. Furthermore,

it was to exemplify the character of the text (genre), which Fairclough (2003: 26) understands as “a way of acting” through its social organisation and control of linguistic variation, whose recognition however requires routine experience (Branston, 2006:45). At the end of the project, the students were asked to fill in the post-study questionnaire, whose aim was to check on their newly acquired competences and attitudes towards a dual-focus methodology.

Table 1 below presents a detailed description of the design of the classes, with their implemented class activities, additional homework as well as objectives set by the teacher.

Pre-study questionnaire	
Class one: British parliamentary system	
Materials: texts on State Opening of Parliament and Prime Minister’s post (www.parliament.uk); David Cameron’s speech (www.conservatives.com)	
Tasks	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - activating prior knowledge to talk about the British political system ; - doing comprehension reading tasks; - inferring meanings of new items from the text; - discussing Prime Minister’s roles on the basis of the text; - identifying discourse markers in the parliamentary speech; <p>Homework: identify speech markers in 2009 Obama’s inaugural address to the Congress</p>	<p>Students will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revised and expanded the usage of lexical items relating to the working of parliamentary system in Britain; - learnt about the language of persuasion, criticism or approval expressed by linguistic means; - developed their abilities in identifying speech discursive markers; <p>Theoretical support: McCarthy and Carter 1994; Matheson 2005; Richardson 2007;</p>
Class two: Higher Education System in Britain	
Materials: Martin Hall’s article: ‘The end of the British public university?’, <i>National Student Fee and Support System. Facts and Figures</i> . 2013; The University of London advert in <i>The Economist</i> , Mar-Apr. 2013;	
Tasks	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skimming the text and identifying changes in the educational system; - understanding and discussing the author’s attitudes towards reforms in universities - drawing cultural inferences about the present and future educational prospects in Britain - matching new vocabulary items with definitions - identifying means of students’ support on the chart - analysing discursive markers in an advert <p>Homework: identify the promotional, narrative and conversational markers in an advert from a British university</p>	<p>Students will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understood the changes in the British educational system; - learnt new concepts connected with studying, i.e.loans, tax, benefits, family allowances, etc. - related the educational system transformation to economic development in Britain; - recognised commercial and persuasive discursive practices in university adverts; - recognised features of hybrid genres; <p>Theoretical support: Fairclough 2003; Richardson 2007; Hutchby (2006);</p>

Class three: Scottish vote on independence, September 2014	
Materials: excerpts from Vernon Bogdanor's <i>The New British Constitution</i> (2009); the article: 'Westminster effect on independence' from <i>The Scotsman</i>	
Tasks	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - true/false comprehension tasks to the text; - guessing the meaning of new concepts from the context; - drawing cultural inferences about the British attitudes towards the referendum; - identifying elements of a typical press article and their functions; - identifying the ideological stance towards a controversial issue <p>Homework: identify attitudes towards Scottish independence in the quality British article, i.e. from <i>The Times</i></p>	<p>Students will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understood the reasons for Scots' desires to become independent and the latest developments in the devolution process on the Isles; - known the economic and social disparities between the countries in the UK; - practiced their skills in identifying a news article structure and features; - noticed the discursive markers of expressing approval, disapproval or identity; <p>Theoretical support: Fowler 1991; Matheson 2005; Richardson 2007; Faiclough 2003;</p>
Class four: Immigrants in the United Kingdom	
Materials: The latest statics from ONS; The article: The Polish paradox from <i>The Economist</i> , Dec, 2014; postings from the <i>BBC</i> blog (April, 2014)	
Tasks	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interpreting the figures from the 2013 migrants' arrivals to Britain; - drawing inferences about the present concerns and prospective issues connected with migrants; - identifying reasons for Poles' coming to Britain and their impact on the local job and property market; - recognising the discursive means of marking the otherness and attitudes in postings; <p>Homework: identify markers of otherness in any postings on the Internet</p>	<p>Students will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understood how sensitive the issue of migration is in Britain; - known the latest data on diversity of the British population; - practiced vocabulary connected with the issue; - recognised markers of otherness, negative and positive connotations, predication strategies; <p>Theoretical support: Richardson 2007; van Dijk 2000; Hesmondhaigh 2006; Polito 2011;</p>
Post-study questionnaire	

Table 1. The design of the study

Due to the limited time and scope of the study, the students were not assessed on their understanding of the applied discourse features after the four-class programme was completed. Their ability to practically use the linguistic means introduced and practised during the classes could be manifested in their homework tasks which the students were encouraged to do.

