English discourse awareness in Vietnamese tertiary education

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The term "Discourse Awareness" is a new concept in Vietnam. Discourse awareness, conceptualized as a classroom pedagogy, can improve students' language capacity and has gained popularity over time. Our literature review suggested that there has been little research into this domain locally in Vietnam. This paper aims to discuss the ecology of the concept, examine its developments in Vietnamese tertiary education, and make some arguments for raising students' discourse awareness in teaching and learning English. It introduces the literature review on discourse awareness in Vietnam, which presents an overview of the supportive role of discourse awareness development in English language teaching and learning. Findings outlined how discourse awareness-raising activities have extensively and successfully been exploited in language classrooms through teaching and learning practices, teacher education, literacy development, and maximizing the cultural competence of language learners. Since then, it is reasonable to hold a strong belief that discourse awareness can serve as an enabling tool to facilitate students' communication.

1. Discourse awareness overview

The starting point began with Eric Hawkins (1984), who is in every sense the father of Language Awareness (LA) (James, 2005), and his vision more than 40 years ago of language awareness as a bridge connecting schools with society, teachers, and students with language, as well as people from all walk of life with language. LA is a form of classroom practice aiming at developing teachers' and students' knowledge about language. Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is a critical approach to LA and it is, pedagogically, an essential part of discourse analysis (CDA). On that basis, *Discourse Awareness* (DA) is the combination of Language Awareness and Critical Language Awareness.

In this paper, *discourse* is defined in three broad meanings. Discourse is "saying, doing and being" (Gee, 2015a, 2015b). These three dimensions of discourse are, for Fairclough (1992d, p. 8), "knowledge, social relations, and social identity," in which the second and third ones correspond to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2013) *interpersonal* function.

Firstly, *discourse as saying* can be understood as a focus on meaning-making from micro to macro language structures, from phonetics, words, paragraphs, and utterances, to the whole texts or genres. For example, if a lecturer says "hello" in the middle of the lesson, it does not mean he or she wants to greet someone. It is to attract attention. In this case, students need both the knowledge of the language as well as of the context of the language being used (classroom) to understand that.

Secondly, *discourse as doing* can be understood as "social relations" in language use. By understanding language, one needs the understanding of the world (Freire, 2000). Thus, Gee (2015a, p. 1) advocates that "reading the word requires reading the world. To understand what is being said in any profound way, people need to know what speakers or writers are trying to do." In this sense, Fairclough states that discourse is, then, "not just representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (Fairclough, 1992c, p. 64). This requires people to make meaning simultaneously with understanding social relations embedded in the event of communication.

Thirdly, *discourse as being* can be understood as the practice of "social identity." People act differently in different situations, and they utilize different language styles or varieties of language in different circumstances. In communication, to be part of a situation or in a context, a community, people may have to act "right" and use the words "right" or in Fairclough's (1992d) introduction to his book *Critical Language Awareness*, he calls it "appropriateness." For example, universities or institutions usually have uniforms to differentiate themselves from others, stick themselves to the community, and be recognized as a member. Thus, students should have "the ability to not just speak two languages, but to be conscious of the sociocultural, political, and ideological contexts in which the languages (and therefore the speakers) are positioned and function, and the multiple meanings that are fostered in each" (Walsh, 1991, p. 127).

The understanding of the notion of "*awareness*" in applied linguistics may be much influenced by the works of three scholars Schmidt (1993, 1995), van Lier (1996, 1998), and Fairclough (1992b, 1992c), who understood it as the subject's capacity to notice or to focus their perceptual activities on a certain property of a communicative event. Van Lier (1996) proposed the term "discursive awareness" to include the subject's access to a set of precise terms to analyze and discuss language in use as part of communicative practices. This is the same as the second level of "discursive practices" in a communicative event proposed by Fairclough (1992c). At the next level of awareness, van Lier adopted Fairclough's idea of social practices in a communicative event and coined the term "critical awareness."

In language education, discourse awareness ought, therefore, to "help children develop not only operational and descriptive knowledge of the linguistic practices of their world, but also a critical awareness of how these practices are shaped by, and shape, social relationships and relationships of power" (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1990, p. 249). A critical understanding and awareness of discourse are crucial in English language teaching and learning.

