

## Using Prose-based Dialogues to Develop Critical Literacy

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### 【摘要】

為鼓勵在 EFL 情境進行更多的批判識讀研究，本文探討 26 位台灣大三生之批判識讀語言學習，檢視 2018 年下學期五個活動之一之會話活動，研究學生對此含歧視為主題之活動反應。研究以質性資料為主，包含教室觀察、每周教學日誌、學生上課心得、訪談資料、及學生活動對話作品，採用 Lewison、Leland 與 Harste(2015)之批判識讀教學模型為分析架構。研究顯示，此學習活動根基於教師對於學生的歧視意識想法，幫助學生體驗多元觀點與各類社會議題，最後刺激學生創造相關對話，對社會產生一定態度。此外，批判識讀活動應該開始於教室參與者資源，引導學生審視各類題材，讓學生探索社會相關之議題。

### 【關鍵詞】

批判識讀語言學習、散文故事、小組對話、多元觀點

### 【Abstract】

In order to encourage more research on and practice of critical literacy in the EFL classroom, this paper explores a case study of critical literacy conducted at a university in Taiwan. Specifically, it focuses on one of five critical-literacy-based activities that took place during the 2018 spring semester. The activity used a prose-based story to help 26 senior college students to create 5 dialogues addressing different sociopolitical issues. The instructional model of critical literacy by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2015) is employed to analyze different qualitative data: (1) classroom observations, (2) weekly teaching journal, (3) student reflection papers, (4) interview data, and (5) students' team dialogues. The

current paper found that this activity was based on the teacher's belief in controversial-issue story for students' consciousness of discrimination. It helped students experience multiple perspectives and sociopolitical issues before some of them took some stance toward society. In addition to the practice of critical literacy, three pedagogical inferences are drawn based on students' responses to the activity. Finally, conclusions and limitations are provided in the end of the paper.

**【Keywords】**

critical literacy, prose-based stories, team dialogues, multiple perspectives

## Introduction

Critical literacy embraces critical approaches to language, which are traceable to the work of Paulo Freire (1970), the Brazilian literacy educator. Freire and Macedo (1987) suggest that language educators should teach literacy learners to read the word and the world. Specifically, literacy training should focus not only on the learning of literacy skills, but also on a deeper understanding of the world. Students should experience change in their language and consciousness development.

The notions of critical literacy began to be applied in a systematic way in the 1990s. Critical literacy has been receiving growing interest and acceptance as well as endorsement in the field of education. For example, a special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* in 1999 was devoted to studies of critical literacy in which most of the studies took place in ESL (English as a second language) contexts and revolved around such topics as gender, identity, sociocultural issues, and popular culture from various critical literacy perspectives (Ibrahim, 1999; Lin, 1999; Nelson, 1999).

In 2012 the journal *Theory into Practice* published an issue that highlighted the practice of critical literacy in ESL contexts. Luke (2012) offered a look at the origins and characteristics of critical literacy and advocated the necessity of alternative literacy. The other studies in the issue included research that showcased how critical literacy could be practiced in the ESL context. Flint and Laman (2012) created a writing workshop in which students wrote poems in response to issues related to social justice and these poems were examined through critical lenses. Another example (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012) encouraged language scholars to see how the body can be a text and how students' performances can illustrate critical literacy components. This paper reflects Stein's (2004) argument that meaning-making is multimodal and critical literacy should challenge students by asking them to address different modes of representation in the classroom.

As shown above, critical literacy has been drawing considerable attention in ESL settings. With regard to EFL (English in a foreign country) contexts, some language educators and scholars have attempted to investigate critical literacy and examine to what extent it can be implemented in the classroom. For example, three Indonesian researchers (Setyainghsih, Musthafa, & Lengkanawati, 2018) encourage critical literacy by using selected materials and having students fill in a worksheet in which they were encouraged to create their own critical questions and to write a short review. A follow-up discussion was conducted in class in order to invite more reflective responses to the texts. Another example from Indonesia can be found in Mbau and Sugan's (2019) research study in which they investigate the basic and important issues related to critical literacy for English language teachers in Indonesia. The paper is designed to help students to develop "critical manners in reading and writing" (p. 143).

Taiwan is no exception in developing critical literacy through some efforts by researchers such as Huang (2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013, 2017) and Ko (2007, 2010, 2013a, 2013b). However, if we examine the 2-day agenda of the 36th International Conference on English Teaching and Learning in 2019, a primary language teaching and learning conference held annually in Taiwan, there were 11 poster sessions and 52 oral presentations, but none of these research studies used the term critical literacy directly and most of the studies provided at the conference were related to the development of the four skills.

Accordingly, the current study explores a critical-literacy activity in an English Conversation course at a university in Taiwan. This research was conducted in 2018 spring semester (1) to investigate the extent to which the goals of critical literacy were achieved in the classroom and (2) to arrive at some pedagogical implications for the practice of critical literacy in Taiwan.

