EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL READING
EXPRESSED IN CHINESE STUDENTS' GROUP DISCUSSIONS OF TEXTS

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Cynthia Jean Macknish

Evidence of Critical Reading Expressed in Chinese Students' Group Discussions of Texts

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The purpose of this thesis is to gain insight into mainland Chinese students' metacognitive understandings and practice of critical reading (CR) in a pre-university second language (L2) reading course in Singapore. CR is interpreted as social practice that can involve a range of processes from analytical evaluations of texts to critiques of power relations and pursuit of social change. The assumption is made that CR engages students' critical stance which can be nurtured by teaching various tools that facilitate CR processes. As such, the impact of teacher intervention and other influencing factors were important considerations in this study.

Data collected from various sources revealed that the students' understandings of CR changed throughout the course to include a broader range of processes. This provided some insight which was enhanced when data from peer group discussions of texts showed what CR in this context looked like in practice.

The view is taken that interacting with texts and other people in a way that draws on various CR processes constitutes CR discourse (CRD). Transcripts were analysed to determine the nature and extent of CRD that students displayed in peer group discussions. Transcripts were also interrogated to explore factors that influenced those displays of CRD. Results indicate that, from the beginning of the course, these students displayed CRD, albeit often in small amounts and to variable degrees. This challenges notions of uncritical 'Chinese learners' (Atkinson, 1997; Wu, 2004).

Conditions for displaying more CRD were, however, never fully achieved. Various forms of scaffolding, text topic, and certain aspects of identity that emerged in interactions influenced displays of CRD, but inconsistencies indicate that these influencing factors interact in complex ways, at times enhancing, and other times restricting critical engagement. Awareness of these factors has implications for facilitating CR in L2 reading courses.

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List of Abbreviations

CDA   Critical Discourse Analysis
CL   Critical Literacy
CLA   Critical Language Awareness
CR   Critical Reading
CRD   Critical Reading Discourse
CT   Critical Thinking
EAP   English for Academic Purposes
ED   Empowering Discourse
DD   Descriptive Discourse
ICT   Information and Communication Technology
ID   Interpretive Discourse
IELTS International English Language Testing System
JD   Justificatory Discourse
KMT   Kuomintang
L1   First Language
L2   Second Language
LA   Language Awareness
MD   Metadiscourse
MOE   Ministry of Education
PRC   People's Republic of China
SCT   Sociocultural Theory
SFG   Systemic Functional Grammar
ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Synopsis

This study explores mainland Chinese students' understanding and practice of critical reading (CR) in a pre-university reading course in Singapore. Critical reading (CR) and CR discourse (CRD) will be used provisionally here and explored in detail in Chapter 3. This chapter focuses on the context of the study and its importance.

1.2 Catalyst for this Study

The catalyst for the research was a puzzling observation I and my colleagues had made that students in previous cohorts of the reading course did not appear to question what they read or challenge it in any way. In other words, they were not displaying any evidence of CR. By CR I am referring to social practice involving a range of processes from analytical evaluations of texts to a critique of power relations and pursuit of social change. The view is taken that interacting with texts and other people in a way that draws on CR processes represents CRD.

Polsky (2003), referring to a lack of criticality in students with English as a first language, implies that this is not the fault of the students but rather that:

> [Students] have often been educationally and culturally conditioned to grant authors too much authority, and for the most part they are quite aware of their position in the knowledge hierarchy (p. 427).

Whether an observed lack of criticality can be linked to educational or cultural conditioning or something else needs to be explored, but from my experience working with students at various age and academic levels - whether first or

second language (L1 or L2) learners - some students do seem to assume that they are positioned lower than authors and teachers (I use L2 to represent the use of another language, not to marginalise dialects or other languages). This assumption is perhaps perpetuated when top-down teaching methods are used and this may seem even more pronounced in traditional Confucian heritage cultures where there is sometimes a stereotype of traditional teacher-led lessons and passive learners (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Wu, 2004). Characterising 'the Chinese learner' has implications for my research which will be discussed further in relation to CR in Chapter 3.

In the cursory and compliant contributions made in class discussions about texts, it appeared that many of my previous students were conditioned to grant authors too much authority. I assumed, however, that all of them had the capacity to access their critical dispositions and were simply suppressing their CRD. I wanted to explore what conditions would prompt students to display evidence of CR, what it might look like in this context, and how guidance in CR processes might benefit them.

1.3 Background to this Research

While interpretations of CR have diversified over the years, educators and researchers suggest that CR is important and that teachers should be helping students to show more critical awareness (Goatly, 2000; Spears, 2003; Wallace, 2003; Linkon 2005). A complexity arises, however, in determining if CR can in fact be taught. This depends whether CR is considered to be a skill

or a disposition. In my view it is a disposition, but there are ways teachers can facilitate CRD. These will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Despite the support of educators, CR does not always seem to be given much attention, particularly in L2 reading courses. My own experience attests to this because, although CR was an objective in the academic reading comprehension course, it was not emphasised in the course curriculum. Possible reasons for this will be suggested in Chapter 3. What seems clear is that CR practice deserves more attention in L2 reading courses.

Because context is such an integral part of this study, I would like to introduce some background details about my position, the programme, the students, and the course.

1.4 Context of this Study

This study was conducted at a Singaporean university where I was teaching academic reading comprehension in an intensive pre-university English programme for scholars from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The goal of this programme was to help students develop greater general and academic language proficiency. Two terms, spread over eleven months, were separated by a one-week break plus fifteen weeks of immersion in a local junior college where it was expected students would interact with local students. The duration of the course and the number of contact hours (156) were dictated by the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) and, while the

university was generally free to develop the curricula and forms of assessment, all results were monitored by the MOE.

1.4.1 My Position

Like my students, I am a foreigner in Singapore, but unlike my students, English is my L1 and, being a Caucasian westerner, I have a very different set of social and cultural norms. This, and my role as teacher and representative of the institution, likely positioned me as 'expert' in the class and the students as 'others'. My views on teaching and learning also may have differed from my students'.

From my perspective as an educator, I view teaching as facilitating opportunities for effective learning which includes introducing knowledge and tools to help students develop skills; but importantly, it also means encouraging reflection and the emergence of curiosity, criticality, creativity, and motivation to learn. To do this, teachers need to create environments that provide students with a discursive space in which they can display their dispositions and engage in practice.

1.4.2 Profile of the Students

The eighteen-year-old students had completed two years of senior middle school (upper secondary school). While education in China is evolving, class sizes in middle schools are still quite high -generally forty to seventy students- and examinations are still the focus. Students were selected for this scholarship from different parts of China based on their senior middle school

results, their scores on science and English entrance tests, and on interview responses.

The scholarships, awarded by the Singapore MOE, provide tuition and all living expenses while the scholars complete this bridging programme in English and a concurrent one in science, plus four years of subsequent study for a science or engineering degree. The scholars are then bonded by the Singapore government for six years of employment during which they contribute to the Singapore economy by paying taxes and working in a field deemed important by the government.

Investing in these scholarships apparently benefits Singapore because it creates access to foreign talent and boosts the work force in areas of need - for the short term and potentially longer if the scholars decide to become permanent residents. It also aims to contribute to Singapore's efforts to develop stronger cultural and economic links with China.

Among the potential benefits for the scholars are: a 'free' education (free meaning no tuition is paid, though bonded employment must be served), international experience, and an opportunity to improve their language proficiency by living and working in an society where both English and Mandarin are widely used.

The students had had about five years of English study in China. Their L2 reading ability on entering the programme was assessed in a pre-course

reading test based on an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) sample test. Their scores ranged from what would be approximately equivalent to band 5 or 6 placing them at an intermediate reading level. While I cannot claim the class was homogeneous, the students did share certain characteristics. They were all Chinese and about the same age, they all planned to study for a university degree in engineering or science, and they claimed to have some similar values such as commitment to hard work, respect for education, and filial piety to name a few. They also all shared the common experience of being away from home and family to take up this scholarship.

I did not perceive these students to be economically oppressed because in Singapore their expenses were provided for and they had access to many resources and high-tech facilities. If academically successful, they would eventually be awarded with recognised university qualifications. Nevertheless, it is possible that they were marginalised in other ways. For example, although Mandarin or a Chinese dialect is spoken at home by forty-eight percent of the Singaporean population (Singapore Statistics, 2005), Mandarin is not the medium of instruction here, nor is it the lingua franca of the Internet - a common resource students used. In addition, both China and Singapore tolerate social, political and cultural domination by some groups which impose strict laws and social policies, including a strongly censored media and limited free speech. The power of the government and the educational institution is detectable in certain aspects by both students and faculty, for example, requiring the successful completion of this bridging programme, giving

importance to examination results, and providing limited options to students in terms of subject choices.

1.4.3 The Reading Course

The Academic Reading Comprehension course was "designed to help students develop the competence and confidence to effectively read and respond to texts of both a general and an academic nature" (CSP103 course description). Viewing reading as social practice was implied but not made explicit in the syllabus or assessment rubrics. Individual teachers followed a scheme of work based on set objectives and course textbooks, but methods of delivery were flexible and texts could be supplemented with other materials if desired. Classes met three times per week for two hours per class. Speaking, writing, and listening played important roles in this course through discussion, written assignments, and oral presentations; though clearly, developing reading skills and strategies was emphasised. The purpose of the core textbook was to help students learn and apply reading skills and strategies. The broad topics of the texts included anthropology, literature, economics, and ecology. Students worked on vocabulary and reading speed using separate designated textbooks. In addition, they were expected to select, read and respond to newspaper articles for a portfolio and to apply the skills they had learnt by presenting a reading project to their classmates.

Although the focus was primarily reading comprehension, one of the objectives of the twenty-six week course was for students to be "able to approach a text actively and critically" (CSP103 course description) and part

of the course document read, "after building up effectiveness and confidence with information retrieval, the texts and tasks move toward a focus on CR skills" (ibid). Curiously, no definition of 'CR skills' was provided, nor were any clear expectations, tasks or assessment tools given. When I consulted the course coordinator about his interpretation of CR, he defined it as:

> …analysing a text for the author's position and comparing that to your own position as supported by the text and by your own experience. This requires awareness of the author's assumptions, bias, use of quotations, use of language, and so on (M. Wilkinson, personal correspondence, November 17, 2004)**.**

He admitted that the set text for the course was inadequate in this area and suggested supplementing it with various materials of my own that would be suitable for my and my students' needs, so that is what I did.

I felt students would be more successful in their future studies if they showed evidence of CR because criticality is purportedly valued by the academic community. I say purportedly because in Singapore there is still sometimes a strong emphasis on prescribed responses and examination-based teaching, so support for CR may sometimes be disingenuous.

Nevertheless, pedagogically, I believe that encouraging CR will help students be more active, discerning readers, more aware of hidden ideologies and naturalised assumptions that can perpetuate inequalities. Moreover, CR can help students to reflect on their own values and beliefs, articulate opinions with convincing rationale, make informed decisions, and show that they are inquisitive, interested, and socially responsible adults.

It should be noted that, while improving language proficiency was an expectation throughout this course, it is not the focus of this research.

1.5 Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions

Having observed a lack of CRD displayed in whole class discussions, I was curious about what students were doing in peer group discussions. Berrill (1991) points out, "instead of trying to find reasons why our students are not doing what we expect, we might ask ourselves what they are doing in their discussions" (p.143). With this in mind, I wanted to know what my students were doing in their group discussions of texts. To investigate this, I needed to know what metacognitive understandings the students had regarding CR. I also wanted to know what experience they had had with CR in China and whether or not they saw value in CR. As a teacher researcher, my pedagogical goal was to encourage students to display CRD, for example, engage with texts in complex ways by interrogating and problematising the authors' construction of the text as they reflect on their own belief system, work to expand and support their own opinions and recognise that they could be empowered to uncover ideologies and contest naturalised assumptions.

My research aim was to gain insight into the emergence of CRD in peer group discussions, specifically, to explore what CRD would look like and the circumstances under which students would display it.

To accomplish this aim, a number of objectives would have to be met. Students would need opportunities to express their interpretations of CR and

they would need opportunities to display CRD. In order to recognise CRD, an understanding of CR would need to be explored and criteria to identify it would need to be devised. From this, evidence of CR could be identified and examined in order to find out how critically the students were engaging with texts. Finally, evidence of CRD over the duration of the course would need to be studied to determine if there were any apparent factors influencing the emergence of CRD.

The aim and objectives formed the bases for the following research questions:

1. What are the students' metacognitive understandings of critical reading and do they change over the course of the reading programme?

2. What is the extent and nature of CRD that emerges in group discussions of texts over time?

3. What factors affect the emergence of CRD in the group discussions?

1.6 Significance of this Research

This research considers the complexity of defining CR and recognises the importance of acknowledging a range of processes in the understanding and practice of CR. Viewing CR as a disposition that all readers have capacity for developing raises issues of how it can be facilitated and problematises assumptions about non-critical Chinese students.

The purpose is not to generalise or suggest a model of CR practice or a theory of CR pedagogy, but rather to gain insight and understanding of my students' engagement in CR practice.

Understanding how the students make sense of CR in this context could reveal any gaps in teacher and student understandings and expectations which could provide deeper educational rationale for facilitating CR in an L2 reading comprehension course. This in turn could prompt further reflection, stimulate ideas, and lead to considerations for course changes or improvements if deemed necessary. Besides myself, those involved in the reflection and discussion include the students, the course coordinator, and other teachers who may be interested in facilitating CR in their classrooms.

The study is important because it contributes to the literature on how CR might be recognised as well as the factors that might affect its emergence. These influencing factors could have implications for facilitating CR in an L2 reading course.

1.7 Challenges

There were a number of challenges to confront in doing this research. Firstly, the course I was teaching was primarily a reading comprehension course wherein the main areas of focus were vocabulary and reading comprehension skills and strategies; hence, CR seemed to be an optional extra. As such, time, resources, materials, and assessment were limited or non-existent. Logistically there were challenges in balancing the institutional requirements and allocating opportunities for CR practice and collecting data.

As indicated, defining CR amongst multiple interpretations is complex and further complicated by my desire to validate the students' changing

understandings of it. This would impact on how I facilitated CRD and how it would be recognised in the discussion data. These challenges and attempts to overcome them are further expanded on throughout this thesis.

1.8 Overview of this Thesis

This introduction began with the puzzling observation of a seeming lack of evidence of CR in Chinese students' interactions with texts. This prompted the current study. Some important contextual information was provided before the aims and objectives of the study were introduced. Finally, the importance of the research was outlined and challenges presented.

Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework of the research, specifically, how sociocultural theory and social constructivism inform the study. Focus is placed on the importance of social interaction and how dialogue mediates co-construction of knowledge. A discussion of 'teaching' and 'learning' as 'facilitating' and 'making connections' is presented with emphasis on facilitating scaffolding.

CR is the focus of this study and will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3. The complex nature of CR will be discussed with a review of its influences over the years, particularly critical literacy (CL). CR is presented as social practice constituting a range of processes. Related concepts of discourse and CRD are defined and relevant research studies on CR are explored.

Chapter 4 explains the design and rationale of this study. Included is a description of how the peer group discussion data were collected and supplemented with other data collection tools. Subsequently this chapter describes how evidence of CR was identified and categorised using a framework that merges varieties of discourse (Zeichner & Liston, 1985) with the four dimensions of critical literacy (Lewison, Seely Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). Wider contextual influences on the emergence of CRD were analysed using discourse analysis tools from Gee (2005).

The findings and discussion chapter addresses the three research questions. Firstly, data from interviews, email questionnaires, and focus group discussions are highlighted to describe students' metacoginitive understandings of CR. This constructs an overview of the students' perspective on CR over time. The next section focuses on the nature and extent of CRD that emerged in group discussions. Specific examples are highlighted and various features of CRD are characterised according to the varieties of discourse and four dimensions of CL. This provides a picture of what CRD looked like in this context. Subsequently, factors affecting the display of CRD are explored.

In the final chapter, conclusions are made regarding pedagogical and research implications of facilitating CRD in peer group discussions. In addition, the notion of the 'Chinese learner' in L2 reading classes is reviewed in terms of the results of this study.

Before defining CR, a significant issue in this research, the next chapter

outlines the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

As a teacher, I view learning through the lens of an educator and subscribe, not to a cognitive model whereby learning is a decontextualised mental process, but rather to a model in which learning depends on the social context from which meaning is constructed. Consequently, the theoretical foundation for this study is that learning is a social activity.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how research in sociocultural theory (SCT) and social constructivism informed this study. Reference to critical reading (CR) is interwoven throughout a discussion of teaching and learning within a sociocultural perspective. Critical literacy (CL) and CR discourse (CRD) will be used provisionally here and explored in detail in Chapter 3. Relevant concepts of mediation and internalisation and externalisation are considered and illustrated through the work of Wells (2000) which, though not specific to CR, displays some conceptual parallels, specifically in terms of cultivating a disposition. The importance of social interaction is discussed with emphasis on scaffolding in group discussions. The relationship of identity and agency and CRD is also considered. The chapter ends with a description of challenges that the current research will address, specifically in facilitating scaffolding.

2.2 Relevance of a Sociocultural Approach in CR Research

Bruner (1986) explains that, "For Vygotsky, language was an agent for altering the powers of thought –giving thought new means for explicating the world. In turn, language became the repository for new thoughts once

achieved" (p.143). As such, in sociocultural theory (SCT), social interaction

and artifact-mediated activities are significant in the development of higher

mental functions. Artifact-mediated activity refers to humans' use of physical

and symbolic tools like language to mediate (control and organise) mental

activity and thus develop cognitively (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.62). The focus

on thinking and language has meant that SCT perspectives have influenced

much research in psychology (Wertsch, 1985; Bruner, 1986; Lave & Wenger,

1991), applied linguistics (Donato, 1994; Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Ohta, 2000;

Lantolf, 2000; Swain, 2000; Platt & Brooks, 2002; Lantolf & Thorne 2006), and

literacy (Janks, 2000; Gee, 2001; Rogers, 2002).

CL (and by extension CR) also draws on a SCT of language in the sense that:

> Critical literacy learning is a socioculturally situated set of processes
> drawing on theories of learning that emphasize (a) that learning is
> mediated by language, (b) that learning cannot be separated from its
> context, (c) that learning occurs first on the social plane and then is
> internalized, and (d) that learning involves more knowledgeable others,
> such as peers and adults (Rogers, 2002, p.774).

Rogers' characterisation of CL is in accord with Street's (1984) ideological

model in which literacy is viewed as culturally mediated and as situated social

and cultural practice. In other words, texts, readers, and reading are not

viewed as autonomous entities whereby readers passively absorb

information; but rather they socially interact with textual features to make

sense of the text. Literacy and CL are social practices that depend on

contexts and the relationship between the reader and text.

Rogers' (2002) comment about internalisation refers to the complex process

that transforms externally (socioculturally) mediated processes into internal

processes or higher mental activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.153).

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of internalisation leading to cognitive development has been disputed by critics who assert claims of a Cartesian duality of mind and body (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or claim that internalisation is a one-way transfer (Matusov, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) addresses this by emphasising that biological and sociocultural factors must unite through regular interaction between the individual and social group. Ellis and Barkhuisen (2005) add that the 'shift' from external to internal is not just a simple transfer of knowledge, but an internal transformation over time (p.232). Nevertheless, some researchers prefer the term 'appropriation' which suggests more active processes (Rogoff, 1995; Wertsch, 1998). In their view, internalisation makes the individual a passive recipient of cultural knowledge whereas appropriation could be accepted or resisted as determined by human agency. Agency refers to "the mediated capacity to act" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.234) or make choices. Agency is mediated by a variety of factors which will be discussed further in section 2.9.

Extensions of Vygotsky's concept of internalisation demonstrate a reciprocal externalisation process in which psychological functions are converted into cultural practices so both the individual and others can be impacted (John-Steiner & Meehan, 2000). Evidence of externalisation would occur when collaboratively constructed understandings would be demonstrated by other novices after interacting with the individual who first internalised the knowledge. In other words, other group members would benefit through social interaction (Donato, 1994).

Related to this, Rogers' (2002) point that 'learning involves more knowledgeable others' refers to Vygotsky's (1978) view of conceptual learning as a collaborative enterprise (p.90), characterised by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) as scaffolding. Scaffolding, as it applies to classroom learning, means temporary guidance, support, or collaboration between teachers and students, as well as between more competent and less competent peers. It is temporary because the goal of scaffolding is for the 'expert' to engage in challenging activities with the 'novices' to help them move toward new levels of understanding until they master the concept or take independent responsibility for the task. Donato (1994) asserts that learners can simultaneously be individual novices and collectively experts as they provide new perspectives that help one another achieve understanding, though this may not be deliberate. To circumvent the argument that 'scaffolding' between 'experts' and 'novices' tends to be uni-directional, Swain (2000) prefers the term 'collaborative dialogue' which she characterises as knowledge-constructing dialogue (p.97). This term would not, however, account for other kinds of scaffolding.

Wallace (2003), for example, considers scaffolding to include the use of texts as cultural artifacts that support learning; and, in a study of socialisation experiences of three Japanese students in an ESL programme at a Canadian university, Kobayashi (2003) found that L1 was a scaffold for group preparations for an L2 class presentation. Various forms of scaffolding, therefore, can mediate learning.

One other point about SCT and CL research is relevant. Readers' identities are derived from their changing life experiences and these provide accessible resources when reading. Some forms of CL research emphasise socialisation and the discursive construction of identities which encompass a related but broader perspective of the sociocultural domain (Norton, 2000; Ryan & Anstey, 2003; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Gee, 2005). My research draws on the SCT perspective in the sense that CR is a socioculturally situated activity, mediated by language and various forms of scaffolding; but my research also recognises this broader perspective that considers the construction of identity as an important factor in social interactions.

These concepts of social interaction, internalisation, scaffolding, and artifact-mediated activity will be revisited in terms of collaborative inquiry in section 2.6.

2.3 Social Constructivism and Perspectives on Teaching and Learning

Like SCT, social constructivism draws on Vygotsky's (1978) work and is a growing influence in education (Wells, 2000). It has various versions, but common to all is the notion that knowledge is constructed in a social context and learners refine their own ideas and help shape the ideas of others through interaction (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997).

Unlike cognitive views of learning with individual, mental views of knowledge construction, social constructivism acknowledges the contributions of others in

learning. This is not to say that cognition and metacognition are not important,

but they cannot be divorced from the social context as Biggs (1996) explains:

> …learners arrive at meaning by actively selecting, and cumulatively
> constructing, their own knowledge, through both individual and social
> activity. The learner brings an accumulation of assumptions, motives,
> intentions, and previous knowledge that envelopes every
> teaching/learning situation and determines the course and quality of
> the learning that may take place (p.348).

Biggs' reference to the learners' accumulation of assumptions, motives,

intentions and previous knowledge is in line with Cope and Kalantzis' (2000)

view that "learning is a matter of repertoire; starting with a recognition of

lifeworld experience and using that experience as a basis for extending what

one knows and what one can do" (p.124). Lifeworld, based on Husserl (1936)

and linked to Bourdieu's (1977) habitus refers to subjectively lived experience.

This view clearly reflects Vygotsky's (1978) claim that learners are not passive

recipients of knowledge, but actively connect it with previously assimilated

knowledge to construct their own meaning and understanding. It is making the

connections between their current social practices and their lifeworlds and

from that constructing new meaning that constitutes learning because making

connections reflects realisations and new awareness. This raises the question

of how teachers can help students make connections and internalise new

knowledge because conventional teaching in terms of transmission of existing

knowledge and traditional values from teacher to students does not always

allow room for students to construct new knowledge.

Biggs (1996) implicitly addresses this question saying that higher level

objectives have a greater probability of being achieved when teachers use a

range of teaching and learning activities that involve the teacher, peers, and

the individual student (as appropriate), than if only one teaching method, such as lecturing, is used (p356). As such, there may be a place for transmission of knowledge and tools and giving guidance in applying the tools (developing skills); but teaching should also encompass the provision of opportunities for students to activate, develop, and display dispositions like creativity, reflection, criticality, curiosity, and motivation to learn. In certain conditions (facilitated by the teacher or not), if learners see value in an activity, they can access these resources to make connections between their lifeworlds and current learning processes and practices. With this in mind, teaching means introducing students to various tools and facilitating their application by providing opportunities for the display of dispositions and conditions (such as offering a purpose) for students to make connections. Learning means adjusting values, recognising connections, making realisations, showing awareness, and creating meaning.

In terms of CR, students, alone or facilitated by others, would interrogate the text and use text analysis tools to highlight textual features that might prompt them to make connections with their lifeworlds and lead to knowledge construction. Whether or not this knowledge would be internalised would depend on contextual factors and the sense of agency invoked.

Wells (2000), whose work has built on SCT and social constructivism, acknowledges changes in thinking about teaching and learning, but cautions that many teaching practices today are constrained by external forces like demands for high scores and lack of support by stakeholders and teachers

themselves who see these changes as a passing trend. Wells refers to L1 contexts, but his point could equally refer to L2 learning contexts. He describes how educational institutions "often impede rather than facilitate learning by mistakenly conceptualizing and evaluating learning as the product, or outcome, of instruction" (p.59). He claims our educational practices are no longer appropriate for the complex, changing world of today because they tend to reward students who conform to expectations.

From a different perspective, Canagarajah (1999) makes a similar point commenting that "students are conditioned mentally and behaviorally by the practices of schooling to serve the dominant social institutions" (p.22). These notions of 'conforming to expectations' and 'conditioned students' support the assertion by Polsky (2003) presented in Chapter 1 and confirm that certain traditional educational practices and teaching methods are not sufficient for developing critically literate individuals. Therefore, a more student-oriented approach to teaching and learning is required.

2.4 Peer Group Discussion as an Alternative to Transmission Models
Group discussions represent a student-oriented alternative to traditional transmission models. Discussions are dialogic so the active exchange of ideas between participants is significant for the construction of personal meanings in response to new information or experiences, as well as the joint construction of knowledge as a result of sharing and discussing different interpretations. This clearly aligns with social constructivism and explains Ellis'

(2000) claim that "learning arises, not *through* interaction but *in* interaction"

(p.209). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) support this:

> …the relationship of learning to development hinges on dialogic
> mediation, on the ways in which socialization processes involving the
> inculcation of concepts through practical-critical activity, mediated by
> direct adult and/or peer intervention, provide opportunities for the
> construction of psychological tools through which developing
> individuals are able to increasingly participate in and engage in
> culturally organized activity (p.288).

Research has revealed many positive results of using group discussion in L1

and L2 classrooms at different levels and subject areas which supports a

sociocultural view of intellectual development (Mercer, 2000; Gambrell &

Almasi, 1996; Tinto, 1997; Swain, 2000; Edwards, 2005; Goodyear & Zenios,

2007). In higher education, Biggs (1999) identifies several benefits of peer

learning activities including the sharing and expansion of knowledge, the

development of skills in comparison and critical evaluation, increasing

awareness of cognitive processes needed to form opinions, opportunities for

more active communication and motivation to develop social bonds. Literature

on group discussion with learners from China, however, has shown mixed

results.

2.5 Group Discussions and Learners from China

Several concerns have been raised regarding group discussions and 'the

Chinese learner'. For example, Jin and Cortazzi (2006) suggest that Chinese

learners may have difficulty speaking in group discussions without preparation

time. Li (2005) and Ni (2007) reason that Chinese students are reluctant to

participate in discussions for fear of losing face if their opinions are not 'right'.

For the same reason, Wu (2004) claims that Chinese students tend to be

over-anxious in discussions with the presence of the teacher. Jin and Cortazzi (2006) and Hu (2003) attribute a lack of participation in group discussion to teacher-dominated teaching methods in China, positing that many Chinese students believe they learn from teachers rather than peers. Another perception put forward by Cheng (2000) is that Chinese students believe reading courses should focus on vocabulary, grammar, reading strategies, and increasing reading speed -none of which they believe requires group discussion.

While some of these observations may apply for some students, claims about the notion of 'the Chinese learner' have been challenged, as stereotyping such a large population as one homogeneous group is problematic (Cheng, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Clark & Gieve, 2006; Coverdale Jones, 2006). Less traditional teaching methods are now being used in China (Yu, 1999; Watkins & Biggs, 2001; Hu, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006) and the size and diversity of the country and its people make it impossible to support generalisations. Moreover, Clark and Gieve (2006), building on McKay and Wong (1996), emphasise that the notion of 'Chinese learner' does not account for the multiple identities that learners construct and reconstruct in different learning situations.

In response to claims that Chinese students are not used to group discussions, Jin and Cortazzi (2006) make the argument that students from China can adapt to new learning methods. This is supported by Wong (2004), an academic raised in a traditional Chinese family, who presents himself as

proof that Chinese students can be flexible in their learning styles. I would add that no matter what their background experiences and expectations, all students would benefit from exposure to a variety of learning methods so that they can make informed decisions about what methods work best for them.

Sengupta (2002) found that Hong Kong students were keen to participate in discussions which she attributes to increased freedom at university after strict control experienced in secondary school. Similarly, Kennedy (2002) claims that adult Chinese learners in Hong Kong were receptive to different modes of learning, but he warns that successful implementation of new approaches depends on various factors, "such as language proficiency, the assessment system, and teachers' expectations" (p.442). In a Singaporean example, Meyer (2003) found that 53% of pre-university students and 81% of graduate students from PRC had a preference for group discussion over individual work. These findings confirm that students from China have varied beliefs and preferences, but more than half seem open to group discussion. A realistic view is adopted by Chen and Hird (2006) who refer to the complexities of the group process with Chinese learners. Though fairly positive regarding the benefits of group discussion, they warn against generalising group behaviour, and remind us about individual differences and the situatedness of learning. In my view, this applies to any learners regardless of nationality or ethnicity. In Chapter 3, Chinese learners will be discussed in terms of critical dispositions.

