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Discourse Analysis in EFL Reading

Diskursanalys i EFL läsning

Sergej Ivanov

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Examinator: Bo Lundahl
Handledare: Björn Sundmark
Abstract

The purpose of this degree project is to find out what opportunities discourse analysis offers in teaching EFL reading. It aims at determining what areas of discourse analysis are relevant to teaching EFL reading at Swedish upper-secondary school as well as identifying what language teachers and learners can borrow from the linguistic study of text and discourse and make use of in the language classroom as well as outside it.

The degree project is based on secondary research on discourse analysis within the selected works in applied linguistics, language teaching, and social sciences. The sources are reviewed critically and the results are presented. The degree project emphasises the role of discourse analysis in the shift from English being a purely proficiency-oriented subject to being a democracy-oriented subject.

Keywords and concepts: discourse analysis, discourse, EFL reading.
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1. Introduction

The Swedish syllabus for English in upper-secondary school explicitly states that the aim of the subject is to use the English language for studies, travelling abroad and for social and professional international contacts (SKOLFS, 2000, p. 4). Among the specific goals, reading, which is one of the main issues of this research, is regarded as one of the priorities in language learning as schoolchildren are supposed to be able to read all kinds of literature, think critically about the texts they are reading, and view the texts from different perspectives (ibid).

Acquiring the reading abilities, which are mentioned above, require efforts from both language teachers and schoolchildren. One of the answers to the needs of the participants of the learning process is offered by discourse analysis. Although the theory of discourse analysis has been available since 1950s, there was not much research into how it could work during a language lesson until late 1980s. But starting with Guy Cook’s Discourse (1989) discourse analysis has become an increasingly popular subject of research in language teaching (McCarthy, 1991; McCarthy & Ronald, 1994; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Wallace, 2003 et al.).

The field of discourse analysis is very broad, but in regard to language teaching it is possible to define five areas: cohesion, coherence, information structure, turn-taking, and critical discourse analysis (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p. 7). In this degree project I try to trace the whole development of discourse analysis but with some focus on critical discourse analysis at the end. It should be also noted that Norman Fairclough (2003, p. 3) suggests distinguishing ‘textually oriented discourse analysis’ from discourse analysis that is not concerned with the linguistic features of the text. Fairclough (2003, p. 4) asserts that there is a strong tradition to use term ‘critical discourse analysis’ without considering the linguistic features of the text, which are of indispensable interest in language teaching. In his book Analysing Discourse: textual analysis for social research, Fairclough (2003) tries to unite these two approaches to discourse analysis under the name ‘critical discourse analysis,’ but finally fails. That is the reason why the degree project is entitled Discourse analysis in EFL reading rather than Critical discourse analysis in EFL reading.

Despite great interest in discourse analysis, one of the latest authoritative books on teaching second language reading (Hudson, 2007) does not mention discourse analysis as a tool that can be used either by language teacher or language learners, neither does Common European framework of reference for languages (2001). A search on ‘discourse analysis’ that
was done in the publication database on the website for the Swedish National Agency for Education did not give any hits either\(^1\). Conscious of this fact it seems pertinent to look closely at how the theory of discourse analysis has been developed over time with respect to considerations relevant to teaching EFL reading.

1.1 Purpose

The aim of the degree project is to find out what opportunities discourse analysis offers in teaching EFL reading. It is attempted by addressing the following research question:

- What areas of discourse analysis are relevant to teaching EFL reading at Swedish upper-secondary school and how have they changed over time?

1.2 Definitions

The understanding of the concepts used in the degree project such as ‘discourse analysis,’ ‘discourse’ and ‘EFL reading’ are dynamic. There is, nevertheless, an urgent need to provide a kind of benchmark for the reader and for the degree project itself. The working definitions that are presented below serve, therefore, as a frame of reference for the researcher and the reader.

1.2.1 Discourse analysis

It would be possible to use the working definition of discourse analysis found in the works of Cook (1989), McCarthy (1991), and Fairclough (2003). In that case discourse analysis would be defined as the study of the relationship between language and its intertextual, social and intercultural contexts in which it is used. But to achieve the purpose of the degree project it is better to adopt Östman and Virtanen’s (1995, p. 244) view on discourse analysis and define it as “an umbrella-term for all issues that have been dealt with in the linguistic study of text and discourse.”

