

POSSIBLE WAYS TO DEVELOP FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: The need to develop foreign language learners' critical language awareness (CLA) has become a relevant issue, since these days we are exposed to countless messages via the media, the television and the internet, and it is often difficult to decide how trustworthy the information is, or to what extent and in what ways it is controlled. Socially distributed power relations, ideologically manipulated discourses are parts of our everyday life, and in most cases we do not even suspect that we are massively manipulated. In such circumstances, teachers, as far as it is possible, have to develop students' awareness in order to make them conscious, responsible citizens who can respond appropriately to the manipulative attacks of society. I propose that by exposing students to ideologically loaded phenomena and texts it is possible to teach them to read between the lines. In other words, if students are acquainted with hidden traits of manipulative discourses, they can hopefully think about them critically later. The research described in this paper, and conducted at a Hungarian university, investigates the potentials for this development by applying various methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) during a critical awareness development training programme which, for the most part, focused on political text and talk. The results of the study show that involving students in consciousness raising exercises definitely have an empowering effect on their thinking. There is a clear difference in their recognition of ideologies and manipulation hidden in texts, as well as in the world around them. The evidence presented in the case study seems to prove that there is great potential for developing learners' awareness and sensitivity in the intake and processing of manipulative discourses and events.

Keywords: critical language awareness, manipulation, power relations, critical language awareness training, critical discourse analysis

1 Introduction

These days we have more access to information than ever, moreover we not only acquire information when we want to but are constantly bombarded with unsolicited ideas. We are consumers of numerous artful political and commercial messages, often without noticing their cunning endeavours. As we cannot hide from this powerful surge of information, our skills in analysing and understanding the information should be improved in order that we could reflect appropriately on it. To be able to resist the unwanted manipulation of political, commercial or institutional discourse, critical interaction with manipulative messages seems to be essential, therefore one of education's primary aims should be the improvement of students' critical awareness. The present research investigates the opportunities for this improvement, using several methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in an English language practice classroom at a Hungarian university.

The research is primarily based on the premise that features of manipulation and power relations can be identified in discourse, and I postulate that by exploring manipulative discourses learners can become more conscious of less overt social processes embedded in them. Political discourses are foregrounded in the research because a huge segment of the manipulative messages conveyed by the media is political in nature. Furthermore politicians and political institutions develop and maintain social inequalities by the manipulative use of language, of which the audience is at best only half-aware, so the threat of total linguistic manipulation is evidently present in our age (Chilton & Schaffner, 1997, p. 206). Despite the emphasis placed on political discourse, some other types of manipulative phenomena, such as stories, advertisements, commercials and visuals were introduced and analysed in critical language awareness development training which was embedded in the language practice classes of first year English major students. The implementation of a wide range of tasks was especially important because of the participants' initial refusal regarding political issues, so this wide spectrum of sources made the training more variegated and colourful. Besides the practical tasks, theoretical information about the nature of manipulation and instruction about the techniques for identifying linguistic manipulation were also addressed.

The research aimed to better understand the development of critical awareness in the classroom by teaching methods of CDA to students, which development involved a complex set of factors. Therefore the research design took an interactive, emergent approach. As Hays (2004) argues, case study research can uncover new and unusual interactions, events, explanations and interpretations, so this method proved to be the most proper one to explore the ways to develop learners' awareness. During this progress, I tried to stay as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it. As case studies usually seek depth rather than breadth in their scope and analysis (Duff, 2012, p. 95), my goal was not to universalize, but to particularize and obtain insights of probable wider relevance. Hence this research cannot provide a basis for broad generalizations but rather contextual findings at the present stage. Testing cause-effect relationships between a number of variables was not the goal, quantification of data and testing the significance of findings statistically is not part of the research (p. 99). The inquiry was intended to discover patterns which emerged after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic. Throughout the research I attempted to capture what people said and did, which were the products of how they interpreted the world (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 121). The sections below provide a rich description of this process. An overview of the theoretical background and of previous attempts to improve students' critical awareness was a starting point for the study.

2 Background

This section clarifies the key concepts of the research, such as CDA, manipulation, the relationship between discourse and manipulation and critical language awareness (CLA), to make these concepts more understandable and unequivocal. The section also describes previous attempts to implement CDA in education, which provide the basis for the investigation.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

The research is based on the tenets and various methods of CDA. CDA regards language use, speech and writing, as forms of social practice. As underlined by Fairclough and Wodak

(1996), there is a dialectical relationship between the discursive event and the situation; every discourse is socially constitutive and at the same time socially shaped. Fairclough and Wodak indicate that discursive processes have ideological effects, however these ideological functions, as well as the relations of power in discourse usually remain invisible for the audience. CDA principally aims at making these fundamentally invisible aspects apparent. For this reason, Fowler (1985), Kress, (1985), Seidel (1985), Fairclough and Wodak (1996), Chilton and Schaffner (1997), van Dijk (2006) and others provide linguistic analytical methods to identify hidden signs of power, ideologies and manipulation in political discourse. Fairclough and Wodak (1996) note that to get to know whether a certain discourse contains ideology, it is not sufficient to examine texts, but it is crucial to observe how the texts are interpreted and what social effects they have. Fairclough and Wodak add that critical readings imply a systematic methodology and a profound investigation of the context, so the text is deconstructed and embedded in its social conditions and related to ideologies and power relationships. Consequently, critical readings are very different in nature from any other uncritical reading or learning activity, they claim.