Our purpose of this paper will be to briefly trace the early development of DA in Vietnam. To do so, we will first review the ecology of the concept to set the scene for our discussion.

2. The story of discourse awareness

Most scholars agree that language awareness begins with Hawkins (1984). However, Labercane, Griffith, and Feurerverger (1997) trace its birth back to the Bullock Committee in the UK in 1972. It was not until ten years later that LA was officially part of the school curriculum in the UK after the work of Hawkins (1984).

Discourse awareness has been advocated as a crucial part of language education since the early 1990s by scholars in the UK (i.e., Clark et al., 1990; Fairclough, 1992b; Hawkins, 1992; James, Garrett, & Candlin, 1991; Nunan, Berry, & Berry, 1995) and the birth of the journal *Language Awareness* in 1992.

Soon after that, Sinclair (1985) developed a framework containing six propositions to develop language awareness: (1) productivity: once a student knows and understands the structural rules of a language, he or she can generate an unlimited number of utterances; (2) creativity: that language rules can be broken unconsciously and create meaningful utterances in different contexts; (3) stability and change: there are rules of language, but they are not entirely clear-cut or evenly applied; (4) social variation: due to social factors that arise a variety of language; (5) two-layered code: content and form; (6) language can do things: how to get things done using language. We can see that this framework is more concerned with the language itself and does not consider the user of the language.

Fairclough (1992a) contributes the concept of "appropriateness" to discourse awareness in the commonplace view that varieties of a language and genres of discourse differ in being appropriate for different purposes and in different contexts. He argues against Gee's (2015a) "big D" - where people are bound to a community and adds that there is no actual speech community that all members always communicate accordingly with a shared sense of "appropriateness" and he takes into account contexts and purposes of communication. In this sense, "appropriateness" is not "out there" but it is in a social struggle. Fairclough (1992a) further defines it as an ideological category within language politics. The struggle is for the control of its "discursive orders" (Foucault, 2002). The understanding of "appropriateness" puts forward critical awareness of discursive practices involving the practice of probing and shifting social conventions. Appropriateness is both normative and prescriptive.

Fundamentally, discourse awareness argues for "strong and pervasive connections between linguistic structure and social structure" (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 2019, p. 268) in what Foucault (2002) calls "discursive formations." Discourse awareness is the practices of "saying, doing and being" (Gee, 2015a, 2015b) where speakers or writers are aware of the "knowledge, social relations, and social identity" (Fairclough, 1992d, p. 8) in a communicative event.

Discourse awareness and language teaching

The significance of Discourse Awareness parallels the changes in society. We are at the onset of the third decade of the 21st century; first, there are changes in the global chains of demand and supply, which leads to changes in the ways that power and social control are exercised. Universities and colleges all over the world have switched to a new teaching paradigm of distance teaching when they must comply with social distancing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is undoubtedly a force that changes the role of teachers and students, and accordingly, their power relations. Secondly, there is a significant change in contemporary society in language practices - the change in language awareness in schools and society. For example, there has been a change in the professional domain of the doctor-patient relationship occurring in Vietnam - some years ago, most of the national hospitals in Hanoi, Vietnam called out their "clients" who came for medical check-ups as "patient" number one, two, etc. but now the sensitive term "patient" has been omitted. Thirdly, language itself is more of a target for change because the language used is a product of society (Fairclough, 1992b, 1992c). These changes make discourse awareness particularly significant and relevant.

Initially, Hawkins (1984, pp. 73-74) puts it that "language" affects "competence," and Sinclair (1985) argues that "language" affects "creativity" and "productivity." In the following decade, Fairclough (1992d, p.16) furthers the concept and argues that "language affects language capacities." In collaborative work with other scholars, Fairclough represents his idea as follows (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1991, p. 47):