1.2.2 Discourse

The term ‘discourse’ is used in different senses depending on what school of discourse analysis one adheres to. Bloor and Bloor (2007, pp. 6-7) distinguish a number of uses of the

\(^1\) The search was done on the 23th of March 2009.
term ‘discourse’ ranging from the understanding of discourse as all symbolic interaction and communication between people to treating discourse as a particular text. Harris (1952) treats discourse as language above the sentence and above the clause. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 24) draw a distinction between discourse and text as process and product respectively. Consequently, Brown and Yule (1983, p. 1-6) define text as “the verbal record of a communicative act” and discourse as “language in use.” This comes from the tradition to understand discourse as spoken interaction. But nowadays the term ‘discourse’ is used in a more general sense to also include written interaction (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, pp. 6-7). Bourdieu (1997, p. 73) treats discourse as communication in specific institutional contexts and emphasises that efficacy of discourse is “inseparable from the existence of an institution defining the conditions (regarding the agent, the time or place, etc.) which have to be fulfilled for the magic of words to operate.” But to serve the purpose of this degree project I adhere to the use of the term “discourse” proposed by Cook (1992, p. 2) who defines it as “text and context together, interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by the participants.” The context here is understood in the broadest sense, i.e. including both the reader and the writer, the situation, the function, the multimodality, background knowledge as well as what Blommaert (2005, pp. 58-65) calls “forgotten contexts”. They include resources (i.e. the macrocontext which individuals cannot control), text trajectories (i.e. awareness that every instance of production, reproduction, circulation and consumption of a text involves shifts in contexts) and data histories (i.e. the historical context).

### 1.2.3 EFL reading

Alderson (2000, p. 3) points out that it is common to make a distinction between the process of reading and the product of reading. In this degree project reading as a process makes up the primary focus. Urquhart and Weir (1998, p. 22) defines reading as “the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.” Although this definition serves many purposes, it fails somewhat to put the text in the context that is indispensable in discourse analysis. Moreover, it explicitly excludes all extra-linguistic information surrounding the text, which in some cases can be crucial to interpreting a certain text. Lundahl (1998, p. 9) seems to partly overcome the problem of putting the text into context by defining reading as “an active process that involves giving or constructing meaning provided that the text seems meaningful and we can relate the content to our previous experience and knowledge.” The difficulty is, probably, that the reader is tied to her/his own
discourse community and, thus, the interpretation can be quite distant from that within the original discourse community. Wallace (2003, pp. 7-25) argues for the social nature of reading and states that we read not only as private individuals but also as members of discourse communities. As a result, we may probably want to learn to read an EFL text also as a member of L1 discourse community.

Taking the features that are of importance in discourse analysis and for the needs of this degree project only, EFL reading is, therefore, defined as a process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form by relating to the context in which the text arises.

1.3 Method
There is a tradition to distinguish a range of methods when doing a research. Conventionally, all research methods are divided into primary and secondary. The former one is then divided into qualitative, quantitative, mixed and classroom research methods (Dörnyei, 2007). Secondary research is known for being used by Noam Chomsky and focuses on the synthesis of the ideas from a wide range of disciplines often studied historically (Brown, 1988).

1.3.1 Choice of method
In language teaching one of the most natural research methods is without a shadow of doubt classroom research. Zoltán Dörnyei (2007, pp. 176-194) divides this group of methods into classroom observation, mixed methods, and action research. However, due to the fact that neither the Swedish official educational documents nor Common European framework of reference for languages (2001) mention discourse analysis as a device in language teaching, it hardly seems justifiable to apply classroom research methods. The first two methods, classroom observation and mixed methods, can hardly provide us with any data owing to a lack of application of discourse analysis in the classroom. Although the latter, action research, could be a viable option, it is scarcely possible to apply it within the bounds of this degree project in terms of time. Therefore, the only research method that seems legitimate given the circumstances is secondary research (Brown, 1988).

1.3.2 Procedure
According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p. 167), the “best method is the one that answers the research question(s) most efficiently.” This is why secondary research method is used in
the degree project. Owing to the fact that the term ‘discourse analysis’ is used in a range of disciplines it is urgently needed to limit the scope of the research. That constitutes the first step in my method. I have chosen to include sources within applied linguistics, language teaching, and social sciences in the research.

The second step of the method is to search for relevant research literature. It is done through library and database searches using keywords such as ‘discourse analysis’ and ‘EFL/L2 reading’ within the above named disciplines. This provides us a number of books and articles in the researched area.

The third step is to skim and scan the books and articles to evaluate if they are going to be valuable for the research in the context of language teaching. In the chosen books and articles, special attention is given to the references. They are thoroughly studied in order to find more potential sources that are again skimmed and scanned with the same purpose.

The fourth and the final step is to study the concept of ‘discourse analysis’ diachronically starting with its appearance in 1952 (Harris, 1952a) and up to the present moment. The ambition of the study is not only to find out what was said about discourse analysis at a certain point of time, but also to distinguish the features of discourse analysis that can be used in teaching EFL reading. To support the reasoning the research literature in the area of EFL/L2 reading is involved.