2.2 Manipulation

The study focuses on issues connected to the term ‘manipulation’, and their relationship with discourse, therefore by examining the phenomena related to this term more closely, we must clarify its exact meaning. Van Dijk’s (1996) definition about manipulation and its relationship with politics, and discourse is worthy of note:

The discourses of a powerful group may be such that others will form the intentions and accomplish the acts as if they were totally without constraints, and consistent with their own wants and interests. If discourse can make people believe in this way and we thus indirectly control their actions such that they are in our best interest, we have successfully manipulated them through text and talk (van Dijk, 1996, p. 20).

As for the relationship between manipulation and discourse Kress (1985) asserts that ideologies find their clearest articulation in language, so a powerful way of examining ideological structure is the examination of language. Fowler (1985) highlights that different syntactic structures articulate social meanings, vocabulary is arbitrary, and meanings are not natural, but “rather chopped out of the flux of experience according to the needs of the community of speakers” (p. 65). Reports, parliamentary debates, speeches, textbooks, lectures, banks, publishers of books, radio and television companies all take part in the production of ideological or manipulative discourse. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) add that what is expressed in a language through the choice of different words and linguistic structures may be expressed through the choice of different colours or shapes in visual communication (p. 3). They claim that visual grammar is a kind of a general grammar, since it can describe various types of images, even though this grammar contains the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication.

According to van Dijk (1996) as a result of propaganda and manipulation dominated groups have a representation of their position that is inconsistent with their own best interests, which phenomenon is traditionally referred to as ‘false consciousness’. In this case, discourse serves as the medium by which ideologies are persuasively communicated in society and helps reproduce power and domination of specific groups or classes. “No commands, requests or even suggestions are necessary. This may happen through education, information campaigns, propaganda, the media, and many other forms of public discourse” (p. 20).

All these theories indicate that the analysis of manipulative texts and images is suitable to examine the covert processes hidden in discourse and in society, as well as to serve as a sound basis for the creation and implementation of a critical approach appropriate for educational use. As for practical suggestions concerning critical language awareness classes within the framework of foreign language education, the following sections provide more data.

2.3 Critical Language Awareness

The concept of ‘Critical Language Awareness’ (CLA) refers to an educational approach that gives attention to important social aspects of language and the relationship between language and power (Fairclough, 1992). CLA makes language itself an object of study (Janks & Ivanic, 1992, p. 306). Janks and Ivanic assert that CLA should be a curricular aim since it includes issues of ideology, subject-positioning, power, and social inequities maintained by language, therefore the need for it in the curriculum is “as urgent as ever” (p. 309). Wallace (1992) argues that “effective reading involves challenging the ideological assumptions” (p. 61), and she quotes the standpoint of Scholes (1985): “In an age of manipulation when our students are in dire need of critical strength to resist the continuing assaults of all the media, the worst thing we can do is to foster in them an attitude of reverence before texts” (p. 63). Wallace adds that according to Scholes, learners of foreign languages are inclined to take an over-deferential stance towards the text. Therefore critical readings ought to help learners to become more assertive towards the texts and to resist assaults presented by them, infers Wallace.

Regarding these conceptions I propose that since text and talk represent social processes, by scrutinizing texts we can get an insight into social phenomena too. Consequently, teaching foreign language learners to analyse discourses, we can highlight certain less overt social processes and we can make students aware of the deeper realities of the world around them. Thus their critical awareness and their assertiveness towards manipulative phenomena can be improved.

2.4 CDA in education

Fairclough (1992) claims that a critical view of education and a critical approach to language study ought to be the main objective of language education, if teachers wish to help students to be decisive, clear-thinking, responsible citizens (p. 7). The following sections provide some examples of the application of CDA in education. Besides the recommendations concerning the content of the English foreign language (EFL) classes, the proper learning environment is described as well, as these descriptions also yield valuable information for the application of CDA in the EFL classroom.

2.4.1 Empowerment

Some researchers (Clarke & Smith, 1992; Janks & Ivanic, 1992; Lancaster & Taylor, 1992) give prominence to the importance of the empowerment of students in CDA classes. They emphasize that the learners’ experience should be central in the classes, and teachers should be prepared to hand over substantive decisions to learners. Clarke and Smith (1992) introduce the term of ‘*emancipatory discourse*’, the way critical language awareness can contribute to the process of emancipation, and emancipatory discourse as part of language education in the classroom.

Regarding the empowerment of students, Janks and Ivanich remark that “by examining what it means to read and write from disempowered subject positions in educational institutions we hope to show that changing these language practices can be transformative. When discourse breaks the cycle of reproducing domination it becomes emancipatory” (p. 305). Lancaster and Taylor’s case study (1992) explores the difficulties teachers face when giving up their expert status and some of their control in their classroom. Their project aims to encourage students to explore attitudes to language and to develop an awareness of the nature of language.

2.4.2 Freedom of interpretation

Wallace (1992), Kramsch (1998), and Brown (1999) emphasize the value of students’ own choice regarding what text they want to use, and their right to have their own interpretations. Wallace proposes “to try to find more effective ways to help EFL readers feel more confident in taking up assertive positions against the text, to encourage them to feel they have options in the way they choose to read texts, and to help them feel in a more equal relationship with the writer” (p. 80). Regarding students’ freedom to choose texts and to interpret texts Kramsch (1998) makes this criticism: “institutional power has traditionally ensured cultural continuity by providing a safeguard against the unbounded interpretation of texts” (p. 54). She adds that in the past, traditional academic practice stressed form over meaning and students had to interpret texts as if they were universal and independent of a reader’s response, and those students who did not interpret text as their teachers expected were called bad students. Brown (1999) notes that critical aspects should have a shift from an emphasis on finding the right answer to another aspect where a lot of different interpretations can take place, and the reasons for these interpretations can be discussed.