5.5. Results and discussion

The outcomes of the study were based on the data coming from the two questionnaires, i.e. the pre- and post-study findings obtained from the response to the questions included in both documents aiming at eliciting the students' attitudes and feelings towards their experiences with dealing with authentic texts, be it written and spoken. Further, questions 2-4 in the post-study questionnaire, in which students were to give points, were supposed to check the level of new class design attractiveness (the varied content of the tasks) and the level of difficulty (the linguistic analysis). All questions, both the ones where students were asked to circle an appropriate option or appoint a number of points, were to demonstrate their ability or inability to utilise tasks fully and/or find out whether a dual-focused approach to cultural texts might further their critical reading skills.

5.5.1 The pre-study questionnaire's findings

The pre-study questionnaire (see app. 2) consisted of eight questions, most of which were close-ended. The first three were designed to collect data concerning the students' exposure to authentic materials, their reading habits as well as their likes and dislikes. The remaining ones, i.e. 4-8, checked on their familiarity with the most common discourse features encountered in texts and their significance. Besides, the students were supposed to indicate whether they saw any correlation between textual markers and the texts' syntax and meanings.

As far as exposure to authentic materials is concerned (Question 1), all the 11 students marked that they read some such materials which were not connected with their course of study. Likewise, most of them (9 students) did not indicate any problems with finding them in libraries or media. The answers to other questions were not so definite. While 6 students found reading authentic texts essential, 5 did not. The ratio of choices concerning the introduction of more authentic materials was the same. The last question, i.e. "Do you think that thorough work on 'text' might be helpful in one's life?" brought the most varied results: 4 students indicated "yes," 3 "no" and 4 chose the option "no idea."

When asked about their preferences in reading authentic texts (Questions 2 and 3), students were more consistent in their choices. The most popular genres, which were read quite often or very often, turned out to be books/stories – 11 answers, magazine/newspaper articles as well as Internet web-pages – ten responses. Other popular choices were: memoirs (5), letters (4) and

cartoon strips (4). The least attractive genres, read rarely or never, turned out to be: leaflets (7), manuals (6), speeches (5), memoirs (4) and advertisements (4 choices). These findings are not surprising as such answers could easily be anticipated.

Question 4, which concerned the students' understanding of the importance of the correlation between the use of structural and grammatical means and the text's meaning, brought some interesting results. The most important category that the students indicated as essential in understanding text properly was vocabulary (6 crucial; 4 important and 1 useful); then came grammar/linking forms – 6 useful; 3 important; 1 crucial and 1 quite useful; and title/subtitles/headings ranked as the third with 6 useful; 2 important, 2 quite useful and 1 crucial. The category of layout/paragraphs proved to be vital as the answers important, useful and quite useful each gained three approvals. There was also one crucial and one not important. What is most striking was the lowest assessment of ranking in the category genre/type of text. Four students found it not important, 2 - quite useful, 3- useful, while the other 2 marked important.

The results in the last category contrast with the next question's findings (Question 5). When asked whether they would agree that knowledge of the structure of the text, its elements and their functions might enhance their literacy skills, 7 out of 11 students gave a positive answer, 2 – negative, whereas the remaining 2 students left the question unmarked. Some of those whose answers were positive provided such additional remarks as: “it can help in better understanding the text,” “it is easier to understand the text” or even “if you know what function the text has, you can try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context.” There were also those who found the knowledge useful for their writing class. They added: “it is easier to write a text which is clearer, more understandable and readable,” “it helps how to write clear work” or “it can help to write better.”

Most students (10 respondents), when answering Question 6, indicated that there are other classes in the curriculum which concern the relationship between the text structure and its meaning. They pointed mainly to Writing (6 students) and Reading (3). There were also single mentions of Integrated Skills, Proseminar and Literature.