2. Critical literature review

There is a great deal of research literature that concerns discourse analysis in many aspects. Although this review by no means intends to provide a full coverage of the issue, it attempts to shed some light on the role that discourse analysis has played and is still playing in teaching EFL reading.

2.1 Origins of discourse analysis

The concept of ‘discourse analysis’ owes its origin to Zellig Harris (1952a). He was the first to introduce it to the scientific community in an influential article in the journal *Language*. Harris (ibid, p. 1) defines discourse analysis as “a method for the analysis of connected speech (or writing)” that, firstly, goes beyond the limits of a single sentence and, secondly, correlates culture (in a meaning of non-linguistic behaviour) and language. He argues that the method belongs to formal linguistics and does not take into account the semantics of the elements under analysis. Harris (ibid, p. 8) is primarily interested in so called ‘equivalence classes’ that
are elements occurring in the identical environments like “the middle of autumn” and “the end of October,” and how these patterns are distributed within a given text. The result of such discourse analysis is presented in the form of a double array, or succession of intervals, containing certain equivalence classes.

Although Harris in his article does not intend to address language teachers, his discourse analysis provides a number of perspectives in the language teaching context. First of all, it implies that language teachers should be aware of correlation between language and culture, and that teaching language cannot be done only within linguistics proper. Regrettably, the author does not give any guidelines on using discourse analysis for that very purpose. Harris mentions only the phrase ‘How are you?’ that is used as a greeting rather than a question about well-being. He points out that its function cannot be deciphered from its pure linguistic form, and “cultural knowledge” should be involved for the message to come across. But in the sample analysis (Harris, 1952b) there is no sign of such application of discourse analysis.

Second, Harris draws attention to the fact that texts consist of a number of sentences connected with the help of equivalence classes. This trait is similar to cohesive devices discussed later by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Thus, language teachers and learners are encouraged to pay attention to equivalence classes (i.e. cohesive aids) in the text, which is quite convenient while reading a text. But it is clear that doing discourse analysis in the way that Harris proposes can hardly be feasible in the language teaching classroom.

Third, it is proposed while doing discourse analysis to focus attention not only on the grammar of the text but also on the body of writing in which the text appears. Harris supposes that it can be possible to find a pattern characteristic of the given text which he calls a ‘dialect’ (cf. genre). Although Harris points out that every text is taken separately, he foresees that some specific patterns to be found in most of the texts written within the same ‘dialect.’ In teaching EFL reading the knowledge of the ‘dialect’ in which the text is encoded serves the need for faster and deeper comprehension and is an admission criterion to what Swales (1990) labels a ‘discourse community,’ i.e. a community that has particular expectations about how communication through discourse is presented.

Finally, Zellig Harris argues for an analysis that goes beyond the boundaries of a single sentence. In the language teaching context in general and in teaching EFL reading context in particular discourse analysis provides an impetus for shifting from grammar translation method to a new direction that is not yet (in 1952) to be clearly discovered in language teaching (cf. communicative approach) and for starting thinking to depart from bottom-up approaches to teaching EFL reading.
2.2 First draft on using discourse analysis in the reading class

Despite the fact that Harris possessed foreknowledge of many coming trends in language teaching, it took about twenty-five years for discourse analysis to be mentioned in the educational context. In 1976 Frank Hatt (pp. 56-57) touched on discourse analysis only at the level of name-dropping and pointed out that it is difficult to see how it could help to relate a text to its situational context. But two years later Amy Lezberg and Ann Hilferty (1978) published an article in TESOL Quarterly with the promising title “Discourse analysis in the Reading Class.”

The paper describes two applications of discourse analysis: pedagogy and class content; and its target group is intermediate and advanced ESL/EFL students (Lezberg & Hilferty, 1978, p. 47). Unlike Harris’s application of discourse analysis, it takes into account the situational context not only in theory but also in practice. Lezberg and Hilferty (1978) point out that the goals of learning English as a foreign language are twofold. In up-to-date terms these provide the lexicogrammatical base for academic success and enhancing students’ communicative competence. The goals seem to be broadly similar to those in the Swedish upper-secondary school (see SKOLFS, 2000), although the latter ones have a slightly stronger focus on oral rather than written interaction.

