Using Critical Discourse Analysis Instruction in Argumentative and Descriptive Writing Classes

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Abstract

The field of ELT is constantly witnessing the introduction of new instructional approaches: one such perhaps recent initiative is critical discourse analysis (CDA). Accordingly, the present study was an attempt to investigate the impact of CDA instruction on Iranian EFL learners' descriptive and argumentative writing ability. To fulfill the aforementioned purpose, a sample TOEFL was primarily piloted among a group of 30 upper intermediate EFL learners by the researchers; with the acceptable reliability and item analysis indices achieved, then the researchers administered the test among another group of 90 upper intermediate learners. Ultimately, those 60 learners whose scores fell one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen as the participants of the study and were randomly assigned to a control and an experimental group with 30 participants in each. Both of these groups underwent the same amount of teaching time during 20 sessions which included a treatment of CDA instruction based on Jank's (2005) set of 14 features for the experimental group. A posttest was administered at the end of the instruction to both groups and their mean scores on the test were compared through a multivariate analysis of variance. The result ($F = 14.41$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) led to the rejection of the two null hypotheses raised in this study, thereby demonstrating that the learners in the experimental group benefited significantly more than those in the control group in terms of improving their descriptive and argumentative writing ability. Hence, the major pedagogical implication of this study is that CDA instruction can be effectively used to assist EFL learners improve their argumentative and descriptive writing ability.

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INTRODUCTION

The English language in modern times has by far become the widespread medium of communication and transaction around the world. Perhaps the major driving force behind this ever-growing trend is the rapid promotion of communication technology in the global community where more and more people are not only taking advantage of spoken English but also utilizing the written forms of this international language (Cook, 2003; Schmitt, 2002).

Hence one of the most difficult skills for L2 learners is writing. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), the difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable texts. They argue that the skills involved in writing are highly complex, and L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, etc. To this end, Chakraverty and Gautum (2008) state that writing, "is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic and to analyze and classify any background knowledge. Then, writers need suitable language to structure these ideas in the form of a coherent discourse" (p. 286).

EFL learners conventionally care meticulously for the spelling, punctuation, and grammar and the focus is uni-dimensionally linguistic (Hedge, 2000). More recently, however, there is growing emphasis by a number of scholars on students sliding into a critical language awareness realm (e.g. Cots, 2006; Kamler, 2001; Pennycook, 2001). Critical language awareness sheds light upon the relationship between language and social perspective. The focus of this awareness is on the ways in which language represents the world and reflects the social construction (Fairclough, 1992).

Furthermore, the nature of contemporary society, as Ali (2011) asserts, makes critical language awareness more necessary than ever in order to create citizens for an effective democracy, which moves toward greater freedom and respect for all people. Critical language awareness being the pedagogic arm of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as Wallace (as cited in Svalberg, 2000) called it, supports writers to make well-informed choices as the traces and cues of certain ideology reflected.

According to Van Dijk and Pennycook (as cited in Cots, 2006), the introduction of CDA instruction in language classes does not necessarily "involve a change in teaching method or techniques. Rather, CDA offers

a new perspective on language that considers that language use (a) is questionable and problematic (b) reflects social/ideological processes and (c) at the same time, affect those processes" (p. 458). More specifically, CDA instruction helps students to move from non-critical to critical approaches in language learning. Fairclough (1992) distinguishes the two where he states:

Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants. (p.12)

Furthermore, CDA instruction can contribute to the process of looking into formal linguistic characteristics. Such formal linguistic devices are already part of the syllabus in many ELT classes which employ *bottom-up* reading skills. CDA instruction in effect extends this kind of analysis thereby allowing learners to also see how these devices are used to realize and construct "social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 12).

In a similar vein, Cots (2006) argues that reading in an EFL setting is typically an exercise in honing comprehension skills related to areas of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, among others. Students interact with texts in an attempt to absorb a target structure or learn a function of language. Training for efficiency and appropriacy and the generation of productive citizens is the goal of this model. Cots further explains that this emphasis on the structural/functional aspects of language is an incomplete representation. A full reading of a text emphasizing linguistic structures also contributes to "a global meaning representing an ideological position" (p. 338). In other words, in order for students to gain a complete reading skill and the mastery of writing for that matter, critical skills as well as comprehension skills should be learned through CDA instruction.

