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Critical reading, critical thinking: Delicate scaffolding in English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

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ABSTRACT

Critical thinking is at the heart of tertiary education, and is also a key focus of university preparation courses. In particular, developing the ability to read – and to read critically – is vital for aspiring university students. Courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) generally include some attention to critical reading, but how this is conceived and realised varies considerably. This paper reports on the findings of an ethnographic study of three EAP teaching-learning contexts in Australia and relates the pedagogy of these classrooms to theories of critical thinking identified by Davies and Barnett (2015). All three EAP contexts focused to some extent on cognitive skills such as identifying main ideas, but teachers differed in their approach to criticality and attention to critical pedagogy. In some classes, students appeared to take a performative role (simply 'doing' the task); however, in other classes students demonstrated a more intense engagement with the content of their reading – an indication of a developing critical disposition which could serve them well at university and beyond.

The paper argues that critical reading pedagogy can be realised in different ways, but that nurturing students' critical dispositions, in particular, requires delicate scaffolding to support their development as critical meaning-makers. Such scaffolding pushes students to develop deeper skills and criticality, yet enables them to feel secure in the transcultural contact zones in which they are participating.

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1. Introduction

The potential of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classrooms for transformative learning is immense. In these classrooms, students aspiring to enrol in higher education in English speaking contexts meet – often with an eclectic group of classmates from across the world – to develop the skills that they need to succeed at university, and to pass through the formidable gateway of English language entry testing procedures. This is a highly-charged space: students are invariably strongly motivated to learn, but at the same time desperately anxious to pass whatever language test faces them. For many, the EAP classroom is their first experience of living overseas, far from friends and family, and afloat in a new, exciting and no doubt challenging culture. For those who are studying EAP in their own country, the prospect of these challenges and excitements is ever-present in their imaginations. It is a site of transcultural contact which necessarily involves confronting far

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more than just "English" in the sense of the four language learning macroskills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, which will enable them to pass the English language entry test. For, if students are to prepare for university in English-speaking contexts, they will surely need to go beyond these basic language skills. In particular, they need to develop their understanding of what it means to think – and read – critically. As Moore (2013) points out, critical thinking is at the core of university education across the western world. Nearly every university includes critical thinking within its graduate attributes, and the ability and disposition to think critically will be essential to their success in higher education. Some authors argue, furthermore, that aspiring international students should develop an awareness of how they are positioned by the hegemonic juggernaut of western education (Canagarajah, 2002; Pennycook, 1997; Pohl, 2005).

In particular, EAP students need to begin to READ critically. This is an aspect of EAP which is often overlooked as most courses focus heavily on the observable output of critical thinking – writing. However, reading underpins all university study. The importance of developing a critical approach to reading is emphasised by many tertiary language and literacy practitioners (see Bharuthram, 2012; Chanock, Horton, Reedman, & Stephenson, 2012; Devereux & Wilson, 2008; Vered, 2016, for example).

Many EAP students do not have a great deal of experience in critical reading and critical thinking–or at least of the kinds of critical thinking expected in tertiary education. Some come from educational backgrounds in which emphasis has been laid on rote learning and memorisation, perhaps from backgrounds where books are scarce and hence highly revered (Dong, 2015; Fox, 1994). Some come from different traditions of critical thinking, and/or perhaps from political or religious backgrounds which do not foster robust debate (Bali, 2015). There has been much debate in the literature about cultural differences in critical thinking styles (for example: Atkinson, 1997; Manalo, Kusumi, Koyasu, Michita, & Tanaka, 2015; Paton, 2005): in a useful discussion of the challenges of teaching critical thinking at the American University of Cairo, Bali (2015) argues that, while critical thinking is not a uniquely western concept, students differ in the kinds of cultural and social capital that they bring to the university, and hence in their preparedness for a western approach to higher education.

Whether or not such cultural differences exist, one thing is certain: all EAP students are entering a new culture of learning, and hence, need and deserve a curriculum for critical thinking which prepares them for tertiary study in the new environment. Of course, we should by no means assume that this is a monolithic culture of critical thinking, but one which is characterised by a great diversity of disciplinary, institutional, local and even personal cultures and discourses.