Amy Lezberg and Ann Hilferty (1978, p. 50) understand discourse analysis as inducing students to consider introducing and finishing-off the topic, unfolding of the topic, turn-taking, and domination/subordination of the participants in the given discourse. In contrast to Harris, they use a fiction text, namely Arthur Miller’s drama Death of a salesman. Lezberg and Hilferty believe that it serves best to achieve these ends as it indicates “the inner state of the speaker” and delineates the “relationship between the characters conversing” (ibid). But that is probably the weakest point in their application of discourse analysis as we are immediately confronted with the validity of the text. First, using an American drama to interpret the situational context of any other authentic text written in English appears doubtful as the field of culture, which is a constituent part of the context, can hardly be covered in one text. Second, even if so, the use of just one text, although truly representative, makes discourse analysis too dependent on the period of time when the play was written. In other words, it becomes inapplicable as soon as the situational context is changed.

Despite the drawbacks of the application of discourse analysis that can be done by the students mentioned above, Lezberg and Hilferty (1978, pp. 53-55) come up with some valuable recommendations to teachers on how to carry out practical work with reading as
discourse in the class. These consist of skimming and scanning tasks, before-reading activities, after-reading activities, and reading skill builders. Skimming tasks include skimming for summary and key words as well as skimming the whole book. Scanning tasks are aimed at the information about the context, the writing style, and cohesive aids. Brainstorming, generating questions about the text, word association activities, discussing and defining vocabulary, anticipation activities belong to before-reading activities. Among after-reading activities they differentiate summarising before discussion/comprehension, distinguishing between an author’s statement and opinions and readers’ opinions, paraphrasing, comprehension exercises, distinguishing between general topic and facts, noticing language features and forms, matching, discussing author’s intentions, possible bias and propaganda. As for reading skill builders, Lezberg and Hilferty discriminate between practicing phrase reading and doing timed reading exercises. Most of these recommendations are to be found implemented in the reading tasks in contemporary English course books (see e.g. Soars, 2000).

It is clear that Lezberg and Hilferty’s ambition in contemporary terms is to make students adopt specific strategies while reading a text that in their understanding constitute discourse analysis rather than developing reading skills with the exception of reading skill builders. The bottom line is, a strategy is an action selected deliberately to achieve particular goals, while a skill is a technique applied unconsciously (see discussion in Hudson, 2007, pp. 105-107). To sum up, Lezberg and Hilferty offer the action plan both for teachers and students that is aimed at applying discourse analysis in EFL reading. Teachers are encouraged to include tasks that are enumerated above and to develop strategies that are frequently used and consciously and intentionally selected by the students while reading a text.

2.3 Language in use

In 1983 Brown and Yule published *Discourse analysis*, that is one of the most cited works in the area of discourse analysis. They state that the “analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use” (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1). Regrettably, the book lacks any treatment of the possible application of discourse analysis, and that is the main reason why it is not examined closely in this degree project. However, the concept ‘language in use’ referring to discourse analysis is crucial in language teaching and provides a solid ground for process-oriented teaching.
One of the first longer works on discourse analysis fully devoted to language teaching is Guy Cook’s *Discourse* (1989). It was meant to provide important insights for language teachers and to explain how discourse analysis could be applied in various teaching situations. Cook (1989, p. ix) defines discourse analysis as examination of “how stretches of language, considered in their full textual, social, and psychological context, become meaningful and unified for their users.” The book does not explicitly treat applying discourse analysis in teaching EFL reading but outlined some significant trends. First of all, Cook (1989, p. 75) develops Harris’s idea of the ‘dialect’ and points out that language learners are ‘social outsiders’ because they can lack the social knowledge that is essential to making text into discourse. Thus, he emphasises that the formal approach to language alone (i.e. teaching facts inside the language) is not enough for learners to become members of a discourse community. By the same token understanding lexis and processing grammar while reading do not necessarily provide an adequate comprehension of the text.

Second, Cook (1989, p. 69) includes ‘knowledge schemata’ in the context that is defined as “mental representations of typical situations” that are used to predict the contents of the particular situation. In doing so he follows the Carrell and Eisterhold’s (1983) schema-theoretic view of reading, and what Catherine Wallace (2003) later calls ‘taken-for-grantedness.’ Identifying this taken-for-granted knowledge poses one of the most urgent problems to be addressed in teaching EFL reading.

Third, Guy Cook (1989, p. 81) argues that doing discourse analysis helps students adopt top-down approach in reading, which he assumes being natural for L1 speakers. It is supposed that an L2 student who is able to set a discourse in its textual and social context may postpone or neglect dealing with an unknown word if he/she gets the general idea of the text.