2.6 Cultivating Dispositions through Collaborative Inquiry

Despite the benefits of group discussion with L1 or L2 learners, simply

engaging in talk in group discussions does not guarantee that students are

effectively making connections or learning. One way to increase the

probability that learning will occur in group discussions is to encourage

collaborative inquiry. Wells (2000) proposes that:

> …provision needs to be made for young people today to develop the understanding and dispositions that enable them to participate fully and democratically as informed, critical, and responsible members of the many overlapping communities and interest groups that constitute contemporary society. (p.60)

By collaborative inquiry, Wells means, not just responding to a quest for

information, but also promoting a sense of curiosity with a motivation to

engage in the process of exploring explanations and constructing

understanding together in shared activity with other people. Whether it is

possible for teachers to facilitate the development of dispositions remains to

be seen, but, in attempting to address this, Wells points out that:

> [Inquiry] is a stance that pervades all aspects of the life of a classroom community that is based on the social constructivist belief that understanding is constructed in the process of people working together to solve the problems that arise in the course of shared activity (p.66).

Wells' emphasis on the importance of inquiry reflects Dewey's (1938)

assertion that inquiry starts with involving learners through familiar experience

which provides purpose and motivation for further inquiry and ultimate

understanding which results in transformation. I subscribe to Cope and

Kalantzis' (2000) view of transformation which involves a broadening of

horizons or repertoires rather than a vertical progression in which past

experiences are left behind (p.124). In this sense, transformation would refer

to the raising of awareness or the nurturing of a disposition. Wells (2000) goes

further and promotes transformation in terms of improving the contribution of education and the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. He admits the ambitiousness of this in light of the difficulty in changing mindsets, particularly of conservative policy-makers, yet he remains optimistic (p.81).

Wells (2000) provides clear rationale and counters accusations of Western bias by claiming that the values of dialogue, inquiry, and community are universal, and he is careful to propose an approach rather than prescribe a method (p.62). He commendably advocates a focus on processes rather than skills, collaboration and inquiry leading to understanding, and the importance of meaningful activities and diverse solutions. He recognises the situatedness of activities and the formation of identity that emerges from participation. He believes shared goals and outcomes between the individual and group should be sought but also allowed to emerge, and stresses that the goal is not learning but rather finding answers to puzzling questions. He clarifies that the questions need not be clearly formulated at the start, but may arise through an exploration of the topic.

Regarding internalisation Wells talks about responsivity: the building up of meaning collaboratively through successive turns (p.72). He explains that in the process of formulating a contribution speakers must interpret previous utterances in terms of content and ideology and then evaluate through comparison to their own understanding and connection with their background knowledge and experience with the issue before finally producing a coherent and relevant response. It is through this complex process that Wells asserts

internalisation takes place and in the production of the response that externalisation can occur (p.74).

Vygotsky (1978) claims that the way to achieve internalisation is through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the cognitive area between what a learner can do on his/her own and what he/she can do with the support of an adult or more capable peer (p.86). Wells (2000) argues that "participants with relatively little expertise can learn with and from each other" (p.57). Even groups that seem homogenous are made of individuals who possess different background experiences and knowledge resources which can be applied differently depending on the context of the activity. As such, different students can act as experts in different activities and at different points within an activity. Wells also points out that it is not always the 'more capable peer' in the group who is the most helpful, and sometimes there is no 'expert' at all. This would certainly reflect the complexity of group dynamics.

Despite his emphasis on collaborative interaction for learning, Wells does not neglect the dialogic function of texts. This is particularly important for CR which focuses on the relationship between the reader and text. Wells blames assignments requiring accurate reproduction of information from texts without any constructive or critical engagement for giving students' the perception that texts are tools for knowledge transfer rather than knowledge transformation. Instead, he asserts that texts be seen as "objects to be interrogated and improved through dialogic knowledge building, thereby enabling participants to increase their individual and well as their collective understanding" (p.81).

Teachers therefore need to help students appropriate texts as cultural tools for knowledge building.

The significance of Wells' work on the current study is that cultivating an inquiring disposition parallels aims of CR in terms of fostering a critical stance. In contrast, however, the goal of CR is not to solve problems but rather to promblematise texts. Nevertheless, some relevant concepts apply when facilitating both collaborative inquiry and CR practice.

Building on Vygotsky's concepts of artifact-mediated activity and social interaction, Wells advocates both collaborative inquiry through group discussion and dialogic knowledge-building through interrogation of texts to promote the development of understanding and dispositions. What he does not fully explore is how to facilitate effective peer scaffolding. Perhaps he assumes that scaffolding just happens or grows out of mutual trust, but this needs further exploration.

2.7 Facilitating Peer Scaffolding

Much of the research into scaffolding, particularly regarding literacy, has focused on the primary level (Gibbons, 2002; Maloch, 2002; O'Brien, 2001). Various factors have been found to contribute to effective scaffolding with children, such as levels of formality, type of text (conventional or multimodal), and the relationship of interlocutors (peers or adult-students) (Cumming-Povin, 2007, p.490).

At the secondary level, Love (2002) found that explicit teacher modelling affected peer scaffolding of L1 students' online discussions of texts. In a higher education study of L2 MA students in Sweden, Jansson (2006) also found that tutor modelling prior to peer scaffolding was crucial. It enabled students in collaborative writing groups to paraphrase the tutor's discourse and use meta-knowledge as a tool for learning academic literacies, but Jansson claims that it was not enough and recommends more opportunities for meaning-making with a tutor or other expert. Jansson found that groups with students who knew each other well engaged in more peer scaffolding suggesting that mutual trust is a necessary element of effective peer scaffolding. Jansson noticed the use of L1 but did not explore this as scaffolding.

A different higher education study focused on scaffolding reflections of pre- and in-service teachers in an L1 literacy education course in USA. Bean and Patel Stevens (2002) found that participants benefitted from scaffolding in the form of explicit modelling and prompting by the instructor. As suggested, participants expressed their personal beliefs and referred to assigned readings in their responses, but consequently, they depended on these aspects and rarely challenged wider discourses of teaching, learning, and students. Moreover, the authors claim that the pre-service teachers' lack of reference to schools or wider institutions suggests that "none of them had internalized these settings in exploring implications of what they were learning" (212). They recommended greater scaffolding to encompass broader layers of discourse.

Dillenbourg, Baker, Blaye, and O'Malley (1996) characterise completion of an interlocutor's utterances as "an indicator *par excellence* of collaboration in verbal interactions" (p.20, *their emphasis*). Whether or not the completion offered is the one intended by the original speaker is likely not important because the process of negotiating of meaning undoubtedly signifies collaboration through reflection and engagement with the issue at hand. While I agree that recognising completion of utterances may indicate that scaffolding is taking place, it does not necessarily indicate that learning or internalisation is taking place.

The general view is that scaffolding is useful for learning, but whether it benefits CR specifically needs to be investigated. Aspects to consider include teacher modelling, selection of activity, use of mediating tools, and the learning environment. The type of talk students engage in may also facilitate peer scaffolding.

2.8 Exploratory Talk to Facilitate Peer Scaffolding

Mercer (2000) draws on social constructivism to investigate types of talk in group discussions. He claims that the type of talk most conducive to learning is exploratory talk whereby:

> …partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas. Statements and suggestions are sought and offered for joint consideration. These may be challenged and counter-challenged, but challenges are justified and alternative hypotheses are offered. In exploratory talk, knowledge is made publicly accountable and reasoning is visible in the talk. (p.98)

Mercer contrasts this with disputational talk and cumulative talk. Disputational talk refers to disagreements that do not develop ideas as interlocutors refuse

to take on the other's point of view and instead work to keep their identities separate to protect their individuality. Mercer claims disputational talk is not conducive to learning, though how he proves this is not clear. Cumulative talk occurs when interlocutors build on one another's contributions in a mutually supportive but unquestioning way to construct shared understanding and knowledge. Because of the lack of critical reflection in cumulative talk, Mercer favours collaborative, exploratory talk which has greater potential for learning since participants question, hypothesise, challenge, explain and justify, which are processes that lead to increased knowledge construction and learning. As such, exploratory talk may facilitate peer scaffolding.

In her work in CR, Wallace (2003) contrasts exploratory questions with substantive or content questions. She claims that exploratory questions are reciprocal and may be answered with further questions which "problematise - that is, pose problems rather than attempt to solve them - and acknowledge uncertainty, dilemmas and contradictions" (p.86). She views this positively because it encourages debate rather than closes it. Moreover, using exploratory questions enables participants to express their own thoughts and ideas, but also adjust and qualify them as they reflect on others' ideas throughout the interaction. This, Wallace claims, suggests greater equity.

These characterisations of exploratory talk and exploratory questions suggest greater potential for critical engagement. While not necessarily indicative of CRD, exploratory talk and exploratory questions constructed through peer scaffolding may help facilitate displays of CRD.

2.9 Identity and Agency as Challenges to Peer Scaffolding

With peer scaffolding, the responsibility for learning moves from the teacher to the student and the students themselves may not like this idea or know what their roles are. To this end students may not see any value in interacting with peers, especially if constructed identities comprise a sense of competition, distrust of peers, or apathy about their own or their group mates' learning. How individuals react in groups reflects their agency, that is, their capacity to make choices and act. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) claim that "As agents, learners actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning" (p.145). They recognise that agency is dynamic and may transform with engagement in ongoing activity. Examples of agency show how learners have interpreted and transformed the learning task (Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Breen, 1987); expressed their identities (Norton, 2000; Morita, 2004); and drawn on cultural resources like L1 (Kobayashi, 2003). Lantolf (2000) explains that enacting agency enables learners to transform their world (p.46). Complexity arises, however, because learners do not always act in the way that teachers want or expect them to. Moreover, agency and identity may be unpredictably shaped by situational factors and interaction of individuals' personal histories, identity, needs, motives, values, assumptions, beliefs, and obligations (Donato, 2000).

Roebuck (2000) notes that researchers working from a sociocultural perspective "challenge the assumption that individuals and their activity can be controlled" (p.79) and, as such, stresses that the researcher's goal is to discover the learner's activity rather than predict it. In view of this, Lantolf and

Thorne (2006) see agency as both enabled by cultural and historical factors and constrained by situational factors, social groupings, the individual and group capabilities, physical and symbolic artifacts. In group discussions, therefore, agency can result in conflict and resistance, as well as cooperation and collaboration.

A significant point that Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) emphasise is that agency is not only unique to individuals, but also co-constructed and renegotiated within the group. For example, Zuengler and Miller (2006) assert that if a student's identity or lack of motive deters him/her from participating in an activity or group, he/she will not be active in it. Similarly, if the group rejects an individual's attempts to participate, he/she may be marginalised. As such, they regard "learning as participation, as relational and interactive, and as constrained by unequal power relations" (p.51).

Norton's (2000) work on social identity with L2 learners supports this view, "A learner's motivation to speak is mediated by other investments that may conflict with the desire to speak – investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learners' identities and desires for the future" (p.120). For example, if the learner is intimidated by other more powerful members of the group, he/she may remain uncharacteristically silent. Similarly, Morita's (2004) study of Japanese learners in class discussions in Canadian university courses confirmed that identity was situated because the same learners negotiated different identities and participated differently in different contexts. She found that relative silence was socially constructed in

the classroom and students did not attribute their silence to culture but rather to limited background knowledge, perceived limited English proficiency, and difficulties overcoming ascribed identities imposed by more powerful members like instructors who limited learner agency by allegedly ignoring international students in class discussions and refusing to offer support when it was sought. Morita also found that some students experienced significant personal transformations regarding their identity, values about learning and teaching or approaches to academic socialisation while others failed to overcome marginal positions despite their resistance (p.591). The main implication of Morita's study is that research on learners' identity and participation needs to take the context into account. Implications include not assuming that students will behave according to their abilities and preferences.

Wells (2000) argues that resistance can actually be an important part of the development process and, from another perspective, Canagarajah (1999) asserts that "there may be learning processes of considerable critical potential that may be passive, silent, and non-confrontational in the public domain" (p.191). In other words, keeping silent in certain contexts can send a powerful message. McKay and Wong (1996) argue that an individual "is both positioned by relations of power and resistant to that positioning, and may even 'set up a counter discourse which positions [him/her] in a powerful rather than a marginalized subject position'" (p.579). Different individual reactions to positioning reflect the situatedness and complexity of identity and the unpredictability of human agency enacted in a particular context.

It seems that focusing on identity and agency as challenges for peer scaffolding may not be entirely realistic. However, awareness of the changing complexities of identity and agency can create different perspectives which can lead to increased understanding.

2.10   Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a discussion of how sociocultural approaches informed this study. Links were made to CR in terms of the importance of language mediating learning, the significance of social context, the concept of social interaction leading to internalisation, and scaffolding as necessary for learning. From this, ideas from social constructivism were presented to support a characterisation of 'teaching' as facilitating and 'learning' as making connections.

Recalling Wells' (2000) conviction that educational institutions can constrain learning, this chapter has tried to demonstrate a framework for research that investigates how to minimise constraints and maximise learning. The premise is that teachers need to focus more on providing opportunities for students to build their understanding and dispositions and make connections between their current practices and their lifeworlds. Similarities between collaborative inquiry and facilitating a critical stance were observed.

Given the importance of social interaction, the current research will investigate the construction of knowledge, not only between the reader and the text, but also in peer group discussions. Links to exploratory talk give an indication of

how peer scaffolding or collaborative dialogue might be facilitated and recognised in group discussions. Issues related to 'Chinese learners' and notions of identity and agency as they relate to facilitating scaffolding were also discussed. This is particularly important as it impacts critical discussions. These issues as they relate to L2 CR within an SCT and social constructivism framework will be explored in this research.

The next chapter reviews the literature on interpretations of CR and its influences.

Chapter 3: Critical Reading

3.1 Interpretations of Critical Reading

Critical reading (CR) is the focus of this study and this chapter is devoted to a discussion of how it has been interpreted in the literature and what it means in this context. CR as social practice is continually shaped by the understandings people have of it in different contexts. The multiple interpretations of CR make defining it in practice challenging. That said, awareness of research done in CR is important because "Theory without practice is decontexualized conjecture, while practice without theory is at best superficial and at worst unwittingly harmful" (Patel Sevens & Bean, 2007, p.62).

It is for this reason that I envision CR as involving multiple processes situated on a continuum, as in Figure 1. I use a continuum only to illustrate the range of processes that can be involved in CR, not to imply that they fit into neat boxes or linear, sequential stages. Indeed, quite the opposite; I view these processes as interacting and interrelated, sometimes practised in varying degrees, sometimes deliberately disregarded, and sometimes unintentionally overlooked by readers.

The CR processes towards the left of this continuum reflect analytical evaluations of texts and have been associated with critical thinking (CT) (Norris & Ennis, 1989; Chapman, 1993; Paul, 1995; Fisher, 1997; Spears, 2003). Those towards the right reflect a power perspective and are associated with critical literacy (CL) (Giroux, 1993; Elkins & Luke, 1999; Janks, 2000;

Comber & Simpson, 2001; Fairclough, 2001; Lewison et al, 2002; Rogers, 2002; Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007). These associations and interpretations of CR will be investigated in this chapter followed by an explanation of CR discourse (CRD) and an indication of how CR is situated in L2 education.

Figure 1 Continuum of Interpretations of CR Processes

critiquing the logic of texts, assessing credibility of evidence, identifying fallacies, distinguishing fact & opinion	questioning the source, author's purpose & stance, detecting propaganda devices	identifying bias, presuppositions, showing skepticism, employing intertextuality, showing language awareness	considering alternative constructions of texts, multiple perspectives, missing &/or marginalised voices	focusing on wider socio-political influences, showing critical language awareness	critiquing power relations/ positioning of readers & others, examining underlying values & naturalised assumptions	taking action for social transformation, pursuing social justice

Evaluating Texts Analytically (Critical Thinking)   **Considering Texts from a Power Perspective (Critical Literacy)**

3.2 CR: A CT Perspective

From the mid-twentieth century CR gained attention in western education as teachers prepared students to contend with increasing amounts of information from newspapers, radio, and television and to become more discerning readers, perhaps because of fears of spreading communism.

Some interpretations of CR back then (and now) have included processes like critiquing texts for logic, distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying the source, questioning the author's purpose, evaluating evidence, making inferences, and detecting propaganda devices (Altick, 1951; Spache & Berg, 1966; Norman & Kass Norman, 1971; Chapman, 1993; Spears, 2003). The

emphasis on evaluation and analysis led to an association between this interpretation of CR and CT (Paul, 1995; Fisher, 1997; Henry, 2005).

It has sometimes been understood that CR comprises skills that can and should be actively taught by teachers. For example, in *Preface to Critical Reading* a textbook for college freshmen studying L1 English, Altick (1951) wrote, "Many institutions, recognizing their failure to develop their students' critical intelligence, have required that the students be given formal guidance in how to read with actively questioning minds" (p.xi). Altick's point is clear - college students need guidance in CR. Altick, however, seems to assume the issue was a matter of students not knowing how to read critically, rather than choosing not to. Moreover, he implies that students either read critically or not, rather than having degrees of criticality and displaying it intermittently.

Cervetti, Padales, and Damico (2001) characterise these interpretations as influenced by a liberal-humanist approach to reading in which teachers and students assume that there is one true interpretation of a text. They explain that:

> Overall, these components of critical reading rest on the understanding that interpretation of the text involves the unearthing of authorial intention. The philosophical assumption here is that correct interpretation can be distinguished from incorrect, truth can be distinguished from fiction, and texts are imbued with authorial intention or meaning that can and should be the basis for understanding (p.2).

They believe these interpretations of CR are based on the notion that truth or knowledge of the world can be obtained through reasoning.

While CR processes at the CT end of the continuum go beyond decoding the text, they do not include an analysis of the social and ideological aspects of texts. Even detecting propaganda devices, which involves a broader critique, overlooks some processes of CL, the main influence on more recent developments in CR.

3.3 The Influence of CL

Dissatisfaction with rather narrow pedagogical approaches to reading and writing that overlooked the impact of social phenomena led to the growth of a new literacy education which attempted to change the focus of literacy from a skills approach to a sociocultural approach. Two seminal works had particular impact: Heath (1983) emphasised that readers in different communities and contexts interpret texts in different ways; and Street (1984) proposed an ideological model of literacy that demonstrated how a significant part of reading and writing comprises studying the ideology and social structures in which different literacies are embedded.

Despite these developments, teaching practices still tended to treat texts as unproblematic (Sandretto, et al., 2006, p.2) and presuppose a normative, apolitical social and cultural condition (Luke & Freebody, 1997). In other words, Street's model may have inspired work on literacy practices that considered the importance of social context, but it failed to account for wider sociopolitical forces and social transformation (Pennycook, 2001). This gap prompted interest in CL that would critique power relations and pursue social change.

CL approaches examine how texts are constructed and evaluate how they reflect power structures with the goal of promoting equity and social justice. This contrasts with the liberal-humanist approach because in CL, readers construct meaning from a text:

> …in the context of social, historic and power relations, not solely as the product or intention of an author. Further, reading is an act of coming to know the world (as well as the word) and a means to social transformation (Cervetti et al., 2001, p.5).

As such, CL is social practice with an interest in the relations between language, power, and transformation (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Janks, 2000; Fairclough, 2001). These interests are understandable when we consider CL's roots in post-structuralism, critical social theory, and Freire's (1972) work.

3.3.1 *Roots of CL*

Post-structuralism's denial of an absolute truth informs CL by prompting readers to question assumed meanings, consider multiple perspectives and alternative constructions of texts. The idea is that texts do not carry incontestable meanings, but rather, meanings are context-specific and are created by readers relative to other meanings, beliefs, experiences and knowledge. Nonetheless, Iyer (2007) wisely cautions that problems may arise if students assume that 'anything goes' in the multiplicity of interpretations (p.166).

Critical social theory's critique of social and political issues focuses on exposing power and inequality. CL draws on this by exploring texts to determine whose interests are being served and how certain representations

could be constructed differently. As such, CL "moves beyond high level thinking skills to how ideology and persuasion are at work in many texts in and outside the classroom" (Elkins & Luke, 1999, p. 214). Comber (2001) explains how being engaged in CL means "asking complicated questions about language and power, about people and lifestyle, about morality and ethics, about who is advantaged by the ways things are and who is disadvantaged" (p.271).

CL is also influenced by the work of Freire (1972) whose goal was to help exploited people develop 'critical consciousness' which would enable them to realise they were marginalised and empower them to reconstruct or transform the inequalities for a more just society. CL draws on Freire's work in its commitment to social change. Recently, however, goals of empowering people through CL have been contested (Kramer-Dahl, 2001) and received less emphasis (Morgan, 1997; Wallace, 1999; McKinney, 2003). This will be discussed in section 3.6.

In terms of social transformation, Rogers (2002) points out that CL involves "disrupting dominant social practices through resistant reading and writing of texts" (p.273), in other words, challenging accepted norms or conventions reproduced in texts. She explains that CL recognises that "the social world is composed of discourses that are inherently unequal in status" (p.274) and CL teachers attempt to critique and change social discourses by analysing and questioning the social narratives of various texts. Before discussing CL further, 'discourse' needs to be clarified.

Discourse cannot be reduced to a single definition because it "…is used in a range of different ways by different theorists and sometimes even by the same theorist" (Mills, 2004, p.6). Meanings of discourse have generally been synthesised into three categories. First is a unit of text beyond the sentence. Second is an act of communication or language in use. The third identifies discourse as a count noun representing "a broad conglomeration of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct power" (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001, p.1). As social practice, discourses construct and are constructed by a system of knowledge, beliefs, and social identities (Fairclough, 2001, p.20). Gee (2005) distinguishes this third category as Discourse with a capital D in which language, actions, thinking, and use of tools enact specific identities. Racist, political, and evangelical Christian Discourses are examples illustrating that specific discourses are linked with identity. It is with regard to this view that Rogers (2002) comments that discourses are 'unequal in status'. In other words, "a discourse is always involved in circulating and promoting a certain ideology in preference to another, hence advancing the interests of a particular social group" (Morgan, 1997, p.3,4).

Since people adopt different Discourses simultaneously, they are frequently engaged in connecting and overlapping Discourses. This may cause tensions because as Discourses interact with one another they are constantly contested and negotiated. In some cases "it may be very difficult, if not impossible, to participate effectively in a particular Discourse if it does not cohere well with other Discourses we belong to and are proficient in"

(Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p.291). CR discourse (CRD) in this study will be explained in section 3.10.

3.4 Critical Language Awareness (CLA)

CLA deserves some attention as it is a "close associate" of CL (Wallace, 2003, p.65). CLA, an educational approach informed by critical discourse analysis (CDA), emphasises domination (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanič, & Martin-Jones, 1990; Fairclough, 1992; Janks, 2000). In CLA, teachers help learners deconstruct texts in order to increase their awareness of the author's linguistic choices and how they work to produce and reproduce power relations in society.

Svalberg (2007) explains that advocates of CLA criticise other language awareness approaches for not problematising naturalised discourse and thus perpetuate it rather than pursue social change which is the aim of CLA (p.296). Svalberg raises a concern of the "confrontational nature" of CLA which may limit its adoption by language teachers, but she addresses this with Wallace's (1999) assertion that teachers "should value commonality and resistance rather than difference and opposition, and should foster 'an understanding of the nature of disadvantage and injustice beyond that personally experienced'" (Wallace 1999, p.104, quoted in Svalberg, p.298).

3.5 Four Dimensions of CL

Lewison et al. (2002) studied thirty years of published work on CL by a number of theorists, linguists, and educators, including: Freire, 1972; Shor,

1987; Fairclough, 1989; Anderson and Irvine, 1993; Lankshear and McLaren, 1993; Giroux, 1993; Shannon, 1995; Luke and Freebody, 1997; Farrell, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Gee, 1999; Boozer, Maras, and Brummett, 1999; Janks, 2000; Vasquez, 2000; Comber and Simpson, 2001. Lewison et al. concluded that the main practices involved in CL can be synthesised into four dimensions: 'disrupting the commonplace', 'considering multiple viewpoints', 'focusing on the sociopolitical', and 'taking action to promote social justice'. This became the basis of their four dimensions framework for analysing texts. Each dimension is outlined below.

3.5.1 *Disrupting the Commonplace*

In 'disrupting the commonplace', "critical literacy is conceptualized as seeing the 'everyday' through new lenses" (Lewison et al., 2002, p.382). In the context of CR this means problematising naturalised assumptions and norms that are reproduced in texts and interrogating the author's construction of knowledge. In my view recognising bias, presuppositions, omissions of evidence, propaganda devices, and some other CT processes could fall into this dimension because they problematise the text and can potentially prompt readers to recognise how the text is used to position readers, construct identities, and legitimise or transform existing discourses.

3.5.2 *Considering Multiple Viewpoints*

'Considering multiple viewpoints' means understanding "experience and texts from our own perspectives and the viewpoints of others" (Lewison et al., 2002, p.383). This involves identifying whose views are expressed and whose

needs are being served while simultaneously identifying whose views are ignored or marginalised. For this dimension, CR requires a consideration of alternative and sometimes conflicting perspectives.

3.5.3 *Focusing on the Sociopolitical*

The third dimension, 'focusing on the sociopolitical' means understanding the wider sociopolitical influences on the text and creation of knowledge. It requires looking beyond the personal or immediate factors to identify ideology and power relationships that underpin the text and work to shape perceptions.

3.5.4 *Taking Action to Promote Social Justice*

Finally 'taking action to promote social justice' involves reflecting on injustice and exercising power to improve life. This dimension derives from Freire's (1972) work and, according to Lewison et al. (2002), it is sometimes perceived as *the* definition of CL; however, "one cannot take informed action against oppression or promote social justice without expanded understandings and perspectives gained from the other three dimensions" (p.384, 385). This suggests that the four dimensions are not adopted independently.

Together these dimensions provide a comprehensive overview of what CL practices might look like.

3.6 CL as Problematic

Despite support for implementing CL in education (Morgan, 1997; Elkins & Luke, 1999; Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007, etc.) it is not unproblematic. Firstly,

different forms of CL may give rise to tensions between multiple views of what it entails. Secondly, social change and empowerment cannot be guaranteed and there may be a risk of ideological indoctrination by teachers. Thirdly, non-rational investments in certain discourses and low language proficiency may limit participation in CL processes. These problems will be discussed in turn.

All CL approaches share an interest in relations between language, power, and change, but tensions may arise in terms of how these relationships are interpreted. Pennycook (2001), for example, suggests that CLA focuses on CR and questioning academic conventions, but is limited in its treatment of power and ideology. Critical genre literacy focuses on providing students access to powerful forms of language, but tends towards a transmission model and often a misguided link between genre and power rather than language and power. North American CL focuses on identity and marginalised voices, but the relation between inclusion and change is unclear (p.105).

Pennycook may be over-generalising his characterisations, but he illustrates how different forms of CL are restricted in scope, a claim supported by Patel Stevens and Bean (2007), "Instantiations of critical literacy that are too narrow will necessarily delimit what this practice and theory can offer" (p.90). In a local example, Cheah (2001) makes the following observation, "If critical literacy is only interpreted as the kind of literacy that contests and challenges the status quo and seeks to redefine the existing social conditions, then most educators would argue that critical literacy is nonexistent in Singapore" (p.79).

Post-secondary courses in Singapore often require students to read texts critically, yet a prescriptive, examination-based literacy continues to be maintained; hence, it appears that administrators and course developers are overlooking the pursuit of social change. This may convey a mixed message and create tension if educators and/or students prefer to pursue the form of CL described by Cheah (2001). Possibly educators and students in Singapore are unaware of this government control, in which case there is reason to raise 'critical consciousness' and promote social change through a different form of CL. I suspect, however, that most educators and students are aware of the situation and have simply accepted the status quo because they are either afraid of negative consequences like job loss or low academic results or they are comfortable with the education system and their lives in general. Gomez (2000) implies the latter when he discusses the self-censorship of Singaporeans which he attributes to apathy and complacency created by a dominant, one-party state (p.53). Cheah (2001) explains that the situation in Singapore *can* change, but implementation of a transformative form of CL is not a priority and "it will be a while before any sort of critical education is included in the formal curriculum both for teachers and students" (p.80).

Regarding social change, Canagarajah (1999) warns that educators should not be overly ambitious:

> To say that signs of critical thinking, writing, or reading mean that such students are assured of political and material empowerment is to exaggerate matters. To think that such signs are indicative of imminent political transformation and social reconstruction is to simplify such processes (p.196).

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This point is echoed by Iyer (2007) who adds, "critical literacy does not guarantee that dominant discourses will be neutralized" (p.163). Nevertheless, Canagarajah himself suggests that efforts can be made by students to take a local and personal approach to action by pursuing change through negotiating, rejecting, or reconstructing language to their advantage (p.191). In other words, personal awareness and personal action is more realistic than social transformation.

Referring to CLA, Wallace (2003) addresses a similar criticism that commitment to the pursuit of change towards a better world may seem arrogant and that CLA does not promote emancipation, but rather encourages students to substitute the ideology of the text with that of the teacher. She argues, however, that all teaching, like all texts, is political and she suggests that "it is important to acknowledge and respect a range of views within the texts critiqued in the classroom and offered by classroom members" (p.198).

Another threat to CL is raised by Ellsworth (1989) who found that the classroom was not always a safe place to participate in critical discourse because the diversity of races, genders, and sexual orientations of her students and herself could be intimidating. Students kept silent for various reasons: fear of being misunderstood, becoming too vulnerable, feeling forced to reveal more than desired or relive bad experiences, or being uncertain about levels of trust and commitment. Nevertheless, Ellsworth suggests that people can engage critically if they build supportive and collaborate groups with members who share certain ideologies, oppressions, or interests.

Moreover, they can work towards social transformation if it is mutually understood that knowledge of one another and the world is partial, biased, and potentially oppressive to others (p.319).

From another perspective, Patel Stevens and Bean (2007) warn that CL's focus on deconstruction of texts may cause readers to feel a loss of empowerment, agency, or efficacy (p.66). In other words, attempting to empower students through awareness of social injustices may actually make students feel powerless to change them because of real or perceived consequences imposed by controlling governments, institutions, or other constraints. In such contexts, it is necessary to reflect on the context and decide in an informed way how CL should be promoted.