However, there are many issues facing the EAP teacher who strives to implement a curriculum for critical thinking. First and foremost, critical thinking as a concept is diffuse: many competing definitions and approaches have been proposed, and this can be confusing and perplexing. This paper will attempt to address this complexity by evoking Davies and Barnett's (2015, p.22) model of critical thinking which draws together three broad perspectives into a single framework: the critical thinking skills dimension, the criticality movement, and the critical pedagogy movement. Secondly, EAP, especially in university preparation courses, typically exists in a marginal zone between school and university, often with no prescribed discipline.[2] It can be hard to know how to imbue the curriculum with any depth of critical thinking when the content of students' reading jumps from one topic area to another, as it does in most EAP course books, not allowing students the time to reflect deeply, to build up knowledge and understanding in any particular content area, or to learn how any particular discipline 'does' critical thinking. Third, as mentioned above, is the tyranny of the testing system. Students may feel that teaching which is not specifically directed at the test is irrelevant.

This paper, then, looks at the teaching of critical reading in EAP, and asks 'What does it mean to teach students to read critically in the context of an EAP classroom?' I will first summarise the model of critical thinking proposed by Davies and Barnett (2015), and show how it is reflected in traditions of teaching reading in EAP. Next, I will present three case studies of critical reading pedagogy in EAP and relate these to the Davies and Barnett model. Finally I will discuss how critical reading can most productively be integrated into the EAP curriculum, arguing that EAP teachers have a responsibility to develop students' skills and dispositions for critical thinking and that, for this to occur, it is essential to nurture students' engagement in a challenging, but positive and supportive classroom climate, in other words, to provide "delicate scaffolding".

The concept of scaffolding derives from the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1987), who argued that teaching should be ahead of development; that students can be challenged to achieve well beyond their current capacity, provided they are given adequate support. Such support can be "designed-in" in the form of planned pedagogic tasks, or "contingent" in the form of spontaneous teacher-student and peer-peer interactions (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). However, as Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p.264) point out, not all assistance is necessarily supportive of development: assistance which over-simplifies can also disenfranchise students. Effective scaffolding, on the other hand, enables students to succeed in challenging tasks by encouraging participation and a sense of agency, accepting partially correct answers rather than insisting on perfection (Wilson & Devereux, 2014).

2. Framework for understanding critical thinking

Davies and Barnett (2015) identify three broad perspectives on critical thinking within the literature. These perspectives have often been counterposed, yet they overlap and intermingle considerably. It is partly this interpenetration which makes

[2] In this paper, I am focusing on EAP in university preparation contexts rather than on post-entry academic reading pedagogy. For more discussion of EAP reading pedagogy post-entry, see for example, Clarence and Bharuthram (2015)

the concept of critical thinking confusing and perhaps daunting for teachers of EAP, and why Davies and Barnett's framework is so welcome.

2.1. Skills perspective on critical thinking

The first perspective is a structural, pragmatic approach which emphasises the skills of reasoned argument and analysis. In western tradition, the teaching of critical thinking has often been framed in terms of logical argumentation, dating back to the precepts of the Greek philosophers. More recently it has been articulated as a broad set of lower and higher order skills such as interpreting, identifying logical fallacies, analysing cause and effect, synthesising claims, making inferences and predictions, evaluating and problem solving (Bloom, 1984). This perspective has been particularly influential in the field of academic writing, which places great emphasis on the development of logical argument, but it has also been widely adopted in the teaching of academic reading.

The so-called cognitive approach to reading developed in the 1980s offered EAP teachers tools with which to equip their students, including inventories of reading strategies such as skimming and scanning, looking for main ideas, identifying topic sentences, reading for gist, guessing meaning from context and so on (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Oxford, 1990). More sophisticated higher-order strategies included identifying assumptions, detecting bias, comparing and contrasting texts, and checking the author and date of the text. These codified skills and strategies offered teachers something concrete and practical to teach their students. Moreover, many of the skills and strategies were eminently testable, and were incorporated by the newly developing, and highly influential, International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

2.2. The criticality perspective

A second broad perspective on critical thinking, and the one most advocated by Davies and Barnett (2015) is the criticality movement. While they recognise knowledge, skills and reasoning to be fundamental, they suggest that a curriculum for critical thinking would need to also develop in students a "critical character" or "critical disposition". They would see critical dispositions as including an openness to new ideas, the will to be well-informed and to use credible sources and observations, being prepared to listen and consider other points of view, the ability to take a position and defend it, but also to withhold judgement when appropriate and to change positions if the evidence and reasons indicate this. Also important is the will to keep improving one's critical thinking capacity, and to strive to "get it right". Self-reflection and self-regulation are essential to this view of criticality as it is predicated on students becoming independent and inquisitive seekers of understanding. Barnett (2015a) further argues that criticality is not just a way of thinking: it is a way of being and acting. It means engaging responsibly, ethically and actively with the world in ways which demonstrate a care and concern for humanity and the world to which we belong.

