

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF A UNIT OF A TEXTBOOK USING CRITICAL APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

**Rina Agustina**

*English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education  
The University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto*

### **Book:**

Richards, J.C. (2005). *New Interchange 3A: English for International Communication*.  
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Unit to be analysed : Unit 3 **Could you do me a favor?**

**Abstract:** *New Interchange 3* (Richards, 2005) is one of textbooks used for English language teaching and learning (ELT), which covers English macro skills and language aspects. However, a question of appropriateness for ELT is raised. In order to answer this question, a unit is analysed by using aspects of Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The analysis results reveal that CAL encourages the use of local context to anticipate learners' constraints and CDA suggests that hidden messages implied in the texts and dialogues contain good moral values that should be taught to learners.

**Keywords:** *textbook, critical applied linguistics, critical discourse analysis, local context, hidden messages*

Textbooks have been very important learning materials for both teachers and learners. English language teaching and learning (ELT) need textbooks for accompanying teachers and learners. *New Interchange 3* (Richards, 1998; Richards, 2005) is a textbook which consists of two books, *i.e.*, teacher's book and student's book. The teacher's book is the guidance for teachers to use student's book as the latter one has various kinds of practices.

To ensure that this book is appropriate for ELT, a unit is chosen to be evaluated from the perspectives of Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Unlike curriculum analysis, textbook analysis has shifted from linguistics perspectives into applied linguistics perspectives. CAL looks at more on applied linguistic than linguistic as it sees social context embedded in the textbook. In other words, CAL focuses on foreign and second language learning and teaching as well as puts less close analysis to psycholinguistic and linguistic elements (Davies, 1999; Pennycook, 2001).

Further, CAL also suggests teachers not to be a textbook person (bookish) but rather teach learners by the context surrounding the language acquisition (Davies, 1999). For example, teaching *asking an apology* should be based on the context of the conversation. How an apology to be expressed should be underlined as various ways can be applied so that learners will learn various ways of telling someone how to say sorry.

On the other hand, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights that communication is important in the social world. This statement means that CDA emphasises language acquisition through social interaction, *i.e.* to use the language communicatively both in the oral and written form (Pennycook, 2001).

Generally, the local context to use the textbook would be teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), which is: (1) teaching skills-based courses, integrative speaking and listening for young adult learners, aged between 17 until 20 years old, (2) the learners are the first semester learners at a private university in Indonesia, and (3) their proficiency levels are varied from intermediate to high intermediate. Two learning objectives in the syllabus of the course are: (1) to give learners understanding of how and when to use various language functions and (2) to be able to use them for communication. The main reason for selecting *New Interchange*, particularly, the third chapter of the textbook is it represents those aforementioned objectives for teaching and learning English, which meet the current curriculum used in that private university.

Shortly, this book aims at teaching English for communication based on several aspects like the situation and purpose of communication as well as the involvement of speakers and listeners in the communication.

### **Critical Applied Linguistics**

There are several points that are going to be used to analyse the *New Interchange 3A*, which are *scope and coverage, relation between theory and practice, being critical, micro and macro relations, critical social inquiry, critical theory, problematising givens, self-reflexive and preferred futures* (Pennycook, 2001).

The *scope and coverage* of the third unit of the book, *Could you do me a favor*, focuses on register or language function of how asking a favor, for example, borrowing a friend's car, asking a friend to lend you some money, and asking to give a message to your friend. This unit explains language functions of favours people dislike being asked, for instance, *Could you lend me some money?* or *Could you let me stay at your home for a while?* (p.1).