Language capabilities: potential

Purposeful discourse   Language awareness

Language capabilities: experience
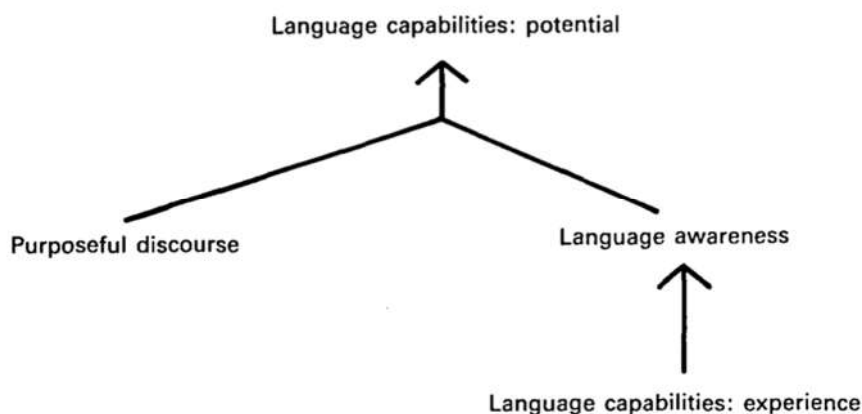
Figure 1. A model of language learning

The major implications of this model are as follows (Clark et al., 1991, p. 47):

1. Critical language awareness is built from the existing language capabilities and experience of the learners: (a) The learner's often implicit sense of what she can do, as well as what experience tells her about constraints on what she can do, are made explicit and brought into the open; (b) educators offer back to the learner a means of constructing an overt and systematic account of this experience, thus, giving it the status of a body of (school) knowledge; (c) this body of knowledge becomes an object of understanding, and the learner can come to be aware of the social causes of constraints on her discourse, and the discourse of others.

2. Critical language awareness should be tied to purposeful discourse. If it is not, awareness leads to nowhere except fatalism and despondency. If it is, learners can discover the potential of their own collective action for breaking out of social constraints.

Discourse awareness is also for lecturers (Andrews, 2007; Cenoz, Gorter, & May, 2017). The possession of an adequate level of DA is crucial to any competent language teacher. The connection between teacher DA and the effectiveness of her students' language learning is obvious. Teachers need to be able to "function effectively as an analyst of the language" and possess the ability to talk about the language and make judgments about it (Andrews, 2007, p. 24). On that account, teachers can make use of DA as a pedagogical tool (Andrews, 2001, 2007).

It is sometimes not just the content, language is not neutral, but it is always part of a wider social struggle which underlines the significance for students of exploring the ways in which language can both shape and reshape the social and ideological nature of texts (Fairclough, 1992d).

In conclusion, Clark et al. (1990) proposed that first, it is to improve students' communication skills; second, to prepare for better social integration; and third, to coordinate work on language in the schools more precisely. Communication skills consist of study skills for learning, literacy skills of verbal and non-verbal communication and the ability to bridge the gap between school and social genres, the preparation of teachers and educators for teaching and student caring, and equipping students with more effective participation for their future work and social communication. Students' social integration means recognizing and challenging linguistic prejudices and discrimination to differentiate and appreciate different language varieties as well as standard English in learning.

3. Discourse awareness in Vietnam

Although the term "Discourse Awareness" is new in the Vietnamese context, the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam is, on the other hand, mainly about language, which is part of DA. The coming of the term marked out a new interest in language, and it acquired the dimensions and features of a movement in which the goals are to promote discourse awareness as a field of its right as a crucial role in the teaching and learning of all subjects and curricula and as an area in the field of discourse studies. In the wake of international globalization and local multilingualism, schools are seeking to overcome prejudice, and inequalities and bring about an appreciation of the richness and diversity of language teaching and learning rather than English, also to overcome issues around the similarities and differences between English teaching and learning at different levels (primary, secondary, tertiary); between English for specific purposes and general English; and between English of home and school. From this perspective, DA opens as an enabling field, which can facilitate people's access to each other through discourse to make the ability to use language to talk about languages available.