### Literature Review

The notion of critical literacy is rooted in the work of Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000). Freire insists that if teachers help students from the oppressed community to read the words but do not at the same time teach them to read the world, students may become literate in a technical sense but will remain passive objects of history rather than active subjects. In Freire's words, subjects are those who know and act; objects are those who are known and acted upon. As a result, critical literacy emphasizes evaluation and critiques of social and political issues in a certain society by examining the power within texts through language (Lee, 2020; Yoon, 2015).

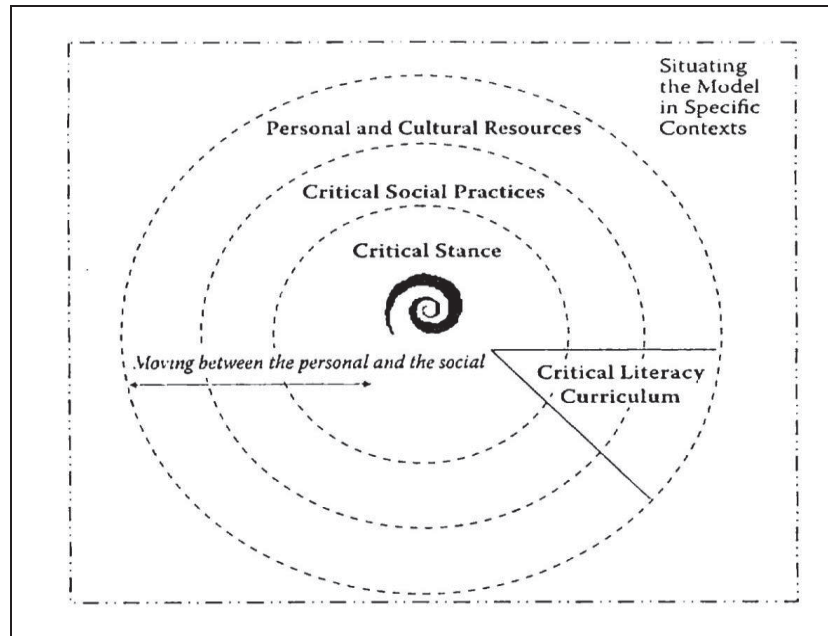
In order to refine the concept of critical literacy, Harste (2009) compares different notions of literacy. First, literacy from a psychological point of view sees each learner as an individual and emphasizes how learners process linguistic information and how they construct meanings. This concept assumes that the purpose of language learning is not only to understand linguistic codes and symbols, but also to construct meanings that arise from the interplay of author, text, and learner. Second, literacy from a sociological point of view implies more than the acquisition of discrete cognitive skills. It suggests that the functions and meanings of literacy vary among people from different cultural and social backgrounds. While literacy from a psychological perspective underscores the mental processes by which students make sense of the text, literacy from a sociological viewpoint stresses classroom interactions and students' prior experiences.

However, these two concepts of literacy fail to recognize images and taken-for-granted messages implicit in the texts. Not merely a personal event involving isolated language skills, interpreting a text is actually a literacy action "constrained, mediated, shaped by the social forces inherent in a particular community of readers" (Serafini, 2021, May). Becoming literate in the twenty-first century requires developing the ability to understand, analyze, and criticize one's own social milieu. The prerequisite for critical literacy is to "provide students with opportunities to use their own reality as a basis of literacy" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 151). In the long run, students can gain a better sense of who they are and who

they will be—as Pennycook (1994) envisions, critical literacy is a form of “education grounded in a desire to change” (p. 297).

In order to shed light on critical literacy and encourage its practice, many research/teaching models have been proposed (e.g., Janks, 2000; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Petrone & Gibson, 2005; Shannon, 1995). A good example can be seen in the model drawn by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2015, xxviii). This model (Figure 1) consists of three components (i.e., personal and cultural resources, critical social practices, and critical stance), three orientations that sufficiently explain the complexity of how critical literacy can be implemented in the classroom. It indicates that critical instruction cannot happen without the investigation of individual lives and cultural resources from classroom participants. In other words, critical literacy should address the realities outside the classroom and make literacy learning a social practice. In this respect, this model starts from the resources that the teacher and students bring into the classroom, moves to critical social practices that occur in the classroom, and finally ends at the changes in the attitudes of classroom participants either in or outside the classroom. This model, as the present study argues, can be used as “a planning tool and also as a lens from which to examine our teaching” (p.5).