Question 7, designed to investigate the most common textual elements which organise its form, and function as well as indicate situational context and the author's perspective, showed that the majority of the students felt quite confident about structural and lexical tools. The students declared that they had no difficulty with understanding transitivity (10 choices) metaphors (10), narrative/sequence of elements (9), tenses again (9), modality (7) and reference strategies (6). Other elements scored far fewer points of confidence,

i.e. presuppositions – 5, predication strategies – 4, and metonymy – 3. There were also those who declared that they did not know some textual markers; polysemy – 6 indications, puns - 7, metonymy – 3 and predication – 2. Some marked the option “I am not sure if I understand how [these means] work.” The students were mostly unfamiliar with: predication strategies – 5 choices, presuppositions – 4, and reference strategies, polysemy, puns, metonymy – each 3 indications. There were also single choices attached to the remaining categories. The intention of this question was to collect the students’ opinions before they did the study in order to gather some necessary data for the comparative analysis with the post-study questionnaire findings.

Finally, Question 8 asked the respondents to reflect whether there should be more systematic work that correlates form, function and situational context of any text to be done in classes on British or American literature. The majority, 6 students, opted for “I don’t know” while the remaining 5 expressed their interest in the modified design of the classes.

All in all, the results of the pre-study questionnaire showed that the students read authentic materials quite often, and felt quite confident about their linguistic knowledge. Additionally, they saw the usefulness of possessing such knowledge and generally understood the importance of noticing linguistic categories in more advanced critical reading.

5.5.2 The post-study questionnaire’s findings

As for the post-study results (see app. 3), some answers seem to have stood in sharp contrast to the teacher’s expectations, the initial students’ choices and the declared skills and abilities. First of all, the students did not fully confirm the researcher’s hypothesis that they would enjoy a more varied class where various cultural texts are examined in relation to their content and language input (Question 1). Besides, not all the respondents were completely convinced that doing a linguistic analysis should be a common practice of any cultural instruction. Four chose the option – “it might be useful,” 3 – “it is a good idea” but only 3 – “I totally agree.” The other findings proved the initial assumptions included in the post-study questionnaire. Most participants (9 out of 11) expressed their conviction that using authentic material should become a regular practice (4 marked the option “I totally agree,” 5 – “it is a good idea”). They were also convinced in their majority that greater awareness of the way language is used to construct certain cultural texts (genres) and their voices might be helpful outside classroom environment (5 chose “I totally agree,” and 4 – “it is a good idea”). Additionally, most students seemed to be satisfied with the balance between the two major parts of the class.

As for the content of the classes (Question 2), it turned out that the most enjoyable one was the issue of popular media and blog culture, the one on payments in educational system was ranked the second, then came the issue of Scottish Independence vote and finally the one about the British parliamentary system and David Cameron's policy. With regards to the content of textual analyses (Question 3), the results were slightly different. Again, the most interesting one turned out to be the blog sample. The advertisement ranked as the second, the speech as the third and the article from *The Scotsman* as the least interesting one. However, when difficulty or ease of the linguistic analysis was judged (Question 4), the students found the blog sample the easiest to do (22 scored points), the article from *The Scotsman* turned out slightly more difficult (24 points), then came the advertisement (25 points). The speech gained way more in the difficulty ranking and scored the highest number of points (35).

Having completed the study, the students expressed their satisfaction at the results (Question 5). They seemed to appreciate their increased ability to recognise discourse features in the authentic materials employed in the classes. In most cases they felt more confident about their usage and meaning. As for the syntactic means, 6 participants of the study said they were more confident about the identification and understanding of the proper usage of tenses, 5 remarked the same about transitivity, three about modality. There were also those (4 students) who said they were more confident about the narrative/sequence of elements in a cultural text. Presuppositions were found to be the most difficult aspect to discern and apply in the target critical reading activities. Furthermore, about half the group (5 students) expressed their satisfaction at their better understanding of predication and reference strategies. Rhetorical tropes also scored well. Six students marked hyperbolas and metaphors as the linguistic means which became more meaningful to them. A few; that is 3 respondents, remarked the same about metonymy and puns.

Not all of these answers seem credible as some students appear to contradict themselves. For example, while the whole group of respondents declared that they felt confident about the use of tenses in the pre-study questionnaire, in the post-study one, 6 remarked that they felt more confident about their applications after the project. This may indicate that the students were either reckless about their filling in forms or that they do understand the way tenses are employed and what they mean but they did not realise how consistent and purposeful their usage is in real textual contexts. The same remark could be made about transitivity or modality.

The results of the study show that it seems meaningful to involve students in practical analytical work on text in a more systematic way. It is both beneficial for their confidence about grammar as well as proper understanding of the

meaning and use of lexical items. Furthermore, in the course of the study, it was also observed that, irrespective of the students' language competence level, they were capable of pointing out some discourse features of a particular genre satisfactorily.