2.4.3 Strategies and content

As for the actual content of EFL classes applying CDA, Wallace (1992), Brown (1999) and Behrman (2006) offer interesting objectives. Wallace (1992) suggests the concept of critical reading as a procedure for reading between the lines, and remarks that critical reading involves more than a critical response to the text itself: it involves a critical awareness in a broader sense, a consideration of cross-cultural aspects, too. According to Wallace critical reading has not been generally encouraged in the EFL classroom: “Students tend not to be invited to draw on their experiences of literacy, or to articulate their understanding of it as a social phenomenon” (p. 61). Wallace maintains that in schools EFL students are often marginalized as readers, and the reading of written texts in social context, the use of provocative texts, and a methodology for interpreting texts which addresses ideological assumptions are all missing; she therefore suggests using authentic texts such as advertisements, magazine articles and newspaper reports. Likewise, Brown (1999) recommends that authentic texts should be used in the classroom, as they seem to be most useful for exploration. Texts with clear ideological loading may be best used as a starting point to show learners the signs of these ideological characteristics. Less traditional materials such as cartoons, graffiti and advertisements can also be used, and it is advisable to encourage students to bring their own texts to the classroom.

The significance of authentic texts in the critical classrooms is underlined by many authors, just as by Behrman (2006), who examines 264 articles published between 1999 and 2003 which present classroom research connected to critical literacy at the upper primary or secondary levels. Behrman introduces the most relevant research projects and concludes:

Teachers often find that to develop a critical perspective, traditional classroom texts need to be supplemented by other works of fiction, nonfiction, film, or popular culture. Underlying this approach is the assumption that traditional or canonical texts are somehow deficient in helping students focus on social issues, and that supplementary texts may allow students to confront social issues glossed over or avoided by traditional texts (Behrman, 2006, p. 492).

Regarding the recommended supplementary materials, Behrman quotes Bean and Moni (2003), Hanrahan (1999), Henry (2002), Houser (2001), Morrell (2000), Sisk (2002), Unsworth (1999), Williams (2001) and Young (2000). Houser (2001) proposes the use of adolescent literature to develop social, cultural and ecological understanding, Bean and Moni (2003) advocate reading young adult novels to stimulate discussions of societal conflicts, and Sisk (2002) recommends reading supplementary non-fiction such as speeches by great leaders like Martin Luther King, Indira Gandhi, Nelson Mandela or Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Sisk also mentions the importance of music and film, and asserts that songs by popular artists may provide students with politically contextualized interpretations of issues related to the environment. Behrman finds Morrell's initiative (2000): using a Francis Ford Coppola film to demonstrate parallels between contemporary power struggles and those in canonical texts remarkable. Behrman cites a resistant-perspective approach represented by Unsworth (1999), Young (2000), and Williams (2001), which involves having students analyse texts using functional grammar or lexical classification. According to Williams, with these approaches "the student is required to consider how the author's conscious choice of words, word order, or sentence structure can position the reader to accept an argument or value a statement from the writer's perspective" (p. 494). Behrman also mentions the practice of producing counter texts (Hanrahan, 1999; Young, 2000) and the importance of conducting student-choice research projects. Behrman, citing Henry (2002), emphasizes the significance of integrating all of these tasks in order that students should be engaged in at least two or more of the tasks.

3 Methods

3.1 Research Question

Taking all these considerations into account, first only a broad research question is formulated which will later on receive new dimensions and insights. Based on the theoretical background and the results of the previous research described above, the current investigation was guided by the following question:

- What conclusions can be drawn about the effects of a Critical Language Awareness development training course implemented in a language practice class of an English language BA programme at a Hungarian university?

The research question was explored by conducting a CLA development training course for six weeks within the framework of a language development class of an English language BA programme. As the teacher of the class I conducted participant observation of the classes, kept a teacher's diary of my reflections and interviewed the participants.

3.2 Participants and context

Fifteen BA English major students, in the first year of their studies, at a Hungarian university participated in the research. All of them attended the same language skills development class. The group consisted of 11 Hungarian students, as well as one from Turkey, one from Iran, one from Croatia, and one from Ukraine. However, in order to exclude any distorting effects of the diverse cultural backgrounds, the research focussed on the data gained from the 11 Hungarian students. The students were approximately the same age, around 18 to 20 years old, two male and 13 female. The group had a two-semester course, with four classes weekly, in the academic year 2012/2013. The general aim of the language practice classes was to develop the students' reading, listening and speaking skills in English. I myself taught and designed the course. The training intended to develop critical language awareness was embedded in this context, embracing the basic goals of the language development class, as well as yielding extra information and experience about manipulative discourses and events to students.

Since the students had spent the autumn term together, by the beginning of the training, in March 2013, they knew each other fairly well, which was a great advantage in terms of group dynamics. During the training they exchanged ideas, immersed themselves in thinking aloud together, co-operated with each other and expressed their thoughts freely, frequently in plenary sessions. As this group had experienced a free, relaxed and empowering style of class work with plenty of pair-, group- and whole-class discussions in the previous term, this protocol was not new, peculiar, or threatening to them. Therefore, they could engage in these activities with positive attitudes, seemingly without any negative emotions. It is important to note that there were great differences in the students' command of English which ranged from intermediate to advanced level. This variation later seemed to be prognostic as regards their development in critical awareness. However, considering Brown's (1999) ideas, at the beginning of the investigation I assumed that mixed level knowledge groups were not harmful, but that a minimal level of knowledge was important both to develop and to test the learners' critical language awareness.