3.1. Introduction

The history of English in Vietnam has been traced back to the middle of the twentieth century when its recognition was still modest and in struggling competition with other more popular foreign languages, namely French and Russian (Phan, 2004; Sundkvist & Nguyen, 2020). However, as soon as its gaining motivation for development since the mid-80s thanks to the Vietnamese economy reform policies, the status and functions of English in Vietnam began to witness changes, generate more essential positions, and become "well-recognized in international communication, education, and some other areas of Vietnamese society" (Sundkvist & Nguyen, 2020, p. 686). Viewing the status of English in the context of Vietnamese Education and as a medium of instruction in contemporary Vietnam, Sundkvist and his associate discussed the considerable room for improvement in English teaching to close the gap of its late catch-up by considering the written and spoken discourse features, in connection with taking into consideration the cultural aspects of the use of English by Vietnamese. This assumption is relatively concerned with the politics and ethics of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Vietnam in the views of Western ELT teachers, where the issue of teacher identity is believed to be reconstructed through discourse and negotiated through the acts of consolidating and reproducing images of the "Self" and "Other" (Bright & Phan, 2011). By defining the Self (native English speakers - the colonizer) and the Other (the colonized), Phan (2004) started a discussion on contesting the stereotypes of the universities classrooms in Vietnam, where the notion of educational, cultural difference signifies a fact that the Other's discourse may be viewed as "old-fashioned, behind, rote, memorization" by the Self (Bright & Phan, 2011; Phan, 2004). In the following parts, we are going to review the correlation between discourse awareness and other aspects of ELT, such as literacy development, learner autonomy, teacher education, language learning, cultural awareness, and language policy in Vietnam.

3.2. Discourse awareness and literacy

Research in literacy has proved considerable systematic links between language learners' discourse competence and their literacy development (Jones, Turner, & Street, 1999). Regarding raising discourse awareness in language classrooms in Vietnam, several studies have been carried out to explore how explicit discourse awareness-raising activities organized in tertiary language classrooms contribute to the development of students" ability to read and write. In the context of ELT in Vietnam, research into the relationship between discourse structure knowledge and university students' reading competence enhancement has been reinforced through a study carried out by Do and Truong (2018). The research results demonstrated that the metacognitive awareness

of discourse structure and the explicit teaching of textual features facilitate students' reading comprehension. In the study, the knowledge of discourse structure provided throughout the intervention period not only enriched the students' knowledge of this field but also had significant impacts on their reading comprehension performance. Students though being at a low level of discourse awareness before treatments have been observed to possess changes in attitudes towards their reading practice, reading comprehension performance, and micro strategies as well. Besides, other discourse knowledge as Cohesion and Coherence was proven to help students to seize the theme and potential meaning of the text, foster a logical thinking ability to analyzing, summarizing, and inducing from the text, and decrease reading time in reading classes (Do & Truong, 2018).

Regarding the other aspects of second language (L2) literacy of writing, genre knowledge plays a significant role in developing EFL students' writing ability. Through raising awareness of students to diverse genres and providing them with genre-based writing tasks in a ten-week program of genre-based teaching approach at a university in Vietnam, it was found that genre awareness raising helps enrich students' linguistic resources. The generic patterns offer them genuine opportunities to reproduce coherent and cohesive texts, especially suitable for learners who lack exposure to practical writing tasks (Do, Tran, & Truong, 2016). In another work carried out on the relations between DA and writing, Nguyen, Rijlaarsdam, Janssen, and Admiraal (2020) found that Vietnamese learners could integrate sample text analysis into their own ideas. Students in the experimental group could use more of the ideas from the sample and produce significantly longer and more complex texts.

Reading and writing at the college level are assumed important and supportive to the general production of language as well as the acquisition of other professional domain content, even in native-speaking higher education settings. In U.S.A college classrooms, Hiebert, Englert, and Brennan (1983) conducted a study to understand students' awareness of text structure in reading and writing, particularly the expository genre, and concluded that sensitivity to text structures enhances both reading and writing performance of college students. It is, therefore, apparently evident to relate discourse awareness to literacy development, which creates the foundation for ELT practice in Vietnam.

Regarding the correlation between discourse awareness and language learning, Do (2016) carried out a study on the impacts of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory on students' critical reading ability. During the study, the experimental group received an intervention where basic tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis theory were introduced and CDA-awareness-raising reading assignments were provided. The results reveal positive signals to support the hypothesis that students' critical reading skills in English as a foreign language can be enhanced through the intensive introduction of CDA - a theory that examines the uses of language in a social context and the ideology hidden behind the language (Do, 2016).