This approach to criticality is echoed in the literature on reading pedagogy, in particular the work of social constructivist theorists. Rather than positioning readers as passive recipients of text, and casting texts as disembodied repositories of irrefutable facts, social constructivist pedagogy advocates teaching reading as dialogue. Bahktin (1994), Gee (1990) and others urge us to understand reading as doing more than simply listening for the propositions expressed in text, but to recognise that these propositions are authored. Not only are they presented in the voice of the immediate author, but they are also shot through with the voices of others. Academic text, in particular, is richly interpenetrated with the multiple voices of the discourse community. Students as readers are invited to participate as novices in this discourse community – a discourse community which has a complex history, culture, discourses and ways of "doing" critical thinking (Lea & Street, 2006). While they should respect and strive to listen with an open mind to the author's position (Zipin & Brennan, 2006), they also need to participate in a rich and dynamic dialogue with text, constructing meaning rather than simply receiving meaning. This means not just teaching students to read (in the sense of understanding main ideas) but also how to think critically and reflectively as they read.

2.3. The critical pedagogy perspective

The third approach to critical thinking identified by Davies and Barnett (2015) is the critical pedagogy movement. If students are to be able to act responsibly and ethically, they should be aware of the powerful social forces at work in the world which serve to silence and marginalise others, restricting human freedom. This movement espouses an activist engagement with civil society and political discourse, a critique of propaganda and hegemonic institutions, and a focus on oppression and hidden structures of power (Luke, 2002). It confronts social ideologies such as capitalism, racism and neo-liberalism: it is painfully aware of western domination in a post-colonial world and the hegemony of western education. Like the criticality movement, it also recognises the need for reasoning and analysis, and for tools which can facilitate this. Critical Discourse Analysis, developed by Fairclough (1989), offers one such tool as a means to critique the ideology of texts, and the ways discourses serve to privilege those in power (Wallace, 2003, p.2). Luke (2002) explains:

> "We can think of the critical, then, in at least two ways – as an intellectual, deconstructive, textual and cognitive analytical task AND as a form of embodied political anger, alienation, and alterity." (p.26)

Critical pedagogy has been slower to penetrate mainstream EAP teaching. A good example of how the approach has been implemented, however, is provided by Wallace (2003) who describes how she implemented such an approach to critical reading with a small group of international students in London who met regularly to read and discuss newspaper articles which had relevance to their own circumstances. Using tools of critical discourse analysis, students and teacher together deconstructed the ways in which newspapers positioned their readers in order to promote their particular perspectives on issues.

The three perspectives on critical thinking identified by Davies and Barnett intersect and also clash. In one direction, they pull strongly towards a Cartesian view of the world in which logic and reason allow thinkers to seek for incontrovertible truths; in the other direction, they pull towards a view of the world which sees "truths" as being socially constructed across time and space. Yet, the framework has the potential to make it easier for EAP teachers to position themselves within this complex field, and to reflect on how they teach critical reading in particular.

3. Method

This paper uses three ethnographic case studies to explore how EAP teachers realize their teaching of critical reading. Three university preparation EAP institutions in Australia were invited to participate in the study as being representative of the industry, and a volunteer teacher came forward in each institution. All three teachers were experienced teachers of EAP, well respected by their peers, and qualified with Masters degrees in TESOL or Applied Linguistics. Ethics clearance was obtained from all the institutions involved and both teachers and students all gave signed agreement to participate. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper.

In each of the classrooms the students were a diverse group of young adults working towards university entrance. In each group there were between 10 and 16 students from at least five different nationalities including African, Middle Eastern, Sub-continental and East Asian students. Their level of English was intermediate or upper-intermediate. One group was working towards the IELTS, while the others were participating in a university foundation course based on continuous assessment.

The data was gathered by non-participant observations of reading classes throughout the length of the 5–10 week course. During this time both teachers and students became accustomed to the presence of the researcher and appeared to ignore the recording devices. Semi-guided interviews with the teachers and focus groups with the students were conducted mid-way and at the end of the course. All data were recorded and transcribed. Classroom artefacts, such as worksheets and whiteboard work, and examples of student writing were also collected. This data provided a holistic, ecological perspective on the teaching-learning of reading in these settings.

