Making The Best Use Of Ads In Flipped Classroom For Improving Critical Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

Modern pedagogy emphasizes strongly on interactive learner-centred teaching and Flipped Method is fast becoming popular in language teaching programs. The language of ads, being rich in its ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings, offers ample resources for improving critical reading ability. This study attempts to blend these two important phenomena of modern life: Flipped Method and advertisements. Considering the richness of the ad's language, the researcher conducted this exploratory study and showed that the analyses of the ad's language on the three levels of Hallidayan paradigm can greatly improve learners' critical comprehension ability. T[1]he research relies heavily on Dell Hymes's idea of language as a social construct. The researcher's objective was to explore how far the Critical Discourse Analyses of ad's linguistic elements can enhance the critical reading ability of the learners if the attempt exploits the advantages of Flipped Method. The linguistic analyses of two ads on the theoretical framework of Halliday indicated that the linguistic resources are exploited dexterously to achieve the desired locution, ill-locution and perlocution and the successful readers can improve their critical skill through interactive analyses of ads.

Key words: *Linguistic Resources, Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual analyses, Flipped Learning, Ads.*

1. Introduction

Chomsky's insistence that language is a mental phenomenon and it is competence which the learners develop with the help of the language acquisition device; both the suggestions have greatly contributed in promoting interactive language learning where the learners' cognition is activated so that an internal language gets integrated with other cognitive abilities peculiar to humans. Characteristic of' linguistic output to which the learners are exposed, the social and pragmatic meanings are learnt through a motivational task of scaffolding successfully with the social reality where the learners are situated. Therefore, for a better performance in the social domain, the learners learn to grasp meanings reflected in the language so that they can exploit linguistic resources to create their own meanings through the interaction of the individual and the social aspect of language.

As language is both, a product of cognition and a system of signs, the language learning programs can work only if cognitive and semiotic are integrated. Critical comprehension relies on both as it attempts to answer the question as to 'why the author says what he or she says'. It is certainly a high level of comprehension and requires the readers to exploit his/her repertoire of symbolic knowledge encoded in the linguistic content for which his/her schema helps them evaluate the quality and values the writers tries to promote. The author's

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reasoning which works with simplifications and generalizations is observed critically. Language does not work in isolation; rather it is the valuable instrument humans use to react emotionally as well as intellectually with the world. Learners can equip themselves best with this instrument by expanding their 'understanding of what language refers to'. The best language program is primarily a program expanding knowledge. When word connotations anchor in the learners' minds through their consolidation with their referents, the students' repertoire of world knowledge gains more breadth. World knowledge is an indispensable ingredient in any recipe of reading comprehension, because text producers create texts on the basis of some assumptions about the cultural and natural worlds which they think their readers share with them (Hirsch, 2003).

According to Paul and Elder`s (2006, as cited in Talebinezhad & Matou, 2012) viewpoint, without developing the learners' critical thinking ability, the creation of better readers who can produce knowledge remains merely a dream. In other words, the successful readers engage in close reading that depends on learners' active use of intellectual skills. Unless learners know well 'how to take ownership of a text's important ideas', the critical reading cannot be developed. In this regard, the author corroborates the thought of Sweet and Snow (2003, as cited in Talebinezhad & Matou, 2012) who consider critical reading to comprise 'three interactive elements: the reader, the text, and the context'. Thus, arousal of learners' urge to learn seems to be a fundamental prerequisite of critical reading (Talebinezhad & Matou, 2012).

1.1 Statement of the Problem
At graduate and post-graduate levels, learners feel difficulty in making sound inferences while studying any text as a discourse. Lack of analytic ability to evaluate, judge and question the position taken by the writer proves a great hurdle in research endeavors. Moreover, the individual learning has given way to the collaborative learning and the language teachers, in Pakistan, have not yet realized the relevance of Flipped Method for developing critical reading ability of their learners.

1.2 Research Objective
The study explores the relevance of verbal language analyses of ads in Flipped Classroom for developing critical comprehension of learners.

1.3 Research Question
The study aims at answering the following question:
How far do the linguistic analyses of ads in a Flipped Classroom improve the critical comprehension of the learners?

1.4 Significance of the Study
In recent years, the studies focusing on critical literacy have gained a greater momentum as it helps learners 'for life in a knowledge society.' The learners can succeed in life only if they have developed this fundamental ability and can navigate 'a text- and media-saturated world'. The proponents of this notion claim that the learners 'need both basic literacy and critical literacy'. Without the latter, they neither can understand 'forms and types of text' that they come across nor can they ask questions and examine viewpoints. The learners' critical ability can help them 'take a stand and to clarify the issues and relationships that are important to them and their future'. Critical literacy is an approach to teaching literacy as it aims at developing a 'set of skills, dispositions and strategies' that the learners require for becoming 'critical consumers and users of information' (Secretariat, 2009).