Related to change, McKinney (2003) points out that people may have strong personal investments in certain social discourses resulting in a failure of CL processes to bring about change in the individual or collective. A similar issue is articulated by Janks (2002) who realises that CL does not sufficiently address non-rational interests that readers occasionally bring with them to texts and tasks (p.7). She is referring specifically to emotional reactions to sexist advertising, or offensive humour, or crises like 9/11 that may elicit subconscious elements of our identity that can threaten our participation in CL.

It seems that educators should take a reflective and open stance to consider what CL means and acknowledge that the assumptions and influences of the

community where it is practised will determine the form that is adopted and the kind of action that can be taken. As Comber (2007) asserts, "What constitutes critical literacy and/or democratic education needs to be negotiated in particular places at particular times and to be informed by our personal and professional histories" (p.53).

3.7 CR Today

With the influence of CL, the scope of CR has broadened beyond analytical evaluations of texts to include a way of being critical that focuses on "how people use texts and discourses to construct and negotiate identity, power and capital" (Luke, 2004, p. 21). Being critical now represents "a diversity of approaches to textual practice, each contingent on particular political and institutional fields where the teaching and learning of language resides" (Luke, 2004, p.21).

As in the mid-twentieth century, information and communication technology (ICT) is rapidly increasing today. Fear of communism has been replaced with fast capitalism and mass consumerism (New London Group, 2000) so there still exists the goal of preparing students with the ability to effectively navigate through massive amounts of information in a discerning way. According to proponents of CL, students need to do more than identify propaganda devices; they need to understand the power and ideologies embedded in texts so they can make informed judgements and take action if deemed necessary. Elkins and Luke (1999) characterise the situation thus:

> In a culture where texts are there to position, define, sell, and, indeed, manipulate and shape a population at every turn, to give students

anything less than a fully critical literacy would be to abrogate our responsibility as educators (p.215).

By "a fully critical literacy" they mean an ability, not only to "identify the meaning of texts and create [their own] personal interpretations, but also gain awareness of how texts may be manipulating [their] perspectives" (p.214).

Patel Stevens and Bean (2007) do not view CR as linked in any way to CL and, following Cervetti et al. (2001), emphatically distinguish between the two, claiming that CR emphasises skill-based tasks and "is a search for a verifiable reading, whereas critical literacy is the endeavor to work within multiple plausible interpretations of a text" (p.7). Although this distinction appears straightforward, it seems rather too simple and rigid for two main reasons. Firstly, CT, like CL, can be considered "a social practice rather than as a decontextualised cognitive skill" (Gieve, 1998, p.123). Moreover, CT processes *can* allow for multiple interpretations of authorial intentions, strength of evidence, claims of bias in a text, and so on.

Secondly, it is not convincing that CT and CL processes can be clearly separated. Indeed, Norman and Kass Norman (1971) advocate elements of both CT and CL in their interpretation of CR:

> Evaluation and critical thinking help you to formulate positive, practical values. The point is this: to come to conclusions when you are faced with opposing propaganda, you must recognize propaganda for what it is, make your judgment and be prepared to take action (p.301).

The action they suggest taking would be to develop or transform individual values and come to decisions about what to buy (or not buy), whom to vote for (or not vote for), and what to believe (or not believe). These actions

constitute feasible actions to take to raise critical consciousness and contribute to personal and possibly social change.

The idea that some CR processes can help to build others is important. We might ask whether it is possible for readers to uncover an author's ideology or language and power relations without implicitly or explicitly identifying bias or propaganda devices. This refers back to Lewison et al.'s (2002) claim that to consider pursuing action involves understandings gained from engaging in other CL processes (p. 384).

Rather than distinguish CR from CL, Wallace (2003) differentiates between a "weak usage" of critical, which she equates to CT processes, and a "stronger" view in which readers "are able and willing to critique not just micro features of specific texts but attend to wider implications which relate to the circulation of dominant discourses within texts and so ultimately to the power bases of society" (p. 27). While this distinction can be made, the term 'weak' has negative connotations and does not acknowledge the complexity involved in processes such as recognising bias and propaganda devices which, as mentioned, may be useful in building other CR processes. To this end I prefer to consider this view of critical as 'nascent' CR to connote emerging criticality.

It is for these reasons I see CR incorporating a range of processes. It should be acknowledged that when reading critically one may not be metacognitively aware of which processes are engaged and to what degree, nor will these

necessarily be observable by others. As such we should be careful how we label people, processes, and perspectives.

3.8 Skill or Disposition?

CR has been described as a set of skills (Spears, 2003; Linkon, 2005) and as an attitude or disposition (Green, 1997; Shor, 1993). This debate is important for determining whether or not CR can be taught. A skill suggests that CR can be explained and demonstrated by teachers resulting in successful realisation by students, while a disposition cannot. I work under the assumption that CR engages students' critical stance or disposition which can be awakened and nurtured by teaching various tools that facilitate CR processes.

Considering criticality as a disposition, Canagarajah (1999) advocates the view that, "students already come with oppositional perspectives and values that constitute a critical attitude". Similarly, Widdowson (1995) asserts that experienced readers already have a critical disposition and do not need critical analysts to point features out to them (p.193,194). Patel Stevens and Bean (2007) explain when a critical disposition is revealed:

> Human beings engage in critical practice when two elements are present: (1) they are knowledgeable about the topic and (2) they are interested and even passionate about the topic…when it serves our worldviews or when we are struck by such dissonance with our worldviews that we are moved to act (p.91).

This begs the question: what can students do if they are *not* knowledgeable or passionate about a topic yet expected in some academic courses to read critically?

To address the first element in Patel Stevens and Bean's (2007) claim, Wallace (1995) acknowledges that textual and intertextual knowledge is helpful for eliciting critical engagement, but she argues that in some instances where (L2) learners lack this knowledge, they nonetheless display a critical disposition because they bring in an outsider's perspective (p.341). This is an interesting point that needs further study as it could resolve the paradox regarding a lack of topic knowledge and academic expectations.

Concerning the second element in the claim, Canagarajah (1999) challenges an assumption that a confrontational approach is conducive to critical engagement (p.191) and he suggests that there may be considerable potential for criticality through passive, silent, and nonconfrontational means. While I do not believe Patel Stevens and Bean (2007) are advocating a confrontational approach, there is value in considering that criticality may take different forms including silence.

3.9 Facilitating CR

In a social constructivist approach, 'teaching' is not 'transmitting information'; teaching is facilitating learning by enabling students to construct knowledge. Students learn by making connections and transforming the knowledge in order to internalise it, nurture or change their dispositions, and develop resources (Wells, 2002, p.3).

In terms of CR, Goatly (2000) recognises the range of processes, though his focus is on power relations. He suggests that teachers can discuss CR

concepts with students, introduce text analysis tools, promote intertextuality and examine texts on similar topics that convey alternative perspectives. The dialectical interplay of textual cues (revealed using text analysis tools) and background knowledge and experience could help students to generate knowledge enabling them to make connections and engage their critical dispositions.

Drawing on Wells (2000) and Goatly (2000), it seems that, despite considering CR as a disposition, teachers can provide opportunities for students to engage in and reflect on CR processes. Tools can be explicitly taught and a discursive space can be provided to activate the students' background knowledge and experience allowing them to make connections to their current practices and engage their critical dispositions.

One platform for CR practice is group discussion which Wallace (2003) supports saying, "critical talk and critical literacy [are] mutually supportive, with discussion prompting students to look more closely at text which in turn fuels further revisiting of text and discussion" (p.77). Her study, however, did not emphasise peer group discussion for facilitating critical talk. Whether students can help each other engage in CR processes and display CRD in peer groups needs to be explored.

3.10 CRD

In this study, CRD is a recognisable way of interacting with people and texts that reflects a critical stance. It involves problematising the construction of

texts according to the four dimensions of CL which can be manifested through questioning, offering interpretations, evaluations, challenges, claims, opinions, as well as justifying and rationalising. Some identifiable features of CRD include the use of metalanguage, demonstrating LA and CLA, intertextuality, detection of dominant or potentially harmful discourse, alternative constructions of texts and suggestions for 'taking action in pursuit of social justice', in other words, evidence of engagement in CR processes.

It is not expected that all CR processes or features would be engaged in equal measure or consistently, but individuals who displayed an inclination to engage some CR processes to some degree in certain contexts could be recognised as displaying CRD.

3.11   CR in L2 Education

There have been claims that L1 students lack criticality (Altick, 1951; Gokhale, 1995; Polsky, 2003, Finlay & Faulkner, 2005). In comparison, Richards and Skelton (1991) make this claim about L2 learners' academic work in the UK, "Overseas students evaluate less, and evaluate less critically. They also evaluate at a lower standard… (though we are not aware of any sense in which they are generally 'less clever')" (p.40). With specific reference to CT, Atkinson (1997) implies that criticality is a cultural concept and that it cannot be easily taught to 'nonnative' thinkers. More recently, Meldrum (2000), also referring to academic work in the UK, suggests, "One common reason for international students' problems with criticality is a different educational background and culture…A second, connected reason is a lack of confidence

in using the language" (p.170). These writers make blanket generalisations using rather disparaging language and tone ("less", "lower standard", "problems", "lack", "we are not aware…they are generally 'less clever'", "cannot be easily taught", "'non-native'"). Furthermore, they do not consider that some L2 learners might in fact read, evaluate, and think critically but simply choose not to display it for various reasons, like a perceived lack of need for explicitness, unknown expectations of the teacher or institution, lack of confidence, or fear of repercussions for challenging an 'expert' source. Jin and Cortazzi (2006), for example, point out that learners from China may be unfamiliar with foreign academic expectations, "including unfamiliarity with the required critical responses and style of expressing personal ideas in academic work" because "such aspects receive less emphasis in Chinese education and so they are not part of students' academic socialization" (p.19). What appears to be a lack of criticality with L2 students, therefore, may not actually be the case.

Implementing CR processes into L2 courses can, however, pose challenges. Firstly, many L2 reading courses focus on decoding surface features of texts and teaching discrete skills, often with simplified texts. Admittedly, a lack of familiarity with L2 texts may require more decoding work at the semantic level, but this need not prevent the implementation of CR processes. Indeed Wallace (2003) argues that "the notion of criticality cannot be linked to innate linguistic competence but is socially and educationally learned" (p.4). This means that fluency and accuracy of language do not necessarily correspond with a critical disposition, so even some expert language users (L1 or L2) may

not read critically. Wallace points out that "language awareness and language development can occur in tandem in that both the analytic reading of texts and critical talk around texts constitute learning opportunities" (p.193). CR processes, therefore, can be facilitated together with L2 learning because, "…in helping learners to be better readers one is necessarily enhancing overall knowledge and use [of language]. When I say 'better' I mean more critical, more powerful users of a language, in this case of a second language" (p. 4). Teachers, therefore, can help students cultivate both language proficiency and CR concomitantly.

Secondly, in selecting texts for use in L2 education, issues of social injustice, significant in CLA, are sometimes avoided if they are deemed too sensitive or risk offending someone. Excluding these, however, may be construed as accepting these discourses. There may be ways of critically engaging with these issues or texts with sensitivity, but students may still not display CRD as Janks (2002) found.

Finally, L2 teachers may feel they don't have time to incorporate opportunities for discussing multiple interpretations of texts or they themselves may be unfamiliar with CR and/or how to foster it or assess it. Facing these challenges, facilitating CR can be daunting; hence many L2 teachers may feel it is easier to avoid.

Despite challenges, Wallace (2003) promotes CR with L2 learners and considers it important for two reasons. Firstly she notes the value in L2

learners challenging racist and xenophobic discourse that may affect them. Luke (2004, p.28) supports this when he states that there must be a critical approach to L2 learning because L2 learners as 'others' have often been subjected to power in terms of race, colour, class, gender, sexual orientation. By 'others', Luke means those who have been objects of symbolic or physical oppression. He asserts that these 'others' need power to contest power. CR as a tool to challenge racist discourses is also advocated from a Chinese perspective by Yu (1999) who alleges that students in China need an education that includes a range of attitudes, such as concern for impartiality and honesty, as well as:

> …a critical vocabulary for identifying and analysing social problems in China as well as in the West… Only when encounters with the Other enrich their life and are related meaningfully to local situations shall we glimpse a chance of transformation with regard to various forms of bigotry, chauvinism and prejudice [in China] (p.134).

In this case, 'Other' refers to foreign and unfamiliar texts and discourses; hence, Yu inexplicably seems to neglect the need to problematise familiar ones.

Secondly, Wallace (2003) suggests that many L2 learners appreciate the opportunity to display CRD, particularly those who may not have had previous opportunities to do so due to limited time, large classes, lack of priority in an exam-based syllabus, or tradition of not publicly questioning an 'authority'. This has traditionally been the case with learners from China and will be discussed next.

3.12 CR and Learners from China

Given that a critical stance involves willingness to question and challenge constructions of knowledge, some people suggest that learners from China struggle with this. For example, Yang and Wilson (2006) observe that, "Traditionally in the Chinese classroom, students have been expected to accept unquestioningly the words of the teacher and the texts they produce for their students to read. The student's role has been that of passive receiver of ideas" (p.364). Similarly, Jin and Cortazzi (2006) explain that, "Given the cultures where respect for the teacher and text often predominate over the asking of questions and posing of doubts, being 'critical' can be interpreted as not showing respect" (p.19). Ironically, McDaniel (2004) makes the same claim about American students, "In general, children in the United States are taught to not question the status quo and to accept and obey the voice of authority" (p.473). As such, we cannot fairly attribute a lack of criticality to culture, yet for many years this was the dominant discourse pertaining to the 'Chinese learner' and it is still produced by some (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Wu, 2004).

Referring to critical discussion, Li (2005) asserts that Chinese students are concerned with maintaining harmony within groups and Littlewood (1999) builds on this notion to support a hypothesis that East Asian learners "may therefore be reluctant to engage in argumentative discussion, in which opposing ideas are confronted and examined critically in order to test and clarify them" (p.84). To be fair Littlewood presents this as a hypothesis open to testing and cautions against generalising and stereotyping.

Indeed notions of a deficit model arising from suggestions that 'Chinese learners' do not question or critically evaluate have been challenged (Cheng, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Coverdale-Jones, 2006; Clark & Gieve, 2006). Jin and Cortazzi (2006), for example, present a broader account of learning in China, where students take an active role in their learning:

> While the common picture is one of heavy memorising and disciplined reciting of texts in a transmission model of learning, this ignores the strong traditional elements of the student's own efforts, the need for reflective thinking and independent interpretation, for internalisation of understanding, and putting what is learned into practice (p.12).

Taking the argument further, Zhang (2004) claims that Chinese students today are "more independent, creative in thinking, and are less likely to be satisfied with the answers they receive from their teachers" (p.334). Li (2005) makes a similar point saying:

> They [Chinese learners] apparently accept this knowledge from the textbook uncritically, but in their minds they have their own thinking. They hesitate to express this thinking because their culture of learning includes the notion that one cannot really create or contribute something new until one has mastered the field or relevant techniques –that is, after long apprenticeship. Also, they reflect carefully before participating, in order to be sure their point is valid and useful. Further, they incorporate their care for social relationship into their learning environment, which includes their respect for teacher and fellow students, their concern for "face" issues, for not "showing off," for group harmony, and so on (p.418).

Although Li challenges the notion that learners from China accept texts uncritically and she carefully refers to 'culture of learning' rather than ethnic culture, her description (and Zhang's (2004) to some extent) ironically portrays a construct of the 'Chinese learner' which seems to overgeneralise the other way.

McKay and Wong (1996) reveal a more credible perspective when they conclude from their study of four Chinese immigrant students in USA, "…learners are extremely complex social beings with a multitude of fluctuating, at times conflicting, needs and desires. They exist in extremely complex social environments that consist of overwhelmingly asymmetrical power relations and subject the learners to multiple discourses" (p.603). In other words, different variables affect individuals differently resulting in different behaviours making it problematic to ascribe labels, like 'Chinese learner'. As such, individual behaviours should be examined in specific contexts without preconception or generalisation.

3.13   CR Studies of L2 Post-Secondary Students

Studies specifically focusing on CR with L2 learners at post-secondary level are few. Most research focuses on CT or CL at primary level and generally involves L1 learners. Two studies, however, are noteworthy. In one, Sengupta (2002) interprets CR as academic analysis of texts, emphasising processes towards the CT side of the CR continuum (Figure 1). In the other, Wallace (2003) views CR from a power perspective, focusing on the CL side of the continuum. These studies will be presented first followed by a discussion of their implications.

3.14   Sengupta's (2002) Study

Sengupta (2002) studied how Cantonese-speaking students developed critical awareness in academic reading in an ESL university course in Hong Kong. She also considered whether critical awareness emerged in their academic

reading beyond the ESL class. Sengupta defines 'academic reading' as, "purposeful and critical reading of a range of lengthy academic texts for completing the study of specific major subject areas" (Academic Reading section, para.1).

Sengupta collected data from recorded teacher-led lessons, interviews, and student journals. She observed a change in critical awareness and students' models of reading over her longitudinal study, particularly in terms of constructing meaning, challenging authors, and use of metalanguage; however, from interview responses she noted the limited existence of any meaningful transfer beyond the ESL classroom believing that students were only demonstrating CR when it was expected.

She concludes that "if indeed education is about critical engagement, we see from this exploratory study that teaching critical engagement may result in apparently superficial conceptual change that can only be fully sustained by critically changing the context" (Conclusion section, para.2). Sengupta is referring here to the constraints imposed on students by the educational context, including the use of an L2, time demands, and lack of appreciation for risk-taking outside the ESL classroom. By risk-taking she means the students' willingness to present what could be considered by lecturers in other classes as 'incorrect' or 'undesirable' responses. Sengupta, comments that, "As teachers we may need to take students to new ways of knowing but unless the courses we offer fully support these ways, it may be a questionable venture" (Conclusion section, para.1). That said, she is not completely

pessimistic and hopes that with further pedagogical support it might be easier for students to adopt a critical stance.

3.15   Wallace's (2003) Study

In a different context, Wallace's (2003) studied L2 learners with diverse nationalities enrolled in a UK university elective course dedicated to CR. She explored the "collaborative, negotiated construction of textual interpretation" (p.80) to find out what it means to read critically in a foreign language.

In her study Wallace applied a framework based on Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar (SFG) which her L2 students used to analyse and discuss various community texts. With CLA she tried to alert students to the ways language can be used to propagate and conceal ideologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Data were collected from the students' presentations of group responses to CR tasks, diaries, reading protocols, and interviews.

Her findings reveal that students used the SFG framework only selectively, though they seemed to appreciate having it as a guide. Wallace admits that terminology was cumbersome and they had to be prompted to use it. Thus, while she notes the potential value of teachers' use of metalanguage, she was not fully confident that it was crucial for students to use it (p.195).

Wallace admits that the idea of emancipation and change in critical pedagogy (which she compared to changing the world socially and politically) was not

adequately addressed in her classroom, that is, she acknowledges that talk can change the world but was not wholly successful in taking CLA forward in constructive ways, other than discussing alternative ways of writing about the topic, which addressed texts, not dominant discourses. She is satisfied, however, that her students were empowered to use English in critical ways as individuals and global community members (p.200).

Her students appreciated the opportunity to develop and voice their opinions. When they read critically, they commented metacognitively and reflectively and willingly offered opinions and judgements in different ways. She states, "students were beginning to notice, at varying levels of specificity, features of texts and literacy practices, located in contextual and cultural settings, in ways which had hitherto eluded them" (p.191). This raises the question about whether or not her students were previously *able* to read critically or just *choosing* not to.

Overall Wallace observed "moments when students appeared to be moving towards differently focused ways of looking at texts in the larger sociocultural contexts in which they circulate (p.155), but her conclusions about growth in critical awareness are tentative because she had not established how critically aware students were on embarking on the course. Moreover, she admits the difficulty in making claims about what students learnt in the course because students were concurrently studying other courses and living in an English speaking environment.

3.16   Implications of these Studies

Despite differences in context, interpretation of CR, and purpose, these two studies are relevant to this research for several reasons. Both Sengupta (2002) and Wallace (2003) see value in helping L2 students develop a critical stance and both believe that it is possible to teach CR. Nevertheless, both are cautious in making conclusions about what their students learnt. Indeed Wallace asserts, "While critical reading can be taught explicitly through classroom procedures, it also looks beyond the classroom to the way in which reading and writing practices are carried out and perceived in the wider society" (p.35) which she prefaced by asserting that "we need…to relate critical reading to the wider project of critical literacy" (p.35). She implies that teaching CR in the classroom is not enough to enable students to be critically literate in the world which compares to Sengupta's concern about her students' lack of critical engagement beyond the ESL class.

While Sengupta discusses the students' 'willingness' to take risks, Wallace did not seem to consider that students deliberately or strategically choose when to display a critical stance. Rather, she implies that students are either able or unable to be critical. To me this is a fundamental point because in my view, individuals may only see value in activating their critical stance in certain contexts. If we want to facilitate CRD, we need to gain insight into the factors affecting its emergence.

Both Wallace and Sengupta examine what CR consisted of for the students in their contexts: Wallace explicitly addresses how readers uncovered the

ideology of texts, while Sengupta focuses on readers' critical evaluation of texts in terms of challenging writers, constructing meaning, and intertextuality. Both refer to the development of metacognitive awareness and both attempted to explore criticality outside the language classroom. Both comment on the complexity of raising critical awareness and claim that more could be done to facilitate their model of CR.

In terms of 'quality' of criticality, Wallace refers to the difficulty in measuring the "*degree* of criticality or growth of criticality" (p.90) but seems to gloss over this. Sengupta did not investigate this at all, yet it seems an issue that needs addressing.

3.17   Chapter Summary

This chapter started with an illustration of a range of CR processes from analytically evaluating texts to taking action for social transformation. Subsequently a history of CR and its influences, particularly CL, were traced. Various interpretations of CL were presented followed by a summary of CR today. A discussion of criticality as a disposition and how it might be fostered was followed by an explanation of CRD. Facilitating CR with L2 learners was narrowed down to focus on learners from China. Finally, two studies of CR with L2 learners at post-secondary level were examined for their implications on this research.

The next chapter will outline and rationalise the research design for the current study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Overview

Acknowledging that researchers bring different perspectives and assumptions to their research that affect the design of the study and presentation of interpretations, I would like to explain my research design and clarify what shaped my choices of approach, methods and analytic procedures. A profile of the student participants was presented with the context in Chapter 1 so this chapter will focus on other aspects of the research design.

This qualitative study was guided by action research. Data were collected from interviews, observations of discussions, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. To make sense of the data and try to understand what was happening in this particular context, I applied an analytical framework based on a model of varieties of discourse and the four dimensions of CL (Lewison et al., 2002). Discourse analysis was also conducted to explore wider contextual influences on the emergence of CRD. Before providing details of the study's design, I would like to explain the research questions.

4.2 Research Questions

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the emergence of CRD in peer group discussions, specifically, to explore what it would look like and the circumstances under which my students would display CRD. This aim prompted the following research questions:

4.2.1 *What are the students' metacognitive understandings of CR and do they change over the duration of the reading course?*

Knowing the students' metacognitive understandings of CR would provide a more comprehensive picture of what was happening in this context as the students combined their background knowledge and experience with their current practice. Additionally, knowing if the students generally value CR could affect how motivated they would be to display CRD, though I am aware that this would depend on the context, for example, whether or not they believe their teachers value it.

Secondly, I want to find out the extent to which the students' interpretations of CR correspond with other interpretations. Would they, for instance, consider a range of CR processes, or focus on CT or any aspects of the four dimensions of CL (Lewison et al., 2002)? Comparing different perspectives and interpretations in this local context with a more global context could raise questions about assumptions some teachers may have about L2 students' understanding of and competence in CR.

I also wonder how students might re-interpret the work we do together on CR in class. In other words, how their understandings might be influenced by teacher and peer scaffolding. Assuming students' understandings would not remain static, I am interested in exploring changes over the duration of the course.

Two issues arise from this research question:

a. Firstly, would students be *able* to read critically and express their critical awareness, that is, would they make connections between their critical dispositions and the current practice, and would they have the linguistic proficiency and/or social skills to display CRD in group discussions?

b. Secondly, would students be *willing* to express evidence of CR in their group discussions? That is, would they see value in displaying CRD in groups? It is possible that students would not be used to this kind of activity so they might not be confident or ready to engage in it willingly. They might perceive negative consequences in displaying CRD, like loss of face for the author or teacher if a text were judged negatively. They might fear disapproval from peers or the MOE if they expressed what might be perceived to be an 'undesirable' response. Some might be concerned about appearing too cynical. Importantly, would the context facilitate the conditions for displays of CRD?

To determine if any changes occurred, I would need to explore the students' understandings throughout the course. Importantly, the students' metacognitive understandings of CR could signal the kind of CR practice that they generally value. It could also provide insight into how they would display CRD in group discussions.

4.2.2 *What is the nature and extent of CRD produced in group discussions of texts over time?*

Findings from this question would reveal how the students approach texts and engage with each other in group discussions. Of interest would be the varieties of discourse, specifically CRD that students display, whether any or all of the four dimensions of CL would be manifested, and to what levels. I also want to know if /how displays of CRD would change as the course progressed. Finally, a comparison of the students' reported metacognitive understandings of CR and the CRD that emerges in group discussions could determine if students' practice actually reflects their understandings.

4.2.3 *What factors affect the emergence of CRD in group discussions?*

Identifying factors affecting displays of CRD would help me (and the students) gain insight into the conditions necessary for facilitating CRD. Besides the value students place on CR, other influencing factors would be explored, including: (perceived) language proficiency, participation rates, text topic, scaffolding, identity and agency. Factors such as time of day, mood and physical condition of individuals and classroom environment are beyond the control of this study.

Awareness of influencing factors would lead to better understanding and, hence, informed decision-making about whether or not improvements to the reading course and teaching methods would be needed.

4.3 Qualitative Research

Studying classroom discourses is complex because classroom life is multifaceted and involves language as well as social practices. To address questions about students' understandings, as well as if, how, and why they display CRD, I embarked on this small scale study that would strive to respect "the complex relations between classroom discourses and academic learning, the role of language in constructing meaning, and the ways in which students, teachers, and collective social space shape classroom interactions" (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006, p.200). To accomplish this, a qualitative approach is needed.

As a teacher researcher my study was informed by certain aspects of action research that recognise the importance of linking theory and practice. Educational action research can be quantitative, but it is more clearly associated with qualitative research (Stringer, 2008, p.15) which proves suitable for my study.

4.4 Action Research Approach

Action research is popular in educational research as a type of practitioner investigation that draws on Dewey's (1933) belief in the interaction of experience, reflection, and action for quality education and a democratic society. Unlike most other research approaches, action research does not try to apply universal solutions to practice in specific educational contexts. It is a formal process of inquiry that involves reflecting on practice to increase knowledge about teaching and learning which in turn improves what happens

in particular contexts and leads to stronger educational rationale for what goes on.

Different traditions of educational action research (Zeichner, 2009) and different interpretations within those traditions have resulted in multiple forms of action research which can be conducted by individuals, colleagues, or groups (Calhoun, 2009). The commonly accepted aims of action research, however, include: action to bring about change in a community, programme or organisation; and research to increase understanding on the part of the researcher, the participants, or both (Dick, 1993; Edge, 2001). Change, however, is open to interpretation.

Allwright (2003) is critical of action research's aim of change. While he is not against change per se, he cautions against immediate and thoughtless change for its own sake. He claims that too often the search for 'better' ways of doing things circumvents the crucial stage of working for understanding, and suggests that only with understanding can we know if practical change is necessary, desired, or possible (p.128). He sees the process of working for understanding as a fundamental change in itself which could lead to a long-lasting and profound change.

Wells (2000) supports action research, yet his view is in line with Allwright's (2003) when he suggests SCT can provide a framework for action research in which teacher researchers can make sense of the current situation, identify

contradictions and consider ways to improve it (p.66); the key being '*consider ways to improve it*' rather than promptly changing it.

Another of Allwright's (2003) criticisms of action research is that it must start with a problem. He feels this reduces the complexities classroom life to a series of isolated problems for which neat solutions can be found. Hence, to avoid the negative connotation of 'problem' and allow the possibility of researching an event simply to understand it better, Alwright prefers the term 'puzzle' (p.117). Dewey (1933) asserts that inquiry and reflective thinking begin with a problem, but clarifies that a problem can be "whatever - no matter how slight and commonplace in character - perplexes and challenges the mind" (p.13) or simply, "a question to be answered, an ambiguity to be resolved" (p.14). In this sense, a puzzle would be sufficient for initiating action research. The danger is presuming there must be a solution at the end of the research. I would argue that research often raises more questions than it answers which can be positive for opening up a discursive space for debate, reflection, and further exploration.

Nevertheless there are worthwhile benefits of action research including the creation of a culture of inquiry that acknowledges teachers' voices and expertise, encouraging praxis, gaining understanding, and producing relevant knowledge (Zeichner, 2009). From an educator's perspective, acknowledging teachers' expertise and encouraging praxis add credibility to the research, and gaining understanding and producing knowledge are important for adding value to action research.

4.5 My Study as Action Research

In my class, I was curious about a seeming lack of evidence of CR and, like Allwright (2003), I viewed this as a puzzle that needed understanding. I also consider the development of insight and understanding that provides deeper educational rationale for facilitating CRD as sufficient change. That said, I acknowledge that my increased insight could lead to considerations for course changes or improvements if deemed necessary. Moreover, the contributions of this research would not be solely self-serving. In terms of knowledge production, the results could contribute to the literature on how CR might be recognised, as well as factors that might affect displays of CRD in certain contexts. Wider implications include opening a discursive space for reflecting on issues about facilitating CR in L2 reading courses. In terms of social transformation, this study could help further promote the acceptance of action research as a legitimate form of inquiry (Noffke, 2002).

In fulfilling its aims, action research generally follows a systematic, cyclical process that takes place gradually and facilitates responsiveness. Responsiveness refers to both student responses to interventions and practice and to teacher responses to emerging needs of situations. Responsiveness is crucial for determining how/if subsequent interventions should be implemented. My approach to action research, like Stringer's (2008), does not focus as much on the teacher as on the students' responses or resultant practices and understandings.