3.3. Discourse awareness and learner autonomy

Learners' language development is influenced and governed by a variety of components among which learner autonomy receives relatively huge concern. Learner autonomy is often discussed in the sense that learners can perform a particular language task independently and beyond their immediate formal context of language instruction, which is believed to assist their later-life learning and development. While much of the literature on learner autonomy indicates the pedagogical task of leading learners from dependence to independence, it is interesting to address the issue of exploitation and development of learners' existing autonomy by relating to the nature of autonomy, which is construed under "the metacognition and conscious awareness of self-management" (Little, 2008, p. 247). There is, therefore, a fundamental association for connection

between language or discourse awareness with learner autonomy. Learners' communicative and metacognitive proficiency in their target language will be moderately obtained based on knowledge about the language they acquire.

Research on learner autonomy in the Vietnamese context focuses much on EFL learning at the tertiary level (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014; Nguyen, 2009; Nguyen, 2016; Le, 2013). Autonomy is a Western concept applied to a country strongly rooted in East Asian tradition and inherited Confusion culture like Vietnam has taken considerable extending steps in promoting learning and teaching motivation in the higher education setting of this country. Research results indicate that the major notions of learner autonomy in the Vietnamese tertiary education context refer a great deal to "taking initiatives in learning, especially in self-study" (Le, 2013), "learner self-initiation" and "learner self-regulation" (Nguyen, 2009) or "self-reflection" (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014). Though the primary level of autonomy that Littlewood (1999) defines is *proactive* and is the "only one that counts in the West" (Zhong, 2010), learner autonomy in Vietnam has been proved to bare more characteristics of the *reactive* level (Le, 2013). This trait serves as a good opportunity for discourse awareness to benefit the" learner's autonomation process. Reactive autonomy "does not create its own directions, but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously to reach their goal" (Littlewood, 1999, p. 75). This level is also encouraged for East Asian students. Learner autonomy, when relating to self-directed learning, will imply "a change in the definition of the knowledge to be acquired and a change in the learner/knowledge relationship" (Holec, 1979, p. 21), which would extend more chances for learners to position the knowledge of the language for themselves. Learner autonomy, especially social autonomy, also has its contributing construction to EFL or ESL learners' "mastering of discourse roles," which promotes communication in the learning environment (Little, 2003).

3.4. Discourse awareness and teacher education

Discourse awareness has been considerably attentive in Language Teacher Education (LTE) because of its prevalently remarkable applications. LTE is concerned with the professional development of language teachers, where not only knowledge about language but also social, political, and cultural factors influencing the teaching of languages are considered (Andrews, 2007). LTE addresses a variety of domains ranging from methodologies, curriculum development, syllabus design, material development and evaluation, testing, and so on (Andrews, 2001). The practice of language teacher education lays the foundation for the real needs of an ever-changing ELT market which is shifting greatly in a fast-globalizing economy during the last few decades. According to Crandall (2000), greater focus has since then been put on teachers' practical experience, research, beliefs, and cognition. Harman, Ahn, and Bogue (2016) found that stimulating discourse awareness with critical performative methodology in teacher training brings expected results in terms of supporting teachers to analyze the multidimensional nature of L2 education. The reflective approach can be used flexibly where language educators are involved in a collaborative critical discourse analysis of the everyday performance of classroom practice, where they may critically think about power relations.

The practice of teaching English discusses the account of teaching grammar extensively. There was a time when bias on the focus-on-form approach to teaching English grammar was very prevalent and frequent. The form-focused method was to refer to teaching explicitly language features without making the meaning negotiation. Later on, Focus on Form (FonF) was proposed by Long (1991), in which he refers to a language education approach where the grammatical form of language features is made aware for learners after they were already able to use it

communicatively. Researching the FonF-based instruction in the Vietnamese context, Le and Barnard (2009) surveyed the Vietnamese teachers' attitudes towards teaching grammar to test whether there is a bias towards the decontextualized presentation of grammar in language instructions. The introduction of grammar within complete texts presents ideal contexts for grammatical aspects of language to be analyzed and acquired. Besides, the presentation of authentic materials is proved not a hindrance due to particular grammatical problems embedded, as believed by some Western pedagogy experts assumed (Burgess & Etherington, 2002), but a favorable chance for exploring real-life situations to understand grammar points in context. This suggested FonF approach to teaching grammar with more discourse-based cognitive and metacognitive activities is favored by Vietnamese language educators, and they become 'well-disposed' to a Focus-on-Form approach than the one which focuses on the forms (Burgess & Etherington, 2002). The studies give insights into the discourse awareness raising in teacher education and draw out that explicit grammar instruction and forms-focused practice received more preference from language educators (Le & Barnard, 2009).