Additionally, the respondents admitted that the language skills they gained would help them outside the classroom environment. Most of them were convinced that they would benefit from the applied methodology in everyday life. That conviction appears real as, when asked to enumerate the reasons why politicians, journalists or bloggers use the discourse features in the way found in the materials (Question 6), they remarked: "to make the text stronger," "to make the text richer," "make the work more interesting," "to influence people's opinions" or "to show their attitude towards the issue" and "mark their own perspective." Having such opinions in mind, it might be said that the project turned out to be successful.

In short, it seems that analysing cultural texts from a dual-focus perspective, followed by additional individual work on the part of the students, enhanced their reading comprehension skills. It is also hoped that it made them more aware of how the application of certain linguistic means may reinforce communicating desired messages in particular genres. Definitely, understanding authentic materials requires much more experience and expertise but providing the students with a balanced content and language practice may ease the process.

6. Conclusions

To fully evaluate the conducted study, one needs to consider its limitations, which causes that the final outcomes cannot be treated as definite. They might rather function as reflection on the innovative programme conducted within a month's period. Still, it may be said that doing any form of discourse analysis that enables correlating form and function with the study of social and cultural practices and, at a more advanced level, with the study of linguistic patterns, seems indispensable in today's world saturated with advertisements, blogs, slogans, etc. This places the CDA approach at the heart of any educational enterprise these days when new methodological explorations call for providing instruction that goes beyond subject and content learning.

Gee's procedure offers one such solution that involves convergence of curriculum areas through practical skills. Definitely, the approach requires more attention to questions of application and some further quantitative research. However, it appears that the conducted study has contributed to making students more proficient in their critical abilities and the learning

process itself becoming more meaningful. Additionally, it seems that Gee's analyses and arguments go well with the present-day impulse to push critical approaches forward towards practice-based learning that is sensitive to current everyday situations in media and cultural events. It may fulfil the desire to make the concepts of critique, discourse analysis and content inquiry available to a readership of larger groups of practising teachers and students.

References

- Bogdanor, V. (2009). *The New British Constitution*. Portland: Hart Publishing.
- Branston, G. (2006). Understanding genre. In M. Gillespie and J. Toynbee (eds.) *Analysing Media Texts* (pp. 43-78). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Chouliaraki, L., and Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Collins, J. (2004). Forward to R. Roger (ed.) *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis Education* (pp. xxi-xxvii). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Critical Language Awareness*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2004). Semiotic aspects of social transformation and learning. In R. Rogers (ed.) *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis Education* (pp. 225-235). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers,
- Fang, Z., and Schleppegrell, M. J. (2011). *Reading in Secondary Content Areas. A Language-based Pedagogy*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (1999/2011). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. Theory and Method*. New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2004). Discourse Analysis: what makes it critical? In R. Roger (ed.) *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (pp. 19-50). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Gee, J. P. (2000). Discourse and sociocultural Studies in Reading, accessed on Sep. 20, 2014, <<http://www.readingonline.org/articles/handbook/gee/>>.
- Gee, J. P. (1990/2008). *Social Linguistics and Literacies*. London: Taylor and Maxwell.
- Halliday, M. (1993). *Writing science: Literacy and discursive power*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

- Halliday, M. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hall, M. (2011). Guest editorial: the end of the British public university? *International Journal of Law in the Built Environment* 3 (1), 5-10.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Discourse analysis and content analysis. In M. Gillespie and J. Toynbee (eds.) *Analysing Media Texts* (pp. 119-157). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hutchby, I. (2006). *Media Talk. Conversation Analysis and the Study of Broadcasting*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Lanshear, C., and Knobel, M. (2007). Sampling 'the new' in new literacies. In M. Knobel and C. Lanshear (eds.) *A New Literacies Sampler* (pp. 1-24). New York: Peter Lang Publisher.
- Lyster, R. (2007). *Content and Language integrated teaching: a counterbalanced approach*. John Benjamin: Amsterdam.
- Matheson, D. (2005). *Media Discourses. Analysis Media Texts*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- McCarthy, M., and Robert, C. (1994). *Language as Discourse. Perspectives for Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman.
- Mehisto, P., Marsh, D., and Frigols, M. J. (2008). *Uncovering CLIL. Content and Language Integrated Learning in Bilingual and Multilingual Education*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.
- Polito, R. (2011). Language and power in blogging: a Critical Discourse Analysis. *2011 International Conference on Humanities, Society and Culture, IPEDR* 20, 282-286.
- Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing Newspapers. An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Houndmills. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rogers, R. (2004). An introduction. In R. Rogers (ed.) *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (pp. 1-18). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). New(s) racism: a discourse analytical approach. In S. Cottle (ed.) *Ethnic minorities and the media: Changing Cultural Boundaries*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Wallace, C. (2003). *Critical Reading in Language Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Widdowson, H. (1998). The theory and practice of critical discourse analysis. *Applied Linguistics* 19, 136-151.