Figure 2 illustrates how an action research cycle consists of interacting stages of planning or intention before action, then observation and deliberate critical reflection after. In the initial cycle, I planned opportunities, specifically peer group discussions, for students to display CRD. The action stage involved students engaging with texts and each other in CR practice. Observations of discussion data and critical reflection on interview data enabled me to consider interventions in the form of scaffolding intended to enhance the students' understanding of CR and facilitate displays of CRD. Subsequent cycles built on one another as interpretations and understandings expanded.

Figure 2   Action Research Cycle
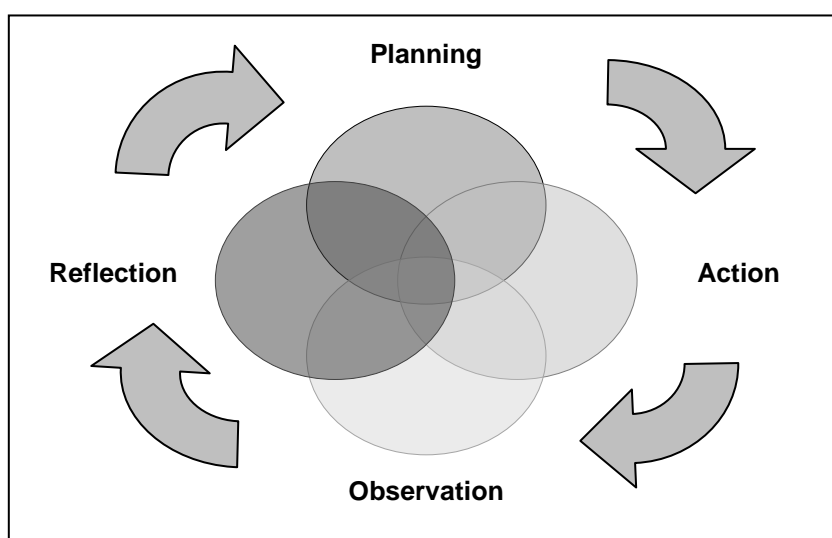
Because the research draws on both intervention procedures and research procedures, each cycle "integrates theory and practice, understanding and action, and informs the next turn" (Dick, 1993, summary section). As such, assumptions are tested, exceptions to interpretations are sought, and ideas from evidence and literature are challenged. This adds rigour to the research.

Using data from different sources (discussion data, interviews, questionnaires) aided the reflection process for both the students and me. Importantly for action research, this also helped me seek out disconfirming evidence. Integrating my interpretations with my secondary research, where I also sought disconfirmation, added further rigour to my research. Details of the data collection are presented in section 4.7.

My interventions had potential to transform students' understandings of CR and allow me to respond to any transformations. Consequently, I planned to intervene explicitly and recurrently throughout the study in order to test my interpretations of the students' understandings and practice. My interventions are discussed in section 4.9.

Table 1 summarises the sequence of action research cycles that took place over the duration of the course. The cycles were not finalised in advance; rather, they emerged from one another. It should be noted that logistical factors sometimes affected actions. For example, we had to work around end-of-term tests scheduled in week 10, and reading project presentations in weeks 20-23. Unrelated pedagogical activities were not included in this table.

Before describing the methods more fully, the issue of ethics will be addressed.

Table 1 Action Research Cycles in this Study

Week	Planning/Intention	Action	Observation & Reflection
1	Explore students' interpretations of CR	Whole class sharing of interpretations of CR with limited teacher input.	Reflect on students' contributions in class; consider how interpretations align with the literature.
	Provide scaffolding for CR of a text	Guiding questions (in L1) distributed for homework with Text 1 (L1).	Reflect on usefulness of providing guiding questions
	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in L1 in peer groups	Peer group discussions (in L1) of Text 1, recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions
2	Provide scaffolding for reading and discussing a text	Guiding questions distributed for homework with Text 2 (this and all subsequent texts and discussions in L2)	Reflect on usefulness of providing guiding questions
3	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups	Peer group discussions of Text 2, recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; compare L1 & L2 discussions
4	Explore students' backgrounds of and perspectives about CR	Individual interviews with students on their understandings of and experience with CR; recorded outside of class.	Reflect on students' interview responses; consider how they align with the literature and students' CR practice in group discussions.
	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups; see how students direct their discussions; don't provide guiding questions	Peer group discussions of Text 3, recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; consider any changes from earlier discussions
5	Enable students to share highlights of group discussion; reflect on practice & seek clarification if needed; verify transcripts and my interpretations	Whole class follow-up discussion on Texts 2 & 3; verification of transcripts	Reflect on students' class contributions
6	Explore ideas on CR	Whole class activity comparing processes used in CR and processes used in reading comprehension; field notes taken	Reflect on whole class CR practice; compare to practice in group discussions so far

Week	Planning/Intention	Action	Observation & Reflection
7	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Discussion of text analysis tools; comparison of texts	Reflect on students' response to intervention and practice
8	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Practice analysing text together; opportunity to display CRD	Reflect on students' response to intervention and practice
9	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups	Peer group discussions of Text 4; data recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; consider any changes from earlier discussions
9	Enable students to share highlights of group discussion, reflect on practice & seek clarification if needed	Whole class follow-up discussion on Text 4; opportunity to display CRD; field notes taken	Reflect on students' class contributions in view of peer group practice
10	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Discussion of text analysis tools, practice analysing text together; opportunity to display CRD	Reflect on students' response to intervention and practice
Break-week + JC immer-sion	Clarify my interpretations of translated data from 1st peer group discussions; gain other perspectives on students' practice	Discussion of interpretations with translators; field notes taken	Reflect on translators' perspectives on students' CR practice
Break-week + JC immer-sion	Maintain contact & compel students to reflect during their JC immersion programme	Email questionnaire; data collected	Reflect on students' responses; consider in view of their (changing) practice
11, 12	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Discussion of text analysis tools, analyse texts together; opportunity to display CRD	Reflect on students' response to intervention and practice
13	Provide scaffolding after long break	Guiding questions distributed for homework with Text 5.	Reflect on the usefulness of providing guiding questions
13	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups	Peer group discussions of Text 5; data recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; consider any changes from earlier discussions
13	Enable students to share highlights of group discussion, reflect on practice & seek clarification if needed	Whole class follow-up discussion on Text 5; opportunity to display CRD;field notes taken	Reflect on students' class contributions in view of peer group practice

Week	Planning/Intention	Action	Observation & Reflection
14	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Discussion of text analysis tools	Reflect on students' response to intervention and practice
15	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Analyse text together; opportunity to display CRD	Reflect on class's analysis of the text
16	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups	Peer group discussions of Text 6; data recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; consider any changes from earlier discussions
17	Provide scaffolding in the form of text analysis tools, teacher modelling, & whole class practice and discussion	Analyse text together; opportunity to display CRD	Reflect on students' response to intervention and practice
24	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups	Peer group discussions of Text 7; data recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; consider any changes from earlier discussions
26	Provide opportunity for students to display CRD in peer groups	Peer group discussions of Text 8; data recorded	Reflect on how students approach text in group discussions; consider any changes from earlier discussions in light of change in group size & focus group comments
	Enable students to reflect together on their understandings of and practice with CR over the 26 weeks	Focus group discussions with teacher researcher, data recorded	Reflect on students' responses; consider in view of their (changing) practice
1 week post-course	Enable students to individually reflect on their understandings of and practice with CR over the 26 weeks	E-mail questionnaire; data collected	Reflect on students' responses; consider in view of their (changing) practice
5 months post-course	Enable students to reflect individually on their understandings of and practice with CR over the 26 weeks	Follow up questionnaire; data collected	Reflect on students' responses; consider in view of their (changing) practice

4.6 Ethical Issues

To carry out this study, written approval was sought and granted from the programme coordinator and the head of the English department. Ethics forms were completed and filed with both my work institution and the University of Leicester. Support was also sought from my EdD supervisor and from my colleagues.

Following the policy of my institution, basic principles of respect, beneficence and justice were applied to my research, meaning that all individuals involved in the study, directly or indirectly, including students, administrators, colleagues, translators, and raters were respected. None of the procedures involving the students was intended to threaten physical or psychological harm or educational disadvantage. I emphasised to the students that the research would be conducted with them (not on them) and I referred to them as students (not subjects or objects of study). Every attempt was made to be sensitive to their needs and rights. No confidential data would be used for personal advantage or that of a third party.

To help ensure that the students had freely agreed to take part in the study, they were required to sign a consent form. They were informed, in writing, of the research purpose and the expectations of the participants. The amount of time required was made clear to them, as was the fact that interviews and group discussions would be filmed and recorded. Students were assured that their grades would not be affected whether they participated or not, and any perceived pressure to participate was unintended. Students were also

informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The expectations were reviewed and clarified before students agreed to take part.

All eighteen students in the class agreed to participate and submitted signed consent forms. Two students had not yet turned eighteen so, with the help of a Chinese colleague who translated the form, I sought and received the parents' signed consent by post. All the students' identities remain anonymous.

McKay (2006) presents an ethical principle that, "…those doing research in a language classroom have an obligation to use the data they gather to increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of that community of learners" (p.24). In this study, students benefited by having slightly more than the usual number of opportunities for group discussion, something most claimed to appreciate. In addition, closer observations of discussions enabled informed decisions to be made about their progress and the necessity for and relevance of teacher interventions.

4.7 Data Collection

No single data source was sufficient for addressing all three research questions. As shown in Table 2, the first question could be answered by asking the students in interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. Answering the other questions required observations of interactions with texts and peers in group discussions.

Table 2 Sources of Data

	Research questions	Inter-views	Peer group discus-sions	Email question-naires	Focus group discus-sions
1	What are the students' metacognitive understandings of CR and do they change over the duration of the reading course?	✓		✓	✓
2	What is the nature and extent of CRD produced in group discussions of texts over time?		✓		
3	What factors affect the emergence of CRD in the group discussions?	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.7.1 *Interviews*

To answer the first research question I asked the students about their understandings of and experiences with CR in individual fifteen-minute interviews that were audio recorded outside of class after they had had opportunities to display CRD in one Chinese and one English discussion.

Prior to the start of the interview each student had fifteen minutes to read and reflect on the eight questions that would be asked (Appendix A). The intent was to put students at ease by giving them some time to decode the questions and start generating some thoughts. During the interviews, probing occurred if responses seemed unclear or incomplete, and opportunities were provided for students to ask any questions if desired.

To investigate any changes in understandings of CR over the duration of the course, similar questions were posed via e-mail mid-course and post-course (Appendix A) and focus group discussions were scheduled in the last week of the course.

4.7.2 *E-mail Questionnaires*

Mid-course e-mail questions were sent to the students to gather feedback about their experiences with CR thus far and to determine if their understandings had changed since the beginning of the course. These were sent during the break to maintain contact and compel students to reflect on CR practices while they were away from the course.

One week after the end of the course, the same e-mail questions were sent to students to explore changes in understandings and experiences since the break.

Five months after the end of the course, after some analysis had been done, a follow-up e-mail was sent to find out why, in the group discussions, students seemed to have focused on certain CR processes more than others.

4.7.3 *Focus Group Discussions*

In the last week of class I facilitated three focus group discussions to give students an opportunity to share reflections on their experiences with CR. I initiated the discussion by posing some questions about possible influences on displays of CRD, but the intention was for the students themselves to direct the conversation. Unlike in the questionnaires, this was an opportunity for students to share ideas with one another and discuss what was important to them.

4.7.4 *Peer Group Discussions*

To study CR in practice, I collected data from a series of peer group discussions of texts. I did not consider having students employ "think aloud" or verbal protocol practices (Ericsson & Simon, 1993) to report their approaches to CR because "think aloud" is a rather unnatural activity and I did not have time to instruct students in how to do it. Instead I decided to record peer group discussions about texts because these would show how/if students demonstrated evidence of CR in practice.

I regularly use small group discussions as a pedagogical tool because, as discussed in Chapter 2, social interaction stimulates cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, talk "is the medium in which meaning is most readily and ubiquitously negotiated… it is also the foundation of a social constructivist approach to education" (Wells, 2002, p.2) which grounds this research. Regarding group discussions with L2 learners, Bodycott and Walker (2000) state, "Contrary to some of our preconceived notions, the Asian students in our classes appeared to learn best in small groups" (Individual and Small Group Work Strategies section, para.1).

Supplementary texts were selected for the group discussions which students were periodically asked to read for homework and prepare to discuss critically. To scaffold CR, I provided a set of guiding questions with the first two texts and the first text after the long break with the intention that students would be able to approach subsequent texts with their own questions and direct their interaction in ways that were important to them.

Four consecutive twenty-minute discussions with four or five students per group were recorded in one class period for each of the first seven texts. For the eighth text only three twenty-minute discussions were recorded with six students per group because that lesson time was shortened. This totaled thirty-one discussions overall, comprising 10.33 hours of audio-video recordings which were collected and transcribed.

I decided to use peer groups because my past experience showed that learner participation usually decreased when I sat in the groups. I did not want my questioning or even my presence to interfere with the students' willingness to participate or display CRD. Admittedly, it is impossible to remove the power differential completely because students would be aware they were being recorded; but, through my physical absence, it might seem less obvious. This was an attempt to create optimal conditions for displays of CRD.

I gave the students freedom to choose their own groups in order to empower them as decision makers. Self-selecting groups is supported by Parr and Townsend (2002) whose review of research on group work illustrates that "student attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours are influenced by natural peer contexts" (p.409) and "informal talk affords students opportunities for mutual support in their acquisition of new knowledge" (p.407). 'Natural' groupings are more likely to emerge when they are self-selected.

Being aware of the importance of social context, I realise that any classroom activity is not truly 'natural' because there are always underlying institutional

goals. In a language classroom these goals usually focus on improving students' linguistic competence and achieving success in particular tasks (Seedhouse, 2004: xii). In this sense, peer group discussions, though unscripted, would not be completely 'natural'. As CR was the focus of this study, I tried to convey to students that linguistic form, fluency, and task achievement were not priorities of this research. My effort to remove language concerns as an obstacle was another attempt to provide optimal conditions under which CRD could flourish. That said, language proficiency would be examined in terms of its effect on displays of CRD.

Video recordings were made to help me recognise the speakers when I transcribed the recordings. They would also provide the opportunity to consider non-verbal communication in the analysis. An added benefit was that transcriptions with film could be more interesting and easier for students to verify than audio alone.

The first text and accompanying questions were provided in Chinese and the discussions of this text were conducted in Chinese for several reasons. Firstly, I wanted to try to make the students feel comfortable with the tasks, their new environment, and each other without having to worry about (perceived) limitations in their L2 proficiency. Secondly, I wanted students to know that I recognised value in their L1 as a useful resource and as an important part of their identity that they could draw on. Finally, using L1 would allow me to consider the effect of language competence on the emergence of CRD. Data from the four L1 discussions were translated and transcribed by

four university English language teachers from China. I reviewed the transcriptions with the translators to clarify any ambiguous expressions. All subsequent texts and recorded discussions used English as the medium.

4.8 Selection of Texts

Texts selected for this study were newspaper articles as they would be a familiar genre to the students since they were used as supplementary texts in other parts of the course. Moreover, they are authentic, current, easily accessible, and potentially provide controversial issues for critical discussion.

Selected texts varied in topic and source. Yu (1999) asserts, "To develop critical literacy through intercultural negotiation, a foreign text which will raise questions of difference and yet not remote from students' own daily concerns can serve as a good point of departure" (p.135). Dewey (1938) and Wells (2000) emphasise the importance of topic for engaging students' interests, feelings, values, and cognition. To this end, Text 1 was about Chinese youth and students were invited to select articles for subsequent discussions. Only two did, so I selected the other articles from a variety of newspapers from Asia, North America and the UK with topics that I considered relevant to students' lives. To maintain relevance to the academic reading course syllabus, the articles related -directly or indirectly- to coursework topics of anthropology, economics, and environment. Admittedly these topics were not necessarily relevant to the future studies of these students; however, they could raise what I considered interesting social issues which could potentially elicit critical debate, specifically: materialism, race, religion, politics, ethnic

violence, corporate responsibility, environmental pollution, and value of appearance. The titles and linked topics are shown in Table 3.

While all the texts contained ideological features that could be examined, some might be deemed more obvious than others. For example, bias in the tabloid article (Text 4) seemed more apparent to me. The texts were all chosen with the ZPD in mind (Vygotsky, 1978), but due to individual differences, a few might have been more challenging for some than others. It was expected that group mates could help scaffold understanding of the texts and CRD.

Table 3: Selected Texts

Text No.	Newspaper Article	Topic /Social Issue /Course Textbook Topic
1	Sun W. (2001, October 13) What is on the mind of the young in China? *Lianhe Zaobao*, Singapore. (L1)	youth in China /social responsibility vs. materialism
2	Chesnoff, R.Z. (2004, October 25). Ban on Head Scarves Makes Sense? Mais Oui. *Daily News*, New York, pp.33.	religious symbols /racism & religious freedom /Anthropology (cultural symbols)
3	Dotinga, R. (2004, December 7). A who's who of players in the battle of biology class. *The Christian Science Monitor*. Boston, pp.11.	teaching evolution vs. creationism /science vs. religion & censorship /Anthropology
4	Tan H.C. (2004, July 1). Slap, Punch, Stomp and Spit on Him, *The Electric New Paper*. Singapore.	murder of a Singaporean in the UK /racism & youth violence
5	Macartney, J. (2005, May 4). How Panda Diplomacy Bamboozled the Leader of Taiwan. *The Times*, London.	PRC gift of 2 pandas to Taiwan /political manipulation vs. symbol of friendship
6	Pfluger, A. (1998, March 27). On the Brink. *Asia Week,* Wuhan.	endangered Baji dolphins in China /corporate responsibility/economics vs. environment /Environment
7	McIlroy, A. (2005, October 24). Canada: Environmental Bad Boy, *Guardian Unlimited*. London.	pollution rates in Canada & OECD countries /environment & politics /Environment
8	Kapes, B. (2004, March 1). China's Cosmetic Surgery Market Flourishes. *Cosmetic Surgery Times.* Beijing.	cosmetic surgery in China /concepts of beauty & economics /Economics & Anthropology

To facilitate a comparison of discussion data over the duration of the course, selected texts were fairly similar in terms of length and language difficulty. The average word count for seven of the texts was 720 which proved to be a manageable length for the limited time available for the discussions. According to the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score in the Microsoft-Word application, overall reading levels of the texts averaged at American grade eleven, equivalent to students sixteen-seventeen years old. I considered this level appropriate for the students in this study because, based on a sample of similar length, it equated to the difficulty level of the course textbook.

4.9 Teacher Intervention

Working from the assumption that everyone can develop a critical disposition, but displays of CRD would be crucially dependent on contextual variables, my role as a teacher was to facilitate CR by creating opportunities and conditions for CRD to emerge. My intervention at the beginning of the course was limited to providing guiding questions and a discursive space for students to read and discuss texts critically.

In line with action research, teacher intervention is crucial but must work to meet the needs of the learners. To that end, I made various means of scaffolding available if and when needs arose. Regularly asking students to reflect on their CR experiences in interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions was a form of intervention that could compel students to think about what was happening and this could potentially help them see value in displaying CRD and provide more information on which I could reflect and

plan subsequent action. As such, I carefully reflected on my observations and noted any changes as the course progressed.

After reflecting on interview responses and observing recordings of initial peer group discussions, I determined that further scaffolding was necessary to raise critical awareness by helping students make connections between existing and new knowledge, experiences, and practice, and by facilitating realisations of the value of displaying CR. Consequently, the class discussed CR processes and concepts together in teacher-led sessions and, with students' agreement, I introduced text analysis tools and metalanguage and we applied these to some texts together. I also encouraged intertextuality and together we examined texts on similar topics with alternative perspectives to investigate how different authors construct texts and their potential impacts on readers. Throughout, I tried to model CRD.

Eight teacher-led sessions were conducted using Goatly (2000) as the primary resource. Sessions involved discussing CR processes and teaching text analysis tools, specifically, analysing the impact of:

- visual and structural information
- pronouns
- nominalisation
- modality
- imperatives
- passivisation
- presupposition
- subject positioning
- stereotyping
- generalisation
- indirect vocabulary

When I could fit them into the course schedule, I provided opportunities for follow-up debriefings in which the class was invited to share comments about the texts, their discussions, or CR practice. This was possible after five of the group discussions, but they were all rather brief. A summary of the interventions is provided in Table 1.

4.10 Approaches To Data Analysis

Bearing in mind that interpretations and understandings of CR vary, I needed analytical tools that would answer my research questions and reveal emerging varieties and levels of CRD that students displayed throughout the course.

Van Sluys et al. (2006) comment that:

> Because critical literacy is about interrogating textual practices, researching critical literacies should involve methodological actions that push researchers to consider multiple ways of seeing, interpreting, and understanding data. Frameworks provide questions or points of inquiry that researchers may not have considered asking on their own (p.214).

Realising this, I considered different frameworks that would be compatible to my purpose, research questions and context and that would most closely represent my own values, assumptions, beliefs, and experiences.

As a teacher researcher, I do not view this research through the lens of a linguist, but rather through the lens of an educator. As such, I am guided more by SCT than SFG or other language-based analytical approaches. While I do not ignore language, my emphasis is the social context of learning.

One analytical model was not enough to make sense of the data in this context and address all three research questions so I based my analytical approach on three models: one to identify varieties of discourse in group discussions (Zeichner & Liston, 1985), one to characterise what CRD might look like within that framework (Lewison et al., 2002), and one to interrogate the data for the interactional processes and wider social context of the CRD that emerged (Gee, 2005). These will be discussed in turn.

4.11 Varieties of Discourse

Zeichner and Liston (1985) developed their framework to analyse different varieties of discourse that student teachers and their supervisors displayed in lesson observation debriefings. Four varieties or categories of discourse were identified namely: 'Factual Discourse' which involves describing pedagogical actions, 'Prudential Discourse' which refers to evaluating pedagogical experiences, 'Justificatory Discourse' which concerns rationales for pedagogical actions, and 'Critical Discourse' which involves questioning underlying assumptions of actions. The categories and their sub-categories enabled an assessment of the 'quality of thinking' in the supervisory discourse (p.157). 'Quality' of discourse is clearly subjective and in their context it was limited to the extent to which discourse revealed different levels of reflection and different types of reasoning related to the expressed goals of the programme. In their model, unsubstantiated claims could be differentiated from justified claims and those with a power perspective.

It should be noted that while categorising data into different varieties of discourse helps to make sense of it, it does not mean that one variety of discourse is isolated from the others. For example, other types of discourse are necessary for the functioning of critical discourse, so while they may appear separate, they are actually embedded in multiple layers of discourse.

To align this framework with my purpose, I modified the categories to more explicitly reflect my focus on CRD in peer group discussions of texts. To this end, I renamed 'Factual Discourse' as 'Descriptive Discourse' to include non-critical observations or experiences. I added a category, 'Metadiscourse' which comprised mostly procedural talk. I renamed 'Prudential Discourse' as 'Interpretive Discourse' to emphasise the individuals' critical assessments of texts. I maintained 'Justificatory Discourse' as involving rationale for interpretations, but added what I call 'Empowering Discourse' in which an understanding of the power relations is demonstrated. I linked the latter three discourses under the umbrella of 'CRD' to show how they could work together to build a critical perspective. The modified categories and sub-categories are illustrated in Table 4 and explained further below.

4.12 Metadiscourse (MD)

'Metadiscourse' is concerned with procedural talk, interrupted and incomplete utterances, repetition, and acknowledgement markers, like *right, yes, I agree*. It could be difficult to determine if these carried significant meaning or were just fillers for the flow of the conversation. MD was not considered part of

CRD but may sometimes have helped direct the discussion toward a display of CRD.

Table 4 Varieties of Discourse

Metadiscourse (MD)		
Descriptive Discourse (DD)		
Critical Reading Discourse (CRD)		
Interpretive Discourse (ID)	**Justificatory Discourse (JD)**	**Empowering Discourse (ED)**
Disrupting the Commonplace	Textual Rationale	Impact
Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	Intrinsic Rationale	Hidden Agenda
Focusing on the Sociopolitical	Extrinsic Rationale	Positioning
Taking Action		

4.13 Descriptive Discourse (DD)

'Descriptive Discourse' refers to non-critical descriptions of explicit textual content or decoding surface features, like defining lexis or organisational structure. It also includes non-critical narratives of topics, issues, personal experiences, intertextuality. Repeated or paraphrased lines from the text or partner's contributions were considered as descriptive discourse, as was talk that, to me, seemed obviously tangential to the text or topic. Like MD, DD was not considered part of CRD but may have sometimes helped direct the discussion toward a display of CRD.

4.14 Critical Reading Discourse (CRD)

As mentioned, CRD is the umbrella term for three varieties of discourse: interpretive, justificatory, and empowering discourse. The three varieties of CRD are further sub-divided as explained below.

4.14.1 *Interpretive Discourse (ID)*

This variety of discourse involves interrogating the text and its construction according to the four dimensions of CL and CR processes. Questioning and offering critical interpretations, evaluations, opinions, claims, and challenges constitute ID. It also includes identifying or challenging less obvious features of the text, like bias or generalisations or sociopolitical influences, as well as suggesting action for social justice.

Not all ID may be considered a 'strong' form of CRD, like identifying bias, but it is often a necessary foundation for CRD so I included this as part of CRD in my framework. Doing so would allow me to recognise evidence of nascent CRD displayed by students.

The sub-categories of this variety are the four dimensions of CL which are described in section 4.15. It should be made clear that these four dimensions can be embedded in the other categories of CRD as well.

4.14.2 *Justificatory Discourse (JD)*

This discourse is concerned with reasons and evidence that support opinions and claims made in ID. To identify different types of justification produced, this variety is sub-categorised by 'textual', 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic rationale'.

'Textual rationale' refers to justification of claims based on evidence (or lack thereof) from the text.

'Intrinsic rationale' refers to justification of claims on the basis of assumptions of universal knowledge, common sense or shared background knowledge.

'Extrinsic rationale' refers to justification of claims using criteria external to the text including specific references to other texts, personal experiences and knowledge.

JD can be considered a 'stronger measurement' of CRD because it adds plausibility to interpretations and allows argumentation to develop.

4.14.3 *Empowering Discourse (ED)*

Discourse in this category is empowering because it demonstrates an understanding of how texts attempt to influence and position people. ED uncovers ideologies, dominant or potentially harmful discourse, or attempts made to manipulate readers. The sub-categories of ED are 'impact on the reader', 'hidden agenda', and 'positioning readers'.

'Impact on the reader' involves determining the influence of the text on the reader, for example, eliciting certain emotions whether deliberate or not.

'Hidden agenda' is concerned with uncovering ideologies, embedded values, and underlying assumptions in the text.

'Positioning people' refers to assessing how the text intentionally or unintentionally shapes or manipulates certain people and their thinking.

Operationalising this model was done by matching pertinent segments of data to the relevant varieties of CRD. In general, exploratory claims constituted ID. Support for claims constituted JD which was sometimes but not always marked by 'because' or a similar cue. Claims explicitly recognising power relations constituted ED. One segment was defined as an occurrence in which an utterance met the criteria of a particular category. It could be one turn or part of one turn or, if points were elaborated in multiple turns, more than one turn could be categorised as one segment.

This model helped me to identify different varieties of discourse and illustrate how certain varieties can work together to build CRD. Moreover, it facilitated an attempt to categorise the 'quality' of discourse, which in the context of my study meant the extent to which discourse revealed levels of reflection and different types of reasoning related to text analysis.

For a detailed description of the nature of CRD in terms of which of the range of CR processes were practiced, this framework was merged with the four dimensions of CL framework.

4.15 Four Dimensions of CL

As explained in Chapter 3, the four dimensions of CL represent a synthesis of interpretations of CL. Although developed for use with primary students, this framework has value in my context because the dimensions characterise the nature of CRD and what it might look like in a classroom at any level.

4.15.1 *Disrupting the Commonplace*

This dimension involves questioning the author's stand, purpose or intentions, and target audience; problematising accepted norms and assumptions, disrupting the status quo in terms of language, and construction of the text; identifying gaps in information, bias, presuppositions, generalisations, propaganda devices, and so on.

4.15.2 *Considering Multiple Viewpoints*

This dimension refers to identifying omitted or marginalised voices and whose needs are served by the text.

4.15.3 *Focusing on the Sociopolitical*

This dimension involves considering influences of wider social, political, cultural systems and challenging unequal power relations.

4.15.4 *Taking Action to Promote Social Justice*

This dimension is concerned with suggestions for action to take in response to

the text whether in pursuit of personal or social change, for example, claiming

to refuse to reproduce particular discourses presented in the text.

To operationalise this framework, Van Sluys et al. (2006) provide a set of

questions for interrogating the data (see Table 5).

Table 5 Four Dimensions of CL: Questions for Interrogating the Data
Van Sluys et al. (2006, p.215)

Disrupting the commonplace
- Do participants question "everyday" ways of seeing?
- Do participants consider alternative ways of seeing, telling, or constructing a given event or issue?
- Do participants use language & other sign systems to interrogate "how it is"?
- Do participants question textual intentions by exploring underlying messages &/or histories that inform constructed meanings?

Considering multiple viewpoints
- Does the discussion involve attending to, seeking out, &/or considering silenced or marginalised voices?
- Does the discussion involve examining competing narratives or producing counter narratives?
- Do participants engage in discussion that foregrounds difference?

Focusing on the sociopolitical
- Does the discussion move beyond the personal & attempt to understand relationships between personal experience & larger cultural stories or systems?
- Do participants challenge power relationships &/or study the relationships between language & power?

Taking action for social justice
- Does the discussion involve rewriting, redesign, or the taking on of new positions?
- Do participants move from spectator to actor roles?
- Does activity involve ongoing accessing & using language or image to change existing discourses?
- Are participants crossing borders & creating new borderlands that welcome & build on rich cultural resources?

Wherever affirmative answers to any one of these questions emerged, the pertinent segment of data was coded with the relevant dimension. Again, segments could be one turn, part of one turn, or more than one turn.

