

CRITICAL READING SKILLS FOR LAW STUDENTS WITH THE HELP OF THE NOVEL “FIVE LITTLE PIGS” BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

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Abstract. *This research will be conducted due to the fact that this area is under investigated. Few comprehensive studies have been conducted on this topic. Therefore, previous studies were limited with respect to the number of stories/genres. This study will have considerable contribution to the field of ELT, since it will mitigate some of these flaws. This research has novelty since a diversity of genres are encompassed in this study. Combination of critical reading and literature in regard as an interdisciplinary approach, which is currently a significant academic enterprise. Discipline of linguistics, psychology and literature are aggregated to delve deeply into the interplay of diverse academic domains.*

Keywords: *critical reading, critical thinking, reading strategies, extensive reading.*

Introduction

First of all, we need to answer the questions what is critical reading? What is the difference of critical reading from other types of reading? And in which way it is helpful for students' learning? Most students may misunderstand the meaning of critical reading. They think that critical reading is being critical of what you read.

Actually, there are different ways of learning critically, such as, critical reading, critical thinking, critical writing, and critical listening. [1] But none of them give the meaning being “critical” or “judgmental” towards the things you learnt, claiming that some arguments, ideas or piece of writing are faulty, or flawed.

Critical reading is asking yourself questions while reading in order to understand the main point of any given information. Which means interrogating yourself with questions, like “what does the author want to say?” “What is the main argument of this reading”, and etc. Theoretically, being critical means advancing your understanding, not dismissing, closing off learning. Critical reading involves presenting a reasoned argument that evaluates and analyses what you have read.[2]

Methodology

While reading any academic material, the process shouldn't be limited with just reading. Besides, the reader must be ready to analyze the events and to be able to give their arguments against the ideas in the work by the author. Different authors naturally have various viewpoints and opinions. [3]

Reading any material critically means look for limitations, omissions, inconsistencies, oversights and arguments against what you are reading. Critical reading goes further than just being satisfied with what a text says, it also involves reflecting on what the text describes, and analyzing what the text actually means, in the context of your studies.[4]

Being a critical reader requires more than reading, which means one should be able to reflect on what the text says, what it describes, what kind of meaning does it deliver by interpreting the style and structure of the writing, language and its content

When it comes to talking about critical reading for law students, it is quite different from other types of readings.[5] Most of the extensive reading assignments that we know are descriptive. The author intends to describe the events in a narrative order, moving from general to specific. For instance, in the textbook about medicine, the whole chapter is dedicated to any type of disease. It tends to give theoretical explanation about the illness.

That is to say, the whole chapter includes general information about the certain disease. Then the author moves to be more specific in the next chapters. The author proceeds to provide more specific information about symptoms, diagnosis and its treatment.[6]

After reading the textbook, the students may have some questions about the theme. They begin expressing their opinions, answer each other's questions on the theme, do the assignments and even may have arguments, if there are contradicting ideas. Generally, they practiced their critical reading skills and now they are discussing critically. This proves that students obtained understanding by reading the textbook extensively and critically.

In terms of critical reading skills for law students, this works differently. Reading materials of law are distinguished from other types of reading materials with several features. Most of the law reading assignments are casebooks, textbooks that are primarily made up of selected court cases. The textbooks and fiction books about court cases are not usually descriptive. The authors write to resolve a question presented by the case. Furthermore, textbooks dedicated to law are not intended to provide the reader with a broad understanding of the law. These kinds of textbooks teach the reader "how to think like a lawyer".

Which means students of law will be able to master their critical reading skills and critical thinking abilities, consequently they learn how to apply law to new factual situations. For instance, a student may be asked to apply the law to any factual situation. The purpose of the textbook dedicated to law students is not only reading and understanding, but also extracting the law from the reading assignment and to reflect on and evaluate the case.

Therefore, by reading textbooks specialized in law, students not only develop an understanding of the law, but also, they will acquire some knowledge and the skill of analyzing and critical thinking.[7] Students whose major is law are considered to be higher-performing students comparing to others, as they have lots of chance to apply critical thinking to their reading, it is also known as critical reading.

Of course, there are some reading strategies to achieve the goal of being able to think critically and analytically. Critical reading strategies comprise being familiarized with the text, analyzing or evaluating it and placing it in the scope of their knowledge.[8]

Results

This article delves into the ways of experiments on the students whose major is jurisprudence. It can be organized to analyze the efficiency of critical reading strategies and exercises made with the help of the detective novel "Five little pigs" by Agatha Christie.

Before describing the steps of the experiment, it is preferred to be familiarized with the text: Agatha Christie's novel "five little pigs" was chosen as the studying tool of this article. The book describes crime and criminal, as well as 5 people who were involved in that crime. The criminal who was sentenced to death because of killing her husband wasn't actually criminal and

killed nobody. She was blackmailed and became a real victim of those people who were against her.

The process of revealing the truth was very long, 16 years. But it was too late, the woman was hanged to death from her neck as soon as the judge announced the verdict. The woman had a daughter, who was too young to understand what was going on. When she grew up and became mature, she found out about everything and decided to know the real criminal who killed her father and made her mother have a tragic death.