Furthermore, it relates to what kinds of language functions people used to ask a favour and what sorts of language used they to response, which relate to the degree of formality and informality of a language. Therefore, the next point in the unit is presenting several grammar points, which underline (1) the use of *modals and if clause* for asking a request and which expressions are appropriate for formal and informal situations, and (2) indirect requests, for example, *Could you ask Jeff if he can drive us to Tony's party?*

Indeed, the *scope and coverage* of the book is sufficient for intermediate until high intermediate learners. The topics of asking favours of people hated being asked for are good and relate to real context, however, several topics may not be fitted into the learners' situations in a suburban university in Indonesia, such as *asking to borrow a friend's car*, *asking a friend to drive you to the airport*, *asking a friend's help to move into an apartment*, and *leaving a message to your friend*. These topics are not real for Indonesian learners since not all of Indonesians have cars and know how to drive a car (note: different social status). Also airports are only built in major cities in Indonesia. Most of Indonesian learners have not seen an airport or even have flown in an airplane (note: it is a small city in Central Java Province, which is 5 until 6 hours drive from Jakarta). *Leaving a message to a friend* is also uncommon as Indonesians usually just say *I call back later* rather than *I leave a message for Jack*.

Moreover, there is a strong connection between *theory and practice* of the textbook, in which it employs Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for each activity in the book. CLT promotes communicative competence, in which learners should be able to use the language communicatively. Further, the four competencies are also promoted in CLT, grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic (sociocultural) competence (Savignon, 1997). However, CLT does not only engage learners to use language for spoken communication but also introduce learners to do writing activities, like online discussion or writing short outcomes after a small group discussion.

In addition, there are plenty of examples which implement CLT in the textbook, namely, (1) group work activity to make requests and practise to sound those requests in the group (p 16), (2) individual and pair work in the writing activity, in which a learners writes some favours to a friend and then exchange the written note with a classmate (p 16), (3) role play in the speaking activity, (4) grammar focus activity, learners make some indirect requests and practise them in a group of threes. Furthermore, learners write another five indirect requests and go around the class to practise those requests (p 18), (5) the last activity in the unit is group work discussion after reading a passage entitled *Yes or No?* (p 19).

The next element is *being critical*, in which this unit presents several social values such as social and cultural backgrounds of learners are being evaluated. The use of *New Interchange* is good since it includes people and cultures from other countries. However, in my context learners who come from low income family may feel offended of some topics like *borrowing a video camera* (p 14) and *partying* (p 18) as their life is difficult and they can not afford to buy a video camera and go to a party and brings a present to the party. Cultural difference is also a big issue when it is not appropriate to open a present in front of the giver in Indonesia, which is common in Western countries like Australia and the USA. Moreover, the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, so they do not respect spendthrift ways of life like partying as well as food and drink are taken into account because of religious faith.

*Micro and macro relations* between the book and learners are further analysed from the context of usage in the classroom to social, cultural and political issues like gender and sexuality (Pennycook, 2001). Gender and sexuality are considered since *equality* has been a big issue, but most of Indonesians have strong traditional beliefs that a woman should stay at home and do all the houseworks like cleaning , cooking and looking after children. The most important point is every opinion and thought must be talked over and discussed with a father or a husband. Therefore, topics like *going out with friends*, *going to a party*, and *going with a boyfriend or girlfriend* are sensitive (p.18). Further, political issue like *capitalism* and *modernism* are also shown in the unit through some topics of *lending money* (p.15 and 18), *lending a video camera* (p.14), and *going to a party or dinner* (p 16 and 17). Those topics reflect that spending money for leisure time is fine, but it is actually unacceptable in Indonesia to do it frequently as budget is tight and it is difficult to balance earning and expenses incurred.

*Critical social inquiry* and *critical theory* are also reflection of previous points, in which social relation between men and women are viewed differently in Indonesia, for example going out to a party and dinner (p. 16 and 17). A woman can not go out freely without her man's permission and she must inform who going with her is. The booming of modern supermarket make Indonesian Government build luxurious malls, which make traditional markets lose their existence due to conveniences of shopping. People do not bargain

prices, mall is clean, and all what people's needs are in one place. In other words, they may experience social shock when these certain topics are used in the classroom.

The next point is about *problematizing givens*, which can be seen in the passage (p.19), in which cultural differences are presented but these differences will cause big problems for learners to be encountered in real-life situations. The problems reflected in this page are how learners make sure that their request is not misunderstood by others, and how to understand other people's culture beforehand. It seems that the solution is only expanding general knowledge but the unit should give some examples and exercises of how to cope with such issues.