4.16 Applying the Analytical Framework

To reiterate, two models were necessary. The first revealed different varieties of discourse, illustrated how they could work together to build CRD, and gave an indication of the 'quality' of discourse. Concomitantly, the four dimensions of CL characterised the nature of the CRD identified in the first model. Table 6 illustrates how these two models were merged into one framework and how the four dimensions formed the basis of ID but could also be embedded in other varieties of CRD. Examples of CRD that emerged in group discussions are included for each category.

The boundaries encompassing data segments for each category were not always clear as dimensions and varieties of discourse often overlapped. For example, an exchange that focused on the sociopolitical might have concurrently disrupted the commonplace, and a dimension may have constituted JD or ED, as well as ID. In such cases data were assigned to more than one category. Whenever boundaries were ambiguous, I made notes justifying my decisions for allocating them to particular categories.

Table 6: Examples of Varieties of CRD Displayed in Group Discussions

T = text number (titles in Table 7), grp. = group number, l. = line number (in the transcript).

INTERPRETIVE DISCOURSE:	JUSTIFICATORY DISCOURSE:	EMPOWERING DISCOURSE:
Interrogating the construction of the text according to the four dimensions of CL and CR processes; questioning and offering interpretations, evaluations, opinions, claims, challenges.	Justifying interpretations, opinions, claims made in ID with reasons, examples & rationale (3 types) which allow argumentation to develop.	Uncovering ideologies, dominant or potentially harmful discourse, or attempts to manipulate readers.
Disrupting the commonplace e.g. *…I think this may cause some bias* (T.8,grp.3,l.2). **Considering multiple viewpoints** e.g. *He didn't show any opinion of the Beijing government or Chinese population* (T5,grp.4,l.80). **Focusing on the sociopolitical** e.g. *why should we pay so much money to protect this kind of animal but not protect (.)pay more money to the people who live there?* (T6,grp.4,l.24). **Taking action** e.g. *we should <u>think</u> about the future or the big issues such as social development not necessarily form a procession and demonstrate on the street* (T1,grp.4,l.95).	**Textual Rationale** e.g. *but I think it's a criticize to this government because this sentence is quoted from Mr. Suzuki one of Canada's best-known environmentalists* (T.7,grp.2,l.57). **Intrinsic Rationale** e.g. *Actually we have not touched the real spiritual of Christianity because in China we do not touch any religion we just know about Darwin* (T2,grp.1,l.93). **Extrinsic Rationale** e.g. *yeah it's true (.) hundreds of (.) about 200 missiles are lined up on the coast…I read up both in China and in Singapore also other countries* (T5,grp.1,l.233,237).	**Impact** e.g. *Maybe the writer wants to attract people … This kind of shocks eh?* (T.4,grp.4,l.40,41). **Hidden Agenda** e.g. *He want to advertise this operation … Yes he can make a lot of money* (T8,grp.1,l.97,99). **Positioning** e.g. *he just don't want people to think Singaporeans are bad* (T.4,grp.1,l.122).

Applying this framework to my data enabled me to determine the variety of CRD and the nature and extent of CRD displayed in group discussions; however, this was not sufficient for analysing discourse in terms of social practice. For this interpretation of discourse, an approach to discourse anlaysis was required.

4.17 Discourse Analysis

One more level of analysis was needed in this study to provide greater understanding and insight into the contextual factors that influenced the ways students approached texts and interacted with one another in their discussions. For this, discussion data were analysed using aspects of Gee's (2005) approach to discourse analysis. Gee provides seven questions of inquiry in his approach but points out that "actual discourse analyses will rarely, if ever, fully realize the ideal model" (p.137). Likewise, I selected four questions to use in interrogating my data:

- "What identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact?" By identities, Gee means "different ways of participating in different sorts of social groups, cultures, and institutions" (p.1).

- "What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language being used to enact with others?"

- "What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating?" By social goods, Gee means "anything that a group of people believes to be a source of power, status, value, or worth" (p.2).

- "How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?" (p.12-13).

These four questions would elicit findings most pertinent to the focus of my research. Identity, for example, is an important issue of this study because individuals may reveal aspects of their identity in their interactions that can

provide insight into how they engage in CRD. Related to this, knowledge of

relationships can provide understanding of interactional processes that may

influence the display of CRD. Perspectives on social goods can reveal the

value students place on different conditions for displaying CRD. Finally,

making connections is important for raising awareness or making realisations,

in other words, learning. By exploring connections students make in their

discussions, some insight can be gained about how CRD may be facilitated.

4.18 Reliability

Reliability refers to replicability, stability, and consistency of results regardless

of when or how many times the research is conducted. However, due to the

uniqueness of each context, qualitative research cannot be easily replicated

and consequently may lack reliability. Having said this, uniqueness is seen as

a strength because variables are not isolated and controlled in artificial

settings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Despite the uncertain reliability in action research, there is not a lack of quality

because critical reflection and responsiveness to the situation in a cyclical

process adds rigour. In other words, responsiveness is valued over

replicability (Dick, 2000). In my study, I carefully observed and interpreted

what was happening in the group discussions in conjunction with information

from other sources and in response I adjusted my interventions in ways I

deemed would meet the needs of that particular situation. Because of the

multifaceted nature of social interaction, my responses would likely have been

different at other times or in other contexts.

4.19 Validity (Trustworthiness)

Like reliability, validity can be problematic in qualitative research because various issues regarding the faithful representation of an interpreted social world must be addressed. With this in mind I attempted to establish trustworthiness by designing, implementing, and reporting a detailed and rigourous research process which includes an acknowledgement of limitations.

In my study I employed seven deliberate strategies to establish trustworthiness. Firstly, I conducted my study in twenty-six weeks over an eleven-month time span. This prolonged commitment gave sufficient time for careful and critical reflection which helped me to gain deeper understanding of the context and what was happening. It also enabled me to build a relationship of trust with my students which may have offered me access to more insider information. Importantly, it meant that I did not rely on one or two observations of peer group discussions or question the students' understandings of CR only once; instead I recorded and observed thirty-one discussions and five sets of student reflections in various modes. This continual observation added rigour by increasing the credibility and adequacy of my data collection methods.

Secondly, to minimise any discrepancies in my transcriptions, I had the students review and verify one quarter of them. The number of corrections they made was negligible. Time did not allow me to conduct full member checks of my analysis, but there were opportunities in class for follow-up

discussions after five of the peer group discussions. These sessions were not recorded, but field notes were taken. The sessions added credibility because they offered a platform for clarifying interpretations and reflecting on the appropriateness of the group discussion format.

Thirdly, I validated the construct of CRD by deriving it from existing literature (Zeichner & Liston, 1985; Lewison et al., 2002; Gee, 2005) and analysing using a multi-domain analysis which allowed a closer examination of what CR in this context looked like.

The fourth strategy relates to my interpretations, analysis, and presentation of findings. I attempted to incorporate enough samples of data that the students' voices would be heard and my interpretations would show adequate evidence. Presenting the terminology used by the students helped me to remain faithful to their positions. I tried to include a balanced picture that did not ignore any inconsistencies. Doing this enhanced the truthfulness of my claims.

As previously mentioned, the intention of this research is not to generalise, but to gain understanding in the local context. Nevertheless, the fifth strategy I employed to increase trustworthiness was to provide details of my research design so that readers could replicate the study in another context if desired. For this to be realised, I included a full description of the context and the research design.

The sixth strategy I used was to keep all raw data from group discussions, interviews and questionnaires, as well as field notes, transcripts, and notes from my analysis. This audit trail would provide evidence for other observers to confirm that the perspective portrayed in my research faithfully represents the data.

Finally, to strengthen the trustworthiness of my coding, one quarter (25.8%) of the coded discussion data was verified by another reviewer. In qualitative research, this is not a requirement as multiple interpretations of reality do co-exist; nonetheless, another rater can be useful for confirming the interpretations when results are similar, or for identifying possible bias if there are significant differences (Cohen et al, 2000). The verification here resulted in a modification of 4.31% of my assigned codes and a total match of 83.19%.

This research was limited by time and resources, so not all of the analysis could be verified; however, within the constraints of a part-time EdD study, I feel satisfied that everything possible was done to confirm the validity of my research.

4.20 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the research design and analytical procedures used in this study. Justification was provided for choices made based on the values and beliefs I hold as teacher-researcher.

In the following chapter, findings will be presented and discussed.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Overview

This chapter weaves the study's findings and discussion together in an attempt to create a coherent and meaningful understanding of the students' CR practice. Similar to Wallace's (2003) study, the students' "collaborative, negotiated construction of textual interpretation" (p.80) helped indicate what CR in this context was like. This provided insight into the emergence of CRD in peer group discussions.

Clearly, "it is very difficult to be precise about the processes involved in meaning-making for the obvious reason that they are mainly going on in people's heads, and there are no direct ways of accessing them" (Fairclough, 2003, p.11). Acknowledging this limitation and realising that my interpretations dominate this account, I depend on reflection and explanation to add rigour to my account and, in my quest for understanding, I attempt to include the students' voices wherever possible.

Not all data can be discussed so selections most relevant for illustrating salient issues that address the aim and research questions are included. In the data presented, students are identified by pseudonyms. Their contributions are quoted verbatim (including linguistic and pragmatic errors). The following transcription codes were used:

italics	= quoted data
(.)	= pause
(..)	= longer pause
…	= omitted data
[[ ]]	= overlapping utterances
underlining	= emphasis

xxx	= unintelligible utterances
-	= interrupted utterances
[laugh]	= non-verbal information, translation, or researcher's comment

In this chapter, the research questions are addressed in sequential order, guiding the organisation of the discussion. To reiterate, the research questions are:

- What are the students' metacognitive understandings of CR and do they change over the duration of the reading course?

- What is the nature and extent of CRD that emerges in group discussions of texts over time?

- What factors affect the emergence of CRD in the group discussions?

Related issues are included with each question under relevant headings.

Main findings show that most students' metacognitive understandings of CR did change over the duration of the reading course; the nature of CRD displayed reflected all three varieties of discourse and all four dimensions of CL, albeit in small amounts; and various factors affected displays of CRD, including different forms of scaffolding. The discussion highlights a noticeable aspect of identity that frequently emerged in group discussions, namely that of Chinese patriotism. The chapter ends with a consideration of transformations that occurred over the duration of the reading course.

5.2 Students' Changing Metacognitive Understandings of CR

The self-reported data collected and analysed from individual interviews, email questionnaires, and focus group discussions provided insight into the students' interpretations of CR over the duration of the twenty-six-week

course. These interpretations are presented in chronological order by data source to illustrate the changes. Following this, responses to supplemental questions are considered to illustrate other aspects of the students' metacognitive understandings.

5.3 Students' Interpretations of CR

In the first class, students claimed to be familiar with CR stating that it meant going beyond decoding texts for comprehension of content and vocabulary, but they focused on identifying and describing rather than questioning and challenging. In terms of CR processes, the students suggested evaluating the source, inferring, and exploring vocabulary and structure choices, and similar processes. They did not expand on these responses, nor did they explicitly mention problematising the construction of the text, questioning bias, uncovering hidden assumptions, or other processes in the four dimensions of CL. Overall, their interpretations were limited to processes at the CT end of the CR continuum (Figure 1).

A rough idea of the students' metacognitive understandings was gained in this first class, but, realising that some individuals may have, for various reasons, preferred not to fully articulate their thoughts in this platform, more detailed responses of the students' perceptions of, and experience with CR were sought in individual interviews.

5.3.1 Initial Metacognitive Understandings

Generally, interview responses were brief, generic, tentative, unsupported, and limited in scope. Thirteen of the eighteen students shared interpretations of CR that focused on comparing opinions or ideas of the writer with those of the reader to determine agreement or disagreement. A typical response was*, I think CR is asking questions and to have your opinion of some articles* (Anping, interview, 28 January 2005). Anping included no details about the kind of questions asked or criteria for forming opinions, nor what exactly was being judged. This could have reflected a lack of understanding, inexperience in revealing metacognitive awareness, a lack of confidence, or simply an unwillingness to share.

A few comments suggested that connections were being made. For example, four students advocated the use of background knowledge and experience as a lens through which to view the text, demonstrating understanding of the value of accessing lifeworld experience. For example:

> *I think CR just read something and read an essay or read an article and think about it and combine with my own experience and do some comment or other things (.) reading (.) but I only think CR is a matter for our learning (.) you just improve something for our comprehension* (Wang, interview, 28 January 2005).

The use of ambiguous vocabulary (*some comment, other thing, something*) marred the clarity of this response somewhat and, while Wang may have alluded to a re-evaluation of existing beliefs and values and application of knowledge in other contexts, this was not explicitly expressed. He limited the purpose of CR to aiding comprehension without considering other implications

like developing analytical practice, exposing power relations, or pursuing social change.

Bailin also referred to the use of background knowledge and experience:

> *I don't believe everything in the article and I will correct the information the author give us by my background knowledges or by other ways so CR means I use my mind to think about it* (interview, 28 January, 2005).

Bailin's explicit claim counters any suggestion that Chinese students believe everything they read, and her last sentence, though vague, suggests that she engages in reflection.

Comments from six others also mentioned information or texts being 'correct'/'right'/'accurate' vs 'wrong'. This implies that students felt that authors can misrepresent the world, again challenging any assumptions that Chinese students believe everything they read. It is possible, however, that, consistent with a liberal-humanist view, some students lacked tolerance for other perspectives and the use of these extremes could imply that they viewed texts or ideas in absolute terms.

Vague lexical choices in the interviews may have been partly due to a real or perceived lack of language proficiency (confirmed later by some students) which prevented them from fully articulating their thoughts, and partly due to inexperience with metacognitive tasks, that is, they were not used to articulating their thinking processes and practices. Nervousness due to shyness or unfamiliarity with the expectations in the new environment may also have contributed.

The general picture of students' metacognitive understandings of CR emerging at this early stage was limited to a CT perspective with most references to processes of identification, and occasional questioning and reflection by some.

5.3.2 Mid-course Metacognitive Understandings

Prior to week eleven, all eighteen students completed an email questionnaire reflecting on their CR experience in the course thus far. Fourteen students maintained a focus on the author's opinion in their interpretation of CR, but by this time responses were a little more precise in describing CR processes. The connotation of 'author's opinion' also seemed to widen to include author's stand and/or ideology as students explicitly mentioned judging the author's opinion and questioning and discussing why the author held a particular opinion.

Other CR processes students referred to included judging the authority of the author, evaluating evidence, and analysing the text's structure. Noticeably, most interpretations still reflected processes at the CT side of the CR continuum, but more students referred to the use of background knowledge and intertextuality and some use of metalanguage emerged. By metalanguage I am referring to the use of terminology regarding text analysis and argumentation, such as presupposition, bias, inference, and words such as ideology and positioning. LA in terms of interrogating the author's choice of words was also verbalised, though links between language and power were not explicitly made.

Fifteen of the eighteen students referred to doubting and questioning, rather than simply agreeing or disagreeing. This is important because it implies that more students were exploring and challenging texts, rather than judging on impulse. It also creates distance from the liberal-humanist view of the existence of one true reality.

Five students mentioned making the reader a judge despite the perceived authority of the author, and eight claimed that CR means avoiding manipulation by the author. Though not explicit, these responses imply that awareness of power relations had increased. For example, Shilin claimed, *we can understand the meaning that the writer hid in the article* (email questionnaire, 25 July 2005). Shilin demonstrated here that she was aware of hidden meanings or assumptions of the writer. In the same questionnaire, Chen and Rongjia referred to not being *cheated by authors' bias*; Bailin said *not being controlled by the author's words*; Wang claimed that *authors' opinions may mislead readers*; Zhangyi and Lianghui said we should not be *easily persuaded* or *influenced by the writer*, and Xiaoli said it is *dangerous if our thinking is led by someone else* (email questionnaire, 25 July 2005). Although expressed differently, these claims essentially equate authors' *meaning, bias, opinions, thinking* with how authors' ideology can exert power over readers.

By mid course, improved language proficiency, confidence levels, greater understanding, and/or willingness to share resulted in longer, more detailed and specific responses than those in the initial interviews. The fact that the

written mode provided students with more time to reflect may have had an effect. It is possible that these mid-course understandings had existed from the beginning but were not articulated earlier.

It should be noted that not all the responses had expanded. Some valid but rather generic and limited interpretations of CR remained. Possible reasons include a lack of development of metacognitive understanding, a perceived lack of language proficiency, apathy, or resistance to disclosure of full understandings.

5.3.3 End-of-course Metacognitive Understandings

The focus group discussions in the last week of the course began with exchanges about CR processes. Interpretations broadened but continued to emphasise processes from the CT side of the CR continuum. This is not surprising since most aspects of the reading course focused on those processes. Having said this, some students showed that they were willing to and capable of engaging in other CR processes, for example:

Wei	*evaluate the language*
CM	*ok (..)*
Wei	*judge evidence to find some presupposition (..)*
CM	*ok (.) anything else? (...)*
Wei	*to know the author's ideology*
CM	*what does that mean?*
Wei	*to know the author's way to think (.) the way to think (.) the way they think*
CM	*the way the author thinks?*

Wei   *yeah*

(focus group 1, 8 November 2005).

Wei's use of metalanguage is notable here and may have influenced students'

metacognitive understandings because, when used accurately, I believe

metalanguage activates deeper conceptual knowledge. Its use may also

prompt exploration for more knowledge. The reference to uncovering the

author's ideology indicates that students' metacognitive understandings had

broadened or that Wei was at this point more willing to discuss this. Again, it

is possible that students were referring to ideology from the beginning when

they talked about 'author's opinion'.

In another exchange, Aifen and Zhangyi together clarified their use of the

words right/wrong and explained how authors exert influence over readers:

     CM   *so are you saying that when someone has a different opinion*
             to you they are wrong?
             …
     Aifen   *sometimes the author use presupposition to influence the*
             reader's mind (.) try to get the readers thinking in their way (..)
             so it's not right or wrong (.) just a strategy the author use (..)

     Zhangyi *trying to influence you*

     Aifen   *yeah*

(focus group 1, 8 November 2005).

This demonstrates that some students were aware of the relation between

language and power. Aifen's use of metalanguage ('presupposition') supports

the notion that this can link to deeper conceptual knowledge. By paraphrasing

the term 'ideology', however, she was not consistent in her use of

metalanguage.

Although three students maintained their original definitions of CR, most

expanded their interpretations and provided evidence to illustrate them.

Besides Aifen's claim above, others also made attempts to clarify ambiguous

terms. For example, when I asked students in one group what they meant by

the author's mistakes, Lianghui replied:

> *Maybe sometimes it's a mistake and sometimes it is <u>not</u> a mistake but other's <u>opinions</u> (.) but according to our history(.) our personal experience (.) we won't accept it and we won't use it (.) this is (.) may be applicable in other countries but not applicable in our country (.) in our people…* (focus group 1, 8 November 2005).

Despite the false starts, Lianghui was able to distinguish between a flawed

argument and an opposing opinion. This explanation is significant for several

reasons. Firstly, Lianghui showed he was aware of multiple interpretations

and the importance of intertextuality and reflection on background knowledge

and experience when critically interpreting texts.

Secondly, Lianghui explicitly mentioned a refusal to 'accept' an author's text

or interpretation of the world without critical evaluation. While other groups

also talked about not 'accepting' the text, Lianghui added a refusal to 'use' the

author's text, suggesting a form of personal action in terms of refusing to

perpetuate the author's discourse in order to avoid its naturalisation

(Fairclough, 2002). Solidarity was apparent in the use of 'we' and 'our

country', but it was not clear if Lianghui was referring to his group mates, all

his classmates, Chinese students, or Chinese people in general. The

opportunity to probe this was lost so it is not clear what aspect of identity was

reflected here.

By the end of the course several changes in students' verbalisations of their metacognitive understandings of CR had occurred. Notably, more CR processes like using intertextuality and CLA were mentioned, and more metalanguage emerged suggesting that a deeper conceptual knowledge had been activated. Awareness of the concept of texts as representations of authors' ideologies was demonstrated in focus group 3. Wang explained that authors are selective in the words and ideas they choose to include and those they choose to omit in constructing their texts and this reflects their 'opinion'. By 'opinion' I believe he meant 'ideology' because his peers agreed and offered an example of contrasting ideologies revealed in Japanese and Chinese history textbooks. This example shows that students were making connections using intertextuality to consider wider sociopolitical influences and alternative constructions of texts. Texts as ideological representations had not been explicitly mentioned in the mid-course responses illustrating that interpretations of CR were broadening, indicating a transformation of metacognitive understandings of CR.

In focus group 1, students discussed the concept of CR awareness. Bailin, vowed to watch movies critically after this course. In response Rongjia alleged that Bailin had been watching movies critically all along but was only now aware of it. Rongjia's comment reveals that he believed criticality to be a disposition that needed to be accessed rather than a skill to be learnt.

Similarly, Mengjun made this point, *actually before we came to Singapore sometimes we read an article critical (..) I think everyone can read an article*

critical but they don't have a clear mind what CR is (focus group 3, 8 November 2005). This claim shows that Mengjun was also connecting critical disposition and awareness. Using '*sometimes'* indicates that he believed a critical stance would be activated only under certain conditions.

The concept of criticality as a skill vs. a disposition was not something we had discussed in class and, although students did not all agree on this, it is significant that they were reflecting and debating the issue. By raising questions and discussion, these students revealed a deeper conceptual understanding of CR that they had not demonstrated at the beginning of the course.

To gain further insight, students were asked to individually and in various groups reflect on certain aspects of their CR practice. Their responses are explored next.

5.4 Experience with CR

Awareness of the students' previous experience with CR gave a broader insight into their metacognitive understandings because, in line with sociocultural theory, meaning is constructed and re-constructed when people assimilate their background knowledge with influences from other sources, the environment, the context, and historical practices. To see how students' past experiences helped shape their current understanding and practice they were asked about their CR experience in China.

Most students claimed to have had little or no opportunity to engage in CR practices in English classes. A few suggested that lack of English proficiency was the reason, implying a link between CR and English language proficiency.

Conversely, all students claimed to have done some CR in Chinese classes, but many of them were skeptical about whether it actually was CR because Chinese teachers did not normally ask students to 'disagree' with the texts. The fact that some questioned the characterisation of CR in China shows an element of critical evaluation, suggesting that some students had a predisposition for criticality.

Aifen claimed that her Chinese teacher encouraged students to be more critical of texts, even government publications:

> *Sometimes the Chinese education government print the book very careful and it seems that no fault in the articles but our Chinese teacher, he always led us (.) encouraged us to find faults and maybe about the details and maybe about some words not used very well* (focus group 1, 8 November 2005).

It is unclear whether finding 'faults' and 'words not used very well' reflects CR processes associated with evaluating logic of texts, or showing LA or CLA. It is possible, though improbable given Communist Party control of Chinese education, that Aifen's teacher advocated critiquing power relations.

Nevertheless, the stereotype of traditional Chinese compliance and unquestioning acceptance of authority must be questioned because Zhangyi made a revealing comment about his teacher, saying that it was sometimes

acceptable to disagree with a young teacher because he was '*only a teacher*' (interview, 28 January 2005). This counters claims of Chinese always showing deference to authority, and problematises applications of Polsky's (2003) insinuation that students believe they rank lower on the knowledge hierarchy. Zhangyi did, however, intimate that this would not be the case with older teachers, so clearly, age and experience command respect in Zhangyi's view.

Overall the students' background in CR practice seemed limited in terms of formal instruction, though as mentioned by Mengjun in section 5.3.3, students were likely reading critically without realising it.

5.5 Importance of CR

In the initial interviews, seventeen of the eighteen students claimed to believe CR was important. This provided a potential motive for students to engage in CR practice. In addition, awareness that CR might also help them in their new context may have further motivated students to willingly display CRD in peer group discussions. Seeing value in CRD appeared to be a significant factor in facilitating conditions for CRD to emerge.

The most common reasons students gave for supporting the importance of CR were to improve thinking skills and develop opinions. Lianghui added, very pragmatically, that CR was not so important in China because it was not tested on the examination; however, he did claim that CR was important for

success in future, implying that he valued it as a social good in some contexts only.

By mid-course, many students had expounded on their comments about the importance of CR. They made references to an author's influence on the reader and development of personal values and ideas regarding social justice and transformations in their own thinking or value systems. The examples below are evidence of this development:

> *We live in a world that is full of convenient information now. In this case, selection is very important. If we accept all you read, it'll be both a waste of time and money. For example, we can distinguish the cheating part of an ad if we read critically; we'll make our own decision whether to buy or not. By reading critically, we will not be manipulated by the author easily. In addition, I think CR can also help us form our own value view and life view. In this case, we have our own ideas about the justice instead of hesitating which one should be trusted. Overall, CR plays an important part in our life* (Shilin, email questionnaire, 25 July 2005).

Despite some imprecision in word choice, like 'cheating' (misleading) and 'value view' (values) and 'life view' (worldview), Shilin produced an expanded claim with framing ('in the world of easily accessible information') and a summary. She implied that CR could be practised beyond the classroom in different situations (like reading advertisements). This suggestion of transfer of CR practices beyond the classroom is something that Sengupta (2002) alleges did not occur in her Hong Kong study. By deciding whether or not to buy a product based on an advertisement, Shilin referred to 'taking action', and she also demonstrated awareness of a transformation of value systems. When asked in the initial interview about the importance of CR, Shilin had given this one sentence reply: *Yes I think it can help you to build your own thinking (.) the way you thought that's important for in your life in the future*

(interview, 28 January 2005). In comparison by mid-course Shilin presented a more reflective and meaningful response. This may have been partly due to increased confidence or language proficiency, or the mode of communication. It is also possible that various forms of scaffolding played a role in this transformation.

Another example also demonstrates a transformation in expressed metacognitive understandings. In the initial interview, Rongjia was vague in his response and I had to prompt him to elaborate on his claim:

CM   *Do you think CR is important?*

Rongjia *I think it's very important.*

CM   *Why?*

Rongjia *Because after CR you can learn something (..) including the text and ideas (..)*

CM   *Mmm (..) more than reading comprehension?*

Rongjia *Yeah …*

(interview, 28 January 2005).

In contrast, by mid-course Rongjia gave the following response:

> *Yes. There are many advantages when we read critically. First, it can help us understand the text and author's opinions better. Second, it can prevent us from cheating by the author. Third, it can let us think more about the situation and have our own opinion. Though always think critically will be hard to accept other's opinion, the advantages are more than the disadvantages* (email questionnaire, 25 July 2005).

This response shows that Rongjia was willing to give more elaborate, less ambiguous contributions without prompting. Although Rongjia did not mention 'taking action', his reference to 'cheating by the author' (deception or manipulation) shows that, like Shilin, he aware of power relations, something

that had not been expressed in the interviews. I interpret Rongjia's last point to mean that if we always read critically it would be difficult to believe anything, that is, we would become too cynical. By raising this point Rongjia demonstrated that he was responding reflectively and not just presenting what he probably thought I wanted to hear.

Four students asserted that we should not always read critically. Kai claimed, *when we read some story books or when we want to relax by reading, maybe we can just read it, no need to read critically* (email questionnaire, 25 July 2005). The use of 'no need' suggests that Kai considered CR a practice that could be voluntarily enacted. In focus group 3, this issue was also raised and debated. Not all students agreed that they could practise CR at will, but the debate indicated that conceptual understanding was deepening.

In focus group 3, an interesting point arose about practicing CR in other contexts. Specifically, Wang explained how he critically compared football commentaries in various L1 and L2 newspapers. This is significant because it shows that some students practise CR in other contexts which again counters Sengupta's (2002) finding that her students did not read critically outside the ESL classroom.

Throughout the course students claimed to value CR, but from mid-course claims were clearer and elaborated with reasons for valuing it. Students also showed evidence that they had reflected on this and considered deeper conceptual issues, like whether CR was a skill or disposition.

5.6 Recognising CR

For an indication of how the students put their metacognitive understandings into practice they were asked how they would know if they were reading critically. In the initial interviews, a couple of students admitted they did not know how to determine if they were reading critically. Whether they had never reflected on this or lacked confidence in their interpretation of CR (or in their response) is not clear. Most students replied that if they disagreed with the author, found faults in the text, or did not believe what was written, they knew they were reading critically. The ambiguity of 'disagreed', 'faults' and 'what was written' lessens the meaningfulness of these responses, but it is clear that these students did not believe everything they read.

There were, however, some more meaningful responses. Lianghui said he knew he was reading critically when he thought about what the author wrote, as well as omitted:

> *…actually when I think when I compare my opinion with author's or compare author's opinion with others' opinions or think why the author is saying this (.) why he does not say other things (.) I think that is CR* (interview, 28 January 2005).

The vague language like 'opinions', 'this', and 'things' suggests that Lianghui was referring to omissions of relevant information in certain texts rather than missing voices or perspectives, but the implication is that Lianghui understood texts as constructed objects that can represent the writers' ideologies. In other words, alternative constructions and different perspectives exist.

Kemei presented an example to justify her claim that she knew she was reading critically when she reflected on the author's background and her own experience, as well as issues beyond the personal:

> *When I read the passage of others I will think about whether the passage is right or not whether it is true or is it the same in my life (.) whether I met it in life is it the same or not and where is the author from for example maybe some authors from the United States may say something bad to China maybe so I think I will consider something about background of the author and it makes me thinking a lot so I can thinking improved* (interview, 28 January 2005)*.*

Unlike many others in the interviews, Kemei made an attempt to substantiate her claim and expand with a supporting example. The imprecise lexis, such as 'something bad', 'thinking a lot'*,* detracted from the credibility of her rationale, but her paraphrasing ('right', 'true', 'the same in my life') suggests that she was trying to express her ideas clearly. Despite a lack of fluency in parts, Kemei's comment shows a consideration of wider sociopolitical influences on texts. Her reference to China preceded others in other group discussions, marking the patriotic aspect of her identity.

Chen commented that it was *a little hard* [to know if you are reading critically] *because sometimes it's easy to be influenced by author* (interview, 28 January 2005)*.* In my view, this response was quite insightful because it revealed that Chen's metacognitive understanding of CR included awareness of authors' attempts to position readers. By doing this, Chen was displaying empowering discourse (ED) - something no others expressed this early in the course.