The data were analysed using Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Wells, 1999, 2002) to examine the "contradictions" or tensions between the different elements of each activity system. Activity Theory offered an appropriate framework for analysis of social activity within the defined context of the EAP classroom, as it provided a tool to explore how the roles played by the participants (the teachers and students), the tools (including the tasks and texts) that were used, and the classroom practices all contributed to achieving the sometimes mis-matched goals of the participants. Evidence of the emergence of critical thinking in the students was inferred from their participation in classroom activity and from their completion of classroom-based tasks such as worksheets and essays. The framework of Activity Theory underpinned an iterative process of categorising and re-categorising, diagramming and re-diagramming (Charmaz, 2014), so that understandings of the affordances and constraints of each activity system gradually emerged (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; van Lier, 2004).

4. The case studies

In this section, I will give a brief description of the activity of each classroom in terms of the goals of teacher and students, the roles played by the various participants, the texts and tasks that were used, the classroom practices and the critical thinking/reading outcomes.

4.1. Case study 1: Andrea's class

The setting of the first case study is a foundation English course. On passing this course students would qualify to continue their university studies. They saw this EAP class as a gateway into their continuing study, as well as an opportunity to "*improve my English*", as many explained. Their teacher, Andrea, had a longer-term goal: she was keen to equip these students with the skills and strategies they would need to complete their degree, and to establish conscientious habits of independent study. Like the other two teachers, her commitment and dedication were impressive.

The course embodied a tightly scaffolded approach to developing academic reading strategies with numerous short practise exercises leading up to a final essay. Many of these exercises used short, easy texts on a diversity of topics with accompanying exercises to practise strategies such as picking out main ideas, identifying arguments for and against, highlighting and note-taking, paraphrasing and summarising. The students were expected to put these strategies into practise in preparing their major essay, for which they chose their own topics and accessed library resources to support their writing. They also wrote a report and presented a press report.

The emphasis in this class was very much on the teaching and learning of reading strategies. Andrea was quite strict in insisting that students follow the strategies that she taught them. For example, after reading a text on note-taking and highlighting, she asked the students to set up a chart comparing and contrasting the relative advantages and disadvantages of both. When one student tried to maintain that he would simply list the points, she pushed him into acknowledging that a chart would work better. Some students, in fact, resisted strategies such as note-taking, admitting in the focus groups that they did not use the tools that she had painstakingly taught them as they found "*it's kind of waste time*" (Carol). Carol went on to explain that:

some students take some notes but they don't really understand what they did write about cos they just want to complete their homework. Maybe they won't look at it when they write their essay (Carol)

Rather than struggle to understand the source texts as Andrea intended, they used cut-and-paste techniques to write their essay:

Kate: So how did you manage to do the paraphrasing?

Carol: Sometimes I changed the verb into a noun and if it's a noun I changed to the verb or changed to another vocabulary. Just very simple.

Kate: How did you change the vocabulary?

Carol: Use the computer! Just hold Shift-F7!

Although Andrea was keen for the students to become independent readers, she kept tight control of meaning-making in class and accepted only tightly prescribed interpretations of the text. Palincsar (1998, p.346) refers to this directive teacher role, in which the teacher is the "arbiter of meaning", as "direct instruction". It is the teacher, rather than the students themselves, who controls the pace, sequence and content of the lesson. In fact, the students were hesitant to ask questions or to participate in classroom talk.

However, towards the end of the course, when all the major hurdles were over, there was a change of pace. Andrea had the students read two texts on Polygamy, one "for" and one "against" and asked them to participate in a debate on this topic. The students engaged enthusiastically in this activity, working in groups to develop their arguments, and finally presenting them in class. They took up the arguments of the texts, but also went further, exploring numerous arguments grounded in a wide range of cultural contexts, listening to each others' perspectives, and verbalising their ideas more fluently and more passionately than at any time previously. The activity involved rich dialogue both between the participants and with the texts. As Wanda explained, they enjoyed this activity because it was *"close to our lives"*.