**Figure 1: The instructional model of critical literacy**



With regard to empirical studies on critical literacy in Taiwan, Dooley, Exley, and Poulus (2016) present a detailed analysis of some undergraduate critical literacy programs in Taiwan. Kuo (2009, 2013, 2014, 2015) draws on various learning materials such as picture books and self-help books and quizzes to help students achieve a critical stance. Huang (2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2015) uses critical articles and teen magazines to develop students' inclination to engage in text practices. Finally, Ko (Ko, 2010, 2013a, 2013b; Ko & Wang, 2013) focuses on the development of critical consciousness, especially an active and challenging attitude toward reading.

To sum up, the present study sees critical literacy as a social practice, and views texts used in the classroom as not neutral. The purpose of the present study was to fill in the gap of critical literacy research in Taiwan.

## **Methodology**

### **Qualitative case study**

The current research study is a qualitative case study that analyzes students' responses to a prose-based dialogue activity from a critical literacy perspective. It draws on various qualitative data to explore Taiwanese college students' responses to their English learning. Further, this study is an interpretive case study because it contains rich, thick description. As Merriam (1998) indicates, such a case study will use descriptive data "to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering" (p. 38). In the present study, theoretical assumptions refer to the critical literacy orientations discussed in Lewison et al.'s (2015) instructional model of critical literacy.

### **Setting, participants, and the activity**

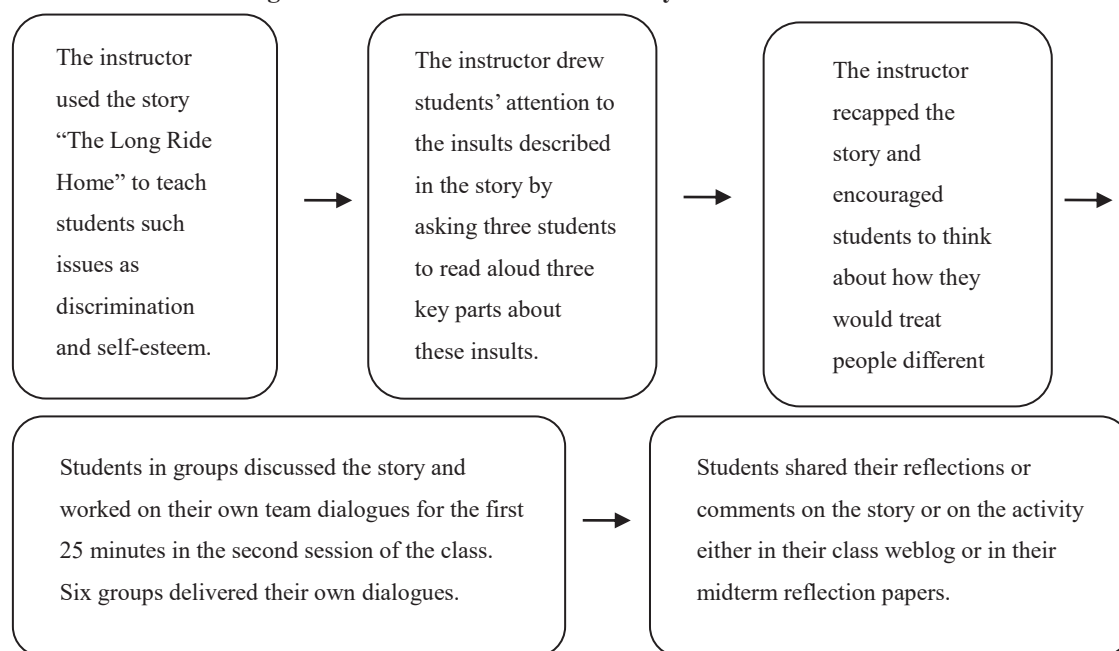
The course discussed in this study was an elective English Conversation course offered at a university in Taiwan. The informants in the study included the instructor and his students. They attended two 50-minute sessions every Wednesday afternoon. Students included 23 male and 3 female undergraduates from the School of Engineering, of whom 24 were third-year students and 2 were fifth-year students at a five-year college. According to the instructor, their English level was low, equivalent to the basic level of the GEPT exams. Students also lacked experience in discussing and writing in English. In the first semester, the instructor used a regular English conversation textbook and focused on drill practices. During the second semester, students participated in all the class activities in six groups of 4-5 members. Each group sat together, and discussed, created and performed a team dialogue at the end of each class.

The activity (Figure 2) discussed was the fourth activity conducted in the class. The flowchart in Figure 2 can help us map the two-session literacy learning that occurred in the activity. This chart highlights how the instructor enacted critical literacy by employing a self-told true story about racial discrimination and a journey of self-discovery. Specifically, the story "The Long Ride Home" (Hurtado,



2000) is a first person narrative of a Hispanic girl (Victoria) who suffered from the symbol of her identity, her honey-colored skin, because her mother's skin was lighter, and some people even mistook her for her mother's maid at a boutique.