On the social account of DA, *discourse as being* is interpreted as the practice of "social identity." During the beginning years of the twenty-first century, there have been a great number of Vietnamese ELT teacher trainees who spent their professional training or studied for degrees in Australia. The issue of being trained in the West and teaching in the East received much concern from ELT professionals. Revisiting the teacher identity of non-native speakers upon returning from TEFL/TESOL courses in Australia, Le and Phan (2013) revealed ELT teacher trainees felt comfortable with the application of Western-based training theory and philosophy. They acknowledged the crucial roles of contexts or real-life situations and authentication in "empowering learners through language" (Le & Phan, 2013, p. 254). Especially, there have been changes in the teacher trainees' perception towards discourse, with more "looking at socio aspects" in teaching language to improve learners' communication competence. More interestingly, language teacher identity is also revisited from the negotiation of the power and status of a teacher, seeing students as a client who should be empowered to "feel self-worth" in the discourse exploration journey (Le & Phan, 2013).

In another context, research into how classroom interaction and teachers' discourse affect learning potentials reveals that there is an obvious relationship between teachers' follow-up moves and student learning affordances. It confirms teachers' crucial role in using classroom discourse to create learning opportunities for students (Tran, 2015).

3.5. Discourse genre awareness and language learning

As mentioned earlier, the concept of discourse awareness is new in Vietnam. However, teaching and learning English is largely about language. Research indicates genre-awareness raising activities exploited in writing classrooms help ameliorate positive written production of students (Do, 2016; Do et al., 2016; Nguyen & Do, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020);

Being "equipped" with knowledge of discourse (i.e., genres, in this sense), students are confident "to create significantly longer self-expressive free writing texts; perceived the generated ideas as more useful, and used more of these ideas in their argumentative texts composition" (Nguyen et al., 2020, p. 280). Genre-awareness-raising activities in language classrooms may range very widely from "realizing the communication purposes of the texts students are to write, noticing how language becomes more or less formal depending on the audience, discussing the appropriateness of specific genres in different contexts, or recognizing how the text flows go for each type of genres" (Do et al., 2016, p. 87). The author's study on the application of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) has concluded that it helps improve students' performance through

progress in writing paragraphs and increases attitudinal satisfaction of students, which contributes a lot to their language learning motivations (Do et al., 2016). This is reinforced by Hyland (2007) as he claims GBA offers writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the way they are.

Memorization, usually known as a cognitive process of recording information into human memory, is regarded as one of the students' learning strategies that could not be avoided nor excluded in the Vietnamese language learning context. It is well documented that successful language learning relies on a range of learning strategies, among which, memorization reveals usefulness and positive impacts on students' performance, especially in oral production and giving speeches. Discourse awareness, in this situation, is the effort of memorizing and, thus, gaining a certain amount of knowledge to help ease the later-stage production of language at a discourse level (Duong & Nguyen, 2006).

3.6. Discourse awareness and cultural awareness

It is defined that language and culture are interwoven as language is referred to a particular group of people. Learning a language entails exploring the customs and social practices of the people speaking that language as language is embedded in the culture. Much literature is found on the interrelationship between cultural awareness and language learning. "Culture awareness has become an important focus of modern language education" (Shemshadsara, 2012, p. 95), and there is a bridge between language awareness and cultural awareness (Barany, 2016; Kostelníková, 2001). Regarding discourse issues, Hazaea (2019) advocated that critical intercultural awareness is believed to be enriched through critical discourse analysis. Their study confirms the efficacy of cultivating critical discourse analysis skills for students to maximize the potential of developing intercultural awareness among EFL learners.