By the end of the course, some students had increased in confidence and gained a greater sense of identity as critical readers. They expressed a sense of satisfaction with their progress, and anticipation of their future ability to succeed in university:

Just a short passage, three months ago I would spend a long time to read it and cannot get the general idea, but after this semester I just use eight or nine minutes to get the totally idea. (Wanda)

At least one student expressed a new orientation towards critical reading:

And once you understand, you won't forget. You can talk to your friends, and if you talk to an expert you can discuss or argue with them, (. . .) but if you understand you can put your knowledge and your opinion as well. That's the kind of thing I really enjoy. I really like to say what I think and stuff. (Yoshi)

Nevertheless, reading for some students remained a major difficulty. As Shuji complained after the course had finished:

Reading is my biggest problem. It's just painful. I don't really have any vocabularies . . . I just keep my dictionary beside me and when I find words I don't know I just check, check and it takes a long, long time. (Shuji)

And, in her final interview, the most successful student in the group, Charity, explained:

In the beginning I used to like reading a lot, but now. . . you just don't want to read any more.

4.2. Study 2: Mark's class

As in all three cases studies, the students in Mark's class were intent on getting into an Australian university course, which, in their case, would mean passing the IELTS. The students had taken a placement test which confirmed that they were still not ready to enter an IELTS preparation stream, and so they were enrolled in an intermediate General English class. For his part, the teacher explained that he wanted to build the students' identities as readers, "opening minds a bit", and introducing them to the creative potential of the English language.

Most classes were devoted to reasonably short, but very challenging, non-fiction texts, supported by worksheets with short sets of questions very similar to those in the IELTS, asking students to identify the main idea in a paragraph, find synonyms, identify anaphoric reference or summarise the article. The topics of these texts included confronting (and somewhat

bizarre) issues such as xenotransplantation (that is, transplanting organs from one species into another species), avian flu (at that time a hot topic), and cannibalism. In addition, the teacher introduced the students to literary texts such as the first paragraph of Dickens' Bleak House and the film script describing the opening of Apocalypse Now. The students were also asked to keep a reading diary.

The teacher had an authoritative presence, but the class was punctuated with laughter and permeated with a positive orientation to learning. Most of the class time was spent in pair or group work reading tasks. Meanwhile, the teacher circulated and assisted pairs who requested help. After each task, the teacher would call the class together to elicit the correct answers, and discuss the reading with the students. Although the students were a little reticent to speak in front of the whole class, Mark was careful not to embarrass them and their confidence gradually increased. Occasionally, he would pause to explain his reasons for choosing a particular text, or the importance of reading skills such as summarising which would be essential for the IELTS but also for the students in their further education, and as a life skill. In this way, he was able to align his goals and the students' goals more closely. The worksheets provided a form of scaffolding, and although some were very challenging, they enabled the students themselves to construct meaning from the texts, rather than have meaning provided for them. As they worked through the scaffolds, they gradually came to gain control of the concepts and to appropriate the language of the texts. The following extract shows two students as they work together, struggling to frame their responses to two contrasting texts on xenotransplantation one by Oogyes and the other by Cowan. The exchange represents a good example of the dialogue engendered by Mark's scaffolding: dialogue between the students themselves, and between the students and the voices of the texts:

> *Hong: Yes, I agree with Glenys Oogyes.*
>
> *Miho: Oh so you oppose? But you said you support.*
>
> Hong: *No I support, oh no, no, no. I support Mark Cowan's opinion because, because, I think it's better. For the whole society, for all humans because... they're just animals, and they can be reproduced. What do you think? What is your opinion?*
>
> *Miho: You can tell your opinion first. Then I can discuss and I can disagree with you.*
>
> Hong: *Yea, I strongly support the idea of Mark Cowan, because I think from now on I don't think we have many choice to say to the people who are suffering the disease, so I think right now the best way is xenotransplantation. Yeah. I think now it's the best way although there are still another way to address, but I think the best way is still xenotransplantation. That's my opinion.*
>
> *Miho: So when and if another way is developed, you will choose that? Instead of xeno-, xeno-something, xenotransplantation?*
>
> *Hong: Yep. I think the best way is xenotransplantation because I think still the transplantation from human to human is still undeveloped – the technology.*
>
> *Miho: I think it's already developed but.*
>
> *Hong: It still have some problems with rejection.*
>
> *Miho: But I think it's about the numbers, the number* [of donated human organs] *is not enough.*
>
> *Hong: Yeah right! The number is not enough so that's why xenotransplantation is needed.*
>
> *Miho: I think if the number was enough, we don't need xeno . transplantation (class is getting very noisy)*
>
> *Hong: But how about, you can't get enough. Many people don't want to [buy??] their organs.*
>
> *Miho: So what I am talking is, if we can have another way, an alternative = =*
>
> *Hong: = =another way*
>
> *Miho: such as mechanical substitutes.*
>
> *Hong: But = =*
>
> *Mark: (to whole class) = =OK. I think it is time we moved on. [SC02_28_3]*