Appendix 1: Lesson one

Rt. Hon David Cameron's Speech at the State Opening of Parliament (May 8, 2013)

Task 1. Answer the following questions:

a) What is the name of the political system in Great Britain?

.....

b) Has such a political system any advantages in the present day world?

.....

c) Who are the most important state personalities in Great Britain?

.....

Task 2. Read the following information of the State Opening of Parliament in Britain and answer the questions provided below:

The State Opening of Parliament marks the formal start of the parliamentary year and the Queen's Speech sets out the government's agenda for the coming session, outlining proposed policies and legislation. It is the only regular occasion when the three constituent parts of Parliament – the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons – meet.

State Opening happens on the first day of a new parliamentary session or shortly after a general election. The State Opening of Parliament for the 2014-15 session will take place on Wednesday 4 June 2014.

State Opening is the main ceremonial event of the parliamentary calendar, attracting large crowds and a significant television and online audience. It begins with the Queen's procession from Buckingham Palace to Westminster, escorted by the Household Cavalry.

The House of Lords official known as 'Black Rod' is sent to summon the Commons. The doors to the Commons chamber are shut in his face: a practice dating back to the Civil War, symbolising the Commons' independence from the monarchy. Black Rod strikes the door three times before it is opened. Members of the House of Commons then follow Black Rod and the Commons Speaker to the Lords chamber, standing at the opposite end to the Throne, known as the Bar of the House, to listen to the speech.

The Queen's Speech is delivered by the Queen from the Throne in the House of Lords. Although the Queen reads the Speech, it is written by the government. It contains an outline of its policies and proposed legislation for the new parliamentary session.

When the Queen leaves, a new parliamentary session starts and Parliament gets back to work. Members of both Houses debate the content of the speech and agree an 'Address in Reply to Her Majesty's Gracious Speech'. Each House continues the debate over the planned legislative programme for several days, looking at different subject areas. The Queen's Speech is voted on by the Commons, but no vote is taken in the Lords.

Adopted from: <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/occasions/stateopening/>

- a) When does the State Opening of Parliament take place?
- b) Who is present at the ceremony?
- c) Who gives speeches on the day and days after?

Task 3. Explain the meaning and importance of the following entities:

- a) the Queen's Speech
- b) the parliamentary year
- c) the Black Rod
- d) 'Address in Reply to Her Majesty's Gracious Speech'

Task 4. Read the following text on Prime Minister's duties and decide whether he has judicial, executive or legislative powers. Justify your answer.

The Prime Minister is the leader of the Government. He or she is the leader of the party that wins the most seats at a general election. After a general election the Queen calls upon the leader of the largest party to form the Government. The Prime Minister chooses the other Members of the Government and has a residence and offices at 10 Downing Street. In Parliament the Prime Minister sits on the Government frontbench near the despatch box in the House of Commons. He or she is also an MP. The Prime Minister has powers to appoint judges, propose the creation of life Peers and make appointments to senior positions in the Church of England. The title of Prime Minister does not constitutionally exist - the Prime Minister's actual title is First Lord of the Treasury. The current Prime Minister is David Cameron.

Adopted from: <http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/prime-minister/>

.....

.....

.....

Task 5. Analyse the below excerpts from David Cameron's speech by taking into account the categories and distinctions provided below:

(...)

Mr Speaker as a result of the work in the last session, this government has now cut the deficit by a third.

Cut net immigration by a third.
Cut crime by more than 10 per cent.
Cut taxes for 24 million.
Capped benefits.
Capped the increase in rail fares.
Frozen fuel duty; helped to freeze council tax.
Cut billions from the bloated cost of government.
...and yes, secured a real terms cut in the EU budget too.