Through the whole book Cook provides 102 tasks that are intended for discourse-oriented approach in language teaching of which 23 are designed for teachers to evaluate classroom discourse. In that respect this work can be useful both for teachers and students to get a clearer picture of what discourse is. Cook (1989, p. ix) emphasises that the EFL classroom provides “discourse analysis with one of its best sources of observation and its most rigorous testing grounds for theory.” But the pitfall is that he does not explicitly state how these numerous tasks relate to discourse analysis leaving much space for speculation. In a nutshell, Cook argues that social and taken-for-granted knowledge are essential to enter a discourse community, and that top-down approach in reading should be adopted.
2.4 Language awareness

*Discourse analysis for language teachers* by Michael McCarthy (1991) and *Language as discourse: perspectives for language teachers* by McCarthy in association with Ronald Carter (1994) are examined together for two reasons: they have a similar approach to discourse-oriented language teaching and share one of the authors. These two works have at least three notable features in common in relation to the previous research in discourse analysis that is discussed in the degree project:

1) interactive approach in EFL reading;
2) intertextuality;
3) language awareness.

In contrast to Guy Cook (1989), McCarthy and Carter (1991, p. 168; 1994, p. 38) adopt an interactive approach in teaching EFL reading. They highlight the interdependence of higher-order operations of language (i.e. cultural and ideological meanings) and lower-order forms of language that contribute to patterning the meaning. In layman’s terms the reader cannot neglect the role of individual words or grammatical markers in comprehending a text. Thus, discourse analysts should be interested not only in the macro-level of a discourse but in the micro-level as well.

McCarthy and Carter (1991, p. 149; 1994, p. 115) point out that written discourse akin to spoken discourse are dependent on their immediate context. The concept of intertextuality is thus included in discourse analysis. In teaching EFL reading context, this means that both language teachers and learners are urged to pay attention to what other texts the reading text refers to as it may be crucial to its understanding.

Following a schema-theoretic view of reading McCarthy (1991, p.169) divide schemata required to understand the reading text into content schemata (i.e. background knowledge of the content area of a text) and formal schemata (i.e. background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical organisational structures). In *Language as discourse* McCarthy and Carter (1994, pp. 159-165) substitute content schemata by cultural frames that eventually become a parameter of language awareness, namely socio-cultural meaning. Formal schemata are also somehow transformed into two other parameters of language awareness: form and function\(^2\). To increase language awareness within the parameter of form the students are

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\(^2\) These transformations are not explicit in the text and may be regarded as too simplistic but they certainly reflect a trend in language teaching (see e.g. Wallace 2003).
encouraged to look at language as a system, while developing awareness within the parameter of function involves examining what language does in the given context.

The shift from a schemata-view to a language-awareness-view is an apt one in terms of practical language teaching and designing syllabus for the course in English. Language awareness being defined as “the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language” (Carter, 2003, p.64) is seen as an ability, while schemata, described as “the previously acquired knowledge structures” (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983, p. 556), are seen as factual information. To include the ability to be developed in the syllabus seems more appropriate than including “prior knowledge” to be learned, especially in the case of the English language being a native language in more than one country and consequently including different content schemata. Anyway, that is by no means intended to detract from the importance of schemata theory in language teaching but only to shed light on how it can be incorporated in the language classroom.

To sum up, McCarthy and Carter consider discourse analysis useful in the way that it can be incorporated in the interactive approach to EFL reading. They also draw attention to the fact that a text does not exist in a vacuum but naturally refers to other texts that are essential for its understanding. In addition, they promote raising teachers’ and students’ language awareness.

2.5 Metacognitive awareness

In *Discourse and context in language teaching: a guide for language teachers*, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 4) choose to deal with discourse analysis as “an umbrella term” for all studies that concern text and discourse. As it was mentioned in the introduction they stated that there are five areas of discourse analysis that are relevant to language teaching: cohesion, coherence, information structure, turn-taking, and critical discourse analysis. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 5) believe that discourse analysis studies have led to a transition from a grammar-oriented approach of language teaching to a discourse-oriented one, and, consequently to the goal of teaching language for communication.

Although Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 14) continue the tradition of schemata theory, they prefer to call content schemata “prior knowledge” and formal schemata “sociocultural and discourse knowledge.” Such labelling is, however, unclear as they do not explicitly define sociocultural knowledge that otherwise would naturally fall into content schemata.
One of the features that Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 124) add to discourse-oriented approach of teaching EFL reading is a metacognitive awareness that refines the interpretation process. Metacognitive awareness is meant to connect top-down and bottom-up processing and, can, thus, be seen as an essential part of the interactive nature of reading. But in contrast to McCarthy and Carter, they continue to include prior knowledge in a reading course instead of language awareness. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain’s (2000, p. 134) understanding of prior knowledge as “knowledge of the world” is even more vague than in the previously discussed works. It could be a good idea to teach students to use discourse analysis instead and to give them instruments to make them aware that something is lacking in their content schemata rather than to make them gain “knowledge of the world” in the language classroom that native speakers accumulate through their whole life.