At the end of the unit the students expressed their satisfaction with their enhanced reading ability. For example:

- I learned that it is the best way to choose topic sentences or to write paraphrase for really understanding the text.
- By summarising and paraphrasing it helped me to improve my reading skills.
- Finding a thesis statement and topic sentences for each paragraph was good. It helped me to think deeply. And also paraphrasing was really good to improve my reading and understanding skills in English.

They also commented spontaneously on the content of the texts, showing that they had engaged with the meaning of the texts, rather than simply treating them as a reading exercise. For example:

- Although this is an academic text and includes some big words, I still enjoyed this reading text because I am very interested at this topic. I have not ever heard such an interesting explanation about this term 'cannibalism' until I read this reading text.
- I find it interesting that cannibalism is not for decreasing the number of species but for increasing it.

4.3. Case study 3: Lucy's class

The third case study is set in a university preparation course based on continuous assessment. There are several concurrent groups studying at the same level with the same prescribed course. Students must pass the assessments (principally a final essay) in order to progress on to university, but many in this group have only just scraped through from the previous level. Their main focus is on the immediate goal of getting through the course. In contrast, the teacher, Lucy, is passionate about empowering her students, helping them to become the kind of critical readers who engage deeply with text. As she put it:

> *it is a very particular kind of reader identity that we're trying to develop here in order to engage not just at a superficial level... but to engage at deeper levels, at more meaningful levels.*

The five week intensive course dealt primarily with a single topic: teleworking. The students had a coursebook with three highly academic readings on the topic (in contrast to the lay texts characteristic of the other settings), which students were to use as sources for their final 700-word essay. The question for this essay was not revealed until the almost the last week of the course as Lucy was insistent that the students should have gained a deep familiarity and understanding of the texts before beginning to write. Lucy followed a similar process with each text, though she spent most time on the first text, and handed over more responsibility to the students for the following texts as a way of scaffolding their reading. Many days were spent deconstructing this first text. Although the coursebook contained some worksheets designed for groupwork, the students did not seem to be able to cope with these tasks and so Lucy took over the deconstruction process, asking a series of IRE (initiate-respond-evaluate) sequences. The responses came predominantly from a single student, who was very confident in English, while others remained increasingly silent, apparently abrogating responsibility for making meaning.

Lucy's deconstruction of the text was extremely thorough. While she began with skimming, picking out main ideas and topic sentences, she continued to delve down more and more deeply into the text, drawing out subtleties of the grammar at text, paragraph, sentence and word level, following a process proposed by Rose (2003). The students clearly lacked the cultural capital to be able to do this without her detailed support. For example, when she coaxed them to unpack the term "*information economy*", they seemed to have no concept of what this could mean, and had to rely entirely on Lucy to draw meaning from the expression.

Lucy's goal was for students to enter into dialogue with text. She explained

> *... meaning is open: it is contestable and having students understand that is a really important aspect of, well, not just language learning but learning, and of reflexivity as well. [...] I talk about the fact that new ways of understanding language are that meaning isn't in the words; the meaning is in the relationship between the reader, and the meanings and the ideas and the perceptions that they are bringing in, and the text. So we might read the same thing in totally different ways, taking different meanings from the text.*

She tried to push students into constructing meaning from text, and to make them see that "language evokes ideas, it does not represent them" (Slobin, 1982, cited in Lantolf and Thorne 2006, p. 9). For her, "*Texts work on excess and supplements of meaning. That excess, that supplement, they're not really marginal, they're really important".* She was aware that she was *"pushing students where they might not want to go",* but she hoped that "*they'll be picking up that it's worth reading difficult texts: that it's worth struggling with meaning*." She saw reading as a process of ever-deepening engagement with text and ideas. She disparaged what she saw as "*structuralist supports*" such as text-mapping exercises, instead drilling down into the rich metaphors embodied in the language such as the phrase "*the bottom rung of the career ladder*", drawing a picture on the whiteboard and explaining at length how women would have to climb up this ladder to make a career in teleworking. She used semiotic tools such as concept-mapping, but where Andrea might have created a neatly structured for-and-against table, Lucy's concept mapping was a rhizomatic web of intersecting concepts and questions.