Thus, the introduction of CDA instruction in the classroom not only contributes to an increase of critical language awareness among students (Fairclough, 1995) but also paves the way for language awareness. Koupaee Dar, Rahimi, and Shams (2010) describe the latter as an internal and automatic capacity developed by the learner to discover the language for him/her self. They further assert that in the process of CDA instruction, language awareness is not achieved necessarily by means of

an explicit teaching but it is the students who pay deliberate attention to language features to acquire them.

Accordingly, Wallace (as cited in Koupaee Dar et al., 2010) asserts that critical language awareness is essentially a pedagogic procedure indebted to CDA and language awareness, respectively. From CDA is derived a view of discourse as shaped by relations of power; from language awareness, the interest in examining language as a specific object of study is encouraged. Therefore, critical language awareness exemplifies CDA instruction in teaching contexts while strengthening basic principles of language awareness. In fact, CDA is both a pedagogical approach (i.e., an instruction modality) and an explicit knowledge about language or a conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning (Koupaee Dar et al., 2010).

In line with what has been stated so far, the significance of the present study is that while most of the researches dealing with CDA instruction have been conducted on the reading skill (e.g., Correia, 2006; Cots, 2006; Fredricks, 2007; Icmez, 2009; Janks, 2005; Koupaee Dar et al., 2010; Wallace, 1992, 1999; Yang, 2004); little has been done on the writing skill. Hence, the present study endeavored to provide some valuable insights into how writing could be taught through CDA instruction with possibly more effective outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The skill of "writing, which was once considered the domain of the elite and the well-educated, has become an essential tool for people of all walks of life" (Weigle, 2002, p. x). Weigle (2002) further asserts that many people around the world need to report analyses, write business letters, compose academic essays, etc. and if all that were not enough, a huge number of individuals from different demographic cohorts are writing for personal communication through emails and text messages. Therefore, writing instruction not merely as an object to study but as a means of communication is of growing significance in language teaching programs (Bazerman, Little, & Bethel, 2005; Hedge, 2000; Petraglia, 2005).

Despite the abovementioned significance, all is not so simple; there are both theoretical and practical challenges in the instruction of writing. From a theoretical standpoint, even defining writing is burdensome since the uses of writing "by different people in different situations are so

varied" (Weigle, 2002, p. 3) and that "Writing can be understood as meaning anything from forming letters to writing extended discourse" (p. 7).

Practically speaking, writing even in L1 let alone L2 is one of those skills that seems to fall not at all among many people's list of favorite tasks; to this end, there are indeed quite a number of writing instruction textbooks with some going to the extreme of using the word *hate* for writing in their titles (e.g. Bohannon, 2005; Heise, 2009; Wright, 1994). And of course, just as there is an abundance of textbooks dedicated to the teaching of writing, there are numerous methods of writing instruction.

As stated earlier, CDA instruction is among the many different methods and approaches of writing instruction originated from the work of pioneers in discourse analysis-based pedagogical paradigms in the language classroom (e.g. Allwright, 1979; Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979) that later on developed by other scholars (e.g. Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; McCarthy, 1991; Morgan, 1998; Shor, 1992; van Dijk, 2006; Van Lier, 1988; Young, 1992).

According to van Dijk (2006), CDA seeks to bring into light the discursive sources of power, hegemony, inequality, and bias through analyzing spoken and written texts. Furthermore, CDA revolves around the assumption that writers choose vocabulary and grammar specifically, and that these choices are consciously or subconsciously "principled and systematic" (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979, p. 188). Thus, choices are ideologically based (Rogers, 2004) and manipulation and illegitimate mind control are significant issues of CDA as the latter is a method to reveal such biases as well as power exercises (van Dijk, 2006).

Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is the linguistic backbone of CDA (Rogers, 2004). Unlike structural linguistics which emphasizes forms and structures, the crucial concept in SFL is function. Rogers writes that, "SFL is committed to a view of language that focuses on meaning and the choices people make when making meaning" (p. 8). She further suggests the choices made by people are conscious or subconscious. Options such as singular/plural, past/present, future tense, and positive/negative are components of the language repertoire called system thus the name systemic linguistics. The selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others, Fairclough (2004) argues, are controlled by social practices.