### 2.6 Critical reading

In all probability, one of the most consistent applications of discourse analysis in teaching EFL reading is shown by Catherine Wallace (1992, 2003). Wallace argues for critical reading that is based on critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA), critical language awareness (henceforth CLA) and Hallidayan functional grammar. CDA is defined by Fairclough (1989, p. 1) as study of how language and power are related, as examination of “connections between language use and unequal relations of power.” CLA being a pedagogical application of CDA is understood as “an awareness of the role that language plays in conveying not just a propositional message but an ideological one” (Wallace, 1992, p. 69). Moreover, Wallace (2003, p. 42) introduces metacritical awareness to challenge your own stance to the text and to separate yourself from your own interpretations. It should be noted that she assumes that EFL readers are not only inferior to L1 readers but, on the contrary, have an advantage over them as they in many cases possess a metalanguage (i.e. the language to talk about language). Moreover, EFL readers are more sensitive to taken-for-granted knowledge than native speakers as they do not belong to the same “interpretative community,” in which the text has been written, (Wallace, 2003, p. 5; cf. discourse community) and do not activate schemata that otherwise reinforce L1 speakers’ taken-for-grantedness. This gives us legitimacy to think of using discourse analysis in upper-secondary school, although it is clear that the teacher should adjust it to the actual level of the learners.
The strongest point in Catherine Wallace’s works (1992, 2003) for language teachers is that she offers a clear methodology for teaching critical reading. She states that critical reading pursues the following goals (Wallace, 2003, p. 43):

- to facilitate reflection on the effect of language choice;
- to develop conceptual/critical abilities which means being able to move beyond the text to develop a cogent argument around it;
- to promote insights into cultural assumptions and practices, similarities and differences across national boundaries.

To achieve these goals Catherine Wallace (2003, pp. 101-102) proposes a set of principles to adhere to, which are “CDA antecedents.” They may be roughly divided into two groups: theoretical prerequisites and practical approach. Theoretical prerequisites include that all texts reflect a certain ideology as they arise out of relationships based on power; texts have their own history and relate to each other intertextually; interpretations of texts are negotiated within discourse communities as reading itself is a social process. As for the practical approach, students and teacher are encouraged to intervene in the text to pursue the truth (as a regulative ideal) in an open and equal dialogue (cf. Dysthe’s ‘multivoiced classroom,’ 1996). This approach is obviously adopted to face the critique of the balance of power in the classroom. Moreover, Wallace (2003, p. 42) argues for metacritical awareness that is defined as an ability to challenge your own interpretation and, consequently, to keep a distance to your own ideology.

In practice, language teachers may continue using the conventional procedure while working with EFL reading divided into three stages: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading; but they need to add a critical element to each of them. In the beginning the critical element can be limited to reflection on five basic issues (Wallace, 1992, p. 71): the topic of the text, the choice of the topic, the way the topic is being written about, alternative ways to cover the topic, and relation between the writer and the reader. The two latter serve to reveal taken-for-granted knowledge (cf. content schemata) and to emphasise the interactive nature of reading respectively. Then the teachers are encouraged to gradually introduce students to Hallidayan grammar and teach them to focus on the field (i.e. what is going on), the tenor (i.e. interpersonal relations) and the mode (i.e. text organisation) of discourse, with an emphasis on the effect of the writer’s choices. The whole framework for textual analysis in critical reading (Wallace, 2003, p. 39) is presented in figure 1.
It is obvious that the framework can hardly be used at upper-secondary school in its original form, but it certainly provides language teachers with new insights into working with EFL reading in the language classroom in order to achieve one of the goals set in the syllabus for English C, namely “reading critically” (Lundahl, 2009, p. 173). Thus, applying its parts or its simplified variant seems relevant in teaching EFL reading in upper-secondary school.

To sum up, Catherine Wallace proposes a practical application of discourse analysis in teaching EFL reading acknowledging the importance of language and metacognitive awareness. Moreover, she argues for CLA and metacritical awareness as the constitutive parts of critical reading. Wallace tends to diminish the role of the author’s communicative intent
and is primarily concerned with the effect it causes as she understands reading as a social process of negotiating the meaning in the discourse community. Language teachers are given the framework of teaching EFL critical reading that may be easily adjusted to the level and needs of students. In their turn, students develop their CLA and metacritical awareness while reading English texts, which they may utilise in the language classroom as well as outside the school. The only perceived downside of the approach is the possibility to simply substitute one ideological standpoint for the other. With no luck it may result in internalising a standpoint that is even further from the idea of social justice propagated by adherents of CDA.