3.3 Instruments

To measure the effects of a critical awareness raising process, a **six-week-long training programme** was designed, in which all the students took part. In order to ensure triangulation during the research several data collection methods were applied, and a rich description of details, processes and results was obtained. I included a thematic analysis of classes, an extended description of each participant's profile and experiences, subjective opinions, exemplifications, complexity of experiences, uniqueness of cases. The data collection happened via **interviews, observation, and self-reflection**. First, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the students, before and after the training. These semi-structured interviews needed an interview guide (Dörnyei, 2007) which was constructed in advance and then piloted. I asked the same questions of all the participants, and supplemented the main questions with various probes. The detailed interview guide served as the main research instrument, and a few trial runs ensured that the questions elicited sufficiently rich data. The emergent nature of the qualitative interview data was enhanced by applying these several probes. The interviews were recorded, and then transcribed. Second, besides teaching the classes, I also observed all the events in the classroom during the training period, and kept a teacher's diary, which contained all meaningful details. Third, my own reflections and experiences regarding the research process were noted, including emotional or subjective reactions to some phenomena which occurred in class. The data collected were analysed through the

participant researcher's viewpoint, though with the intention to be as objective as possible in such circumstances.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

The case generated qualitative data; the information gained prior to critical awareness development training and after the training were compared. Besides this comparison, information was also gathered by observing students' behaviour, reactions and performance during the training. Before the training the 11 Hungarian students were interviewed. Those students who missed more than one class during the training were not asked to participate in the second interview, consequently there were altogether eight students who took part in both interviews and more or less all classes of the training. From these eight people, I chose four focal participants who attended all classes and took part in both interviews, whose interviews were transcribed and thoroughly analysed. The choice was also influenced by their level of English, which had been previously tested in class. I intended to focus on the students with the highest proficiency levels, following Brown's (1999) recommendations. These same students showed the most spectacular understanding of the topic, so I could easily obtain and map the components of their success in this type of development.

At the first interview, all the interviewees received an extract from the first inaugural speech by American President Barack Obama. The students were asked to read the extract prior to the interview, but no other instructions were given to them. At the beginning of the interview their task was to speak about their thoughts in connection with the text. At this stage, they could speak freely about anything that came to their minds; I did not comment on any ideas (See Appendix A for the extract of the speech). After they felt they had said everything they could, the second stage of the interview started. The students were asked questions about the text, their opinion about manipulation, and its role in their lives (see Appendix B). The second interview had the same structure, but the students were asked to share their ideas related to the training they had taken part in. The data obtained during the interviews were complemented and compared with the data gained during the observation of the classes and my self-reflections.

4 The training

4.1 Objectives

Besides developing the participants' critical language awareness, one of the goals of the training was to show them that focusing on mostly political issues and analysing political discourse do not inevitably mean immersing themselves in tedious activities; on the contrary it can be exciting to look behind the scenes with the help of lively tasks. A 'step-by-step' procedure was planned, and the goal was to involve the students in various consciousness raising exercises. Personally held political views were not utilized in order to provoke the learners' interest. Rather a dynamic synthesis of theoretical and practical tasks was designed to arouse their curiosity. The training was designed on the basis of the suggestions found in the work of Bowers (1992), Brown (1999), Clark (1992), Chilton and Schaffner (1997), Harrison (2003), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Lancaster and Taylor (1992) and Wallace (1992).

It is stressed by Clark (1992) that individual acts of communication in context cannot be examined independently of social forces, and students' awareness should emerge from the production and interpretation of real language. Thus, as recommended by Bowers (1992), Clark (1992), Brown (1999) and Wallace (1992), strictly authentic texts were to be used for exploration. Throughout the training I aimed to rely on the students' own interpretations which they could share in groups, then in plenary discussions.

4.2 Strategies and content

The training involved a six-week-long exposure, embedded in a language practice course, twice a week. The timing varied, the shortest exposure took 30 minutes, the longest one 90 minutes, depending on the time needed to complete the different types of tasks. All 15 students took part in the training; they were all asked to do home assignments and contribute to the work of the class. The students frequently worked in groups, and after a task was completed a plenary session followed, which gave them a chance to share ideas, generate their own questions and compare their solutions with those of the other groups. Brown (1999) states that "a critical approach needs to become a regular part of classroom practice, not simply a question of a few random activities" (p. 26). Therefore, I planned to involve the students in group speculations every class during the six-week-long period.

The tasks consisted of creating stories with special goals, rewriting stories from alternative subject positions, analysing political discourse and several other consciousness raising exercises. The training addressed some theoretical issues, for instance linguistic features of manipulative discourses was to be scrutinized. For that reason, theoretical instruction linked to a linguistic analysis of texts was also in the repertoire, for which I used the analytical framework created by Chilton and Schaffner (1997). As for the analysis of visual images or the combination of visual and textual information, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) provided frames of interpretation. MDA rests on the tenet that with the help of images it is possible to negotiate meaning between the producer and the viewer, reflecting their individual social, cultural and political beliefs, values and attitudes. This research has been assisted by the ideas of Harrison (2003), who proposes an analytical framework named visual social semiotics, which can help viewers to decipher the symbols and signs of visuals. According to Harrison "an image is not the result of a singular, isolated, creative activity, but is itself a social process" (p. 47). The meaning of signs is created by humans and does not exist separately from them. As a consequence, investigating visual information and the relationship between the visual and the textual, more interpretations about social, cultural and political beliefs, values and attitudes could be generated. The training also included watching the first episode of a BBC documentary series, 'The Century of the Self', about the nature of political manipulation, and various tactics of manipulation in everyday life were also debated.