The CDA framework introduced by Fairclough (1995) following Halliday's SFL helps students improve their writing quality as well as growing a critical view in their writing while teachers may provide light for them to concentrate more on the micro level of their writing letting them have choices more oriented towards meaning. Fairclough (1995) asserts that language simultaneously functions "ideationally in the representation of experience and the world, interpersonally in constituting social interaction between participants in discourse, and textually in tying parts of a text together into a coherent whole (a text, precisely) and tying texts to situational contexts" (p. 6). Accordingly, his framework which studies language in its relation to power and ideology comprises the three dimensions of text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. Hence, the instruction of writing in class is not restricted to the usual tenet of lexicogrammatical components but it extends to the analysis of meaning in the sociocultural context as well (Auerbach & McGrail, 1993; Fairclough, 1995; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Vesely & Sherlock, 2005).

According to this CDA model, the textual function is the place for the realization of the other functions. Fairclough (1995) argues that the content of a text is signified in its form as well as organization. The specific choices of lexicon, grammar, and conventions leave traces of what the writer implies to mean. In simple terms, there is interdependence between micro level choices and the macro level of expression of ideology and ideas in students' writings.

Alongside the discussion of what method to choose to teach writing is the issue of genre denoting different types of writing. Hyson (as cited in Hedgecock, 2005) refers to genre as a "popular framework for analyzing the form and function of nonliterary discourse and a tool for developing educational practices in the fields such as rhetoric, composition studies, professional writing, linguistics and English for specific purposes" (p. 600). Byrd and Reid (1998, cited in Hedgecock, 2005) note that L2 writing instruction may produce the optimal results when it focuses "on genre-specific rhetorical features, audience expectations, and tools for improving lexicogrammatical variety and accuracy" (p. 600).

Among these different genres of writing are descriptive and argumentative with the former being a type of genre dealing with perceptions where sensory experience of any kind (e.g. visual, kinetic, auditory) is the topic of investigation (Kane, 2000). Glencoe (2005)

writes on descriptive writing that, "To compose an effective description, the writer creates vivid word pictures and organizes these pictures into effective patterns" (p. 127). Glencoe further adds that, "To further empower a description, the writer makes use of energetic verbs, attempts to choose exact verbs in order to mirror strong mental images, chooses a particular vantage point either stationary or moving" (p. 140).

Defining descriptive writing as "adequate details to describe a particular topic in such a way to appeal to the audience" (p. 9), Rozmiarck (2000) discusses that such writing has the following criteria: "a focused topic, an engaging lead, adequate supporting details, transitions, varied sentence structure and length, several elements of stylistic language (similes, metaphors, adjectives, etc.), and a powerful conclusion" (p. 9). Moreover, Nazario, Borchers, and Lewis (2010) state that the goal of description is to convey "an overall idea, or dominant impression, of the topic by building up concrete details to support the general point" (p. 26). However, Fusillo (2000) warns the writer of the danger of including too many details in such a manner that "the subject is under the burden of the words and this is called purple prose or over writing" (p. 13).

Alongside descriptive writing, there is also argumentative writing. Glenn, Miller, Webb, Gray, and Hodge (as cited in Nimehchisalem, 2011) assert that "Argumentation is the art and science of civil debate, dialogue and persuasion" (p. 58). More specifically, Kinneary (as cited in Nimehchisalem, 2011) believes that "Argumentation involves statement of an issue, discussion of its pros and/or cons, and justification of support for one with the primary focus on the reader" (p. 58).

Furthermore, Toulmin (as cited in Crammond, 1998) claims that argumentation is composed of the six elements of claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and reservation. These elements represent the basis of argumentative discourse and an organizational framework for argumentative essay writing. Although the above categorizations seem clear-cut at the surface level, the practice of teaching argumentative and descriptive writing is by no means a process so clear-cut and free from challenges and debates as there are various views and ideas regarding this practice. As Wang (2004) asserts, teaching EFL writing is a headache for many teachers; despite their considerable efforts in correcting their students' compositions, many students' written English "remains non-idiomatic, poorly organized, insufficiently developed,

grammatically awkward, devoid of sentence structure variety, and weak in vocabulary usage" (p. 24).