The last work that is reviewed in the degree project is the article Teaching ‘with an attitude’: critical discourse analysis in EFL teaching written by Josep Cots (2006). Cots shows an application of CDA in teaching EFL reading on a certain text that is akin to Wallace’s critical reading but at the same time different as Cots prefers Norman Fairclough’s framework for textual analysis to Halliday’s. According to Cots, the work with the reading text should follow the conventional way but be complemented by CDA activities at three levels: social practice, discursive practice, and textual practice (Cots, 2006, pp. 339-340).

At the level of social practice language learners are encouraged to examine the representation of the world in the text, the influence of the writer’s ideology on the text, and the effect of the text on the readers. It is apparent that in this phase the focus is on what other researchers call the content schemata or taken-for-granted knowledge. To reveal taken-for-granted knowledge Cots suggests that the teacher makes up questions to students. The pitfall is that the teacher has, probably, too much freedom to choose what she/he assumes being important, and the students can only answer the questions that are asked. In this manner the lesson may, but not necessarily, become authoritarian.

At the level of discursive practice students study the communicative situation of the text: genre and its intertextual links; the structure of propositions and coherence. In this phase the attention is, consequently, drawn upon the formal schemata. Here students can rely on their own experience of English texts and be more independent from the teacher in their analysis.

At the level of textual practice EFL learners concentrate on the formal and semantic features of the text: connectors, modality, and vocabulary. This phase is very similar to what we usually call language focus but has an emphasis on the role of the individual linguistic features in creating the representation of the world.

In a nutshell, Cots proposes to teach students to use discourse analysis in order to prepare them to deal with the unexpected by examining it. Such examination is based on
sharp observational skills that allow students to pass judgement on the text and to make informed choices on its interpretation.

3. Results

Before I go further to the conclusion, it is relevant to remind us of the aim of the degree project and the research question that is employed to address it. As for the aim, it was to find out what opportunities discourse analysis offers in teaching EFL reading. The research question was:

- What areas of discourse analysis are relevant to teaching EFL reading at Swedish upper-secondary school and how have they changed over time?

The ambition was to show that discourse analysis has made a lot of contributions to the way we teach EFL reading nowadays. The originator of discourse analysis, Harris (1952a; 1952b), proposed that we should analyse the correlation between discourse and culture and do it with the help of discourse analysis. Although Harris did not provide us with any guidelines on how to do that, he managed to begin the discussion about the correlation between stretches of language longer than a sentence and culture. Harris also emphasised the role of discourse analysis in identifying cohesive aids in the text and the ‘dialect’ in which the text is written (cf. genre). As a result cohesive aids and genres became class content in teaching EFL reading that is still used by language teachers. But the most important achievement of discourse analysis proposed by Harris for teaching EFL reading was the shift from the sentence and its parts to longer language segments, which later made the top-down approach to EFL reading possible.

Lezberg and Hilferty’s approach (1978) to discourse analysis provided language teachers with the reading tasks that we are all familiar with, e.g. skimming for the main idea, anticipating. Instead of dealing with a non-fiction text they chose to deal with the specific literary text and immediately revealed methodological disadvantages in terms of validity. Lezberg and Hilferty supposed a bit naively that the single text would be able to expose the cultural heritage of American culture. However, most tasks offered by Lezberg and Hilferty are used nowadays to develop students’ strategies while reading a text, and that is, in all probability, one of the major contributions.
Guy Cook (1989) talked about language learners as social outsiders who lacked the experience of typical situations in L1 discourse community. Therefore, he emphasised the role of knowledge schemata for being a member of the discourse community. In his opinion, knowledge schemata should be class content and an essential component in teaching EFL reading, which language learners need to comprehend the reading text. Not surprisingly, Cook argued for adopting a top-down approach in EFL reading as he supposed that it is the natural way L1 speakers read a text. Guy cook also provided a great deal of tasks both for language teachers and learners to get a grip on what discourse is.

McCarthy and Carter (1991; 1994) did not agree with Cook on the naturalness of top-down processing and pointed out that both top-down and bottom-up processing happened simultaneously and served to pattern the meaning. In other words, they adopted the interactive approach in teaching EFL reading. Thus, language learners do not need to play the guessing game every time they are reading and are allowed to look up a word which meaning they cannot understand out of the context or are unsure of. Moreover, McCarthy and Carter included the study of intertextuality in EFL reading. Language teachers are, therefore, encouraged to teach students to pay attention that a text does not exist in a vacuum but naturally refers to other texts and to find these references in the text. But the most significant of McCarthy’s and Carter’s contribution was the substitution of the learning-prior-knowledge approach for the developing-language-awareness approach. Thus, language learners do not any longer need to acquire all prior knowledge. They should instead concentrate on learning to identify lacunae in their schemata, together with the teacher.