**Figure 2: The flowchart of the activity**



### Data collection

In addition to the team dialogues that students created during each activity, the following data sources were collected. First, while the instructor was the primary teacher for the class, I was an observant participant in the classroom. Close observation data were collected through moderate participation in class and I tried to strike a balance between insider and outsider (Spradley, 1980). But I attempted to keep a certain distance from students in class. I would not interfere with their discussion and/or participate in the composition of their group dialogues. Second, the instructor kept a weekly teaching journal related to reflections on his instruction and students' performances. Third, each student was required to write a reflection paper in Chinese that was submitted at the end of the semester. Fourth, at the end of the semester I interviewed the instructor and the students. Two groups of seven

students were selected and each group was interviewed once. All the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Data in Chinese were translated into idiomatic English. Students' names are all pseudonyms.

### **Data analysis and triangulation**

This study employs the aforementioned model (Lewison et al., 2015) as the analytical framework. Such a framework reflects a theoretical concept of language instruction, which is used to examine the activity from a critical perspective. Accordingly, the analysis protocol used in the study is mainly discourse analysis rather than conversation and interaction analysis. The data will be used to make meaningful inferences regarding the activity according to the framework. Data triangulation is achieved from the cross-examination of various data in an attempt to reveal some tentative, but meaningful and important, truth.

## **Results and Findings**

### **Personal and Cultural Resources**

The instructor believed that the story would be effective not only in promoting a sense of self-discovery, but also in teaching an awareness of racial discrimination in Taiwan. In his opinion, articles regarding racial discrimination are less frequently offered to students in Taiwan than in the USA. As a result, the instructor designed the activity in an effort to motivate students to consider similar questions surrounding their lives: (1) "Do we talk about foreign workers with contempt?"; (2) "Do we talk about them by using neutral words?"; and (3) "Do you find other people use words that make us uncomfortable when they are talking about foreign workers?"

In contrast to the instructor's broader view of racial discrimination, students held a simplistic black-and-white perception of racial discrimination, as a tension between blacks and whites in the USA. This rigid definition of racial discrimination was influenced largely by Hollywood movies and American TV programs that students had seen. For example, after the researcher interviewed some students

about this issue, Happy responded: “It seems that Taiwan doesn’t have this kind of problem. In fact, I kind of don’t like black people because they look quite disgusting!”

Gee (2004) proposes that cultural models are our first thoughts or everyday theories about the world, such as schemata and storylines. In the case of the activity, students were preconditioned with a cultural model of racial discrimination: Racial discrimination is a social problem occurring exclusively between black people and white people in the USA rather than in Taiwan. Developed by twenty-six junior college Taiwanese students at the age of nineteen to twenty-one, this cultural model expressed students’ values and perspectives that defined what counted as racial discrimination. Finally, the cultural model became a learning source that informed students when they enacted their learning practices—i.e. while they were discussing and working on their team dialogues.

### **Critical Social Practices**

#### **(1) Disrupting the Commonplace**

The instructor selected “The Long Ride Home” in an attempt to help students develop a better understanding of racial discrimination. At the beginning, students did not seem to see the story as a thought-provoking text to help them move from a passive reading to a critical reflection. Their cultural model of racial discrimination became an ideological frame that initially constructed the students’ team dialogues. As Lakoff (2004) states, frames are our mental structures that shape the way we see the world, that is, the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and so on. One’s worldview is mainly concerned with ideas, and language is the tool for showing these ideas: “Framing is about getting language that fits your worldview. It is not just language. The ideas are primary—and the language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas” (p. 4).

Students’ cultural model of racial discrimination was a learning source that not only shaped students’ perceptions but also became a cultural framework that engineered their dialogues within the dichotomy of blacks and whites. In response