The students found the texts themselves and Lucy's intense and detailed deconstruction of the texts difficult to understand. For most, the topic of teleworking seemed remote from their lives and interests. When I asked why they rarely interacted in class, they responded, for example: "*Sleepy. Boring class*." Attendance was compulsory, but most students seemed to "zone out" in class. One student explained:

> *Sometimes we can't follow. But when we get back home and we read it again, we can follow. But in class sometimes we don't understand.* (Mon)

It seemed, as Janks (2002, p.9) put it, that there was "a disjunction between critical deconstruction and students' affective engagement with texts".

Although the students completed their essays, including referring to the in-class texts, Lucy was far from happy with their achievements. Nor did the students feel that they had made much progress. Hari, the only student who had participated actively in class, commented:

Reading? I don't think there's too much change. Because I don't have a problem with reading actually. There are a few words I can't understand, but if we read the whole sentence we can easily understand what the author wants to say.

Perhaps this was not the kind of understanding that Lucy meant when she declared that she wanted students to "*INCORPORATE*" meaning from texts.

5. Participation in Davies and Barnett's categories of critical thinking

5.1. The skills perspective on critical thinking

To return to the framework for critical thinking proposed by Davies and Barnett (2015), the three teachers integrated critical thinking into their teaching of reading in different ways, however, all of them relied at least to some extent on applying basic thinking skills. Andrea (Case study 1) put the greatest emphasis on critical thinking as skills, trying to raise her students' metacognitive awareness of skills such as comparing/contrasting, arguing for and against, and strategies such as taking notes of main ideas. Her approach was strongly influenced by theorists such as Chamot and O'Malley (1994) and Oxford (1990). Mark (Case Study 2) approached skills development less overtly, the emphasis in his classes being more on content and meaning than on skills. Although he complained about the *"tyranny of the IELTS"*, his IELTS-style worksheets with quasi exam questions called on students to use skills such as identifying main ideas and summarising key points. These worksheets formed an invaluable scaffold for students (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005), placing the onus on them as much as possible to construct meaning themselves through dialogue with the text rather than have meaning constructed for them (Bahktin, 1994; Gee, 1990). Even Lucy (Case study 3), who resisted what she saw as *"structuralist handholds"*, worked with students to identify main ideas, evaluate contrasting positions, and draw inferences, modelling the application of critical thinking skills rather than providing tasks which would enable students to apply such skills themselves. The data suggests that critical thinking and reading skills are fundamental to EAP reading pedagogy, although the three teachers taught such skills rather differently.

5.2. Criticality

All three teachers also aspired to engender critical reading dispositions. Mark and Lucy, in particular, placed great store on criticality: their goal was a certain kind of transformation in their students' dispositions towards reading (Mezirow, 2000). Lucy wanted her students to develop a reader identity which would probe into the deep meanings of text; however, her goal of developing critical awareness did not align with the students' more pragmatic goal of simply passing the course. In addition to wanting his students to develop critical dispoisitions Mark simply wanted his students to love reading in English. He chose texts precisely because of their affective impact, and also because of the challenging ethical issues they addressed. As he said:

that text kind of challenges conventional wisdom ···And again that's one of the reasons for choosing such a text, because it does in some way, engage you – almost forces you to engage a critical faculty.

He enjoyed confronting his students with uncomfortable ideas, as in the following extract (a segue between the xenotransplantation text and the cannibalism text), but he did so in a light, humorous manner within a warm and supportive classroom climate:

So I'm going to pose a question for you: (to Rina, a Chinese student) you might eat pork meat, and you might put a pig heart [into a human], and you might use a human heart, would you eat a human? (All laugh) Would you? Does that not mean that there's a difference (between eating pork and using pigs for xenotransplantation)?

By providing "designed-in scaffolding" (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005) – scaffolded tasks and worksheets –, he maintained a "hands-off" presence, encouraging the students to make meaning and engage with ideas for themselves. And he was rewarded as the students gained confidence in using the language and concepts of the texts to develop their own position on the ethical issues involved, as can be seen in the dialogic exchange between Hong and Miho in Case Study Two above which offers a beautiful example of the type of dialogic inquiry proposed by Wells (1999), for example.