By mid-course, eleven of the eighteen students claimed that questioning or doubting was proof of CR. Eight students maintained that having an opposing opinion or disagreeing with the author was evidence of CR. This parallels many of the initial interpretations and suggests that students continued to believe that a comparison of readers' and writers' opinions was key, though interpretations of 'opinion' may have differed. One student clarified that readers can agree or disagree with the writer, but to read critically they must ask themselves why.

Interestingly, one student referred to *emotive language*, demonstrating an increased use of metalanguage and awareness of the relationship between language and power.

To investigate students' awareness of criticality in group interactions, I asked how they would identify if someone else had read a text critically. Responses again referred to questioning, but other processes were also suggested, such as considering background knowledge, explaining deeper meanings, sharing doubts, and analysing texts from multiple perspectives. Most claimed that group interaction helped activate these processes, but they did not expand on the type of doubts, deeper meanings, and analysis they were suggesting.

5.7 Students' Perspectives on the Influence of Peer Group Discussions

Most students claimed that group discussions were useful for exchanging opinions with peers and developing a shared understanding of the texts. Several students said they learnt from group mates and one said group

discussions helped him to open his mind, but they were not very explicit about what was learnt. They generally claimed that group discussions helped them with CR but did not give any details about how.

Several students revealed that they did not have much experience with group discussion in China, but they seemed open to the use of group discussion here. This parallels Sengupta's (2002) findings in which Hong Kong students, though inexperienced in group work, embraced it. Jianwen explained why he valued small group discussions more than large class discussions:

> Jianwen   *Yeah it very useful because in small group not like in whole group you can say anything you like and the students (..) there are many jokes and I think this kind of discussion is really is a real one (.) Yeah so sometimes you're in whole class discussion maybe you must think it first and choose the best sentence and ideas (..) so (..) the chance you speak is less*
>
> CM   *Why do you think that is?*
>
> Jianwen   *mmm because in front of many people you must do it as well as you can but only in your group (.) small group what you think you can say out*

(interview, 28 January 2005).

By referring to a '*real'* discussion Jianwen implied that peer group discussions were more authentic and perhaps honest than class discussions. Certainly he seemed more comfortable in small groups. His assertion that in a large group the ''best' sentences and ideas' must be presented implies that face-saving is important though I would not necessarily attribute this to Asian cultural norms as fear of speaking in public exists to varying degrees in all cultures.

In terms of CRD, no student stated directly that group discussions were *not* useful for facilitating CRD, but one student believed that if the language of a text was too difficult, peer group discussion did not help because no one would understand. This suggests a perceived link between language proficiency and CRD. A few individuals claimed that when all the group members held the same opinion, it was difficult to build CRD, suggesting that disagreement was needed for CRD to emerge.

Several students said that teacher-led lessons and whole class discussions also influenced the display of CRD, implying that teacher scaffolding was useful. A few seemed to consider group work as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, traditional methods. This also indicated individual differences in learning preferences.

Overall positive reactions to group discussion challenge notions that Chinese students do not like (or do well) working in groups (Chen & Hird, 2006; Wu, 2004; Liang, 2004; Liang & Mohan, 2003). The positive reactions showed that students saw value in the activity, and group discussions established a discursive space for peer scaffolding. How peer scaffolding influenced displays of CRD will be discussed in section 5.16.3.

5.8 Students' Perspectives on Other Factors Affecting CRD

By the end of the course the majority of students agreed that some of my intervention was useful. Specifically, they claimed that learning tools for LA and CLA helped them to discuss articles critically, and comparing different

articles on the same topic helped them to activate their critical stance. They also asserted that other forms of scaffolding had helped them to display CRD including interactions in group discussions, other text analysis tools, and the guiding questions.

All students agreed that the topic of the text and its relationship to the background knowledge and experiences of the group members was important in motivating them to display CRD. This implies that they would display CRD in discussing some texts and not others.

Contrary to earlier admissions, in end-of-course email questionnaires only one student mentioned that displays of CRD correlated to greater language proficiency. This supports Wallace's (2003) view that, rather than being linked to linguistic competence, CRD is socially acquired.

When asked if the video camera had had any affect on their display of CRD, students gave unanimous and unhesitating denials. This reinforced my decision to record rather than participate in the group discussions.

One comment highlighted the importance of considering the different experiences of these students despite their seeming homogeneity. Xiaoli confessed*, I don't think I have improved much. I think most of what I can express [is] based on what I learnt in Chinese lessons in China* (email correspondence, 21 November 2005). This admission could have been an attempt to express displeasure or dissatisfaction with the CR aspect of the

course, the teaching, or the course in general. It is important because it acknowledges that past experience impacted displays of CRD and it shows that Xiaoli was not afraid to voice a response that was counter to what she likely thought I was hoping to hear.

5.9 Summary of Students' Metacognitive Understandings of CR

Overall metacognitive understandings shared by students generally expanded throughout the course. Comparing the reader's and writer's opinions remained a crucial part of CR for many students, but by 'opinions' students meant different things. For instance, some students referred to specific claims or ideas in texts and others referred to the author's beliefs or ideology. As the course progressed, characterisations of CR evolved from an emphasis on describing and identifying authors' opinions to challenging and questioning complexities and implications of texts. In addition, students' responses became more precise with increased use of metalanguage. CR processes from the CT side of the CR continuum (Figure 1) continued to dominate interpretations, but students proposed more CL practices as the course progressed. Mid-course, students raised the issue of CR as a disposition rather than a skill, illustrating deeper reflection on conceptual issues and the consideration of implications and complexities beyond the immediate situation. All of this indicates that transformations of metacognitive understandings occurred for many students as the course progressed.

It was useful to gain insight into the students' interpretations of CR before exploring their displays of CRD in group discussions so I could reflect on their understandings in practice.

5.10   The Nature and Extent of CRD in Group Discussions of Texts

To determine the nature and extent of CRD, I transcribed, analysed, and coded thirty-one twenty-minute group discussions in which I looked for evidence of the four dimensions of CL that emerged in the three varieties of CRD that were displayed. The criteria for assigning the categories were outlined in Chapter 4. A sample of coded data is included in Appendix C. In this section, sample discussion data are presented and discussed to illustrate the nature and extent of CRD that emerged.

5.11   Overview of CRD throughout the Course

Overall findings reveal that from the beginning of the course students displayed some willingness and ability to display CRD by interrogating and problematising texts together, putting forward claims for reflection and discussion, and challenging authors' constructions of texts. The CRD displayed by students reflected all four dimensions of CL and all three varieties of CRD, albeit in small amounts. The quantity of CRD within each instance was not considered significant because students could have been critically aware but did not always display it. The focus of this study is not the quantity, but the existence and nature of CRD. Having said this, amounts of CRD that emerged were counted in order to determine if any patterns

occurred in terms of when it would most often be displayed. Specific amounts are discussed in section 5.12.

Analysis revealed that varieties of CRD and dimensions of CL regularly overlapped. Noticeable was the fact that interpretive discourse (ID), consisting primarily of 'disrupting the commonplace', emerged most frequently overall. An important detail should be noted here. In the analysis, questions and mere suggestions of CR practices were counted because they represented nascent CRD and sometimes led to further displays of CRD. For example:

Jiang   *is there any bias?*

Xiaoli   *bias (.) the author has said so much about the positive about the man (.) maybe this is a kind of bias (.) Maybe in his heart he think this man is very good and he want to show his point of view through this way (.) is it bias? or do you think the author should have written this article after the police have investigated the whole event?*

(T.4, grp.4, l.104,105)

Jiang displayed nascent ID by raising the question of bias which prompted Xiaoli to explore the author's one-sided constructed the text. By posing questions and suggestions beginning with '*maybe'*, Xiaoli showed uncertainty, or modesty, but, by presenting an alternative way of constructing the text, she made her claim more credible and opened up an opportunity for further displays of CRD. In this case she did not pursue this further, perhaps because she did not feel confident in her claim, or because she thought her point was obvious, or because she saw no value in pursuing it. Had the group explored further, rather than redirecting the discussion to something else, they may have come to the realisation that the author was trying to elicit sympathy for the Singaporean victim and insinuate a race crime.

Within the frequent instances of ID that students displayed, the first three dimensions of CL emerged most. 'Taking action' was rarely considered in any explicit sense in any of the thirty-one discussions, but, as Lewison et al. (2002) point out, "one cannot take informed action against oppression or promote social justice without expanded understandings and perspectives gained from the other three dimensions" (p.383, 384). Indeed it seems probable that students were still expanding their understandings in the limited 20-minute discussions. Alternatively students may not have placed much value on this dimension. Given more time they may or may not have explored 'action' to take.

Occasionally, students made attempts to support their claims by displaying justificatory discourse (JD). This was often, but not always, signalled by markers like 'because' or 'the reason is'. Some instances of JD were less convincing than others. For example, in one early discussion, a student attempted to justify her claim about the author's purpose by stating- rather ambiguously and tentatively- *because maybe it is a big issue for everyone* (Bailin, T2, l.90). Attempts like this were recognised because they had potential to contribute to the construction of subsequent displays of CRD. In this case Bailin's contribution prompted an exchange about taboo topics in the Chinese press, leading another student to draw on personal experience which justified the claim in more depth. The most convincing L2 JD was displayed in the latter half of the course suggesting that students came to realise the value of constructing more credible arguments.

Students were less inclined to engage in empowering discourse (ED), but examples occasionally did emerge proving that students were at times willing and able to display it. Again, attempts to display this discourse were counted even if I did not think the contribution was very convincing. For example, in a discussion of Text 4, a student suggested that the description of the murdered man was excessively complimentary because there may have been a relationship between the author and the victim. More likely the author was using an emotive device to elicit compassion in the reader. Nevertheless, I did not want to impose my interpretations on students, and this student had in fact demonstrated critical awareness by attempting to uncover a 'hidden agenda'.

Despite attempts, however, students did not always identify potentially provocative features of texts and they missed many opportunities to challenge authors' bias, stereotyping, alarmist language, and tone. For example, no groups challenged the repeated war metaphor in discussions of Text 3 and, in discussions of Text 8, most students glossed over the author's definitions of beauty and stereotypes of Asians and Westerners and no one problemised the author's claim that in places with strong economies "there is a general need and interest by the public for cosmetic surgery" (Kapes, 2004, n.p.).

Table 6 illustrates the varieties of CRD with some typical examples to show what the CRD in the group discussions looked like. To provide further insight, a summary of noticeable features of the discussions is presented next, illustrated with various data samples that appeared as the course progressed followed by a sampling of data comparing early, middle, and final discussions.

Then, a closer examination of the varieties of CRD and dimensions of CL is presented.

5.11.1 Initial L1 Discussions

Groups tended to structure their initial discussions according to the guiding questions and this provided opportunities to display CRD. Intertextuality was evident in L1 discussions but limited as most claims were not fully explained or justified or pursued. Humour was evident, but, at this early stage, it was unclear whether it reflected a level of comfort in the group or a nervous response to conceal uncertainty or discomfort. One group spent quite a long time debating whether or not to talk about their opinions or the author's opinions and whether or not they all needed to come to a consensus on points raised. Students often built on one another's responses through exploratory talk which was sometimes inconsequential, but at other times led to displays of CRD as in this example:

> Bailin   *The whole article is very negative (.) I think he should say more because (.) there are so many youths (.) it is impossible that every youth is like this (.) There must be some youths (.) who are excellent thinkers*
>
> *Anping   I think in the last two paragraphs he begins to (.) change his attitude (..) to be positive like* [reading] *"while we have reasons not to be optimistic about the young, we can seek solace in well-known scholar Chen Duxiu's writing that 'to society, the young are like fresh new cells to the human body'. Life, of course, has its ugly and undesirable side but the young in China are still dynamic and creative because of a more open environment and plenty of choices".*

(T.1, grp.4, l.77,78)

Bailin's display of ID reflects a 'consideration of multiple viewpoints' because she recognised voices were missing. It also 'disrupts the commonplace' by

pointing out the author's generalisation of youth. This prompted Anping to counter Bailin's claim of negativity and display JD in the form of 'textual rationale'.

In one discussion, Jiang and Mengjun demonstrated that they practiced critical multiliteracies by looking beyond the text to the impact of the accompanying photo which depicted a crowd of smiling Chinese youth.

> Jiang   [reading from text] *"everyone enjoys more freedom and openness now" (.) This picture can prove there's more freedom and openness?*
> [laughter]
>
> Mengjun   *Then how about the minority groups?*

(T1, grp.2, l.135-136)

The laughter after Jiang's question indicates that this was construed as a sarcastic remark, implying that the photo did not represent freedom and openness and suggesting that the author omitted much information which 'disrupts the commonplace' by problematising the construction of the text. Mengjun's question about minorities showed he was 'considering multiple viewpoints', but this may have been interpreted by the others as a rhetorical question or possibly they lacked knowledge or interest in this point because it was left unexplored and the topic changed. Later, the issue of silenced voices resurfaced, but the contributions were vague and cursory:

> Aifen   *Well (.) whose perspectives on these issues are not included?*
>
> Jiang   *Nobody's perspective is included*
>
> Mengjun   *It is only his opinion* [the author's opinion]
>
> Shilin   *Yes this is his opinion*

Aifen	*I think so too*
Mengjun	*Nobody's perspective*

(T.1, grp.2, l.209-214).

No alternative perspectives were suggested as if it were unnecessary or too

troublesome to delve deeper into this question.

In another example, students overlooked opportunities to explore deeper:

Lianghui	*Then the next question* [reading] *"what does the author mean when he writes "young people often look ahead to the future while the elderly look back on the past"?*
Minzhe	*It means the young think more about the future (.) that is (.) the time calling for his contribution is in the future (.) [[Then]] the elderly-*
Xumin	*[[I think]]-*
Minzhe	*The contribution of the elderly people has finished*

(T1, grp.1, l.172-175)

Minzhe's last observation was not pursued. In subsequent turns peers

focused on the importance of youth but overlooked the implication that the

elderly are considered insignificant. In fact no groups problematised this point.

Evidence of ED did emerge, but it was limited. Mengjun claimed that the

author positioned Chinese youth in a negative way, but he did not elaborate or

support his claim. Aifen identified some provocative language in the text, but

she referred to it as 'ambiguous' rather than analysing it more critically. Nor

did anyone connect it to Mengjun's claim.

Unsurprisingly, no struggles with language occurred in these L1 discussions, nor were there any unnatural pauses, suggesting that students had little or no difficulty with the task. On the other hand, limited metalanguage was used except terminology taken from the guiding questions, like *bias*. CRD was displayed showing that some students were willing and able to engage critically but in varying degrees, and opportunities to display more were not pursued.

5.11.2 First L2 Discussions

As in the L1 discussions, students chose to follow the guiding questions in the first L2 discussions and some displays of CRD emerged, but turns were usually short and hesitant sometimes with long, unnatural pauses. Claims were not expanded or justified and sometimes prompting by one group member was needed to elicit participation. The following example represents a fairly typical exchange:

Shilin	*Mmmm so who is the intended audience?*
	(…)
Shilin	*in your case who is the intended audience?*
Jiang	*Public*
Shilin	*The public (..) What about your opinion?*
Aifen	*(..)what about your opinion?*
	[Laughter]
Mengjun	*maybe mmmm reli-*
Aifen	*Religion*
Shilin	*Religious believers*

      Mengjun   *Religious believers*

(T.2, grp.2, l.52-67)

The reference to intended audience here represents ID as students attempted to interrogate the construction of the text, though responses were broad and ambiguous. Shilin tried prompting the others to give opinions, but there seemed to be resistance here when no one volunteered so she addressed Jiang specifically. Rather than exploring or probing Jiang's response, however, Shilin proceeded to question Aifen. Aifen, however, deflected the question to Mengjun and I suspect the ensuing laughter indicates that the group believed Aifen was trying to avoid answering the question herself. Possible reasons for her resistance are unknown. Throughout this discussion there were several unnatural pauses (one lasting thirty-eight seconds) which may have been a result of lack of familiarity with the task. Because these lengthy pauses were not evident in the L1 discussions, it is more likely that individuals lacked confidence in their English proficiency or understanding of the topic.

Importantly, no groups or individuals showed sustained resistance, and linguistic struggles did not impair displays of CRD. For example, group 2 members generally participated actively throughout the twenty minutes and on occasion willingly displayed CRD. Rongjia made a comment in which ID, JD, and ED were displayed as overlapping discourses:

> *And in the last paragraph part of the problem is he* [the author] *said why people (.) why the government should do this (.) because some some immigrants lack money so if they saw the immigrants they may think they're poor* (T.2, grp.3, l.45).

Though not entirely fluent, Rongjia 'disrupted the commonplace' by inferring the author's stand (supporting the government ban on headscarves in schools). The reference to the paragraph in the text about the immigrants constituted JD ('textual rationale')*, and the reference to immigrants being poor showed that Rongjia realised the author was 'positioning' immigrants as poor (ED).

Lianghui also displayed ED despite linguistic struggles:

> he [the author] *want to provoke the Islamic extremism so France will do the right thing (.) Do you know what it means? so in his opinion it does not want to make the Islamic into French (.) the French government's ban is to (.) how do I say? to frighten Islamic extremism* (T.2, grp.1, l.118).

Langhui's grammatical errors and awkward sentence structures did not stop him from revealing the author's 'hidden agenda' of using the text to provoke fear of Islamic extremism and garner support for the ban on headscarves in schools. Ten turns later he expanded on this by referring to the author's exaggerated use of the expression "Islamic extremism":

> *do you think this is a wave?... the author say this is a "wave of Islamic extremism"… this is not Islamic extremism (.) they* [immigrants] *want to keep their own culture (.) this is not Islamic extremism (.) Islamic extremism is something radical* (T.2, grp.1, l.128,132).

Here, Lianghui problematised the author's use of language and implicitly alleged that the author was being inflammatory. In light of his previous comment, Lianghui's characterisation of extremism constituted JD as it supported his earlier claim of the author deliberately provoking the reader with anti-immigrant sentiments.

Both Rongjia's and Lianghui's displays of CRD are significant. Firstly, these students proved their ability and willingness to display CRD in their L2 very early in the course. Secondly, while most individuals were contributing short, hesitant turns, Rongjia and Lianghui produced relatively long and insightful contributions despite a lack of fluency and linguistic accuracy, demonstrating that language proficiency was not an impediment to displays of CRD. Thirdly, both examples demonstrate that the varieties of CRD (ID, JD, ED) did not necessarily emerge in sequence. Overall, discussions of Text 2 illustrate that different individuals responded to the text differently and displayed CRD variably.

5.11.3 Subsequent Discussions

Though some groups raised critical issues in subsequent discussions, many opportunities to display CRD continued to be overlooked. In discussions of Text 3 particularly, the amount of CRD was lowest overall and no group displayed any ED at all. This suggests that some influencing factor was at play, such as lack of interest in the topic, or a low assessment of Text 3's value or relevance.

Amounts of CRD in discussions of Texts 4-8 steadily increased. In addition, issues were often explored in somewhat greater depth as the following exchange illustrates:

> Lianghui   *have you ever heard of this article?*
>
> Chen   *yeah Asia Week (..) Asia Week is not published in China*
>
> Lianghui   *yeah because it condemns the Three Gorges Dam (.) of course it cannot be published in China*

Chen	*yeah*
Lianghui	*so which country is it published?*
Jianwen	*Singapore*
Chen	*I've seen it in Singapore when I was in JC* [junior college]
Lianghui	*mmm Asia Week (…)*
Chen	*but I don't know if it is reliable (.) this magazine*
Lianghui	*yeah I don't know much (.) a lot about this magazine (.) We don't know what kind of people read this magazine (.)*
Chen	*yeah but-*
Lianghui	*so we don't know if this magazine is reliable or not*
Jiang	*I think it's just for the public readers*
Lianghui	*what kind of(.)what groups of public readers does it focus on?*

(T.6, grp.3, l.117-130)

This group displayed ID by exploring the source of the text and the intended audience which 'disrupted the commonplace'. Embedded in the ID is JD with reference to the students' background experience with the magazine ('extrinsic rationale'). Lianghui drew on the 'sociopolitical' dimension in terms of government control of the press to uncover the author's 'hidden agenda' (condemn the Three Gorges Dam) which constituted ED. Compared to the initial L2 discussion sample shown in section 5.11.2, Lianghui's final question reveals that he, unlike Shilin, was not satisfied with Jiang's cursory answer, '*public readers',* and pushed to examine the profile of the intended readers more closely.

Notably in the later discussions many students identified language choices
and commented on their impact, albeit in a limited way as in this example:

Anping   *and also he use this language makes people angry*

Lianghui *who?*

Aifen   *Canadians*

Anping   *yes the readers yeah*

Jiang   *the author is from where?*

Anping   *author is –*

Lianghui *Guardian. It's from England (…)*

Kemei   *yes I think she use these words (.) these negative words "sluggish" "asleep at the wheel" and "haywire" and "incontinent" (..) uh these words are very (..)*

Aifen   *important*

Kemei   *negative so it make the Canadian government very angry*

Aifen   *not only Canadian government (.) I think the Canadians very will feel very angry*

(T.7, grp.2, l.39-49).

In this exchange the group displayed ID in considering the purpose of the text,
intended audience, source, and author's construction of the text ('disrupting
the commonplace'). Kemei identified emotive words, and the references to
eliciting anger demonstrated that Kemei and Aifen recognised an 'impact on
the reader' (ED). The impact, however, was not fully explored so the others
either had nothing to say about this or saw no value in pursuing it.

5.11.4 Final L2 Discussions

Groups for the final discussions changed (as explained in section 4.7.4) with
six people in three groups, but this did not seem to affect displays of CRD

uniformly as one group displayed a significantly higher amount of CRD than the others. The text for this discussion was chosen by Shilin, but she was not in the group that displayed the most CRD.

Discussions of the final text showed use of metalanguage as in this exchange:

> Rongjia   *and at the last sentence of the second paragraph he writes "it has helped awaken millions of Chinese women's sense of beauty"*
>
> Minzhe   *presupposition (.) it's a presupposition*
>
> Rongjia   *yeah I think that means Chinese woman had a sense of beauty before*

(T.8, grp.3, l.34-36)

Rongjia and Minzhe demonstrated their awareness of presupposition so this was coded as 'disrupting the commonplace'; however, Rongjia's explanation seemed to miss the presupposition that the sense of beauty had been dormant and no one pursued this point.

Evidence of JD was displayed in this exchange:

> Rongjia   *the way he talk (.) the statistics he gave may let people think the positive side more than the negative side about [[cosmetic surgery]]*
>
> Minzhe   *[[I think he should give us]] an example give us I mean a bad example about someone–*
>
> Kai   *that had complication*
>
> Chen   *for what purpose?*
>
> Minzhe   *yeah for tell us the danger of cosmetic surgery because it is very dangerous as I talked to Jianwen before(.) there is a woman who-*
>
> Jianwen   *yeah*

> Minzhe *it's very dangerous and destroy her life her whole life and her husband's life*

(T.8, grp.3, l.46-52)

Rongjia's reference to the author's use of statistics ('textual rationale') suggests he realised the author was attempting to 'position readers' (ED) as cosmetic surgery consumers. Minzhe 'disrupted the commonplace' by suggesting a different way of constructing the text which was supported by Kai. When Chen sought justification, Minzhe displayed 'extrinsic rationale' by relating his knowledge of a woman who had experienced failed cosmetic surgery. While not explained in full detail, he was clearly making connections between the text and his background knowledge and experience, and he saw value in displaying JD.

Generally in the final discussions, turns were longer and, on average, displays of CRD increased with JD in particular becoming more credible. For example:

> *I think he also want to make the audience feel that cosmetic surgery is popular and so many people follow so cosmetic surgery is not so risky like the other (.)because some other experts here are against the cosmetic surgery (.) they think it's not good for health so this author want to show the flourishing of the cosmetic surgery market so then invoke more people to do it (.) cosmetic surgery* (*Bailin,* T.8, grp.2, l.51)

Displays of CRD were variable showing that sometimes students saw value in displaying CRD and made connections between their background knowledge and experience, the text, and current practices while at other times they did not. The next section will consider in more detail the extent of CRD displayed in group discussions.

5.12   Extent of CRD

As shown in Table 7, all three varieties of CRD emerged in all discussions except those of Text 3. Data here are in shown in percentages of turns in the whole discussion. Tables of data showing evidence of each of the subcategories are included in subsequent sections.

Coincidently, average amounts of CRD displayed in initial L1 and final L2 discussions were exactly the same (35%); so, the course started and ended with the highest amounts of CRD overall. Curiously, a relatively high average amount of CRD (30.7%) emerged in discussions of the first L2 text. Average amounts then dropped to the lowest average (13.5%) and subsequently, average amounts of CRD increased steadily. The use of L1 could account for the high initial average, but the relatively high average in the first L2 discussions suggests that language did not significantly influence displays of CRD. Increasing familiarity and practice could account for the high average of CRD in the final discussions, but actually it was only one of the final groups that raised the overall average. These findings clearly indicate that other influencing factors need to be explored. They will be addressed in section 5.14. A few significant findings will be highlighted here according to the varieties of CRD and CL dimensions that emerged.

Table 7: Extent and Varieties of CRD in Peer Group Discussions

Text	Grp No.	% ID	Ave. ID %	% JD	Ave. JD %	% ED	Ave. ED %	Total CRD %	Ave. CRD %
1. *What is on the mind of the young in China?* (L1)	1.	24.7		4.1		0.9		30.6	
	2.	23.6		2.5		1.4		27.5	
	3.	32.6	29.2	3.5	4.1	1.8	1.6	37.9	35
	4.	35.8		6.1		2.2		44.1	
2. *Ban on Head Scarves Makes Sense? Mais Oui*	1.	31.3		7.2		3.6		42.8	
	2.	24.6		6.5		2.2		33.3	
	3.	17.1	22.4	6.6	6.1	0.7	2	24.3	30.7
	4.	16.7		4.2		1.5		22.4	
3. *A who's who of players in the battle of biology class*	1.	13.0		1.7		0		14.7	
	2.	13.8		6.5		0		20.3	
	3.	9.6	10.7	3.5	2.9	0	0	12.3	13.5
	4.	6.5		0		0		6.5	
4. *Slap, Punch, Stomp and Spit on Him*	1.	8.4		0.4		1.5		10.2	
	2.	14.5		4.2		0.6		19.4	
	3.	12.0	13.3	3.2	2.3	0.5	1	15.7	16.6
	4.	18.4		1.4		1.4		21.1	
5. *How Panda Diplomacy Bamboozled the Leader of Taiwan*	1.	13.3		3.6		0.6		17.5	
	2.	19.8		6.1		0.4		26.3	
	3.	14.8	18.5	6.2	5.3	0.6	0.6	21.6	24.4
	4.	25.9		5.3		0.9		32.0	
6. *On the Brink*	1.	24.4		3.9		2.4		30.6	
	2.	11.7		3.9		1.7		17.3	
	3.	19.2	19.3	6.2	4.6	2.8	2.2	28.2	26
	4.	22.0		4.2		1.7		28.0	
7. *Canada: Environmental Bad Boy*	1.	19.9		4.1		2.1		26.1	
	2.	17.3		5.9		0.9		24.1	
	3.	18.7	20.7	3.7	5.2	2.8	2.1	25.2	28
	4.	26.9		7.1		1.0		35.0	
8. *China's Cosmetic Surgery Market Flourishes*	1.	18.9		6.9		0		25.8	
	2.	27.7	23.8	15.4	9.3	3.6	2	46.7	35
	3.	24.9		5.6		2.4		32.9	
Overall average		19.7		4.9		1.4		26.2	
L2 averages		18.2		4.9		1.4		24.5	

5.12.1 Interpretive Discourse (ID)

Of the three CRD varieties, ID was displayed throughout the course far more frequently than JD or ED (Table 7), but there were inconsistencies over time and no clear pattern of increasing or decreasing amounts emerged.

There are several reasons why it is not surprising that ID emerged more than the other two varieties overall. Firstly, the criteria for this category were somewhat broader than those of JD and ED. Secondly, guidance was heaviest in ID because in whole class discussions it seemed that students needed intervention in this area. This is not to say that they were displaying more JD and ED (in fact these discourses were even more limited), but ID proved to be a more accessible place to start facilitating CRD because text analysis tools could be taught to students and skills in applying them could be practised. Finally, elements of ID and JD were reinforced in other parts of the programme, but ED was not. It should not be surprising then, that ID emerged most often.

Table 8 shows that ID reflecting the CL dimension, 'disrupting the commonplace', was displayed in every discussion of every text to varying amounts, the highest being in two of the L1 discussions and the lowest being in three of the Text 3 discussions. The obvious reason for the frequent emergence of this dimension seems to be that 'disrupting the commonplace' constitutes CR practices that most closely match the students' metacognitive understandings of CR. In addition, the class was also often 'disrupting the commonplace' in whole class activities and other aspects of the course, and, importantly, most of the guiding questions provided with three of the texts were related to aspects within this dimension.

The second most common dimension reflected in ID was 'focusing on the sociopolitical'. Oddly, in one of the L1 discussions, no CRD in this dimension

Table 8: Sub-categories of ID (number of turns with evidence of each subcategory)

Text	Grp No	Disrupting the Commonplace	Considering Multiple Viewpoint	Focusing on the socio-political	Taking action	Total	Average
1 (L1)	1	32	2	18	2	54	
	2	58	6	0	3	67	
	3	52	3	12	7	74	64.75
	4	29	4	26	5	64	
2	1	37	2	13	0	52	
	2	30	1	3	0	34	
	3	17	0	8	1	26	39
	4	25	1	17	1	44	
3	1	15	4	5	6	30	
	2	20	0	0	1	21	
	3	8	0	3	0	11	18.75
	4	11	0	2	0	13	
4	1	21	0	1	1	23	
	2	16	3	5	0	24	
	3	19	0	6	1	26	25
	4	19	1	7	0	27	
5	1	30	1	13	0	44	
	2	37	2	10	0	49	
	3	17	0	7	0	24	44
	4	42	2	15	0	59	
6	1	46	2	3	0	51	
	2	21	0	4	2	27	
	3	27	0	7	0	34	34.5
	4	19	1	5	1	26	
7	1	37	4	6	1	48	
	2	38	2	1	0	41	
	3	14	0	2	4	20	40.5
	4	47	4	2	0	53	
8	1	27	3	12	2	44	
	2	34	4	15	1	54	53.33
	3	43	4	14	1	62	
Overall Average		28.7	1.8	7.8	1.3	39.98	

was displayed while in the other three L1 discussions, multiple examples emerged. This dimension requires students to understand the impact of political and cultural systems, and it appeared that some students made more connections than others.