The practical part was built on strictly authentic, not invented, texts. Open ended sentences quoted from politicians such as Nelson Mandela and Winston Churchill were used for the task of sentence completion. Longer texts from Tony Blair, George W. Bush and Barack Obama were used for linguistic analyses. When selecting the texts I followed the guidance of previous research, however the choice of speeches by Blair, Bush and Obama was also motivated by the intention to appeal to learners' interests. The two most important target cultures of English major students are the UK and the USA, thus I assumed that the students would be interested in the speeches of these

charismatic leaders. Inventing stories, and writing manipulative texts for advertisements were also parts of the development.

The participants also had the opportunity to create their own ideologically loaded texts in the classroom and at home too, and they were asked to write an ideologically loaded text from a different point of view as well, since Lancaster and Taylor's case study (1992) shows that students take part with pleasure in exercises where they can invent stories, or even new languages. While completing these tasks they get acquainted with the characteristics and means of manipulation and later it helps them to recognize these characteristics when they face the manipulative discourses of others. It is also important to emphasize that there were no right solutions in the classes: all answers were discussed and appreciated (Wallace, 1992). For the tasks and texts see Appendix C.

4.3 Structure and timing

The training followed a 'top-down' structure, starting with some general concepts as an introduction. By narrowing down the focus we were approaching deeper layers of the analyses step by step. As already mentioned, the training was embedded in a language practice class therefore we had time limits for the training activities, though these limits were handled in a rather flexible way. Despite the restrictions of time, some critical classes took up the whole 90 minutes, such as for instance the very first class of the training: when introducing the topic we discussed the students' ideas about the notion of manipulation, and then watched the 60-minute-long BBC documentary about mass manipulation in society. During the second class the students shared their ideas and questions related to the documentary, processed new vocabulary, and summarized what they had learnt. The third class focused on manipulative tactics in everyday life. The fourth class introduced the multimodal analysis of picture advertisements, and after discussing the effects of the advertisements, the students were asked to write manipulative texts to accompany the pictures. In the fifth class we turned to political issues, and some pieces of the linguistic analytical framework created by Chilton and Schaffner (1997) were introduced. In class, the students received some elementary task samples related to the newly learnt theory, so that they would see how the framework could be used, then they performed some parts of the analysis at home. In the sixth class we compared Barack Obama's first and second inaugural speeches by using the newly learnt theory. The students focused on the topics of the sentences, the ways the topics were talked about, the nouns, the verbs and the adjectives as well as their impact in the text. Modality, voice, and the effects of the writers' choices were also discussed (Chilton & Schaffner, 1997). As a home assignment, the students wrote manipulative texts, freely building around one given sentence, for instance 'We had the right to do that'.

From the sixth class on, the students immersed themselves mainly in linguistic analyses during the classes and at home too, using some speeches by Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Tony Blair, and they frequently created their own manipulative texts too. At the very last class we watched the second inaugural speech of Barack Obama on YouTube, which had been previously analysed and discussed by the class. All classes started with warm-up activities, then after the main 'critical' topic, some conclusions were drawn. Returning to the tasks of the 'general' language practice class could only happen after performing a complete unit of a 'critical session'. Whenever it was possible I accommodated the topics of the language practice classes to the current topics of the critical awareness raising classes. For the structure, content and timing of the classes see Table 1.

N ^o of the class	Contents	Time (minutes out of the 90-minute classes)
1 st	1) Introduction: discussing participants' ideas regarding the concept of 'manipulation' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group work: talking about the meaning and forms of manipulation + plenary: sharing ideas about manipulation 2) Watching the documentary in class: "The Century of the Self"	90'
2 nd	1) Reviewing the new vocabulary of the documentary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plenary 2) Discussion about the documentary, drawing conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group discussion + plenary discussion, sharing/comparing ideas 	30'
3 rd	1) Manipulative tactics in everyday life/social life (van Dijk, 2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plenary: theory, new vocabulary + group discussion 2) Speaking about the students' personal experience regarding manipulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group + plenary 	30'
4 th	1) Multimodal analysis of visual advertisements (Harrison, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plenary: theoretical instruction/ sharing ideas + group: personal interpretation of advertisements 2) Writing manipulative texts to accompany the visual advertisements (Brown, 1999; Wallace, 1992) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group work: writing the texts + plenary: comparing the texts of the different groups 	50'
5 th	1) Linguistic analysis - introduction (Chilton and Schaffner, 1997) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plenary: theory 2) Identifying signs of manipulation in political texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group work: task sheet, finding verbs, nouns, adjectives, and their roles in the text + home assignment: task sheet 	50'
6 th – 12 th	1) Political issues: linguistic analysis of texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pair + group + plenary + home assignments: analyses of inaugural speeches by Barack Obama, George W. Bush, speech by Tony Blair; watching Barack Obama's 2nd inaugural speech in class. • Topics: the role of nouns, verbs, adjectives in the discourses, questions of modality, transitivity. 2) Other tasks: Guessing, story writing, open-ended sentence completion (Brown, 1999)	30-40' per class

Table 1 The structure, content and timing of the training

5 Results

5.1 Observation and self-reflection

By the time the training started I had been working with the group for half a year, we had four classes a week. This period of working together had yielded some valuable information about the knowledge and the most apparent personality traits of each student. This information was helpful while I was observing the students' reactions to different tasks and their achievements. As the limitations of space here do not allow for a detailed analysis of each class, I will only mention the most distinctive features of the classes.