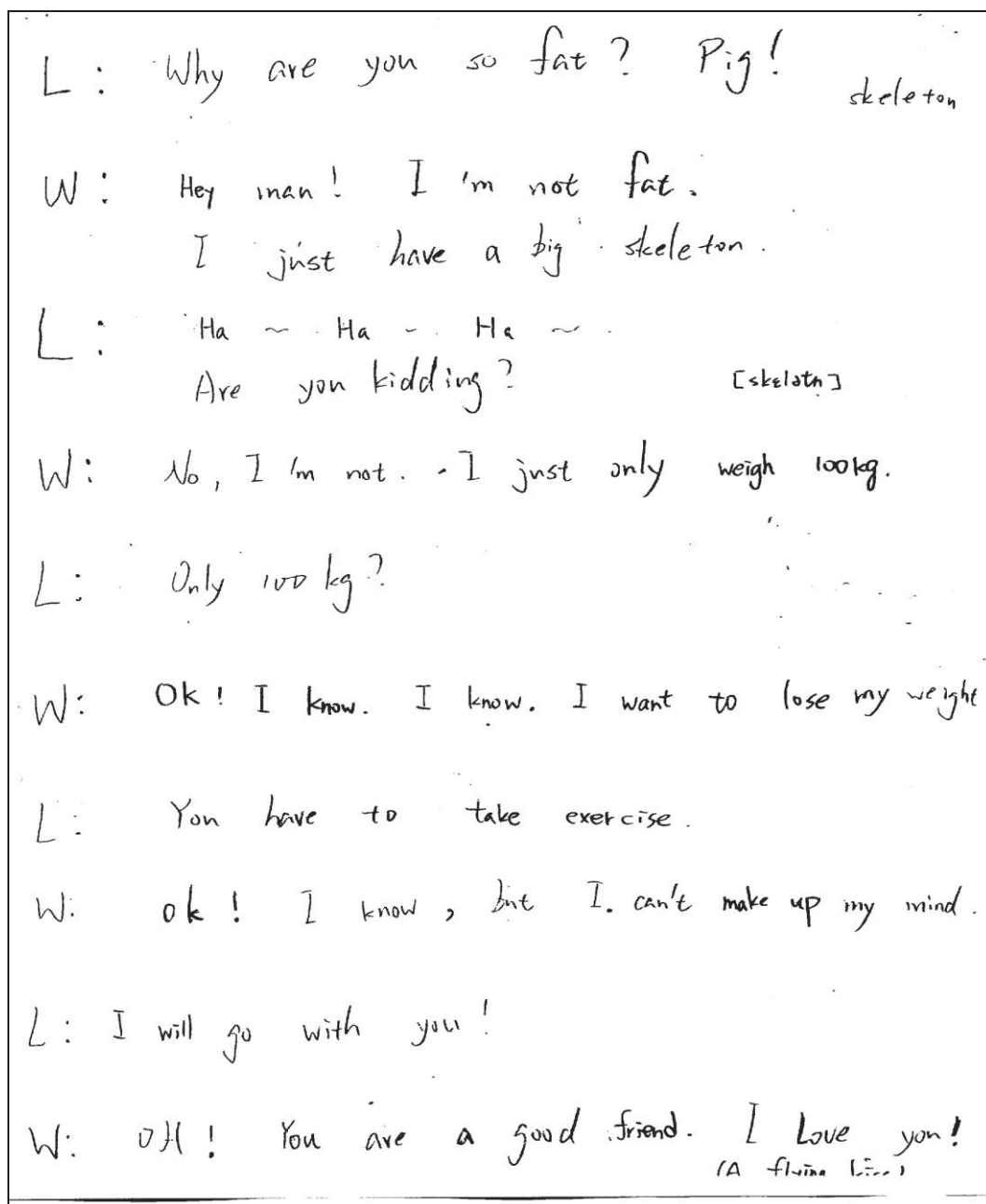
to the definition of racial discrimination, students frequently mentioned *black people*, *white people*, and *the USA*. In other words, this cultural model influenced students in an inflexible way so that they viewed racial discrimination mainly as a racial bias of white people toward black people in the USA.

As a result, the cultural model of racial discrimination developed by students provided both a positive and a negative momentum. On the one hand, it helped students to make sense of “The Long Ride Home” and created an image of racism in their minds as food for thought. On the other hand, it became a barrier to a deeper understanding of racial discrimination. The framework in the minds of the students drew a fine line between what was included and what was left out in terms of racial discrimination.

## **(2) Considering Multiple Perspectives**

Data suggested that at the beginning of the activity, students were hesitant to share their perspectives. As Mary said, “racial discrimination has been there all the time. For example, French people discriminate against American people, and white people discriminate against black people and Asian people. The world is changing and it seems the problem is not so serious as before. Maybe in the future the problem will be solved.” However, a further discussion on discrimination in students’ lives motivated students in their group to create a dialogue that stemmed from their own experience.

Figure 3: Group 1's Prose-based Dialogue



Group dialogue helped us understand that students responded to the text by writing a different version of discrimination, one that reflects students' problem in

their real lives. Specifically, Group 1's dialogue (Figure 3) was about LP, a student who was made fun of by his classmates because he was overweight in junior high school. In the dialogue, although one of the characters thinks that he only has a "big skeleton" [heavy bone structure] and is not fat, he is still mocked as a pig because he weighs 100 kilograms. The plot and coherence of the entire dialogue may be not very logical and convincing; for instance, the contrived ending and friendship comes too fast. However, students shared their alternative reflection on the story through the dialogue.

Students' perception of racial discrimination varied depending on time and place. During the interview, LP made the following meaningful remark:

Racial discrimination has been there since the old days. People of the same race must think that they are superior to other people. When such a sense of superiority is developed in certain races, confrontation will occur between different races. . . . To solve the confrontation between different races, we should start with education, step by step, instilling mutual respect in the next generation. This is the solution!