This is just the start of clearing up the mess left by the Party opposite.
Three years can only begin to undo the damage of the previous thirteen.
But already it is the record of a government on the side of hard working people who do the right thing.
And this Queen's Speech sets out the next steps forward in this vital task.

(...)

Mr Speaker, just as there are great challenges in our world today.

So there are also great opportunities.
We must link Britain to the fastest growing parts of the world - from India to Indonesia, from Brazil to China.
We must forge new trade deals that will bring new jobs and greater prosperity.
We must use our commitment to open economies, open governments and open societies to support enterprise and growth right across the world.
That is exactly the agenda Britain will be driving at the G8 in Northern Ireland.
And I will be discussing these issues in the coming days when I travel to meet my counterparts in Russia, America and France.

But Britain will not seize these opportunities ourselves unless we are able to take the tough decisions needed here at home.

That's what this Queen's Speech is all about - rising to the challenge of preparing this country for the future.
We are in a global race - and the way we will win is by backing families who work hard and do the right thing.
To do that we must get the deficit down - not build up even more debts for our children.
We must restore our competitiveness, so British businesses can take on the world.
We must reform welfare and pensions so it pays to work and pays to save.
And we must reform our immigration system so that we attract people who will contribute to our country and deter those who will not.

Every one of these issues is addressed head on in this Queen's Speech.

And on every one of these issues the Opposition would take us in the wrong direction.

On the deficit - they would increase it.

On our competitiveness - they would put up taxes not cut them.

And on welfare reform - they have opposed every step we have taken to make our system affordable and to support people to get into work.

(...)

These are the consequences of a Leader of the Opposition too weak to stand up to his Shadow Chancellor.

And the Leader of the Opposition has a long history of this weakness.

Too weak to stand up to his party on welfare reform...

... too weak to stand up to the Unions on strikes...

... too weak ever to stand up to Gordon Brown when in government.

And too weak to apologise for his party's reckless over-spending, even after Gordon has gone.

He is the living embodiment of a new dictum: the weak are a long time in politics.

(...)

Mr Speaker, our determination to end the last government's something for nothing culture is also why we will continue to pursue our welfare reforms to ensure that it pays to work.

But that is not the only thing our welfare reforms have in common.

The truth is that whatever welfare reforms we have promoted.

The Leader of the Opposition has been against every one.

We said families shouldn't be allowed to receive more than £100,000 in Housing Benefit.

He said they should.

We said no out-of-work household should be able to claim more than the average working family earns.

He said they should.

We said benefits shouldn't go up by more than 1 per cent while workers' wages are being cut.

He said they should - and he wants our children shackled with more debt to pay for it.

The party of Labour has become the party of welfare - and the whole country can see it.

On this side of the House we are standing up for hard working people.

This is a Queen's Speech that will back aspiration and all those who want to get on.

This is a Queen's Speech that will make our country competitive once again.

This is a Queen's Speech that will cut our deficit, grow our economy, deliver a better future for our children and help us to win in the global race.

And I commend it to the House.

Source: www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2013/05/David_Camersons_Speech_at_the_State_Opening_of_Parliament.aspx

Worksheet: fill in the following worksheet with appropriate examples of discursive markers.

Form – textual organisation - syntactic means:

a) tenses and their meanings

.....
.....
.....
.....

b) transitivity (passive/active voice)

.....
.....

c) modality (its meaning)

.....
.....

d) presuppositions

.....
.....

e) narrative/sequence of elements

.....
.....

Form – textual organisation - lexical choices:

a) predication (nominalisation)

.....
.....
.....

b) reference strategies

.....
.....
.....

Form – textual organisation - rhetorical tropes:

a) hyperboles

.....
.....

b) metaphors

.....
.....

c) metonymy

.....
.....

d) polysemy

.....
.....

e) puns

.....
.....

Function: what is achieved due to grammatical and lexical choices:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Situational context: what is said and who is involved in the process:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Author's perspective: understanding the overall impression of the text

.....
.....
.....