One of the most characteristic aspects of the training was a certain kind of fluctuation in the performance of the students, which fluctuation followed a special pattern. After theoretical instruction about, for instance, manipulative tactics in everyday life, the basic rules of multimodal analysis of visual advertisements or the textual analysis of written texts, a set-back was marked. Even Zsóka¹, one of the most talkative and best prepared students made an irrelevant remark when we started the multimodal discourse analysis of a manipulative visual ad displaying a woman who was wearing some beauty product. Zsóka's only remark during the discussion was:

That woman is old.

After such a perplexing experience I wondered if my instructions had been clear enough. I also thought that the material was uninspiring for the students and they lost motivation. Despite the low points when everybody was equally puzzled, in the subsequent classes there was always a boom: the students opened up and started to use the previously acquired material. Soon it became obvious that regardless of the detailed instructions, the learners were not able to apply new theories instantly, a 'silent period' occurred and they needed some time to digest the information. Anyhow, by the subsequent occasion they always appeared to enjoy using the newly acquired knowledge. Later, the interviews provided an explanation for this fluctuation. Almost all the students reported some uncertainty when absorbing new theory, on the one hand because of some unknown words which they had to check at home in their dictionaries, on the other hand because the novelty of these theories surprised them and they needed some time to elaborate their thoughts and organize the newly acquired knowledge in the system of their existing knowledge and beliefs. This phenomenon warned me to be patient and not to expect the students to use the newly learnt material too soon after instruction.

As Brown (1999) had forecast, the learners seemed to relish the completion of creative tasks such as the story-making or the open-ended texts the most. When performing these tasks they became active, interested, cooperative and relaxed. To my great surprise, in the last part of the training, when we were analysing Tony Blair's speech on the Iraq war, a heated debate took shape in class, with the students arguing for and against several conceptions and employing their theoretical knowledge. This outcome was unexpected, because of their initial reluctance to deal with political issues, and the confusion they showed when learning the basic steps of the linguistic analysis. Nevertheless, by the end of the training the confusion had disappeared and been replaced by an enthusiastic, empowered attitude.

¹ Pseudonyms were created to protect the participants' anonymity.

The final task of the training was to analyse President Barack Obama's second inaugural speech, which gave the students the opportunity to become active participants in the class. They seemed to enjoy the discussion about the speech, and they could use several segments of the information they had acquired. Several bright suggestions were added, and even the basically shy students took part in the discussions. The group members seemed to be confident and motivated using the acquired analytical skills. During the very last class of the training I felt that there was a spectacular shift in the students' way of thinking and attitudes, besides a marked increase in their interest and activity.

5.2 Interviews

The language of the interviews was Hungarian, the students' mother tongue, for two reasons. First, it made them relaxed during the interviews, and even if their language proficiency was sufficient to communicate fluently, for some students speaking about certain topics in English might have caused insecurity or the loss of some part of the message. On the other hand, linguistic analysis was part of the interviews and using Hungarian helped avoid any misunderstandings in connection with the texts.

5.2.1 The first interview

During the first interview the participants were not able to recognize any features of manipulation in the inaugural speech of Barack Obama. The most open-eyed learners concentrated on the aims and the issues of the speech, and many of them realized who the speaker was.

Zsóka: It seems to be a presidential speech, perhaps Obama, but surely American... He emphasizes that the nation can achieve great things together ..., because of this he must be American ...

Gerda: It is a political text, it wants to exhort people... I think it is Obama.

Others, disregarding the text, went on to speak about the Hungarian political system and their ideas about it. Two students shared anecdotes about their own personal experiences and memories connected to certain topics in the speech. The students typically had negative attitudes to politics and articulated prejudiced common-places about it, however they could not name any example which supported the following allegations:

Gerda: Politicians are liars.

Helga: I do not believe what they [politicians] say in Hungary... they speak about positive things and we can see it is not true.

Nóra: Politicians only want power, and never keep their promises.

Zsóka: I'm very critical ... but yes ... I believe them very rarely! There are a lot of naive and ignorant people in this country [Hungary]...

As for the meaning of the word '*manipulation*', all the students gave relatively exact definitions, but they could not define clearly whether manipulation was simply negative or had some positive connotations as well. Without exception, every student mentioned that politicians usually manipulated people, but they could not define in what ways it might happen, except for "lying". All in all, the students had a very strong opinion about the existence of manipulation in our society but

they could not explain what it meant or how it could be identified: they only expressed obscure ideas and prejudice related to the concept. All the interviewees brought up examples from their own personal lives and most of them argued that manipulation was something bad, which should be avoided, however they did not know how. Except for three students, Gábor who was deeply interested in politics, and Zsóka and Fanni who were more or less open to the topic, all the students claimed that they were not interested in politics at all. Some of them added that they loathed politics because of its dirty nature and had avoided dealing with it. Zsuzsa stressed:

I do not like politics at all, I am not interested in it and I am not an expert in this area.

Emma expressed similar opinion:

I do not like to deal with politics.

Gerda started to laugh when I asked her about politics, and ironically said:

Gerda: Oh, that is my 'favourite' topic!