The activity discussed made critical literacy feasible because students were provided ample opportunities to consider multiple realities during the learning process.

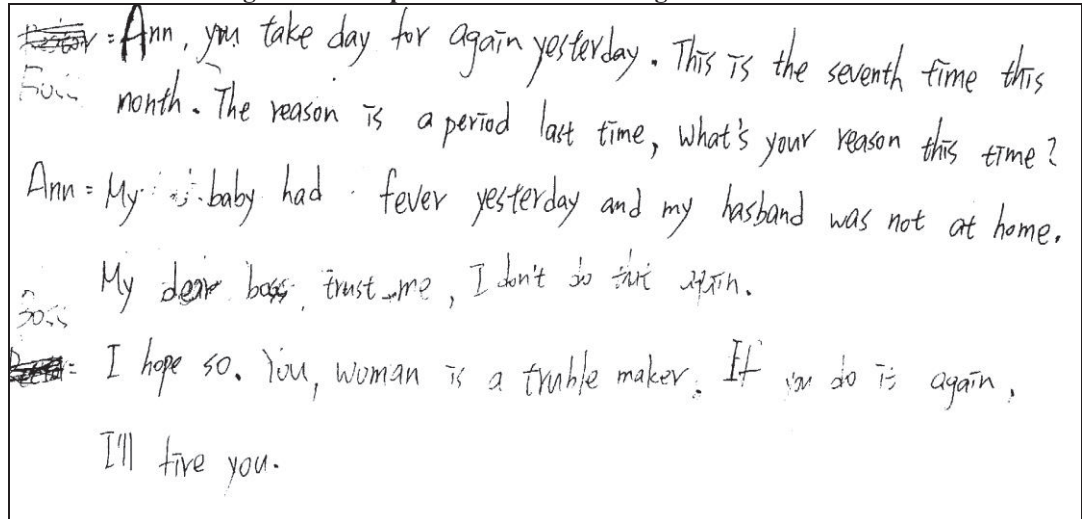
### **(3) Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues**

Taking a closer look at students' team dialogues can help us explore more sociopolitical issues in terms of critical engagement. For example, Group 3's dialogue (see Figure 4), explicitly describes gender bias against women, suggesting that women can be unfairly treated at workplaces because of unequal power relationships between men and women.

In Group 4's dialogue (Figure 5), students toyed with the notion of being a black person and a white person by adding the characters Michael Jordan and Michael Jackson to their creative work. According to students in Group 4, the

character “W” in the dialogue represents a white boy who brags of his “fell” [skin] as a symbol of higher social status, and who despises a black boy by describing him in a metaphorical way: “I can’t see you in the night.”

**Figure 4: Group 3’s Prose-based Dialogue**



According to Jay, because the white boy is snobbish and considers the black boy “law [low] strips” [a person of lower class], his group decided to make Michael Jordan the black boy’s father, a well-known role model for young black people, and make the white boy’s father Michael Jackson, an African-American singer who wanted to become a white person. Students said that the juxtaposition of two black Michaels was an attempt to make fun of the notion of racial discrimination, a way to subvert the comparison of black vs. white.

Figure 5: Group 4's Prose-based Dialogue

W: Look my fell. That's so nice. It let me Look so noble. Ha~ha~ha..

B: Oh~ really? I think my fell is great, too. It let me so health.

W: But... I can't see you clear in the night.

B: Deam... You are bitch. Don't hurt me. You well get retribution.

W: Ha~ha~ I don't think so. I don't care that. You are the law stirps.

B: Shoot! Do you know Jordan is my father?

W: Wow~wow~wow~ So~ Michael Jackson is my father.

B: Hey~ Hey. Do you know he is a black men?

W: Oh~ No. I can't believe that..

As Janks (2019) indicates, critical literacy should be seen as a repertoire of literacy practices that are positive and locally negotiated. Critical literacy can engage with local realities, which are narrated and examined from students' viewpoints. Take students' responses to the activity as an example. The dialogues of Group 3 and Group 4 indicate that the instructor created a motivating learning space where students were offered many opportunities to express their values, viewpoints, identities, and their lives. What students wrote or said was either collective or personal stories, presenting a microcosm of the society in Taiwan. These narrative accounts were stories about their own lives: (1) a relationship between themselves and their teachers; (2) a description of career women who encounter gender bias; (3) and a creative alternative interpretation of racism drawing on two well-known African-American celebrities.



#### **(4) Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice**

Taking action and promoting social justice means seeing literacy practices as a tool and a path to social transformation, in which social issues are raised and acted upon to effect changes in students. Group 5's dialogue (Figure 6) represents an example of social transformation through literacy practices because the dialogue is a product of negotiation and mediation through multiple perspectives from students and myself during the discussion. In addition, the dialogue relates to a situation in which a white mother encounters a positive experience with a black stranger and thus changes her negative attitude toward black people.