The problem of finding efficient methods of writing is further exacerbated by the fact that despite the endeavors of many teachers to find such methods, it is perhaps more important for teachers of writing "to look beyond the classroom, beyond method, beyond debates about what might be the right or wrong way to teach writing" (Kamler, 2001, p. 173). In an attempt to suggest a workable solution for the fulfillment of the above approach, Kamler (2001) suggests that critical writing pedagogy once considered not a new method but actually a politicized frame, could "help teachers think differently about teaching writing and reflect on *what* it is students are learning to write, what they *do* with that writing and what that writing *does* to them and their world" (p. 173).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In the researchers' own experience in their writing classes (with the two descriptive and argumentative genres bearing no exception) EFL students do have the tendency to run into the challenges. Having been both encouraged by the somewhat successful application of CDA in ELT and being personally interested in the trend, the researchers set out this study to investigate whether CDA would have any significantly positive impact on EFL learners' argumentative and descriptive writing. To fulfill the aforementioned purpose, the following two research questions were raised:

1. Does critical discourse analysis instruction have any significant effect on EFL learners' descriptive writing?
2. Does critical discourse analysis instruction have any significant effect on EFL learners' argumentative writing?

METHOD
Participants

The participants of this study were 60 upper-intermediate EFL learners selected from among an existing intact group of 90 students at a private language school in Iran based on their scores on a sample TOEFL (the 60 whose scores were one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen). The test had been piloted beforehand among 30 students whose English language background was similar to that of the target

group. The 60 female participants – aged between 20 and 32 – who took part in this study were assigned randomly to the two experimental and control groups each consisting of 30 learners.

Instrumentation

Proficiency Test for Homogenization

A sample CBT TOEFL was used in this study following its piloting among a group of 30 upper-intermediate EFL learners in order to homogenize the main participants of the study. The test consists of the three parts of structure and written expression (40 items), reading comprehension (50 items), and writing (TWE), the topic of which was "*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Learning about the past has no value for those of us living in the present. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.*"

Writing Posttest

At the end of the course, the participants in both groups wrote two essays: one was a descriptive writing on the topic of "Your memory of a place that you visited as a child" while the other was an argumentative essay on the topic of "Can censorship be sometimes justified?" The topics were both chosen from a sample TWE which has proven to be a highly valid instrument worldwide. The learners were given 30 minutes for each task and had to write around 200 words for each.

Rating Scale Used for Scoring the Writing Papers

For rating the writing papers both at the homogenization stage and the posttest, the Hamp-Lyons (1989) rating scale was utilized which is used as a rubric for a summative score. Based on this scale, the scores fall between the ranges of 0-6.

Course Book

All the participants in the two groups received instruction based on units 5-8 of *Interchange* as their course book, the *Interchange* workbook, and the pertinent audio materials. The overall series comprises four books with sixteen units in each. The course is appropriate for learners of English from beginning to upper intermediate level. This multi-level course builds on the foundations for accurate and fluent communication extending grammatical, lexical, and functional skills, teaching students to use English for everyday situations and purposes related to school, work, social life, and leisure. The underlying philosophy is that language

learning is more rewarding and effective when used for authentic communication.

Data Collection Procedure

Following the selection of the participants (described in the method section), the treatment commenced. The classes of both groups were held five days a week for a total period of four weeks (20 sessions) throughout the term focusing on all the four language skills including writing. The classes were taught by the same instructor (one of the researchers). All the 60 learners underwent the same procedure of teaching in terms of the three other skills and were assigned the same kind of homework even in their writing instruction; in addition to writing in class, they were assigned to write an essay as their homework. This phase started in class and continued as homework with the teacher-researcher asking two students to read their homework the next session while she and the other students gave them feedback. She would then collect all the other students' writings, score and comment on them after class, and hand them back to the students the next session.

Regarding the writing skill, the underlying difference was that the experimental group underwent CDA instruction of descriptive and argumentative writing. For both classes, each session started with a warm-up, followed by the main activity, and ended with a follow-up. It is worth mentioning that the writing instruction for all classes took around half of the time of the class since the teacher had to work on other aspects of English as well. What follows is a description of the procedure of the writing instruction in both groups.

Writing Instruction in the Control Group

The first 10 sessions of the instruction in the control group were allocated to teaching descriptive writing while the remaining 10 sessions to argumentative writing. The teacher began the writing instruction on the first session in the control group with a warm-up of 3-5 minutes during which she wrote an example of a descriptive sentence on the board and asked the students to identify any feature that made the sentence descriptive. This and other such examples were extracted from Glencoe (2005). She linked this warm-up technique to the main activity where she further explained what descriptive writing is. Accordingly, she elaborated on the topic sentence through writing a sample paragraph on the board highlighting how the topic sentence was significant.

Furthermore, the students – in groups of four – were given a text to analyze and grasp how the topic sentence contributed to the general meaning. Accordingly, the students analyzed the texts as a part of the main activity while they were learning to compose writing.