2. Review of Literature
An important study examined how explicitly teaching the rule-oriented question answer strategies can help learners overcome some specific reading difficulties. It also revealed that teaching reading following principles laid out in the conceptual framework of the

transactional model offered better results in improving comprehension at literal, pragmatic, discourse and creative levels. The study further maintained that explicit rule-based instruction was a significant component of any literacy learning program (Kingham, 2003). Huijie (2010) believes that critical readers adopt a high-level reading process which entails that they read with analysis combined with judgement. They focus not only on what a text says but also on how it is said. His review of the notions of critical reading coupled with the descriptions of critical reading proficiency led him to set up a four-level hierarchical framework that provides the necessary theoretical framework for testing of critical reading. The levels start from structural analysis and passing through rhetoric analysis and social relevance reach holistic evaluation. The study includes four components: analysis of paragraphs, discovering the hidden meanings, evaluating how those meanings are constructed and 'responding to text' (Huijie, 2010).

Since the early '90s, there has been a clear boom in the number of books studying ads with a shift in focus on the discussion on how they could be used in a foreign language (FL) classroom. The choice of a specific lexical item and the preference of one representative order over the other, both are the necessary elements the critical readers struggle to improve. Most of the books encouraged the analyses along three aspects: language play, language awareness work and culture learning. For researchers working on language awareness, the main argument was that learning about language combined with learning the language was more effective for critical reading. The scholars focusing on language play suggested that learners' opportunities to experiment with the language were crucial for their proficiency. The studies stressing culture learning claimed that the knowledge of the cultural values and assumptions was necessary to become successful critical readers. Thus, for researchers working in these areas emphasized 'that advertising can be a valuable source of materials for these purposes'. From these developments, it was clear that language teachers were using ads more often and they are a great resource for teaching critical reading. Examining critically the arguments of the researchers, Picken (2000) summarized the relevant ideas, provided examples of how ads could be used more effectively and supported further research where it was desirable, and where caution was advisable (Picken, 2000).

Modern consumer society under the impact of constant process of globalization has made advertising an integrated fact of life. Advertisements are almost everywhere – radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, planes, buses, trains and Internet. They act as a cultural artifact in tourism industry by displaying associated generic traditions. In majority of cultures, they form a central part of the entire tourist experience. Petrovska (2008) investigated the genre and found that texts in ads may seem trivial and ephemeral when considered in terms of its content. However, the closer scrutiny reveals interesting facets of both the culture in which the ad had the particular meaning as well as the society to which the composer belonged. Such advertisements are ample resource for the ESP teachers and these can be used as a tool for practicing grammar, or for introducing some specific vocabulary items or for a wider skill practice. Even though, the attractiveness of advertisements remains unquestioned, they are still underused by language teachers. So it is advisable to make their use in critical reading for enhancing the learners' ability to exploit language as resource (Petrovska, 2008).

Overmyer, in his dissertation on the effectiveness of Flipped Classroom, has done an exhaustive critique of the model. With the world getting technology based with every passing day, he declares it a 'paradigm shift' as it involves maximal interaction among learners. That is why, he encourages the teachers to exploit it fully as a resource to improve and develop learning in any discipline. He informs us that in the flipped classroom the students learn through videos at their homes and the traditional home task is done in the class. Giving a detailed account of its development in academic history, he acknowledges the central roles of great teachers like Jonathan Bergman, Aaron Sams, Baker, Lage, Platt, Treglia, Dan Pink and Salman Khan. He rejects most of the criticism lashed against it and clears many misconceptions about the programme (Overmyer, 2014).

3. **Research Methodology**
The study is in its nature descriptive and exploratory so the researcher preferred qualitative method for the data collection as well as data analysis.