The girl asked detective Poirot's help to reveal all the truth by investigating everything and by interrogating 5 people who were involved in that crime 16 years ago. The truth has a habit of revealing itself; this was the favorite quote of that detective, which implies that no matter how old or new the truth is, it appears soon or later. His investigations proved that the woman was innocent. No matter how pathetic it was, the court had no chance to improve the situation, but just expressing posthumous pardon to the honor of that woman". It was a brief gist of the novel.

The novel with the above-mentioned content can be given as a home assignment for students. If they are not given a task of reading the novel in advance, it is impossible to apply some reading strategies.

In terms of theoretical explanation of reading strategies, there are three of them, which are called default strategies, problematizing strategies, and rhetorical strategies. Among them default strategy can be applied while reading the text intensively by underlining, highlighting, rereading and making notes in the margin to rephrase and paraphrase the text.[9] Default strategy is not a good option to understand and analyze the text. In order to work with comprehension, the next 2 strategies are preferable, which are called problematizing strategies and rhetorical strategies.

Problematizing and rhetorical reading strategies can be applied to any type of reading to produce better comprehension and recall. Problematizing strategy helps the reader actively engage with the text.[10]

For example, they may have questions about confusing moments while reading and they search for answers from the novel; instead of simply paraphrasing the text, they synthesize it; besides, anticipate the events in the novel by using their logical thinking. As for rhetorical strategy, it involves the readers own opinion or attitude towards the novel. Saying it in another word, the reader reads the text in an evaluative manner comparing the events in the text with the experiences from their own lives. The reader may even have some critical approach towards the novel. In this strategy the reader notes disagreement or surprise with the conclusions reached. [11]

Discussion

As for the implementation of the above-mentioned reading strategies into the novel "five little pigs", I chose both problematizing and rhetorical strategies, which are based on case studies. The novel describes the criminal issue, which is related to murder. It is not just a manslaughter connected with a sudden accident.

It is actually, intentional killing, thoroughly planned in advance. It is a serious criminal act. So, it requires some time to read and understand the plot. That is why, I divided the reading procedure into stages, where it also requires some strategies: pre-reading, reading, and post reading strategies. First of all, the reader is given several questions from their own experience in order to check their background knowledge and understanding about sphere of law. The following questions are given before reading the novel:

What is the difference between manslaughter and murder?

Why is it important to learn human psychology for lawyers?

Is it enough to check the details and facts connected with the crime? What else required from a professional lawyer to investigate the crime?

Does the period of time affect the vivid analysis and investigation of the criminal act? Is it important not to lose the track of time to explore the criminal?

The teacher elicits some ideas and responses connected with these questions. If students are higher-performing and full of background knowledge, there could be an intense discussion and even argument, each of them defending their perspective, way of thinking. This of course helps for further stages of our reading strategies.

The teacher gives at least 5 days to read the whole novel. There goes the next stage, which is called while reading strategy. The students are asked to read like an advocate or judge, not just an ordinary reader. The tasks while reading the novel are as follows:

Read like an advocate or judge

Note the details (like the name of people and places, the number of people, the date of the events, the attributes and personal traits of heroes, and etc)

Compare the events to each other, think about their coincidence.

Write down every opinion of the characters involved in the crime

Try to give and make note of your own factual arguments about the case

Try to describe your imaginary role in that situation. What would you do, if you were in the place of a victim, or a criminal?

Try to make your verdict on the results of the crime, based on the law.

Post-reading strategies. This process requires the final outcome, which means the students should demonstrate what they understood from the novel. In order to check their comprehension, the following strategies are applied:

Concept mapping – students reflect on the novel they have read and they are asked to group the information what they learned from the novel, such as, categorizing the characters, places, events and incidences. The students create Venn diagrams or concept maps to link these details or highlight differences between them.[12]

Exit slip – this way is a more simplified comprehension check. teacher asks students to make notes a few things they learnt in the novel and to summarize the important points of this novel. The students must be encouraged to list any questions they had after reading the novel. They are called exit slips and they help the teacher to determine what they understood from the novel. [12]

Guided questioning – randomly asking questions from students to sum up or review at the end of class. [12]

In summary, as law students need to work with cases, they have to improve their critical skills and critical thinking abilities. Either real life cases, or cases taken from any story or novel, in order to understand them, they need to develop their comprehension abilities.

Reading cases requires so much effort, that they have to fully comprehend the text, and they are not ordinary texts, in which the readers just skim and pick up the necessary skills.

Therefore, applying critical reading skills for full comprehension of the text is in necessity for law students. This article suggests some strategies and recommendations of how to apply critical reading skills for law students while reading their cases.

These strategies are grouped as pre, while and post reading strategies. Each of these groups comprise sub-strategies to make it clearer while applying them in the experiments or lessons. Furthermore, these strategies ensure that the student is getting efficiency from their reading time, because together with gathering information, they are developing their skills and abilities to apply that information. As law students need to use these cases in the real life, they have to practice these strategies, which help them to become experts in their fields.

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