The other sessions began with a warm-up through asking the learners if they could come up with any explanation or any example of the point which was going to be taught; this was followed by the main activity to teach "organization of details", "direct observation," and "exact words" and ended with asking the learners to write a short paragraph based on the point being taught as their homework.

As for the sessions on argumentative writing, the teacher-researcher warmed up the first session by eliciting from students if they knew about the content of the argumentative mode of writing (3-5 minutes). Sliding into the main activity, the teacher specifically explained and exemplified the concept of thesis statement and supporting sentences. Subsequently, as the follow-up, she assigned students to improve three confusing thesis statements and to write three supporting sentences for each of them as their homework.

The next sessions started with the teacher giving to the learners in groups of four sample paragraphs; they were asked to analyze and to report to the class. This continued with the main activities of explaining and exemplifying introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs and ended with a follow-up asking the learners to compose a paragraph based on the point taught.

The teacher/researcher used various procedures such as explicit, recast, reformulations, etc. in the process of providing feedback on the learners' writings. Peer feedback was also encouraged and of course monitored by the teacher/researcher.

Writing Instruction in the Experimental Group

In the experimental group, the teacher-researcher taught CDA-based argumentative and descriptive writing together. On the first session, she began by describing the concept of CDA through providing various sentences and encouraging the learners to discuss the underlying meanings of each. Furthermore, she highlighted the modes of argumentative and descriptive writings while discussing how to use CDA features to compose argumentation as well as description.

Just like the control group, each session started with a warm-up, followed by a main activity, and ended with a follow-up. The warm-ups as well as the main activities took on average five and 25 minutes, respectively. The learners practiced writing argumentative and descriptive paragraphs as the follow-up in class and continued this activity

During the warm-up phase, the learners were acquainted with the topic chosen and the process intended for that specific session. The teacher started introducing that topic and encouraged the students to give information about it sometimes through asking some questions. Following the warm-ups each session, the teacher introduced CDA features as the main activities. These 14 sets of features were taken from Jank (2005) and appear below in Table 1:

Table 1: CDA features (Jank, 2005)

Linguistic Feature	Explanation
Lexicalization	The selection/choice of wordings. Different words construct the same idea differently.
Overlexicalization	Many words for the same phenomenon.
Relexicalization	Renaming.
Lexical cohesion	Created by synonymy, antonymy, repetition, collocation.
Metaphor	Used for yoking ideas together and for the discursive construction of new ideas.
Euphemism	Hides negative actions or implications.
Transitivity	Processes in verbs • *doing*: material process • *being or having*: relational processes • *thinking/feeling/perceiving*: mental • *saying*: verbal processes

	• *physiological*: behavioral processes • *existential*
Voice	Active and passive voice constructs participants as *doers* or as *done-to's*. Passive voice allows for the deletion of the agent.
Nominalization	A process is turned into a thing or an event without participants or tense or modality. Central mechanism for reification.
Quoted speech Direct speech (DS) Indirect speech (IS) Free indirect speech (FIS). This is a mixture of direct and indirect speech features. Scare quotes or "so-called".	Who is quoted in DS/IS/FIS? Who is quoted first/last/most? Who is not quoted? Has someone been misquoted or quoted out of context? What reporting verb was chosen? What is the effect of scare quotes?
Turn-taking	Who gets the floor? How many turns do different participants get? Who is silent/silenced? Who interrupts? Who gets heard? Whose points are followed through? Whose rules for turn taking are being used given that they are different in different cultures? Who controls the topic?
Mood	Is the clause a statement, question, offer or command?
Polarity and tense	Positive polarity (definitely yes) Negative polarity (definitely no) Polarity is tied to the use of tense. Tense sets up the definiteness of events occurring in

	time. The present tense is used for timeless truths and absolute certainty.
Modality Degrees of uncertainty	Logical possibility/probability Social authority Modality created by modals (may, might, Could, will), adverbs (possibly, certainly, hopefully) intonation, tag questions.
Pronouns	Inclusive we/exclusive we/you Us and them: othering pronouns Sexist/non sexist pronouns: generic "he" The choice of first/ second/ third person.
Definite article ("the") Indefinite article ("a")	*The* is used for shared information – to refer to something mentioned before or that the addressee can be assumed to know about. Reveals textual presuppositions.
Thematization – syntax: the first bit of the clause is called the theme.	The theme is the launch pad for the clause. Look for patterns of what is foregrounded in the clause by being in theme position.
Rheme – syntax: the last bit of the clause is called the rheme.	In written English the new information is usually at the end of the clause. In spoken English it is indicated by tone.
Sequencing of information. Logical connectors – conjunctions set up the	Sequence sets up cause and effect. Conjunctions are: • *Additive*: and, in addition • *Causal*: because, so, therefore

| logic of the argument. | • *Adversative*: although, yet |
| | • *Temporal*: when, while, after, before |

Various texts and particularly newspaper headlines were employed to elaborate each of the above features. In addition, after being acquainted with each set of features throughout the treatment, the learners – in groups of four – analyzed a sample paragraph in order to discover how utilizing that specific feature contributed to the general meaning of the paragraph.