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) also argued for an interactive approach to EFL reading and saw metacognitive awareness as the interlink between bottom-up and top-down processing. Therefore, language teachers should teach students to monitor and control the use of strategies while reading.

Catherine Wallace (1992; 2003) was the first to propose a comprehensive guide on using critical discourse analysis in teaching EFL reading. Following the previous researchers she acknowledged the role of language and metacognitive awareness and also introduced metacritical awareness. Wallace emphasised that EFL readers are even advantaged in comparison to L1 readers as they do not have preconceived ideas of how to read a certain text and are more sensitive to taken-for-granted knowledge. Language teachers are given the adapted Hallidayan framework to work with in the reading class that can be adjusted to the actual level of the students. In their turn, language learners adopt a critical approach to the text that can be easily used outside the classroom and is useful for them to become fully-
fledged citizens, which is even one of the goals in the Swedish curriculum for the non-compulsory school system (*Lpf 94*).

Josep Cots (2006) demonstrated another way to use critical discourse analysis in teaching EFL. Instead of using a Hallidayan framework he took Fairclough’s framework where the teacher is given much more power as she/he is authorised to put questions that would reveal the ideological meaning of the text. The outcome of the method is meant to be akin to that of Wallace. Students take a critical stance on texts and are supposed to be able to make informed choices based on sharp observational skills while interpreting a text.

4. **Conclusion and pedagogical implications**

In the degree project I have traced the development of discourse analysis in the areas that are relevant to teaching EFL reading and have managed to prove that discourse analysis has played and is still playing a significant role in how we teach EFL reading. The focus has been on what we, language teachers, and our students can borrow from the linguistic study of text and discourse and make use of in the language classroom as well as outside it. I argue that discourse analysis has contributed to the paradigm shift in teaching EFL reading several times: from pure linguistic study of text to the study of language in use, from bottom-up via top-down to interactive approach, from prior knowledge-oriented approach to awareness-oriented approach. I also argue that discourse analysis has played a part in the shift, as Lundahl puts it (2009, pp. 98-104), from English being a purely proficiency-oriented subject to being a democracy-oriented subject.

The Swedish curriculum for the non-compulsory school system (*Lpf 94*, pp. 3-7) states that “pupils shall train themselves to think critically” and learn to show “solidarity with weak and vulnerable” as well as become autonomous and prepared for adult life members of society. To accomplish it the applications of critical discourse analysis proposed by Wallace (1992, 2003) and Cots (2006) have proved to be invaluable as CDA goals coincide exactly with the above-mentioned goals of the curriculum. Furthermore, the degree project has shown that discourse analysis is significantly wider than its CDA application. Discourse analysis can be used not only to demonstrate a commitment to social justice and critical reading but also to place texts in their social, cultural and intertextual contexts in order to become a more effective language user and an autonomous learner. To develop such a method that would incorporate both aspects is a promising area in teaching EFL reading and a natural continuation of this degree project.
At this point of the discourse analysis development, it is possible to understand it in language teaching in general and in teaching EFL reading in particular as “pedagogical implications” (Nunan, 1999). Such discourse-oriented approach to language education (Nunan, 1999; McCarthy, Matthiessen & Slade, 2002) implies teaching language as a set of choices showing how language is structured in different contexts of use. Thus, it enables language teachers and material designers to delineate genres that are essential and relevant to particular learners’ needs and to include them in class content and textbooks. It should be noted that a careful selection of genres for the textbooks is of crucial importance as 94 percent of the language teachers in Sweden reported that they used a textbook, and 80 percent of the learners reported that they often or very often used a textbook in the language classroom (Lundahl, 2009, p. 51). A discourse-oriented approach also encourages learners to develop language awareness exploring relationships between form, meaning and use, which enables language learners, inter alia, to grasp the underlying features of the text types. From a cognitive perspective, Grabe (2009) argues for building awareness of discourse structure by highlighting key words that signal text structure, identifying a paragraph’s function, finding patterns of discourse organisation in a text, etc. Finally, a discourse-oriented approach to language teaching allows teachers to evaluate classroom interaction (McCarthy, Matthiessen & Slade, 2002) in order to enhance it and achieve a better classroom task design. In conclusion, considering pedagogical implications of discourse analysis has become an essential part of language teachers’ duties, and nowadays language teaching is virtually impossible without adopting a discourse-oriented approach.
References