Andrea and Lucy, in contrast, tended to exert more control over meaning-making, emphasising the reading process rather than encouraging the students to engage in their own dialogue with the ideas of the texts. In Andrea's classroom, the students generally took a performative approach to the reading class – simply doing the task without real engagement As Wells (2002) argues, if the teacher retains the role of 'primary knower', students fall into the role of passive recipients and their ability to participate in communicative engagement with texts is limited. It was not until the Polygamy debate that they began to participate actively in making meaning from the in-class texts. This suggests that a pedagogy for critical reading requires delicate scaffolding in which the teacher sets up a challenging environment which encourages students to participate in making meaning independently, using texts that provoke engagement, and tasks which prompt the students to take responsibility rather than relying on their teacher.

5.3. Critical pedagogy

The third perspective in Davies and Barnett's framework, critical pedagogy, was most apparent in Lucy's classes (Case Study 3). Like Wallace (2003), Lucy aspired to have her students engage with social issues. The topic of teleworking offered huge potential for tackling such issues: the globalisation of work, the changing balance of social, economic and political power between the developed and developing world, and the exploitation of female workers and call centre workers more generally. One of the three texts, "A female ghetto? Women's careers in call centres", directly called students' attention to the social disadvantages faced by women. Lucy also talked to the class at some length about the hegemony of western education, but again with little response from the students. Unfortunately, the students remained aloof from these pressing and urgent social debates, despite Lucy's passionate discourse.

6. Implications for critical reading pedagogy in EAP

The three teachers in these case studies represent three dedicated and highly skilled professionals, working in slightly different EAP contexts, with different students, and each with rather different orientations to critical thinking, and hence to critical reading pedagogy. All three introduced their students to basic critical thinking skills such as identifying key points, making comparisons, and identifying causation. All three were keen to see some sort of transformation in their students: Andrea hoped that the students would become independent, well-organised and strategic, while Mark was more interested in the students gaining an appreciation for the creativity of the English language as well as a disposition towards critical, ethical thinking. Lucy was striving for the students to become deeply engaged with meaning-making. All three tried to disturb the students' worldview, to "make life a little awkward" (Barnett, 2015b), so that they would engage more reflectively in the world and be more aware and understanding of a diversity of perspectives.

Teachers of EAP are often passionately committed to their work in the transcultural contact zone of international education. Most take their work in smoothing students' entry into the new culture of higher education as a moral endeavour; they recognise the responsibility of demystifying the cultural codes of higher education and empowering students to participate in these new contexts. However, they may also be inclined to see themselves as "redeemers" of students "shackled by deficit" (Singh & Doherty, 2004, p.11). Their very passion may also be daunting for students. While we can unsettle and disturb such students, the data from these case studies suggest that we also need to scaffold them delicately. Wallace (2003), who used a critical pedagogy approach with a group of international student volunteers in London, relates how several Arabic students abandoned the course after she introduced some controversial texts on Islam. Similarly Pohl (2005), who used critical pedagogy to question the hegemony of western education with an EAP group, was disappointed by the students' reluctance to challenge power relationships although he believed that the unit was "a useful counterpoint to the traditionally more pragmatic view of EAP evident in the rest of the EAP program" (p.7).

This does not mean to say that we should not be "*pushing students where they might not want to go*" as Lucy put it, or that we should not be disturbing their worldview. However, it does mean that students need careful and "delicate" scaffolding so that they remain secure in this dangerous space between educational worlds. Secondly, attention to engagement is crucial. Texts which are challenging, topics which grip their imagination but are not too confronting, and tasks which allow them to feel a sense of achievement and agency along the way are all key factors in creating and nurturing this engagement. EAP students also need a positive, fun, creative and supportive classroom community in which they are able to interact in small groups and try out their voices in the new discourses in non-threatening environments, like Miho and Hong in the xenotransplantation extract above. Above all, "delicate scaffolding" means setting up a challenging reading environment which supports students in making meaning for themselves rather than having meaning imposed upon them.

Clearly, there can be no one right way to teach critical reading. As Moore (2013, p.521) suggests, we can only hope to impart "an extra edge of consciousness" to our students. Teachers and institutions will develop many different approaches to curricula and to pedagogy in response to their students, their contexts, and their own beliefs and personalities. Critical thinking skills, criticality and critical pedagogy all have something to contribute. By providing delicate scaffolding and maintaining high engagement, our EAP students can become better critical readers and more conscious thinkers as they progress towards their future studies.

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