As a form of social transformation, the dialogue is principally based on students' concept of racial discrimination, i.e., a social problem specifically between black people and white people. The dialogue embodies the concept of agency for social change as mentioned above, a concept that highlights transformation through reflection and action in terms of individual and because the ending of the dialogue makes a difference and reverses the framework shown at the beginning of the dialogue—the mother rejects the way she used to see black people as from the lower class. In Lakoff's (2004) words, the dialogue involves the idea of reframing--“changing the way the public sees the world ...[and] changing what counts as common sense” (Preface, xv).

Figure 6: Group 5's Prose-based Dialogue

(In a white-predominated community)

Little girl ⇒ Look! There are one black man over there.  
He looks so funny.

Mom, look at that guy. Why does he look so black?

Mom ⇒ Listen, don't get close to this kind of people.  
Most of them are ugly and dirty, sometimes they are lazy and stupid.  
(Few seconds later.... A car is racing on the street.  
The car is approaching the mother and little girl.)

black man: Watch out! A car is coming. (The black man is trying to  
save the girl by pushing her away.)

Mom ⇒ What a close call! Thank you for saving my daughter's life.

Black man ⇒ Nothing. I just did what I should do. Bye - Bye! (He leaves.)

Mom ⇒ Maybe I have to change my mind of black man.  
Maybe it is time for me to change the way I see  
black people.

However, more interesting is the process of negotiation that produced the dialogues. Some time after the instructor asked students to start discussing and writing their team dialogues, Linda, the only female student in Group 5, raised her hand to ask a question. After I approached and stood near her and the other group members, Linda spoke in Chinese and asked me how to describe a neighborhood where most residents were white people. I suggested the expression *white-predominated* [predominantly white] *community* and wrote it on their paper. Then they started to think who would appear in their dialogue. At first, Linda proposed that the dialogue should be about a black man in an area where most of

the residents were white people. Mike also offered his idea in which a white mother and her daughter saw a black person on the street in the neighborhood. Finally, students in Group 5 thought that it would be meaningful to have the ending positive and encouraging--the black person saved the daughter's life by pushing her away from a speeding car and the mother changed her previous impression of black people. At this point, I did not want to interfere in the direction of their dialogue, so I stood beside Group 5, saying nothing and waiting for any questions, which gave me a chance to see how they developed their dialogue. Most importantly, I helped students with their English rather than in the development of their group dialogue.

Their story started with a little girl who saw the black person on the street and asked her mother why he was so dark-skinned. The mother did not answer her daughter's question but told her that she should not approach "this kind of people" because she considered them dirty and lazy. The mother's impression of black people represents a negative stereotype of black people, unfairly maintained in the minds of many people. Then some students asked how they should write and make the mother change the way she saw black people. Jeffrey, usually the quietest student in Group 5, said, "Action! There must be some action as we see in many movies." A while after students shared different ideas and negotiated with one and another, they decided that the daughter was almost hit by a speeding car and it was a close call because the black person pushed the girl away from the car. The mother was depicted at the end as a good person expressing her gratitude toward the black man before saying good-bye to him by saying "Maybe it is time for me to change the way I see black people." While it is possible to criticize the ending as being too abrupt, didactic, and mechanical, it is important to understand the constraints imposed on these students, which allows us to better appreciate the transformation seen in the dialogue.

However, despite the naiveté of the ending, the process of discussing and completing the dialogue shows that students were not passively awaiting the arrival of knowledge from the instructor. Instead, they pulled together different perspectives and ideas and incorporated them into a team dialogue through

cooperation and negotiation. More importantly, students saw how their individual responses differed by completing a dialogue.

### **Critical Stance**

The instructor in retrospect said that it was his first time to use a story in his class to promote in students an awareness of racial discrimination and a better understanding of other people in society. He did not expect too much of his students in becoming aware of racial discrimination merely by reading and discussing a story. He thought that the first step to develop a critical curriculum from a multicultural viewpoint would be to bring into the classroom valuable texts that deal with relevant issues as seen in the activity.

The instructor and I examined the learning process in the activity on a collaborative basis. When I told him that I heard Grace complain about why students had to discuss and complete a team dialogue every week, the instructor responded:

I would encourage her to work with her group members to write something about the story. We talk about different topics every week. In fact, I hope that they would be like me and think and write about social issues around foreign workers or aboriginal people in Taiwan. However, it appears that they didn't do the same. It's OK because they might not be mature enough to handle these topics and to show great concern about them, I mean, limited prior knowledge and personal experiences. I think that it's extremely important to arrange more materials that would interest and relate to students and their lives.