Finally, the learners wrote both argumentative and descriptive paragraphs using the points taught as their homework (the procedure of which – as described earlier – was identical for both control and experimental groups). The teacher/researcher applied the same procedure of feedback for this group too (described earlier). At the end of treatment, all the students in both control groups sat for the same posttest.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were carried out in this study. The mean and standard deviation of all tests were calculated with item analysis and reliability being conducted for the multiple-choice items. The inter-rater reliability of the two raters was also calculated to ascertain the consistency of the ratings given by them. To test the two null hypotheses in one, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run.

RESULTS

For the purpose of testing the two hypotheses raised in this study, a comprehensive description of the findings are presented. A chronological order is applied in reporting the data analysis, thence, the participant selection process, the posttest, and the hypothesis testing are described in order.

Participant Selection
Descriptive Statistics of the TOEFL Administration

Following the piloting of the sample TOEFL with its reliability standing at 0.77, the test was administered to 90 students with the aim of selecting 60 of them for the study. The descriptive statistics of this process are presented below in Table 2 with the mean and standard deviation being 82.58 and 4.12, respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for TOEFL

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOEFL Administration	90	72	91	82.58	4.122
Valid N (listwise)	90				

Furthermore, the inter-rater reliability of the two raters' (both researchers) scoring of the TWE had already been established at the piloting stage; the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient which was run demonstrated that there was a significant correlation at the 0.05 level ($r = 0.823$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$). Hence, the researchers were rest assured that they could proceed with scoring all the subsequent writing papers in this study.

Dividing the Participants into Two Groups
Once the 60 participants were chosen following the above procedure, they were randomly divided in the two control and experimental groups. To make further sure that the two groups bore no significant difference in terms of their writing prior to the study, the mean scores of the two groups on the above administered TWE had to be compared statistically. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of these two groups' TWE scores with the mean and standard deviation standing at 2.70 and 0.70 for the control group and 3.10 and 0.55 for the experimental group, respectively.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the TWE scores of the two groups at the outset

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness Ratio
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	
TWE Cont Group	30	2	4	2.70	.702	1.56
TWE Exp Group	30	2	4	3.10	.548	1.08
Valid N (listwise)	30					

As both distributions manifested normality with their skewness ratios falling within the ±1.96 range, an independent samples *t*-test was run. As is evident in Table 4 below, with the *F* value of 6.559 at the significance level of 0.013 being smaller than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were significantly different. Therefore, the results of the *t*-test with the assumption of heterogeneity of the variances were reported here. The results ($t = -2.46$, $p = 0.17 > 0.05$) indicate that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the outset. Hence, any possible difference in the writing of the two groups at the posttest could be attributed to the treatment.

Table 4: Independent samples *t*-test for the two groups' scores on the TWE at the outset

	Levene's Test		*t*-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	6.559	.013	-2.46	58	.17	-.400	.163	-.725	-.075
Equal variances not			-2.46	54.7	.17	-.400	.163	-.726	-.074

assumed

Posttest

Following the treatment, the two posttests (i.e. a descriptive and an argumentative writing essay) were administered to the two groups. As shown in Table 5 below, the mean and standard deviation of the control group on the descriptive writing were 3.92 and 0.97, respectively. In the experimental group, however, the mean was 4.88 while the standard deviation stood at 0.69. As for the argumentative writing posttest, the mean and standard deviation of the control group were 4.27 and 0.89, respectively. In the experimental group, the mean was 4.90 while the standard deviation stood at 0.79.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for the posttests in both groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness Ratios
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	
Descriptive – Control Group	30	2.0	5.0	3.917	.9656	-.15
Descriptive – Experimental Group	30	3.5	6.0	4.883	.6909	1.48
Argumentative – Control Group	30	3.0	5.5	4.267	.8880	-.33
Argumentative – Experimental Group	30	4.0	6.0	4.900	.7922	.56
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Responding to the Research Questions

To test both null hypotheses of the study which were raised based on the aforesaid research questions, the researchers conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) which requires certain preliminary measures: the normality of the distribution of the scores on the two posttests within each group (skewness), the multivariate normality (the Mahalanobis maximum distance), linearity, equality of covariance matrices (Box's test), and the Levene's test of equality of error variances. With all the above assumptions in place, the MANOVA could be performed.