Despite two guiding questions explicitly related to the CL dimension, 'considering multiple viewpoints', students did not often show that they considered omitted or marginalised voices in the texts. In fact not one discussion of Text 3 made any reference to a 'consideration of multiple viewpoints'. This should not be surprising because reference to this dimension was not made in many students' reports of their metacognitive understandings of CR. Reasons for this could be that students focused on developing their own viewpoints, or they sometimes did not realise that particular groups were omitted or marginalised, or perhaps they did not see value in this aspect of CRD. Some intervention on this dimension occurred, but some students may not have internalised this information or had not had enough practice recognising the techniques authors used to marginalise certain voices or perspectives. The fact, however, that instances occasionally emerged indicates that they were at times able and willing to 'consider multiple viewpoints'.

References to 'taking action' emerged in all of the L1 discussions and in all of the L2 discussions of the final text; but evidence of this dimension was minimal, often nil. In fact, not one of the four discussions of Text 5 had any examples of 'taking action'. 'Taking action' represents processes on the extreme CL end of the CR continuum (Figure 1) which no student mentioned when reporting their understandings of CR. On the rare occasions this dimension did emerge, the text possibly elicited passion in certain students or struck a discord with their worldviews, spurring them to consider 'taking action' as Patel Stevens and Bean (2007) attest.

Of the discourse relating to 'taking action' that was displayed, most of it referred to a personal refusal to support an author's claims. Students did not explicitly state plans to change dominant discourses or join any advocacy campaigns, but, by refusing to accept claims, they were 'taking action' in terms of consciously or subconsciously examining their values and attitudes and considering alternative positions and points of view before reaching decisions. In one example, Xiaoli said, *we should think about the future or the big issues such as social development (.) not necessarily form a procession and demonstrate on the street* (T1,grp.4,l.95). Here she revealed her understanding that personal reflection was sufficient action to take. The fact that 'taking action' was not discussed more often does not mean that all students were unable to engage in it. Clearly the examples that did emerge refute this.

5.12.2 Justificatory Discourse (JD)

The highest average amount of JD (9.3%) emerged in discussions of the last text. This average was considerably higher than in any of the other discussions because one of the groups displayed an unusually high amount of JD (15.4%). Overall, no clear patterns arose, but it is noted that no evidence of JD emerged at all in one discussion of Text 3 and generally low amounts were displayed in another discussion of Texts 3 and two discussions of Text 4. This suggests that the text topic or construction had an impact on amounts of JD.

As illustrated in Table 9, students relied on the subcategories 'intrinsic' and

'textual rationale' in almost equal amounts. In contrast, they displayed

Table 9: Sub-categories of JD (number of turns with evidence of each sub-category)

Text	Grp. No.	Intrinsic Rationale	Extrinsic Rationale	Textual Rationale	Total	Aver-age
1 (L1)	1	5	2	2	9	8.75
	2	2	3	2	7	
	3	3	0	5	8	
	4	3	5	3	11	
2	1	8	0	6	14	11
	2	4	0	5	9	
	3	3	0	7	10	
	4	5	0	6	11	
3	1	4	0	0	4	4.75
	2	6	0	5	11	
	3	2	0	2	4	
	4	0	0	0	0	
4	1	1	0	0	1	4
	2	3	1	2	6	
	3	7	0	0	7	
	4	0	0	2	2	
5	1	3	2	6	11	12
	2	4	0	11	15	
	3	7	0	3	10	
	4	5	1	6	12	
6	1	3	0	5	8	8.25
	2	3	0	6	9	
	3	7	1	3	11	
	4	1	0	4	5	
7	1	2	0	8	10	10.25
	2	6	0	7	13	
	3	2	0	2	4	
	4	4	0	10	14	
8	1	8	1	7	16	20
	2	17	0	13	30	
	3	8	1	5	14	
	Overall Average	4.39	0.55	4.61	9.88	

'extrinsic rationale' rarely, meaning that students preferred to support their

claims with examples from common knowledge and evidence in the text

rather than their personal experiences or intertextuality. Possibly this was

because they did not consider the latter very reliable or accurate rationale or they lacked confidence in the value of their experiences, or they did not have relevant background knowledge and experience or make connections to it.

5.12.3 Empowering Discourse (ED)

ED emerged rarely overall with the highest average amount of only 2.2% displayed in discussions of Text 6. Notable examples emerged in several discussions, but, in five of the total thirty-one discussions, there was no evidence of ED at all and, interestingly, four of those five discussions were about one text, Text 3. This suggests that Text 3 was not very conducive to eliciting displays of ED or indeed CRD in general. ED involves processes at the CL end of the CR continuum (Figure 1) and, in their reported definitions of CR, students did not make many references to these processes; hence, it perhaps should not be surprising that they did not engage in ED very much.

The subcategories of ED, illustrated in Table 10, show that references to 'impact on the reader' were generated most, followed by references to 'hidden agenda' and 'positioning the reader'. Reasons for this preference are not clear, but perhaps students found it easier to make connections between the text and impacts on the reader because they could use their own personal experience of reading the text.

Table 10: Sub-categories of ED (number of turns with evidence of each sub-category)

Text	Grp. No.	Impact on reader	Hidden Agenda	Positioning the reader	Total	Average
1 (L1)	1	0	0	4	4	4
	2	0	1	3	4	
	3	2	0	2	4	
	4	2	2	0	4	
2	1	3	1	1	5	3.3
	2	3	0	0	3	
	3	0	1	0	1	
	4	3	1	0	4	
3	1	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	
	3	0	0	0	0	
	4	0	0	0	0	
4	1	0	3	1	4	2.3
	2	2	0	0	2	
	3	1	0	0	1	
	4	2	0	0	2	
5	1	1	1	0	2	1.5
	2	0	1	0	1	
	3	0	1	0	1	
	4	0	1	1	2	
6	1	3	1	1	5	4
	2	3	1	0	4	
	3	2	3	0	5	
	4	0	2	0	2	
7	1	4	1	0	5	3
	2	1	1	0	2	
	3	2	1	0	3	
	4	2	0	0	2	
8	1	0	0	0	0	5
	2	3	4	2	9	
	3	1	3	2	6	
Overall Average		1.4	1.0	0.5	2.9	

5.13   Summary of the Nature and Extent of CRD

To summarise, the nature and extent of CRD displayed during discussions

constituted primarily ID, but there was evidence of JD and ED in relatively

small amounts. Discussions of Texts 1, 2, and 8 revealed relatively high

average amounts of CRD, yet, despite a pattern of increasing average amounts of CRD after Text 3, inconsistent amounts in individual discussions prove that displaying CRD is not a straightforward matter of learning and applying a skill. Instead, displays of CRD depend on the interaction of various factors. Importantly, displays of ED in the initial L2 discussions show that language was not an impediment to displays of CRD and there seemed to be some correlation between the metacognitive understandings of CR that students expressed and the nature and extent of CRD that emerged, but inconsistencies signify that conditions for the display of CRD were not always achieved; hence, a deeper exploration of contributing factors is needed.

Before considering the factors affecting the emergence of CRD, a few interesting findings about the interactions should be noted. Firstly, though amounts of CRD remained generally low, it seemed that claims became more specific and supported with more credible rationale. Secondly, data from three of the four discussions of Text 3 revealed the least CRD overall and no ED was displayed during any of the discussions of that text. Finally, an unusually high number of displays of CRD emerged in one particular group discussion of Text 8.

Some possible reasons why the nature and extent of CRD emerged as it did have been suggested in this section, but it seems that displays of CRD depend on various interacting factors which determine whether students make connections between the current practices, their background knowledge and experience, and the value they place on displaying CRD. Evidence will be

explored in more detail in section 5.16 to see if these connections could be triggered through various forms of scaffolding or other factors.

5.14 Factors Affecting the Emergence of CRD in Group Discussions

Findings addressing the first two research questions reveal that students generally claimed to value CR which suggests they viewed CR as a social good and this likely provided some motivation for them to display CRD in group discussions. Other factors that students claimed affected their displays of CRD were explored, such as various forms of scaffolding and knowledge of, or interest in certain text topics. This section considers these and other observable factors that may have affected displays of CRD. Identity and relationships enacted in the discourse, as well as evidence of connections being made (Gee, 2005) will be incorporated into the discussion. This section concludes with a deeper look into the patriotic Chinese identity that frequently emerged. The first consideration is the relationship between participation rates and displays of CRD.

5.15 Participation Rates

Participation rates were calculated by counting the number of turns per twenty-minute discussion. I first compared total group participation rates and then individual participation rates over time to get a broad idea of group interactions. Table 11 shows that the average number of total turns in L2 discussions was 198, which was somewhat lower than the L1 average of 227. In their L2, some students may have felt uncertainty or lack of confidence about their comprehension of the text or their performance in the discussion

which may have reduced speed of speech or participation rates. Indeed, during focus group discussions, some students admitted they had not been able to express everything they wanted to in the early L2 discussions because of lower English proficiency.

Conversely, in ten of the twenty-seven L2 discussions the average number of turns was over the L1 average. Indeed false starts and interrupted utterances likely increased the number of turns. Students generally seemed comfortable enough together to interrupt one another to counter ideas without worrying about causing offense. This challenges notions that Chinese students hesitate to express opposing thinking in order to maintain group harmony (Li, 2005; Littlewood, 1999).

Overall no pattern of participation rates arose. The greatest number of turns (309) occurred mid-course in a discussion of Text 5 and the lowest number of turns (107) occurred in a discussion of Text 7, near the end of the course. Moreover, the number of turns for different discussions of a single text varied. It is unknown whether participation rates were affected by the amount of interest in the text or the task, but individual differences were apparent.

Variation in numbers of turns suggests that language or perceived language proficiency did not affect participation levels in the same way for everyone. Illustrating this are the numbers of individual turns, the highest (97) occurring in a discussion of Text 2, and the lowest (6) occurring a week later in a discussion of Text 3.

Table 11: Number of Turns per Discussion

Text	Grp No.	Number of turns per student Students identified by initials	Total No. of Turns	Amount CRD %
1 (L1)	1.	W-60, LH-77, MZ-50, XM-32	219	30.6
	2.	SH-75, J-49, MJ-65, AF-75, C-20	284	27.5
	3.	K-32, RJ-66, JW-48, ZY-37, WA-44	227	37.9
	4.	XL-35, B-59, KM-55, AN-30	179	44.1
2	1.	LH-62, MZ-19, W-53, XM-32	166	42.8
	2.	AF-34, SH-74, C-20, MJ-29, J-32	156	33.3
	3.	JW-10, K-24, RJ-52, ZY-17, WA-49	152	24.3
	4.	B-81, **KM-97**, XL-36, AN-49	263	22.4
3	1.	LH-63, MZ-53, W-64, S- 51	231	14.7
	2.	J-17, MJ-16, C-28, SH-62, AF-15	138	20.3
	3.	**JW-6**, K-22, RJ-34, ZY-24, WA-28	114	12.3
	4.	B-67, KM-67, XL-40, AN-25	199	6.5
4	1.	LH -74, AF-75, C-79, J-47	275	10.2
	2.	AN-45, SH-52, K-19, MJ-49	165	19.4
	3.	W-71, MZ-42, KM-46, B-58	217	15.7
	4.	JW-33, ZY-34, XM-33, XL-47	147	21.1
5	1.	SH-52, MJ-72, RJ-49, W-79, K-57	309	17.5
	2.	B-88, KM-88, XL-47, AN-24	247	26.3
	3.	JW-53, J-12, AF-52, C-45	162	21.6
	4.	ZY-49,WA-27, XM-28, MZ-74, LH-50	228	32.0
6	1.	SH-53, MJ-33, RJ-42, W-48, K-33	209	30.6
	2.	XL-35, KM-58, AF-51, B-68, AN-19	231	17.3
	3.	C-41, J-29, JW-53, LH-54	177	28.2
	4.	XM-28, MZ-30, WA-31, ZY-29	118	28.0
7	1.	K-17, MJ-63, SH-42, RJ-60, W-59	241	26.1
	2.	LH-49. AN-31, J-47, AF-55, KM-38	220	25.5
	3.	XM-24, MZ-24, C-23, JW-36	107	25.2
	4.	XL-40, B-64, WA-43, ZY-50	197	35.0
8	1.	W-54, WA-34, XL-36, ZY-50, SH-28, AF-31	233	25.8
	2.	B-50, MJ-36, XM-29, J-24, LH-15, KM-41	195	46.7
	3.	MZ-94, RJ-44, JW-36, C-36, K-39	249	32.9
Average number of group turns: L1 discussions 227; L2 discussions 198 Average number of individual turns: L1 discussions 51; L2 discussions 43				Overall average 26.2%

More interesting is the fact that fifteen of the eighteen individuals participated in discussions in which they displayed the most turns, and fourteen of the eighteen participated in discussions in which they displayed the least number of turns. The significance of this is that no individual was consistently dominant or quiet in discussions. Whether vocal or not, students generally seemed engaged and claimed to like group discussions. This parallels findings which show that Chinese students generally participate actively and

enjoy group discussions, despite expectations of teacher-led lessons and/or a lack of experience in group work (Sengupta, 2002; Liu & Littlewood, 1997).

Table 11 shows that participation rates were also inconsistent with the amount of CRD displayed. The highest amount of CRD (46.7%) emerged in group 2's discussion of Text 8 and, with 195 turns, this did not correspond to a particularly high participation rate. The lowest amount of CRD (6.5%) emerged in group 4's discussion of Text 3 which had a similar participation rate of 199 turns. Importantly, a student's lack of participation may not have signified a lack of critical awareness, but rather, time taken to reflect on and/or formulate ideas, or simply a desire to keep silent for some reason. Indeed, participation rates may have simply been a reflection of motivation levels or group dynamics on a particular day. Overall, no such correlations developed throughout the duration of the course.

Over time individual turns often became lengthier, though interruptions and false starts continued to occur. A detailed analysis of length and fluency of the turns is beyond the scope of this study but could be a useful aspect to investigate in more detail in future research.

In interviews and questionnaires, most students claimed (to varying extents) that peer group discussions helped them with their CR. They also indicated that the guiding questions, teacher-led lessons, and whole class discussions helped them. This suggests that students were receptive to scaffolding which will be discussed next.

5.16 Scaffolding

Scaffolding occurred through artefacts like the guiding questions and the use of L1, as well as through direct peer and teacher intervention. The examples provided below illustrate how scaffolding was manifested in practice.

5.16.1 Guiding Questions as Scaffolding

Groups rarely had problems getting started in L1 or L2 discussions despite the limited instructions they were given ("discuss this text critically"). This was likely because many chose to follow the guiding questions provided with Texts 1, 2, and 5, though they were not instructed to. Notably, students followed the questions more closely in discussions of Texts 1 and 2 than of Text 5 suggesting that they were less dependent on them then.

Not all guiding questions related directly to CR processes, but most provided opportunities for students to display CRD and engage in exploratory talk which could build towards further displays of CRD as in this example:

Shilin	*ok question 2 (.) [reading] "Why do you think the author has written this article?"(.) Why?*
Mengjun	*Because he want to know (.) he want to criticise the French government-*
Aifen	*What?*
Shilin	*Criticise? No(.) you see the last sentence "the French made the right decision"*

(T.2, grp.2, l.18-21)

Shilin directed the discussion by posing this guiding question which prompted the group to engage in ID to explore the author's purpose. Disagreement with Mengjun's response impelled Shilin to display JD by engaging 'textual

rationale' to prove him wrong. Potential for further exploration and displays of CRD existed in terms of recognising and challenging the author's ideology. Shilin vaguely alluded to the author's power when she asserted, *he want to show what French did … he want to arouse their* [readers'] *something about it* (l.34), but displays of ED did not fully emerge. Notably, even in early discussions students were not afraid to risk group harmony to disagree with one another.

Nonetheless, students did not always take up the opportunities to display CRD, or build on each others' contributions. Sometimes, they simply provided a cursory statement and moved to another question as if ticking off completed items on a list. Nascent CRD may have been displayed, but students did not always seem to value exploratory talk and did not display more than ID.

In discussions of the five texts without guiding questions, groups often raised similar issues to those in the guiding questions and these had potential to elicit displays of CRD, though they did not always emerge. Despite discussing the same text and having access to the same questions, not all groups interrogated the texts in the same way, illustrating the situatedness of the discussions and the human agency enacted in directing discussions.

Clear changes however, were noted over the duration of the course. In discussions of the initial two texts, turns were generally short and students depended on the guiding questions and procedural talk to direct the conversation. As the course progressed, dependence on guiding questions

and procedural talk lessened and turns tended to be longer and more self-directed. Compare for example, the opening of an early discussion with that of a final discussion:

So number one. What issues are being discussed? is the first question

(Lianghui, T.2, grp.1, l.4),

Versus:

Our topic is 'China's cosmetic surgery market flourishes' (.)its source is 'The Cosmetic Surgery Times' so I think this may cause some bias because I think 'The Cosmetic Surgery Times' may talk more about the positive part of cosmetic surgery (Rongjia, T.8, grp.3, l.4).

Interestingly, contributions in later discussions were often framed as claims (like this example) rather than questions, suggesting that students were more confident in the activity and in themselves towards the end of the course.

Overall, guiding questions were useful in getting discussions started and providing a discursive space for exploratory talk and opportunities for displays of CRD. Dispensing with the guiding questions then enabled groups to direct the discussion in critical ways on their own. The fact that discussions moved from dependence on the guiding questions to independence (object-regulated to other- or self-regulated display of CRD) demonstrates how guiding questions sometimes acted as a scaffold for displays of CRD, but it was clear that students needed a different kind of scaffolding to move beyond the generally limited displays of CRD that the questions elicited.

5.16.2 L1 as Scaffolding

As shown in Table 7, students displayed relatively high amounts of CRD in the L1 discussions leading me to believe L1 scaffolded displays of CRD to

some extent. As in Kobayashi's (2003) study, L1 scaffolded collaborative dialogue in this study by enabling students to familiarise themselves with the activity and each other without worrying about making L2 errors and this sometimes led to displays of CRD. For example, Lianghui willingly shared personal information to support the author's claim that today's Chinese youth are materialistic:

> Lianghui *I have relatives who entered universities in the 1980s (.) When they were at university in the 80s they cared a lot about political issues (.) After the 1989 riot they no longer cared about that(.)One thing they care about now is money*
>
> Wei *Did materialism begin since the political incident? Then in ancient China there was no materialism?*

*(*T1, grp.1, l.34,35).

Wei's question constituted ID as it problematised the assumption, but, rather than pursue the issue more critically, the group moved on to the next question. In this case, the group showed collaborative development and some displays of CRD, but possibly the influence of the guiding questions limited further displays of CRD. Notably, in the first L2 discussions, personal information was not shared which suggests that L1 did indeed contribute to the conditions necessary for initial sharing and rapport-building. Personal sharing did emerge in subsequent discussions as, with time, students felt more comfortable with one another.

In L2 discussions L1 was used infrequently which seems to confirm that students valued speaking English as a social good. When it did appear, L1 tended to be used for procedural talk, as a resource to clarify or convey ideas or lexis, or for expressing humour. I did not consider any of these uses of L1

as detrimental to facilitating CRD; rather, by helping students to negotiate and clarify meaning, interact more actively, and build collegial relationships, the use of L1 likely helped build conditions for displaying CRD.

In one unusual example, L1 was used three times, once for clarification, once for conveying meaning and once for expressing humour:

Anping	*and I don't understand what is "30 OECD countries"?*
Aifen	*Organisation for Economy..*
Jiang	*Economic*
Aifen	*Cooperation Development*
Lianghui	*how do you know?*
Aifen	*I checked the dictionary*
Lianghui	*good* [laugh]
Kemei	*very critical*
Aifen	*it is the countries the* 经济合作开发体 [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development]
Lianghui	*ohh*
Aifen	*I think the countries are very all are the developed countries*
Jiang	*and developed countries always* 狗咬狗 [dog eat dog] *dog bite dog* [laugh] xxx [laugh]
Anping	*it means one country criticise others badly*
Jiang	狗咬狗 [dog eat dog]
Lianghui	*ohh* [laugh]

(T.7, grp.2, l.120-134)

CRD was not displayed in this excerpt, but all five group members worked collaboratively to construct meaning. Kemei's sarcastic comment, *very critical,*

reveals that her interpretation of CR involved more than decoding words with a dictionary. The ensuing laughter shows that students understood the sarcasm and could appreciate humour in English as well as Chinese. It also reflects comfort within the group. Aifen used L1 to confirm the meaning of OECD and Jiang's L1 expression, 狗咬狗 [dog eat dog] metaphorically reflects power struggles between developed countries. No one pursued this further in this exchange.

The generally infrequent use of L1 in L2 discussions suggests that its use was not needed to sustain discussions and, though it was not observed to scaffold displays of CRD, it contributed to building collaborative relationships which were helpful for peer scaffolding.

5.16.3 Peer Scaffolding

Ellsworth (1989) warns that levels of trust and commitment are needed in the classroom before students will engage in critical discourse together. Unlike her students, my students were not racially diverse and their shared experience of being alone in a foreign country perhaps made it easier for them to bond. This is not to say there were no conflicts during discussions, but they were rare and settled quickly. Students generally displayed a trusting relationship with one another which likely helped peer scaffolding work fairly effectively.

Peer scaffolding occurred in the initial L1 discussions as students prompted one another to publicly interrogate the text. Individuals, like Shilin, sometimes

positioned themselves as leaders by initiating discussions and topic shifts and probing others for their opinions and ideas. In one L1 discussion, Jianwen, Kai, and Wang initially agreed that the text was *a very good article* (T.1, grp.3, l.51-54), while Rongjia disagreed, claiming, *I think there are some places that are not so good* (l.55). Rongjia's claim demonstrated that he was willing to oppose the others and, importantly, willing to problematise the text. '*I think'* shows either tentativeness or opinion. I suspect the latter because *not so good* (rather than *weak*) suggests that he was tactfully softening his assertion to not appear arrogant as the group members were just beginning to get to know each other. This is a useful strategy in building trust, which is important grounding for collaborative dialogue.

When Jianwen challenged Rongjia to show which parts of the text he thought were not so good, Rongjia claimed that the article was not based on fact and he displayed ED by suggesting the author's *purpose is to elicit anger in those who read the article* (l.61). Importantly, after hearing Rongjia rationalise his claim that the text was not so good in places, Wang changed his mind and agreed. This is evidence of internalisation because Wang was able to reflect on Rongjia's justified claims, make connections himself, and recognise the value of vocalising this opinion. This represents a shift from other-regulated thinking to self-regulated thinking. I would also suggest that reciprocal externalisation is evident because Wang went on to elaborate on the weaknesses in the text in an attempt to convince the other group members to change their minds too:

> Wang *Why do some of you think this is a good article? I think he did not(.) did not really(.) how should I say it? show some*

> *evidence of an investigation of the issues or reports saying that Chinese youths have certain kinds of ideas (.) he did no such investigation(.) It's all just [[his own words]]*

Rongjia *[[these are all his personal opinions]]*

Wang *And he omitted the facts so(.) some will feel that it is just pulled out of the blue(.) it is not based on facts so it's not good(.) Although what he said(.) the content is indeed true we must admit that it lacks basic examples*

(T.1, grp.3, l. 67-69).

All five peers were actively engaged (to varying degrees) in the discussion to interrogate the text more closely. Kai, Zhangyi, and Jianwen defended the author's construction of the text and challenged Wang and Rongjia on several points, displaying JD to make their arguments. Although they were not critical of the text at this point, the fact that they challenged their partners' reading of the text shows their willingness to engage in critical discussion. Moreover, after prompting from Rongjia and Wang, their cursory opinions developed into more extended and supported arguments.

Rongjia accepted the others' opinions in a collaborative way by commenting that interpretations of the text would *depend on what viewpoint you hold as you read the article* (l.86). This reflects Fairclough's (2003) point that "what we are able to see of the actuality of a text depends upon the perspective from which we approach it, including the particular social issues in focus, and the social theory and discourse theory we draw upon" (p.16). But, despite his initial collegiality, Rongjia was provoked by Jianwen's continued defence of the text and accused him of not reading critically, *Why do you feel he wrote it so well? you just blindly believe it is good* (l.91). Evidently Rongjia had arrived

in the course more willing to display CRD than Jianwen who seemed to accept the text in its entirety.

Interestingly, by line 175, Rongjia's comments had prompted Jianwen to make some connections and he reconsidered his position, clarifying that it was the author's viewpoint that he thought was good, not the text as a whole. Subsequently, he challenged the lack of supporting examples, something that he had observed Wang doing. Eventually Zhangyi began to challenge the text for ambiguity showing that he too was making connections between what his peers were saying and what he observed in the text. Kai did not seem convinced by the others, but, for some, peer scaffolding in this context was generally successful in building nascent CRD.

Noticeably, when the groups discussed the first L2 text, peer scaffolding was more limited. As mentioned, many students followed the guiding questions in a cursory manner presenting mostly undeveloped comments. A few students displayed 'metadiscourse' (MD) or procedural talk by probing group members for opinions and occasionally re-focusing the discussion on the text which helped scaffold opportunities for CRD. Often, however, subsequent turns consisted of unsubstantiated opinions about the author's stand.

Conversely, it seemed that JD was scaffolded when group 4 discussed Text 2. After Lianghui questioned the author's purpose, different group members generated various opinions:

Xumin   *He wrote the article to represent the government*

Wei   *I think he wrote the article for the Muslims because when the French government pass a law the Muslims disabide it so I think-*

Minzhe   *He wrote this article for the French people and not the-*

Xumin   *Immigrants*

Minzhe   *Immigrants.*

Lianghui   *and I have another opinion(.) he write this article to post his view to the American people because in the third paragraph he say-*

Wei   *Fourth*

Lianghui   *Ok he say that most Americans think(.) because this is Newsweek the New York newspaper(.) most Americans think we should give religious freedom (.)*

(T2, grp.1, l.48-55)

In this exchange, successive claims became a little more precise and convincing. Prompted by Xumin's initial, vague opinion, Wei saw the value in adding justification to his claim and this prompted Lianghui to identify the source as 'textual rationale' to support his claim. In this way, displays of JD were scaffolded by peers.

After some practice discussing different texts, peers tended to demand more convincing evidence from one another and, towards the end of the course, students were volunteering claims and providing rationale frequently with little, if any, prompting as in this example:

Bailin   *I think the author write this article to(.) just want to give alarm to Canadians and the Canada government and the author is not totally against Canada*

Wang   *mmm*

Bailin   *because at the last 3 last 4 paragraphs it shows some Canadians' views about this and it calls for the Canadians to stop ignoring some environmental problems*

By emphasing the word *totally,* Bailin's problematised her peers' acceptance of an absolute authorial position. Wang did not explicitly ask Bailin for justification, but his audible response may have prompted her to support her claim. She confidently did this with 'textual rationale'.

Many opportunities to display CRD were scaffolded in peer talk and levels of CRD sometimes emerged from each other during the course of this scaffolding. Though students may not have realised what they were leading each other towards, displays of CRD generally grew out of the context created by previous utterances. This is illustrated in a discussion about Text 4:

Anping	*I think the author should write something about maybe the police (.) the law (.) the judge's side because if he just write something from the family and friends (.)[[not about what the audience thinks]]-*
Mengjun	*[[oh the family and friends*
Shilin	*or the society's opinion (.) different point of view*
Anping	*yes yes and he can give us more information about the five youth*
Mengjun	*oh(.) how they-*
Anping	*yes*
Mengjun	*how they think and why they did this*
Shilin	*yes should pay much more attention on it*
Anping	*yes much more points of view*
Mengjun	*from different people (.)*

Anping displayed ID by considering multiple perspectives, specifically the author's omission of different viewpoints. This contribution provided scaffolding for both Shilin and Mengjun who built on Anping's suggestion for constructing the text in an alternative way. Clearly connections were being made and, from Anping's lead, the others made the realisation that it was useful to display this discourse.

Often peer scaffolding worked through exploratory talk which was sometimes a catalyst for displays of CRD, as in this discussion:

> Xumin   *the writer is from 'Cosmetic Surgery Times'-*
>
> Mengjun *so maybe he want to encourage and increase the number of people do cosmetic surgery*

(T8, grp.2, l.49-50)

In this example, Xumin displayed nascent ID by realising the importance of the article's source, but, before he could explain, Mengjun was prompted to suggest the author's 'hidden agenda'. Subsequently, this scaffolded a connection for Bailin who expanded on this 'hidden agenda', *he also want to make the audience feel that cosmetic surgery is popular so many people follow(.) so cosmetic surgery is not so risky … so this author want to… invoke more people to do it (T8, grp.2, l.51).* Similarly, after considerable exploratory discussion in group 3, Rongjia realised that the writer *give advertisement about Beijing's Evercare Jianxiang Hospital* (T.8, grp.3, l.185).

While peer scaffolding did not always generate extensive displays of CRD, it helped students make connections and see value in displaying CRD. Sometimes, however, interacting influences restricted displays of CRD despite scaffolding. Other times, what appeared to be failed attempts at

scaffolding may actually have successfully activated connections, but conditions were not right for displaying CRD at the time. In other words, processes may have been activated, but connections would not be made until later. Similar eventualities were manifested from teacher scaffolding.