6. What do the above characteristics of the politician’s speech tell us about David Cameron’s rhetoric abilities?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 2: The pre-study questionnaire on literacy

1. Circle the answer which you think is true about you:

- Do you read any authentic English materials not connected with your course of study? yes / no
- Do you find reading authentic English materials essential in your daily life? yes / no
- Do you have any problems with finding the authentic materials you are interested in ? yes /no
- Do you think there should be more authentic materials introduced in class work? yes / no
- Do you think that thorough work on ‘text’ might be helpful in one’s life? yes /no/ no idea

2. How often do you read the following authentic materials (texts)? Indicate your choice by putting a cross in the appropriate box column:

category	never	rarely	sometimes	quite often	very often
leaflets					
cartoon strips					
advertisements					
manuals					
magazine/newspaper articles					
speeches					
letters					
memoirs					
Internet webpages					
books/stories					

3. Which three of the above text types do you regard as the most attractive to work on:

(1).....; (2).....; (3); and which are the least attractive to read: (1); (2).....; (3)

4. Decide how important are the following categories in understanding a text properly? Indicate your choice by putting a cross in the appropriate box column:

category	not important	quite useful	useful	important	crucial
vocabulary					
grammar/linking forms					
title/subtitles/headings					
layout/paragraphs					
genre/type of text					

5. Would you agree that knowledge of the structure of the text, its elements and their functions in the text might enhance your literacy skills? yes / no

If **yes**, try to indicate in what way:

.....

.....

6. Are there any classes in your curriculum that help you understand the relationship between the text structure and its meaning? yes/ no

If **yes**, which classes are these:

.....

.....

7. Understanding any text properly (critical discourse analysis) involves knowledge about the structure of the text and its elements, i.e.:

- **Form** - How the text is organised (i.e. tenses/voice/number)
- **Function** - What is achieved due to grammatical or lexical choices in the text
- **Situational context** - What is said helps understand who is involved in the process
- **Author's perspective** - How the message is structured (form), what is achieved in the process (function) and who is involved (situational context)

Having in mind the above distinctions, which of the following terms used in a thorough textual analysis on text structure are you familiar with?

Textual analysis and its tools				
		I understand how it works	I don't understand how it works	I am not sure if I understand how it works
Lexical means				
	predication (nominalisation)			
	reference strategies			
Rhetorical tropes				
	hyperboles			
	metaphors			
	metonymy			
	polysemy			
	puns			
Syntactic means				
	syntax (tenses)			
	transitivity (active/passive)			
	modality			
	presuppositions			
	narrative/ sequence of elements			

8. Do you think that there should be more systematic work that correlates **form, function** and **situational context** of any text which is done in classes on British/American culture?

yes / no / I don't know

Appendix 3: The post-study questionnaire on literacy

1. Mark to what extent you agree with the following statements. Circle the most appropriate option.

- A – I totally agree
- B – It is a good idea
- C – It might be a useful
- D – I don't really know
- C – I disagree

Using authentic materials in studying British culture should be a common practice	A	B	C	D	E
Doing a linguistic analysis of a text related to the lesson's subject should be a common practice	A	B	C	D	E

Practising integrated skills is helpful in one's everyday life, outside the classroom environment	A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---	---

2. Which of the four lessons did you enjoy most? Rank them in the scale from 1 to 4, with 4 being the most interesting one.

- a) The State Opening of the British Parliament
- b) The issue of the Scottish Independence vote
- c) Fees in the English universities
- d) Popular media and blog culture

3. Which of the four textual analyses did you enjoy most? Rank them in the scale 1 to 4, with 4 being the most interesting one.

- a) David Cameron's speech in Parliament
- b) an article from *The Scotsman*
- c) an advertisement of academic courses from *The Economist*
- d) a blog sample about immigrants from the BBC

4. Which of the four textual analyses did you find most difficult? Rank them in the scale 1 to 4, with 4 being the most difficult one.

- a) David Cameron's speech in Parliament
- b) an article from *The Scotsman*
- c) an advertisement of academic courses from *The Economist*
- d) a blog sample about immigrants from the BBC

5. Which of the following discourse aspects of textual organisation have become much easier for you to identify and understand? Circle the most obvious one/ones.

syntactic means: tenses and their meaning; transitivity (passive/active voice); modality (its meaning); presuppositions; narrative/sequence of elements

lexical means: predication (nominalisation); reference strategies

rhetorical tropes: hyperboles, metaphors; metonymy; polysemy; puns

6. Can you enumerate any reasons why politicians, journalists or bloggers use the above mentioned textual markers so often?

(liczba znaków ze spacjami: 67 223)