3.1   Theoretical Framework
While explicating his idea of functional grammar and calling it as 'essentially natural', Halliday maintains that meaning in language can be considered as comprising two fundamental components: 'ideational or reflective and interpersonal or active'. With the first, we understand the environment whereas the second helps to 'act on others'. The third meta-functional component named textual is the very essence of the other two primary components as it is through this all representational as well as interpersonal meanings are created and conveyed (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

If language is considered as a shared activity in which human beings engage, the three questions with their relevant answers seem pertinent. The first is related to the nature of the activity and this can be called the 'field'. The second is about the participants of the activity and this is named as the 'tenor'. The third question focuses on the role of the language in the activity and its reference is the 'mode'. All these three terms can be called as the essential aspects of any situation and the language is directly affected by them all. In other words, if language works through predictions based on the context, these three things are central 'to predict what is being said or written on any occasion'. Therefore, working on this principle, critical comprehension can be greatly improved. So, a person's note 'that he went to a new tailor to choose material and be measured for a shirt' can lead to construing the entire dialogue of the tailor with the person by considering the field—service encounter: men's clothing, custom tailoring—, the tenor—tailor and a previously acquainted customer— and the mode of spoken language employed in carrying out negotiation and measurements. Generally, the field is central in enabling us to predict the ideational or representational meanings in which lexicalization, transitivity, logical cum semantic relationships hold a pivotal role. Secondly, the tenor allows us to predict the interpersonal meanings which depend on 'the mood and modality, the tone and key, the connotations of attitude and evaluation'. Lastly the prediction of the textual meanings is the domain where the mode is the sole determinant as it is the mode that controls 'the discourse around certain themes, and the strategies' that can be used to hold it all together (Halliday, 2016).

3.2   Population of the Study
Whatever is advertised in electronic or print media forms the population of the study provided it exploits the natural human language resources for its three meta-functions outlined in the theoretical framework.

3.3   Sample of the Study
For the present study, the researcher selected as a sample only a single advertisement that appeared in the daily 'Dawn', an important English newspaper of Pakistan. Three displays of Berger Paints make a complete set and that was taken as the sample of the study.

3.4   Data Collection
The research data from an English newspaper was collected through downloading the ads from the dawn.com/news/1398497

3.5   Data Analysis
The researcher attempted to analyze the linguistic content and how it was organized to create the desired locution, ill-locution and per-locution through the principles framed by Halliday for critical comprehension of text.

3.6   Outcomes of the Study
The results of the qualitative data thoroughly analyzed showed that the linguistic analyses conducted in the Flipped Classroom in Hallidayan theoretical framework prove valuable in

developing critical reading ability in learners because collaborative task completion in the Flipped Classrooms and learners' active engage in analyses of linguistic text of adverts on the lines suggested in Systemic Functional Grammar were highly motivating for learners.

4. **Data Analysis**

In the first part of the advert, there are two declarative sentences in each of which textual function does not change as it is clear that both have the Robbialac—the name of the paint—as Theme. The Theme of both is quite similar— a Predicator followed by a nominal group. Both the clauses share the Unmarked Topical Theme of a declarative sentence and perform the same function at textual or message level. Interpreting them at interpersonal level, both the clauses have the structure of a message in which the role of Theme is taken by Subject and the role performed by the same entity, the paint. Robbialac occupies the place of Subject on Psychological Grammatical and Logical level. In other words, all the three functions are conflated on Robbialac. These clauses exchange information in the form of propositions which are expressed using finite temporal verbs in their primary tenses— present— and positive propositions have been laid out. In the first clause, the interactants are the paint and the 'protection' whereas in the second, the place of the latter is taken by the 'interior'. Thus, both the clauses share a single Subject, the paint, but different finite verbs carry the burden of the interactive event and transfer it to the different complements. However, both the clauses can be interpreted at representational level as in both the Themes adopt the role of Actor and passing through different process within the same temporal space reach different Goals. In this way, in very simple message as well as exchange structure, the benefits of the product have been highlighted. In the next display of the set, we see more complex pattern which the advertisers have designed. There are four differently structured clauses, yet on textual level make a single whole, integrating one function with the other until the desired impact is created. The first clause is an imperative consisting of nothing more than a Predicator forming its Unmarked Theme and making the clause as exchange.
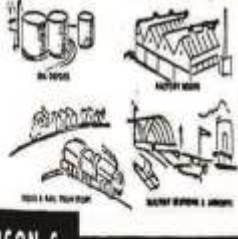
The Topical Theme of this clause is a verb, a process. This makes the clause as representational in its function which aims at a change in the audience thinking about the commodity. The next clause starts with 'I' as Theme and Subject. In the first precedence, the textual meaning is highlighted whereas in the second category, the interpersonal element gets more focus as exchange meaning dominates, thus reinforcing the previous idea of thinking about the product as an immediate necessity. The speaker shares her misconception about Robbialac and aims at challenging the common proposition that Robbialac was an expensive product. In the next two clauses, an Adjunct becomes Theme in each clause and carries two functions. On one level, each acts as a continuative and links the entire discourse and on another level signal towards the circumstantial condition for both the remaining clauses. Moreover, each clause chooses the desired Predicator that suits the targeted change in the audience' view of the product. On Representational level, 'I' changes its role from the Subject to the Actor and exemplifies her own example for being responsible for the process, thus inviting the audience to be active like her to attain the Goal of knowing that the product was not expensive at all.