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Gerda: I hate it! I never deal with it!

The three people who later missed classes during the training and were therefore excluded from the second interviews, also declared that they detested politics. At the outset of the training, having conducted the first interviews and recognizing the participants' revulsion regarding politics, I thought that my research, which was to focus mostly on political issues, was a risky enterprise.

5.2.2 The second interview

In the second interview the procedure was the same, but some questions about the training were added to the interview schedule, in order to map the students' thoughts and feelings about it. Concerning the analysis of the political discourse of Barack Obama, some changes in the students' responses could be seen. They were able to name manipulative tactics and used more consistent arguments on the discourse. At the same time, they were less prejudiced and they could support their allegations with examples. The quality of the students' performance varied, which seemed to correlate with their proficiency level, justifying Clark's idea (1992) that readers can get the true meaning of the text, only if they have the proper linguistic tools at their disposal.

Emma: Obama uses mostly positive words ... adjectives when the subject is 'we', with this he highlights what we can do together... he has a lot of indicatives with positive words, he seems confident because of this...

Gerda: There are a lot of repetitions..., he repeats 'together'..., to emphasize that they have to solve problems together...

Helga: The speech is written in a way that ... it lists positive things ... he always uses plurals when he speaks about positive things... he engages the audience with this...

Zsóka: He uses 'we' a lot in the text with positive words, he means that they are one nation and he encourages the people...

The participants also spoke about their experiences in connection with the training. According to their different personality traits, they chose different tasks as their favourites. A seemingly introvert student stressed that the theoretical part of the training was the most inspiring. One of the most confident and talkative girls, Gerda added:

...the theory was boring at first, and then when we used it in practice it became interesting...

Generally, the most popular tasks were the open ended sentence completion and the free story-making. Students reported on a kind of an understanding of the aim of our training while writing manipulative texts, since they had not only to recognize but also to use the techniques which we had previously discovered in manipulative discourses. Students with higher levels of proficiency named more tasks which were enjoyable:

Gerda: I watched the documentary at home again because it was very interesting, and first I did not understand some parts of it.

Zsóka: I most liked the home assignment when we had to write a manipulative story. It was difficult but very exciting!

Fanni: The open-ended sentence completion was the most exciting task, especially because we could work together in groups and we could compare our solutions.

Although I did not ask about it, almost all the participants remarked that they had enjoyed the critical language awareness training which was strongly permeated with political issues. It was a radical change, since these same people had first declared that they did not like dealing with politics at all. When I inquired about the most appropriate language for a prospective similar course, everybody insisted on English instead of Hungarian. This choice might seem predictable as these students attend an English major, which fact indicates their affection for the English language. There were some convincing explanations though, as to why English should be the medium of a critical language awareness class. Gerda said:

I liked that we learnt new vocabulary even if at first it was difficult to understand the theory..., and it is useful to see the world in a different way...

Most learners admitted they had problems when learning about the theories in English because of unknown words and new terminology, but the need to broaden their vocabulary was at the same time a rewarding feature of these tasks. Learning about intercultural aspects was also one of the themes listed as advantages of having the course in English about British and American issues. Helga brought up a thought-provoking argument for an English critical language awareness raising class:

It was good that we had this course in English, about American and British political issues, because there was distance between us and the topics. If it had been about Hungarian political issues in Hungarian, I would have got upset.

Helga realized that having such a course in a foreign language about foreign issues can build emotional distance between the learner and the text: thus the interpretation can be more objective, without any distracting feelings. Three students, Helga, Fanni and Gábor revealed that the training did not change their way of thinking too much, because they were basically attentive and conscious about the topic, though they added that due to the training they had become aware of some hidden traits of political discourse, therefore their curiosity about the topic was raised. The other five participants commented on a great change in their world views. They admitted being astonished by how much of the world had been hidden from them before, and said that from that time on they became much more attentive and active when it came to observing and interpreting the world around them.

Fanni: I will pay more attention to these things.... if somebody is aware of these things he/she can better interpret what he/she hears...

Zsuzsa: Since I learnt about these things, the whole world has changed around me. I am more interested, I can see things I could not see before. I always listen to the news, which I never did in the past, and I try to identify hidden things...

6 Conclusions and implications

The results show that the most beneficial outcome of the present research was a transformation of views and opinions about politics, power relations and the whole world in the students' minds during the classes. The participants appreciated how the knowledge they earned changed their way of thinking about the world around them. They understood the complexity of power relations and manipulative techniques, and became conscious about some previously hidden phenomena. At the same time they became capable of arguing for their opinions in connection with political texts, and their critical awareness seems to have improved. The rate of improvement reflected the students' proficiency level in English, so Clark's (1992) and Brown's (1999) claim, that a good level of English is necessary in critical language awareness classes was justified by the present research, too. Another valuable impact of the training was that it considerably reduced the students' apathy with regard to political issues. Instead of thinking in clichés and being stuck in their stereotypical schemata according to which politics is dirty and boring, the participants became more open and interested as well as less prejudiced and evasive regarding political issues, at the same time they became motivated to pay attention to its phenomena. Besides, the learners got involved in issues pertaining to foreign cultures by using authentic texts from the target cultures, which could promote their understanding of these different cultures as well. Therefore, during this involvement the participants' cross-cultural competence was also raised.