The first dimension of taking critical stances involves *conscious engagement*, in which people need to respond consciously to events by challenging commonly held beliefs. In the activity, conscious engagement was not clearly visible in that students did not consciously revise their cultural model of racial discrimination as an issue between black and white people in their team dialogues. However, the focus of critical literacy is not only on the learning of the four skills, but also on the development of learners' critical insights about learners into their own lives.

Therefore, teachers should focus on individual development of critical awareness of different social issues.

Such an individualized approach may challenge teachers because critical literacy is not quantitative, but qualitative. Students will be at different stages of personal development and will use different expressive means. In a traditional classroom, students may receive the same grades on the same exam, but students in a critical classroom would not be similarly responsive to different social issues at the same time use the same mode of expression. While some students may use only their previous knowledge of racial discrimination in their learning process, others may have already remodeled their framework of racial discrimination. For example, students in Group 4 discussed and worked on their team dialogue based on their perception of black people, but they also reframed their prior knowledge of racial discrimination by playing around with the definition of being white or being black by using the example of Michael Jordan. The dialogue indicates that students were capable of becoming critical literate beings, which confirms the belief that students have “already had many opportunities for examining real and imaginary worlds in terms of how relations of power work” (Comber, 2001, p. 1) before they enter a classroom.

### **Further Discussion**

With regard to the first research question, i.e. “the extent to which the goals of critical literacy were achieved in the classroom”, this activity used a self-discovery prose story “The Lone Ride Home” to teach students about such issues as discrimination. The data analysis indicates that this activity was based on the instructor’s view of awareness of racial discrimination and on students’ cultural model of racial discrimination. The former tried to make students sensitive to questions related to discrimination, while the latter tended to limit students’ thinking to a black-and-white mind of racial discrimination.

Afterwards, critical literacy was approached through different social practices. First, the classroom disrupted the commonplace by using a prose story in an

attempt to raise questions of racial discrimination. Second, the teacher invited multiple perspectives into the class by having students share their perspectives in their team dialogues. Third, sociopolitical issues were expressed through students' collaborative efforts, i.e., team dialogues. Some students showed change in their concept of racial discrimination as we can see in Group 5's dialogue (in Figure 6). The entire learning process became a social practice in which students played active learners, discussed relevant issues, and shared their own perspectives. In Neilsen's (1989) words, such an activity could be called transaction learning that supports independent learning because knowledge is contextually negotiated through students' group efforts rather than from the instructor or the textbook.

With regard to the second question, i.e., "the pedagogical implications for the practice of critical literacy in Taiwan", the data show that a prose text from an alternative book *Chocolate for a Teen's Soul* (Allenbaugh, 2000) gave students a chance to experience an unconventional story. Second, in students' reflections, what challenged them was crafting a team dialogue based on multiple perspectives and negotiations. Although group discussions were time-consuming, it was worthwhile to create a team dialogue through sharing, debating, and negotiating. Third, the students' English level was fairly basic, so much of their English in their dialogues was neither grammatical nor idiomatic. It should be pointed out that what matters the most in a critical literacy classroom is students' voices.

### **Conclusions and Limitations**

Three pedagogical inferences can be drawn from the results of the present study. First, the activity discussed above can be an example of how critical literacy could be implemented among non-English-major university students in Taiwan. The analysis of the activity was based on the instructional model of critical literacy by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2015). This model can serve as a guide for critical educators to organize instruction to help students adopt a critical approach to texts. Teachers can use this model as an instructional framework in order to make literacy learning a social and critical literacy.

Second, students played the role of EFL learners; in response to this activity, they became critically literate with regard to their previous and present experiences. Students' responses to the prose story used in the activity suggest that alternative material can be used as unconventional teaching materials. A text that has never been used is called "an anomaly, an unexpected occurrence or surprise" (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, p. 379). With an anomaly, we keep students alert with tensions in learning. We keep them engaged in learning through curiosity.

Third, this paper shows that interactive and learner-centered exercises can help teachers to build a critical-literacy classroom. In such a space, students were encouraged to discuss a wide range of issues related to their lives and to create different ways of looking at the world. During the process, students learned to voice their ideas and to build a community where multiple perspectives are emphasized. Finally, negotiation and creation were achieved through students' intellectual exchange.

Fourth, either a teacher-led discussion (e.g. Beach, Thein, & Parks, 2008) or a reflection paper on students' team dialogues (e.g. Huang, 2009) could have implemented after students finished their team dialogues. The teacher could address issues such as racial discrimination. Race is a constructed notion. It could be ethnic, cultural, and social rather than racial.

Two limitations to the present study are proposed. First, this study had limited representativeness. The case in this study occurred in an English course with a small number of non-English-major participants (n=26). The results might not be generalizable to larger populations. However, it should be indicated that this study was mainly qualitative with a detailed examination of a particular case that took place in Taiwan.

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