The aforementioned point leads to *self-reflective* whether the topics in unit 3 of the textbook are representing real context and taken from authentic materials. They may fit into some learners but may not fit into others. Therefore, the use of materials must be changed based on local context of a teacher's use and his learners' needs. As for *preferred future* of unit 3 in particular and the textbook in general, the resources should be changed as they focus on what is happening in everyday life of Americans. In other words, the learning materials and activities in the textbook are based on American's culture and lifestyle. Therefore, those resources should be adapted in order to be accepted and comprehended by Indonesian learners, who come from suburban areas. The use of folk stories from various regions in Indonesia is able to apply in the English classrooms, for instance, *the story of Malin Kundang* or *The Deer who Stole Cucumbers*.

Based on CAL aspects which are used to analysis the unit, it can be summed up that the learning materials in the unit are able to be used with some adjustments to local context, *i.e.*, dialogues and texts can be replaced or adapted based on Indonesian context.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

There are several essential elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse the texts in unit 3, namely, *texts, intertextuality, discourse, genre, subjectivity, reading positions, hegemony and power relationship* (Luke, 1995 as cited in Baldauf, 2010).

The first text is Jack wanted to borrow Rod's video camera in the first conversation (p.14). Although Rod seemed reluctant, he agreed to lend his video camera to Jack. It may be they are very good friends (*power relationship*) since the nature of conversation is very informal (*genre of the text*), for instance *hi, Rod. This is Jack, what's up, no problem* and it is also straight to the point, which is shown in questions like *have you used a video camera before?*

The next text is writing a note (*genre of the text*) to a friend or classmate asking for several favours (p.16). This text shows a power relationship between an employee and his employer as he wanted to impress his employer by asking him to go to dinner, wearing a red bow tie, and picking him up by car. The text also implies the underlying meaning that the employer is the authority, therefore, he must be treated respectfully (*hegemony*).

Then, there is pair work activity, in which learners learnt to take turns to give questions (*discourse*) by using collocation in word power section (p.17) learners talked about returning a compliment of his friend (p.17). The underlying meaning here is power relationship between friends in order to be grateful of one's praise or approval.

The next class activity is making an indirect request of borrowing money from a friend, which involve three learners (p.18). A dialogue between Student A, B, and C implied the intertextuality that student A was afraid of asking directly to student C that she wanted to borrow some money. This may be happened as Student A has borrowed money from student C frequently, therefore, she sends student B to pass her request to Student A (*discourse*). The response from Student A is quite harsh and certain, which shows that she did not like student C's request. The imperative mark in the sentence underpins this point (*I am sorry, but I can't!*).

The last text is a reading passage of cultural differences in Micronesia, Bulgaria, and China, *Yes or No?*, on page 19. The text indicates that learners have to understand that each country has different cultures and they also have to respect these differences. However, it also implies that *subjectivity* plays an important role, in which one's perception may cause wrong interpretation. For instance, a waiter nodded his head, which interpreted by most people around the world that it was a yes; however, it means otherwise in Bulgaria.

To sum up, CDA aspects help to understand how texts and dialogues in the unit would be interpreted. In other words, CDA assists teachers during the process of learning materials selection to find the hidden messages implied through texts and dialogues. The implying messages can be derived from varied point of views such as political, social, religious, economical and cultural issues as well as learners' enrichment of affective factors.

### **Teaching Learners of Acknowledging Sources in the Academic Reading**

Having read this learning materials, there are some valuable things that learners can learn dealing with plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking someone's work without acknowledging the original sources (Pecorari, 2008). Learning how to acknowledge other's work is important, particularly in the non-English Speaking countries

where memorisation comes first and plagiarism is part of culture. Another example of teaching anti-plagiarism is mentioning the source of interview (*Interview with people between the ages of 16 and 50*).

### **Conclusion and Implications for English Language Teaching and Learning**

In conclusion, all the dialogues and texts are suitable with the local context to attract learners' interests. They also teach learners to learn good moral values including acknowledging the original sources taken for activities or assignment. Further, the unit also implies that it promotes real context topics to be used in communication which leads to practising English communicatively through integrative English skills (Richards, 2005).

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