Since the training was embedded in the framework of a language practice class, it aimed to develop the learners' speaking, reading and listening skills too. During the training the learners absorbed a great deal of new vocabulary connected to various topics of CDA, which they later applied in verbal communication as well as in their reading and listening activities. The acquisition of the new 'political' vocabulary and the special critical discourse analytical terminology were a challenge for the learners at first, but the group and the plenary discussions provided space for the learners to apply and practice their new knowledge. The participants expressed their ideas freely, created their own interpretations and used the newly acquired vocabulary, which reduced their initial passive attitudes. As a result of applying the discourse analytical methods in the interpretation of authentic texts from the target cultures, the students' linguistic competence was raised and eventually they became interested, empowered, and active participants in the classes. Despite the unusual nature of the topic in a regular EFL class and the initial reluctance of the learners, reading and listening to the notable political leaders' speeches could facilitate their interpretive and productive processes. By the end of the training an improvement in the learners' communicative skills was apparent.

An important part of the research was the design of a motivating training programme which provided a wide range of topics related to power and manipulation. Nevertheless, time constraints and the different levels of English knowledge of the participants made the research appear less profound. It would have been beneficial to design a longer programme, but the scheduling of the term made this impossible. Conducting interviews with the students who missed classes and asking their opinion about the training could have provided profitable data too, but because of the short time available it was not practicable either. The training had an effect on the students' thinking, but no strong development of the abilities needed for linguistic analysis could be seen in all

participants; there was rather a general shift in their attitude to political issues. As the time remaining for practicing the actual linguistic analysis did not prove to be sufficient, this result is not unexpected either.

Nowadays it is still not a generally accepted objective of Hungarian education to develop learners' critical awareness. However, the results of this research conducted in a language practice class show that it is possible to increase learners' sensitivity and awareness as well as to change their beliefs about issues of power and manipulation. Besides the outcomes the study provided, some questions also emerged. The proportion of theory and practice during CLA training in the classroom needs to be carefully planned. Prospective research might provide data about the utility of theoretical instruction and it might also clarify how the fluctuation in students' performance can be reduced. It would be important to examine how the effects of the training can be enhanced in case of longer exposure, and how other contexts might modify them. Since this research was carried out in the English language BA programme of a Hungarian university, the results do not allow us to draw any conclusions regarding different educational environments. Further research is needed to explore the feasibility of similar or modified projects in other educational contexts in and beyond Hungary.

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APPENDIX A

An extract from the second inaugural speech of Barack Obama, made on 21st January, 2013.

“Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, schools and colleges to train our workers.

Together, we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play.

Together, we resolved that a great nation must care for the vulnerable, and protect its people from life’s worst hazards and misfortune.

Through it all, we have never relinquished our scepticism of central authority, nor have we succumbed to the fiction that all society’s ills can be cured through government alone. Our celebration of initiative and enterprise, our insistence on hard work and personal responsibility, these are constants in our character.

But we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action. For the American people can no more meet the demands of

today's world by acting alone than American soldiers could have met the forces of fascism or communism with muskets and militias. No single person can train all the math and science teachers we'll need to equip our children for the future, or build the roads and networks and research labs that will bring new jobs and businesses to our shores. Now, more than ever, we must do these things together, as one nation and one people."

The source of the text is: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama>

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule:

I. Background questions:

1. Name, age, previous schools, language knowledge

II. Thinking aloud about the political text:

1. What do you think about this text? You can say everything that you thought or felt when reading it.

- monologic phase, interviewee can speak without interruption or limitation

III. Questions about the text:

1. What is the topic of the text?
2. Who might be the audience? Why do you think?
3. Who might have said or written this text?
4. What might be the purpose of the text?
5. What kinds of linguistic tools can you identify?
 - What kinds of adjectives, verbs, and nouns are used?
 - What kinds of syntactic choices can you see?
6. Who are in subject positions?
7. How does the speaker reach his aim? What are the effects of the speakers' linguistic choices?

IV. Questions about the training: (Only in the second interview)

1. In what way did this training change your way of thinking?
2. How can we reach certain goals with words?
3. Which part of the training did you like the most?
4. Which part of the training did you like the least?
5. If you could design a similar training what would you include?
6. What would you omit from a training like this?
7. What other ideas would you have for a future training like this?
8. What did you learn during this training, and how will you use it in the future?
9. Do you have anything else to say?

APPENDIX C

TASK SHEET

1. Try to guess who might have said this sentence and write the continuation. (Winston Churchill)
“Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy, its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.”

2. Who might have said this? What can be the purpose of the speaker? (Tony Blair)
“The threat from Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction - chemical, biological, potentially nuclear weapons capability - that threat is real.”

3. Text for analysis. (Extract: Barack Obama, Second inaugural speech)
“This generation of Americans has been tested by crises that steeled our resolve and proved our resilience. A decade of war is now ending. An economic recovery has begun. America’s possibilities are limitless, for we possess all the qualities that this world without boundaries demands: youth and drive; diversity and openness; an endless capacity for risk and a gift for reinvention. My fellow Americans, we are made for this moment, and we will seize it – so long as we seize it together.”

The source of the text is: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama>

4. Write a story which contains this sentence!
“Our basic right is to do that!”

5. Complete the sentence. Try to guess who might have said this. (Nelson Mandela)
“Education is the most powerful weapon.....” (which you can use to save the world)

6. Text for analysis. (Extract: Barack Obama, First inaugural speech, 20th January, 2009)
“That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet. These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land - a nagging fear that America’s decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America - they will be met. On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness. In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given.

It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted - for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom. For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and travelled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.”

The source of the text is: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/>

The source of the documentary ‘The century of the self’ is:
<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-century-of-the-self/>