Table 6: Multivariate tests

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis Df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.984	1745.495a	2.000	57.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.016	1745.495a	2.000	57.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	61.245	1745.495a	2.000	57.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	61.245	1745.495a	2.000	57.000	.000
Group	Pillai's Trace	.336	14.411a	2.000	57.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.664	14.411a	2.000	57.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.506	14.411a	2.000	57.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.506	14.411a	2.000	57.000	.000

Table 6 above demonstrates the Multivariate test: the result of the Pillai's Trace Test specified that F = 14.41 and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. It could thus be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference

between the two groups with the experimental group which gained a higher mean in both posttests outperforming the control group.

Table 7 below demonstrates the test of between-subjects effects as part of the MANOVA output. As illustrated in this table, the two groups turned out to have a statistically significant difference in the writing posttest, $F_{(1,54)} = 19.88$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. In other words, the first null hypothesis was rejected meaning that CDA instruction did have a significantly better impact on EFL learners' descriptive writing.

Table 7: Tests of between-subjects effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Descriptive Posttest	14.017a	1	14.017	19.885	.000	.255
	Argumentative Posttest	6.017b	1	6.017	8.498	.005	.128
Intercept	Descriptive Posttest	1161.600	1	1161.600	1647.928	.000	.966
	Argumentative Posttest	1260.417	1	1260.417	1780.134	.000	.968
Group	Descriptive Posttest	14.017	1	14.017	19.885	.000	.255
	Argumentative Posttest	6.017	1	6.017	8.498	.005	.128
Error	Descriptive Posttest	40.883	58	.705			
	Argumentative Posttest	41.067	58	.708			

Total	Descriptive Posttest	1216.500	60
	Argumentative Posttest	1307.500	60
Corrected Total	Descriptive Posttest	54.900	59
	Argumentative Posttest	47.083	59

a. R squared = .255 (Adjusted R Squared = .242)

b. R squared = .128 (Adjusted R Squared = .113

Furthermore, Table 8 specifies that there is a statistically significant difference in both groups in the argumentative writing posttest: $F_{(1,54)} = 8.50$ and $p = 0.005 < 0.05$. In other words, the second null hypothesis was also rejected meaning that CDA instruction did have a significantly better impact on EFL learners' argumentative writing. The effect size using Eta squared was 0.25, indicating a large effect size (Cohen, 1988; Larson-Hall, 2010), which means that the instruction accounted for 25% of the overall variance.

DISCUSSION

As discussed above, the result of this study revealed with a large power of generalizability that using CDA instruction could significantly improve EFL learners' descriptive and argumentative writing; this was of course vividly observed in the process of CDA instruction as CDA seeks to emphasize critical word choices.

Ever since Fairclough (1995) introduced CDA, numerous studies have been conducted in the field of ELT proving CDA's significant impact on teaching and learning outcomes (e.g. Correia, 2006; Cots, 2006; Fredricks, 2007; Icmez, 2009; Janks, 2005; Koupaee Dar, Rahimi, & Shams 2011; Wallace, 1992; Wallace, 1999; Yang, 2004). In line with the findings of previous researches, the present study also demonstrated that CDA instruction bore a significant impact on learners' ability to write descriptive and argumentative texts.

Some of the merits of CDA-based instruction as Janks (2005) notes are enabling the writer to choose specific linguistic options and juxtaposing and sequencing them. Accordingly, it was clearly observed in the course of this study that after being acquainted with CDA features each session, the learners were more involved in choosing a specific word rather than the other which reflected the particular meaning that they intended.

As Widdowson (2007) has highlighted and as the result of this study reconsolidated, the students in the experimental group told the teacher both in person and in group that they learned how easy it might be to be manipulated by language and thus had developed critical thinking. This expression of opinion engendered by the learners' CDA-based instruction experience in class meant that they had somehow learned that language could be used to influence readers or how information could be subjected to the background, foreground, or exclusion in a discourse.