Researching the potential of developing cultural competence for tertiary students in Vietnam together with raising their discourse awareness, Dao and Do (2019) survey the perceptions of Vietnamese tertiary students towards intercultural competence and find that there exists a mismatch between the students' great need and the reality of guiding students towards this skill development. Besides specified achievements, backwashes are also claimed as students are not exposed enough to favorable classroom training and out-of-class consolidation of intercultural communication (Dao & Do, 2019; Nguyen, 2013). Cultural awareness is also investigated in the setting of tertiary English-major speaking classes where spoken discourse is practiced (Ho, 2011) and found that raising cultural awareness of students in EFL classrooms contributes a great deal to language production or improves students' discourse competence. However, though owning a comprehensive view of and deep passion for teaching culture in language courses, Vietnamese EFL teachers are found to have limited goals in addressing culture in their language teaching practices connected with teaching materials, activity prioritization, lack of professional development (Dao & Do, 2019; Nguyen, 2013). These obstacles may present hindrances to the efforts of fostering students' cultural awareness while developing discourse awareness. Implications are, therefore, based on teachers' professional development on intercultural competence, awareness, teaching ability, and a "suggested teacher-in-context interaction model" (Nguyen, 2013, p. 230).

3.7. Discourse awareness and language policy

From the onset of English teaching in Vietnam until the mid-1980s, it was all about teaching knowledge about the language. In other words, it was about grammar and vocabulary. Some minor differences could be told in the South of Vietnam before 1975, where English was

officially taught and used in daily life (Albright, 2019). After *Doi Moi* (Renovation) in 1986, English was recognized as an intermediate means for economic integration and social development. However, the teaching and learning were nothing much more than teachers and textbooks, which Vietnamese authors wrote. This approach, which is "usually devoid of contextual meaning and takes precedence over meaningful communication" (Maley, 1986, p. 105), was prolonged for more than a decade. It was not until the early 2000s that Vietnam formed a clear picture of foreign language education. English in tertiary education could be divided into two groups: English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Although EGP was to develop students' communicative competence, teachers were "frustrated" in teaching students communicative skills and pulled back to teaching grammar and vocabulary (Le, 2007). Meanwhile, ESP was mainly about teaching terminologies - the content of language. In 2008, the National Language Project - the most important language policy was introduced. Communicative language teaching has been introduced in the project to develop students' communicative competence (Government of Vietnam, 2008). However, DA was not clearly stated in the project.

4. Concluding remarks

What we attempted to do so far in this paper was to trace the development of LA and CLA from its introduction in the early 1980s in the United Kingdom to the development of the concepts in Vietnam. Clark et al. (1991, p. 52) conclude that "the development of a critical awareness of the world, and of the possibilities for changing it, out to be the main objective of all education, including language education." Besides, Gee (2015b, p. 4) tells us that DA promotes the awareness of "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking and, often, reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities by specific groups." DA also helps teachers and learners to achieve the "appropriateness" (Fairclough, 1992d) of their communication.

This paper introduces the literature review on discourse awareness in Vietnam, which presents an overview of the supportive role of discourse awareness development in English language teaching and learning. Upon seeing how discourse awareness-raising activities have extensively and successfully been exploited in language classrooms through teaching and learning practices, teacher education, literacy development, and maximizing the cultural competence of language learners, it is reasonable to hold a strong belief that discourse awareness can serve as an enabling tool to facilitate students' communication.

It seems that tertiary education in Vietnam has succeeded in equipping students with operational and descriptive knowledge of English language practices with an abundance of grammar and vocabulary. However, there appears to be the fact that DA is the job of the teachers and not of the policymakers in Vietnam. DA is not clearly stated in any policy document. The critical awareness of how English practices are shaped or shape social relations and relationships of power is in the hand of language teachers. To maximize teachers' role in boosting DA, Corson (2000, p. 34) has suggested three things that could be done at the school and local levels: (1) creating better patterns of communication regarding language goals; (2) negotiating policies between the school and local communities; and (3) promoting DA within the school "through a language curriculum that promotes social awareness of discourse, etc. variety, and consciousness of practice for change".

We would like to conclude this paper with a famous quotation from a leading advocate of critical pedagogy who inspired us to the critical awareness of the way we say, we do, and we are, which is crucial to the sustenance and improvement of well-being.

Whether it be a raindrop (a raindrop that was about to fall but froze, giving birth to a beautiful icicle), be it a bird that sings, a bus that runs, a violent person on the street, be it a sentence in a newspaper, a political speech, a lover's rejection, be it anything, we must adopt a critical view, that of the person who questions, who doubts, who investigates, and who wants to illuminate the very life we live (Freire, 1985, p. 198).

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest detected in the production of this article.

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