In the final display, two clauses form the entire adverts in which the second relies on ellipsis of the Theme and the Subject, saying that it is unimaginable to have an idea of a healthy

and happy home without Berger Paints; they are inseparable, and no explicit assertion is needed to show their interdependence. In both the clauses, a nominal group headed by the noun home forms the Theme as well as Subject. As the first category, it works as a message whereas as the second category it attains ideational function and thus attempts to define the central idea of what a healthy home is and what it requires to be fully cognizant of its ultimate demands.

5. Suggestions and Recommendations

One of the influential models that the researchers have recommended for improving literacy has been called 'Four Resource Model' proposed and expanded by Freebody & Luke in 1990 and 1999. The success of the model was due to the insight of the proponents who built their model on the proposition held by Halliday that language was a 'resource rather than simply a set of rules' The present study upholds the objective of the model as Luke and Freebody expressed in their own words as cited in (Firkins, 2015).

> We wanted to develop a model that attempted to recognize and incorporate many of the current, well-developed techniques for training students in becoming literate. We wanted to shift the focus from trying to find the right method to determining whether the range of methods to determine whether the range of practices emphasized in a reading programme was indeed covering and integrating the broad repertoire of textual practices required in today's economies and societies.

In other words, the success of any reading program was determined by how much it employed the repertoire practices the students require for developing literacy skills. Therefore, this model can act as a schema for both the teachers and learners. Luke and Freebody identified four language learner roles which they named as Code-Breaker, Text Participant, Text User and Text Analyst. The third role that lays emphasis on communicative purpose and genre and the final role attempts at developing an understanding of how the text can be applied for reasoning and problem solving, how this text was related to other texts and how much more effectiveness this text enjoyed in comparison to others. These practices can act as literacy strategies and essential skills which individually or in clusters can change ordinary readers to critical ones by engaging them as a learner from the said roles (Firkins, 2015).

For any literacy program to develop criticality, it must be concerned with life as it is lived not as it is imagined. Reading arising from the social and political conditions in which communities unfold themselves can enable the learners understand texts better because their understanding can help them question and change the realities expounded in the texts. Abandoning traditional teaching methods, teachers should incorporate a critical perspective into everything they teach so that the learners understand the social and political issues around them and plan to grapple with them by constructing 'spaces where social justice issues can be raised' Critical literacy can act as a workable framework that can be employed to address issues of social justice and equity. Negotiation and contestation can bring a bigger change rather than discovering "the" best way. I advise the learners to adopt 'a process of adjusting and reconstructing' rather than of 'accumulating information' (Vasquez, 2004). These ideas can be implemented in the flip program proposed in the study. Smith's suggestions can be helpful for the flip learning teachers for preparing their videos and demonstrations for teaching critical literacy. Rather than focusing on the product of comprehension, he has emphasized the processes of comprehension. For him, processing skills can be divided into two sets. The first set refers to those monitoring skills, which the learners employ while coming across comprehension failures, and this monitoring helps in taking remedial action during failures. While the first set facilitated reading, it does not reach the level of critical literacy for which Smith proposes a second set of processing skills. This set encourages critical thinking as its teaching involves building clues in the text that can lead to 'generate, evaluate, and revise hypotheses about current and future events in the text'. These hypotheses are governed by text character, text-structure or genre and many other interpretive skills. Finally, our emphasis is on teaching these processing skills though first modelling by the teacher (Smith, 2007). For better results, the flip

program can be helpful because the modelling done by teacher will be gradually learnt by the students for which the group learning can pave the way to individual responsibility. The study finally recommends the following seven reading strategies that can make learners proficient. They are given below.

1. asking questions, (2) making predictions, (3) making connections, (4) visualizing, (5) determining important information, (6) synthesizing, and (7) making inferences (Galla, 2008).

6. Conclusion

The study tried to answer the question as to how the language learners' critical comprehension ability reaches a higher level by the collaborative endeavor of ad's language analyses in the classrooms taught by Flipped Method. The data analysis has shown that the ads offer ample resources of promoting critical literacy among the learners at graduate and post-graduate levels with the help of analyses proposed by Halliday.

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