Furthermore, the texts that the learners had produced in the experimental group over time demonstrated that as a result of the instruction, they had become more critical and more confident and had learned to take up a more assertive position the texts they wrote. Going through their writings in the duration of the instruction, the researchers could vividly observe that the language of the learners was undergoing this gradual and steady change noted above. The only conceivable underlying reason for this change thus could be attributed to the fact that the learners were getting acquainted with CDA features which in turn provided for them the adequate opportunity to know what language to use which would reflect what they intended. In addition, the learners appreciated that analyzing various texts as main activity helped them to grasp how CDA features worked in practice.

CDA instruction further gave the learners the opportunities to place emphasis on both meaning and form. Through CDA, the learners learned that if they highlighted the meaning only, they might produce texts with grammatical and lexical mistakes. And if they focused merely on form, they might produce texts which were incoherent. Therefore, a balanced focus on both form and meaning produced desirable results that help them to choose from a repertoire of grammatical and lexical options in order to represent their intended meaning.

CDA instruction also raised the learners' cognitive ability as they were so eager to perceive that certain grammatical structures had the potentiality to imply semantic, interactional, and sociopolitical functions

(van Dijk, 2006). Such instruction assisted the learners to move away from rote learning toward more meaningful learning and, accordingly, proved to be an effective technique for teaching.

Furthermore, since CDA and its features are not acquired through any specific process of language learning in an EFL setting, the necessity is felt to provide learners with essential tasks, samples, exercises, and instructions to familiarize them with the CDA concept, its features, and consequently usage in the writing process. Accordingly, teaching CDA and its features should be a part of the pedagogical curriculum to help students empower themselves in the act of writing.

Last but not least, the learners undergoing CDA instruction seemed to have grown to be more autonomous writers as they learned to think critically and adopted the habit of relying on their problem solving and mental capacities (Koupaee Dar et al., 2010). In this process, they not only developed language awareness but also critical language awareness which taught the learners that what to write and how to write matters.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study proved that using CDA instruction in the process of teaching could improve students' descriptive and argumentative writing. This is perhaps the case as CDA seeks to emphasize critical word choices.

To introduce CDA instruction within ELT writing programs (or mainstream it in contexts where they already exist), teacher training centers and institutions obviously need to familiarize teachers with this technique. This training could be done both for pre-service teachers who are being trained to become teachers or those already engaged in the practice of pedagogy in the form of in-service courses.

In this study, the researchers introduced the topic and specific examples related to the topic to be discussed in class in the warm-up phase and elicited the students' information on that topic to in the beginning of each session. Teachers can follow the same format or use cues, questions, and advance organizers to activate prior knowledge. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) report that research shows that cues, questions, and advance organizers should focus on what is important. Regarding the main activity, teachers can utilize magazine articles, newspaper headlines, advertisements, classifieds, political speeches of famous leaders, and even some fiction such as best-selling

novels and short stories for the purpose of analysis. This helps learners to investigate how writers' specific choices convey implied meanings.

One of the advantages of CDA is that it encourages students reading to move away from focusing on form for its own sake and to use language to explore and provide evidence of the text's ideological positioning (Wallace, 1992). In a similar vein, teachers can expand critical writing in a 'pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing' procedure in order to encourage students to move away from focusing on form to use language to produce implied meaning.

Teachers can employ CDA instruction to not only enhance learners' language awareness but also put a step further to develop their critical language awareness. This can assist students to develop critical minds and, as a result, they not only reach the ability to produce critical texts but can also gain the ability of argumentation to defend their beliefs and ideologies in a democratic life.

Syllabus designers and materials developers have to provide the content of teaching material with comprehensible and proper tasks and exercises to familiarize learners with CDA concept and its features. It is recommended that while designing writing tasks, material developers include CDA in the process of pre-writing, while writing, and post-writing.

This study was carried out with a gender limitation in that the teacher/researcher benefited from the participation of females only in class since she was not allowed to instruct male learners; therefore, the results of this study may perhaps not be applicable to male EFL learners. It is thus suggested that the same research be conducted among male learners to see whether gender is a factor or not.

While this study focused on argumentation and description as its outcomes, other studies within the same design and caliber could seek other genres of writing such as expository, narrative, etc. And finally, this research was carried out among adults; the same experiment could be implemented among other age groups to see whether the latter is a factor in investigating the impact of CDA instruction in argumentative and descriptive writing.

Bio-data

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