5.16.4 Teacher Intervention

Noticing that the CRD displayed in discussions of the first two English texts often seemed perfunctory in response to the guiding questions, I decided that some intervention could be helpful and students agreed so I shared with them some text analysis tools to help raise their CLA. In subsequent peer group discussions, students did problematise lexical choices made by authors more frequently, but displays of JD and ED were limited as students did not often explore reasons why authors made the language choices they did or what the implications were. In other words, teacher scaffolding provided analytical tools, but students did not always make connections between language and power so they engaged in LA rather than CLA, as in this example:

> Shilin *and we can see the words that he uses such as "slap, punch, stomp, spit". All are negative, do you think so?*
>
> Anping *yes, negative (…) uh do you believe the five youths just do such things and killed the person?*
>
> Shilin *uh*
>
> Anping *I mean just because he don't have a cigarette lighter they kill a person?*

(T.4, grp.2, l.72-75)

Anping agreed that the words were negative, but no one questioned why the author chose those words or what the reader effect might be. After a pause and no further comments, Anping redirected the discussion.

Increased teacher intervention included more practice analysing texts together as a class and me modelling CRD, after which students' displays of JD and ED revealed greater attempts to raise CLA. For example, in a discussion of Text 7, Kemei identified provocative language in the text and the group made attempts to explore impacts:

> Kemei   *yes I think she use these words, these negative words "sluggish", "asleep at the wheel" and "haywire" and "incontinent" (.) uh these words are very (..)*
>
> Aifen   *negative*
>
> Kemei   *so it make the Canadian government very angry*
>
> Aifen   *not only Canadian government. I think the Canadians very will feel very angry*
>
> Anping *yeah I think the author didn't support the Canadian government because she also say "A leading green country a decade ago" it means the past government environment is very good (.) Maybe they were the best in the world but now the environment in Canada is very bad so the author has some bad feelings to the government of Canada*
>
> Aifen   *but I think it's the author wants to suggest* [warn] *the Canadian government(.) because he said they want to take the (.) in the second page yeah "Canadian voters would make the environment an issue in the upcoming federal election"*

 (T.7, grp.2, l.46-54).

Kemei recognised impacts of the language and Aifen and Anping clearly built on this, demonstrating the connection between the language and the author's stand and the purpose of the text. They also recognised the value in adding 'textual rationale' to support their claims. Though she did not use the metalanguage taught, Anping identified the author's presupposition. This exchange illustrates how turns became longer in later discussions as students elaborated claims and provided credible rationale in displays of JD. While

elaborated claims and more credible rationale were the result of a combination of factors, I attribute the increased engagement in CLA to teacher scaffolding.

In another example showing increased CLA, group 3 explored the quotations in Text 8:

> Rongjia   *quotation about the doctor in Beijing's Evercare Hospital*
>
> Kemei   *Bao Lulu*
>
> Rongjia   *so it's not the author's words (..) we cannot say-*
>
> Chen   *the author want to choose these words because it show the author's opinion so he choose these words*
>
> Rongjia   *so many of the words is from just one person in one particular hospital so I think it lost some effect*

(T.8, grp.3, l.28-32)

Several group members participated together to construct meaning here. Chen demonstrated the realisation that quotations are deliberately selected to support the author's stand. In taught sessions we had discussed how authors intentionally select and reject content to include in their texts and Chen clearly applied this knowledge here. Initially Rongjia was hesitant to link the quotation to the author, but, persuaded by Chen's remark, he went on to comment on the impact. By *lost some effect*, Rongjia meant that the text was less credible because it was biased. This shows that teacher scaffolding and peer scaffolding worked together to promote CRD.

In one group Wang made a comment indicating resistance to CLA:

> Shilin   *why don't the writer use lazy instead of sluggish?*

Mengjun	*[[this is-]]*
Rongjia	*[[writer wants]] to use a very strong word*
Wang	*if the writer use the word lazy you would ask why the writer use the word lazy not sluggish.*
Kai	[laughing]
Mengjun	*yes but I think your point is good but I think sluggish is too strong word*
Wei	*This strong word may be more use and suitable for the author's ideology*

(T.7, grp.1, l.19-21).

Shilin demonstrated that she was aware that author's language choices had impacts. It is not clear whether Wang was expressing frustration or humour in response, but certainly Kai's laugh indicates *he* found the remark amusing. The fact that Mengjun and Wei resumed the discussion of the language and linked it to the author's ideology shows they wanted to raise CLA, but they did not engage in an explicit discussion of the author's ideology here and instead explored other key lexical items, the source, and the use of quotations before making claims about the author's stand. It seems an opportunity to display CLA was lost indicating that more teacher scaffolding may have been needed promote more CRD.

Notably, after the text analysis tools were taught, Shilin attempted to raise CLA in numerous discussions; however, she was less engaged when discussions moved to political issues. This indicates that other influences, like discussion topic, interacted with teacher scaffolding causing in shifts in engagement which resulted in variable displays of CRD.

Besides increased LA and CLA, another noticeable effect of teacher scaffolding was a demonstrated increase in the use of metalanguage which enabled students to identify and explore more features of the texts, such as presupposition, irony, and inference. Section 5.11.4 presented an example with presupposition.

In another example group 1 identified and explored the author's use of *metaphor* which Wei revisited a few turns later:

Shilin	*And "bog" means everywhere muddy ground can let someone to think there is muddy ground*
Menjun	*then you drop in it*
Shilin	*yeah you drop in it and sink*
Kai	*sorry it's very (.)*
Wei	*metaphor*
	…
Wei	*I think he use a metaphor to let us see a very clear opinion about this panda diplomacy*

(T5, grp.1, l.81-85, 94)

Initially the group displayed DD by simply defining the word '*bog*'. Wei then used metalanguage to characterise it as a metaphor, albeit not too fluently. By '*opinion*' he seemed to denote 'perspective' or 'ideology'. The claim itself was not very critical in the way it was expressed, but Wei undoubtedly had made the connection between language and power.

In the next turn, Rongjia recognised another presupposition which led to a deeper analysis of the text for supporting evidence and, after some reflection indicated by the pause, Rongjia revealed China's likely motivation.

Rongjia and *"new round"* (.) *did you see in the first paragraph "new round" "China offered a new round of panda diplomacy yesterday" (.) means there's an old round*

Shilin *oh yes*

Rongjia *because the KMT parties uh Lien Chan (.) came to China and China gave-*

Shilin *and we can infer this by looking in paragraph 14 (.) the last 2 paragraphs the last sentence says "Taiwan has refused similar offers in the past" we can infer from this it is also (..)*

Rongjia *I think panda diplomacy has some negative meaning (.) it seems that China just use panda as some political tools*

(T5, grp.1, l.96-100)

Although Rongjia did not actually use metalanguage, he showed awareness of the presupposition. Shilin agreed and when Rongjia attempted to explain further, Shilin interrupted him to provide 'textual rationale'. Rongjia then characterised the pandas as political tools which prefaced Mengjun's contribution which explicitly revealed an assumption in the text, *I think sending panda (.) the aim is to make Taiwan come back to China* (l.113). Although Mengjun was referring to the government's 'hidden agenda' rather than the author's, he and his group uncovered this belief that informed the author's construction of the text.

Some students demonstrated that they were influenced by another teacher scaffolded activity, namely comparisons of different texts on the same topic to emphasise impacts of alternative constructions and perspectives on readers.

In one discussion, students debated alternative ways of constructing Text 6.

Wei thought the author was sensible in not including an economist's

perspective, but Rongjia disagreed:

Wei   *he can quote from some experts about the environment
            about the negative influences of the Three Gorges* [Dam]
            *including the environment (..)I think (.) there's no business
            about economic-*

Rongjia   *if his opinion is strong enough he can show the opinions of
            the Three Gorges officers and then refute them and make
            his own opinion stronger
            …*

Wei   *I think it's no business for this article (.) It's talking about the
            environment of the Baiji dolphin(.) If you talk about too
            much about the economic reason (.) everybody knows the
            Three Gorges* [Dam] *can bring a lot of economic benefits (.)
            it will make the audience think that Three Gorges* [Dam] *is
            ok (.) it's more important than the environment so that give
            the opposite of the author's opinion (.) of the original
            perspective*

Rongjia   *I think if the writer is a good writer he can deal with this
            problem*

Wei   *ok*

Mengjun   *I think the author can mention a little about the economy but
            not too much.*

(T6, grp.1, l.156-163)

By discussing alternative constructions, this group showed that they

understood the text as a constructed object as we had discussed in teacher-

led sessions. They pondered financial and environmental perspectives and

considered the reader impact of including missing voices. While suggesting

the inclusion of unheard voices is important, this group did not actually

discuss the impact of a whole text written from a different ideological

perspective. In other words, they were being critical in an analytical sense,

more than through recognition of power. Disagreement was made obvious in this excerpt and the discursive space enabled an exchange of views. Peers were respectful of differing opinions as Wei conceded the point and Mengjun suggested a compromise, possibly to maintain group harmony.

Overall, teacher scaffolding had some positive effect by providing tools and models of CRD that helped some students make connections and display CRD. This was confirmed in a focus group discussion when Wang explicitly claimed *we will discuss according to the text analysis tools* and Bailin added *yes I think it give the general direction and uh which part we should look and we should think about and show some tricks the author will play* (focus grp.3). She was referring here to rhetorical strategies we had discussed in class. In practice, students considered alternative constructions of texts and demonstrated increased metalanguage, LA and CLA after teacher intervention. Like Wallace (2003), however, I was not very successful in using CLA to lead students toward emancipation or transformation of dominant discourses. The limited ED displayed suggests that more could be done to facilitate this aspect of CRD. My intervention focused primarily on analytical evaluations of texts so, not surprisingly, these were the CR processes the students demonstrated most. Nevertheless, I was content that students were demonstrating evidence that connections were being made between what they were doing in class sessions and peer group discussions.

5.17 Text Topic

It seems obvious that the topic of a discussion would affect participation rates due to levels of interest and background knowledge of the particular topic. More significant here is whether the text topic affected the emergence of CRD.

Groups generally remained on task and non-critical discourse was almost always related (directly or indirectly) to the topic of the text. Text 1, about youth in China, was deliberately chosen to relate to the students' experience and, as expected, participation rates were high and displays of all three varieties CRD emerged. While the use of L1 likely played a role in this, the topic, too, seemed to contribute to displays of CRD. For example, when the author overgeneralised Chinese youth, students displayed CRD which supports the notion that we reveal a critical disposition when a discord with our worldviews impels us to act (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007, p.91). Relevance of the topic also enabled students to display JD as they could draw on their background knowledge to support their claims.

Text 8, about cosmetic surgery in China, was selected by a student and it garnered much interest as reported by the students in focus group discussions. Notably, average amounts of CRD displayed in two of the final discussions were higher than usual, one of which being the highest of all thirty-one discussions (see Table 7). Also significant was that 'quality' of CRD seemed higher in terms of elaborated displays of ID, credible rationale in JD, and attempts at displays of ED in all but one group. This suggests that interest

in the topic facilitated displays of CRD for two groups. Ironically the other group also claimed to be interested in the topic, but this seemed to impede their displays of CRD because, although participation rates were high, the students displayed a significant amount of 'descriptive discourse' (DD) as they debated issues tangential to the topic, such as whether or not body piercing constituted cosmetic surgery. In this case passion or interest in the topic actually restricted participation in CRD which counters Patel Stevens and Bean's (2007) claim that passion can evoke critical practice. Clearly interest in the topic motivated different students to respond to texts in different ways and this affected displays of CRD.

The topic of both Text 2 and 3, religion, was outside the experience of most of these students. Interestingly, the discussions of the two texts yielded contrasting amounts of CRD. Table 7 illustrates relatively high average amounts of CRD in discussions of Text 2, yet the lowest amounts in all but one category for discussions of Text 3. Text 3 reported on the debate over teaching evolution vs. 'intelligent design' in US schools. Xiaoli's candid remark in the example below confirms that students' were not interested in the topic. Noticeably, she grouped all Chinese people together and the others seemed to support her claim.

Xiaoli   *Maybe CM* [the teacher] *thinks it's very interesting but all Chinese don't think it's very interesting*

Kemei   *Because we don't know much about religion*

Bailin   *Yeah*

(T.3, grp. 4, l.173-175)

In this excerpt Kemei rationalised that background knowledge of the topic was important for generating interest. The link between background knowledge, interest, and display of CRD is supported by the fact that group 3's discussion of this text generated the lowest amount of CRD of all discussions throughout the course and ID was the only variety of CRD they displayed. Surprisingly, Text 3 had been selected by a student in group 3 who seemed to be interested in the topic, so clearly one individual's interest did not influence the group as a whole, at least in this case. Other groups also talked about a lack of background knowledge of this topic and overall amounts of CRD were below average. Most noteworthy about the discussions of Text 3 was that, unusually, no group displayed any ED at all. Moreover, an aspect of the text that I thought was provoking, namely a repeated war metaphor, was overlooked in all group discussions suggesting that the topic of the text had an impact on the emergence of CRD.

Conversely, a lack of background knowledge of the text topic did not always result in the suppression of CRD which counters Patel Stevens and Bean's (2007) claim that topic knowledge and interest in the topic invokes critical practice (p.91). Indeed, their lack of knowledge about religion was articulated by several groups when discussing Text 3, yet this seemed to motivate group 1 to learn more about the topic and consider it a challenge to undertake. Although this did not lead to any displays of ED, this group did display credible rationale constituting JD. Moreover, students displayed more examples of all varieties of CRD in discussions of Text 2 including some insightful ED (see Lianghui's example in 5.11.2). Perhaps students were

being more vocal in their first L2 discussions to impress me or each other, or perhaps wearing headscarves in school was a more provocative or relevant issue as it had also been raised in Singapore. What is clear is that individual and group preferences differed and situational factors had an impact on displays of CRD. Regarding Text 2, additional influencing factors clearly superseded the impact of limited topic knowledge on displays of CRD.

In focus group discussions at the end of the course, all groups unanimously confirmed that background knowledge of the topic was important for CR. Again, however, situational factors were important because displays of CRD did not necessarily emerge despite claims by some individuals about significant knowledge of or interest in the text topic. For example, Text 4 created much interest, but, rather than interrogating the text and displaying CRD, most of the groups engaged in DD by recounting the reported crime and voicing opinions about crime in general. In another example, group 1 displayed increased rates of participation and complained when the time expired on their discussion of Text 5 saying it was interesting *because this topic is related to us* (Mengjun, T.5, grp.1, l.297); but, despite their interest, they displayed less CRD than the other three groups. One individual, Xumin expressed great enthusiasm for Text 6 because it reported a situation in his hometown of which he was knowledgeable. Indeed he participated in the discussion more than usual, but again, most of what he displayed was DD rather than CRD. These examples suggest that CRD was restricted or conflicted with other discourses when a topic activated passion or emotion as Janks (2002) found.

Related to text topic, several students suggested that controversial topics could be discussed critically, but texts with factual content, such as recipes, could not. Not everyone agreed. For example, Wang countered, *any article is biased because any article (.) any words the author write (.) because why he use these words but not other words? Because of his opinion (.) So any article is biased* (focus grp. 3). Despite the false starts, Wang demonstrated that he recognised the importance of problematising the author's choice of words and was aware that the words selected reflect the author's opinion. I suspect that by 'opinion' Wang meant viewpoint or ideology. Minzhe asserted, *you <u>can</u>* [read anything critically] *but it's useless* (focus group 3). This claim shows that Mingzhe places value on CR in some circumstances but not others. Despite their differences (or perhaps because of them) students were reflecting on conceptual issues regarding interpretations of CR.

Text topic clearly impacted peer group discussions, both in terms of participation rates and displays of CRD. Interest in the topic was determined through explicit reports by students and, notably, individual interest did not always signify group interest. Significantly, reported interest in the topic could either prompt more displays of CRD or fewer when discussions digressed from the text to a descriptive exploration of the topic itself. There was some evidence to support Patel Stevens and Bean's (2007) claim that CRD increases when readers have topic knowledge and passion or when a discord with their worldview is incited. Some evidence, however, refuted this because sometimes passion or emotion restricted participation in CRD as Janks (2002) found.

5.18 Influence of Other Varieties of Discourse

As mentioned in sections 4.12 and 4.13, MD and DD were not considered varieties of CRD, yet they occasionally helped the discussion move towards displays of CRD. As the course progressed, students challenged their partners more and showed willingness to engage one another in critical discussion, but unless they specifically referred to the reading of the text, this was not considered CRD.

MD in the form of procedural talk was often used to bring the discussion back to the text. Typical examples that resulted in a display of ID occurred when students suggested going on to another guiding question. JD was sometimes displayed when peers probed one another for justification and sometimes this led to EP.

DD was usually used to convey personal knowledge or experiences and to recount parts of the text as background or contextual information, for example:

> Bailin   *… The beginning is more description and the (.) this author compare Qi Qi and the panda*
>
> Kemei   *yeah it give us a–*
>
> Bailin   *to compare the panda and the baiji dolphin to motivate the readers to want to pity the baiji dolphin*
>
> Kemei   *yeah*

(Text 5, grp.2, l.38-41)

Here Bailin started by simply describing the opening of the text which led her to explain how this helped the author elicit pity in the reader. Effectively, her

DD led to a display of ED. Bailin showed confidence by asserting her claim as a statement rather than a question and by interrupting Kemei to complete her claim first. Kemei's agreement shows that she had had the same idea and/or she was being collegial. She did not show anger about the interruption, but maintained group harmony.

Though rare, this example shows that other varieties of discourse could sometimes open up more opportunities for displaying CRD. Whether these opportunities were taken up depended on whether students were making connections between the varieties of discourse, their background knowledge and experience, their past and current practices, the local context, and the value they placed on discussion they were engaged in.

5.19 Observable Aspects of Identity

Noticeable aspects of identity emerged on several occasions, but not consistently. For example, Shilin and Rongjia often displayed a discourse that involved initiating discussions, directing topic shifts, raising issues, posing questions, probing peers for opinions, evaluating claims, and seeking justification which often resulted in displays of CRD. In displaying this discourse they positioned themselves as group leaders. During some interactions, however, Shilin and Rongjia remained quiet or enacted a less dominant role, showing that contextual factors, like knowledge or interest in text topic, or interaction with other emerging identities affected displays of CRD. In other words, discourses as social practices enacted certain identities (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 1999).

Sometimes the enactment of certain identities led to more displays of CRD, while at other times they were restricted. In a discussion of Text 4, Aifen explicitly raised a gender issue revealing a feminist aspect of her identity which surfaced again in a discussion of Text 7. Both times Aifen was fairly strong in countering what she perceived as the marginalised female and this created potential opportunities to display CRD. Aifen, however, passionately displayed mostly DD in terms of descriptive accounts and opinions on topics seemingly peripheral to the texts. Possibly, the text elicited such an emotional reaction with this aspect of Aifen's identity that it restricted her participation in CRD (Janks, 2002). In other words, the competing discourses of critical reader and feminist were in conflict (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Gender clearly interacts in complex ways with other identities making it "often difficult if not impossible to determine the extent to which gender alone impacts interaction, participation or learning" (Morita, 2004, p.597). A similar example of competing discourses involved Xumin who struggled when he tried to position himself as both an expert on Wuhan and a critical reader:

> Xumin   *but these three species are live very well but only Baiji dolphin are facing extinction so I think that as these three other species are living very well so I think it is possible for Baiji dolphin to live very well*
>
> Wang   *yeah but the other species you mentioned is in Yangtze River or-?*
>
> Xumin   *no not in Yangtze River*

(T.6, grp.4, l.85-87)

In this discussion, Xumin participated more and produced the longest turns in any of his discussions, indicating that the topic had activated his willingness to share his knowledge. He proudly acknowledged Wuhan as his hometown, but

most of the discourse he displayed was DD. Despite his efforts to make connections and justify claims, it seemed Xumin was hesitant to be too critical of his hometown and this restricted his engagement in CRD.

5.19.1 Patriotic Chinese Identity

One aspect of identity frequently enacted by multiple students in discussions of all eight texts was that of patriotism, so I would like to explore this further.

Individuals often revealed allegiance to their Chinese identity by positioning themselves, and each other, as Chinese patriots by accepting authors' constructions that reflected their own beliefs, like the author's reference to "the June 4 incident" in Tiananmen Square rather than the "massacre" (BBC News, n.d.). Correspondingly, students often pointed out where an author was positioning China or Chinese people in a negative or narrow way. For example, Mengjun asserted, *His ideas definitely disparage the Chinese students* (T.1, grp.2, l.120). In another discussion Rongjia claimed, *He categorises all* [Chinese] *youths into one type* (T1, grp.3, l.102). Referring to cosmetic surgery, Mingzhe said, *there is a comparison (.)that Chinese people wanted to look like western but <u>western</u> people don't want to be like Asian people so that means that only Chinese people or Asian people are cheap* (T.8, grp.3, l.103). By *cheap*, I think Mingzhe meant superficial. He went on to accuse the author of bias. In these examples patriotic PRC discourse prompted students to display CRD by challenging the way authors positioned Chinese people. This confirms Patel Stevens and Bean's (2007) claim that

critical dispositions are activated when there is a dissonance with our worldviews (p.91).

In one discussion of Text 5 regarding the China-Taiwan issue, Xumin problematised a comment by Minzhe:

> Minzhe   *it's a history problem but if all Taiwanese think that they can have a better life if they remain as an independent country we can just let it go*
>
> Lianghui   *I–*
>
> Xumin   *what do you mean by <u>remain</u> as an independent country?*
>
> Minzhe   *oh (.) I made a presupposition (.) sorry sorry*

(T.5, grp.4, l.169-172)

In line with China's stand, Xumin clearly refused to consider Taiwan an independent country or to allow his peer to reproduce this political discourse without question. His emphasis on the word 'remain' indicates he knew exactly what the statement meant so I suspect by posing a question rather than making a statement he was giving Minzhe an opportunity to save face by rephrasing his claim to show loyalty to China. Minzhe recognised his own remark as a presupposition and his apology demonstrates that he wanted to appear to support the Chinese position. Indeed by using the pronoun *we*, he showed his solidarity. His initial comment, however, suggests that he may actually have been more sympathetic towards Taiwan. His use of metalanguage in terms of his own discourse illustrates how Minzhe had internalised the concept of presupposition.

Occasionally, the interaction of patriotic Chinese discourse and CRD created

tension. For example, in a discussion of Text 6, Kemei said, "*Sewer" (.) it*

means dirty water so it shows the hatred of the author towards the Yangtze

River. Kemei attempted to enact CLA to reveal the author's ideology, but by

deflecting the blame away from those responsible for constructing the dam

and directing it to the river, her point was weakened. It appeared that her

patriotism put her on the defensive and did not allow her to blame the Chinese

government or the construction companies for the damage they caused.

Similarly, in a discussion of Text 5, students said:

Bailin	but the word "*bamboozled" (.) "embarrassed" and "in a spat" (.) and "China has threatened to invade Taiwan" (.) those are very bad words*
Kemei	*I agree with you (.) this word shows [[that the author]] really had bias*
Bailin	*[[yeah so I think]]* *yeah I think the author has treated China very very bad and the author used this word "panda diplomacy" to cheat Taiwan (.) The author didn't take a positive attitude to China*
Kemei	*yes*
Xiaoli	*yes I have another evidence because all through this article the author didn't show the Beijing government's opinion*
Kemei	*yes yes I agree with you*

(T.5, grp.2, l.65-70).

Some valid points were raised in this excerpt, namely the author's lexical

choices were provocative and the text was slanted to Taiwan's perspective,

but students did not articulate this clearly and the vague terms, '*bad words',*

'very very bad', 'didn't take a positive attitude' left the issues implicit. In fact,

the patriotic identity displayed by this group seemed to limit displays of CRD. Xiaoli's claim, for example, that the government's opinion was omitted was not accurate, suggesting that her judgement may have been clouded by her patriotic identity. This adds weight to Lankshear and Knobel's (2004) claim that it is not always possible to participate in certain discourses if they conflict with others we belong to (p.291), and supports Jank's (2002) argument that 'irrational' elements of our identity can threaten our participation in critical practices (p.91).

Anping challenged her peers and, with unnecessary prompting from Bailin, justified her claim with examples:

Anping	*I believe the author has bias but not as much as we discussed because [[like]]-*
Bailin	*[[why?]]*
Anping	*because like we discussed (.) China also do some good things to Taiwan like reduce uh tariffs and give pandas-*
Xiaoli	*that's not a good thing (.) that's economics*

(T.5, grp.2, l.71-74).

Anping realised that, contrary to Xiaoli's earlier claim, there *was* evidence of the government's voice in the text. Xiaoli acknowledged this and showed she was aware of wider sociopolitical issues at play, but, by relegating it to economics, she dismissed it, presumably because it put Beijing in a negative light which opposed her sense of patriotism. In this case CRD was displayed, but again, it was limited.

Students did not always show support for the Chinese government. In this discussion of Text 1, they criticised China's censorship and suppression of democracy:

Anping	*In fact you see for example when China reports about Taiwan or some insurgence in the west area it is always unreal or not reported at all (.) Once I watched on Phoenix TV that in fact the Taiwan issue including some demonstrations (.) the corruption issues (.) etc. are very serious (.) But China has never reported these*
Xiaoli	*Because CCTV* [China Central Television] *serves the government*
Kemei	*Yes in some senses it is for maintaining social stability [[So they dare not report these things]]*
Bailin	*[[Yes, it's for stability (.) for controlling the public voice]]*
Kemei	*In fact every country has this kind of management (.) [[They need to block out information]*
Bailin	*[[Yes we have freedom of the press to some degree but it's not a large amount]]*
Anping	*Yes I agree*
Kemei	*But we should not follow the western way xxxx*
Bailin	*You see if the central government wants to refuse media coverage of someone (.) it's very easy (.) As soon as the command comes out all media coverage of (.) for example a writer or a singer (.) will immediately disappear*
Kemei	*But in other countries this kind of situation may also exist*
Bailin	*But now this is progressing (.) Now we have many programmes like some talk shows which reflect some social problems (.) The situation has already improved*

(T.1, grp.4, l.141-151)

Although not directly referring to the author or text, the students here displayed a critical disposition by revealing how the government's interests are served by CCTV and by justifying their claims with 'extrinsic rationale'.

While Kemei agreed with her peers' criticisms, she revealed her loyalty to China by rationalising the government's actions and broadening the issue to other countries, which is a fair point, though she did not name the countries or cite any examples as Anping had done regarding China. Kemei also appeared to warn China from adopting western ways.

Anti-western sentiment emerged occasionally in these discussions but was outweighed by references to China or Chinese people demonstrating that students frequently made links to their own background. That references to China were sometimes positive and sometimes negative indicates that context was important and individual differences were exhibited. Individual interest in the topic, the reaction of peers, degree of dissonance with personal views, and other factors dictated how much of a student's patriotic identity he or she would reveal and when. This shows that identities that emerged were linked to a sense of agency being enacted. In other words, students made individual decisions about what identities they would display in their group discussions.

5.20 Summary of Factors Influencing the Emergence of CRD

It has been demonstrated that participation rates did not significantly affect displays of CRD. Factors that did influence the emergence of CRD, directly or indirectly, included various forms of scaffolding, text topic, other varieties of discourse, and various aspects of identity.

The use of guiding questions as scaffolding was useful for directing discussions and providing opportunities to display of CRD. The use of L1 scaffolded the formation of collaborative relationships in initial discussions enabling students to familiarise themselves with the discussion task and each other. In subsequent discussions L1 was rarely used and did not contribute to displays of CRD.

Peer scaffolding prompted exploratory talk which sometimes resulted in displays of CRD, but complexities emerged in dialogic interactions, so more than simply encouraging exploratory talk was needed for facilitating CRD. More significantly, peer scaffolding helped students see value in displaying CRD which sometimes led to further displays of CRD, particularly JD; however, what may have been successful peer mediation was not always evident in discussions. Moreover, interacting factors like an urge to refocus on the guiding questions sometimes restricted peer scaffolding and displays of CRD.

Teacher intervention scaffolded CRD in terms of providing tools and models of CRD that students applied in their discussions resulting in some displays of CRD. Specifically, teacher scaffolding resulted in increases in demonstrated CLA, metalanguage, and considerations of alternative constructions of texts. Students made some connections between taught practices and CRD in group discussions, and there was evidence of a move from object-regulated learning (guiding questions) to other-regulated (peer/teacher) to self regulated

learning, but more teacher scaffolding seems necessary for facilitating a broader range of CR processes, particularly those that promote ED.

Students' background knowledge of and reported interest in the text topic undoubtedly had an impact on displays of CRD. The impact, however, was affected by individual differences, sometimes resulting in more displays of CRD and other times fewer. Evidence emerged to both support and refute the claim that CRD increases with readers' knowledge and passion, or when there is a discord with their worldview (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007).

Other varieties of discourse did not usually lead to displays of CRD, but they opened up opportunities to engage in exploratory talk which sometimes led to displays of CRD.

Aspects of identity, including patriotic Chinese identity, emerged frequently and, interestingly, sometimes promoted displays of CRD while at other times limited them as discourses competed and emotional reactions impaired critical awareness (Janks, 2002).

The overall conclusion is that no single influencing factor can attribute for displays of CRD as they interacted in complex ways in different situations resulting in variable varieties and amounts of CRD.

5.21 Transformation

In line with SCT and action research, the students and I reflected on our CR practice throughout the duration of the reading course. Students displayed CRD from the beginning and extensive change did not occur. In fact, discussions never showed significant increase in displays of ED or discourse reflecting the CL dimension of 'taking action'. Nevertheless, there was evidence of some transformations, particularly in terms of metacognitive understandings of CR that students shared, the nature of the CRD they displayed, the complexity of language they used, and the connections they revealed. These transformations have been presented throughout the discussion already; however, I would like to summarise them here and add a few others.

The initial metacognitive understandings that students' reported reflected a limited range of CR processes expressed in rather vague terms, most focused on comparing reader's and writer's opinions. At the end of the course, most students continued to value the practice of judging the writer's opinion; however, they showed evidence of increased awareness of a broader range of CR processes in general and specifically included several CL processes in their revised interpretations. In a post-course email questionnaire, Shilin wrote:

> *At first I even don't know why we need critical reading. I thought critical reading is just not to believe what the author said and you should have your own ideas. However, now I think critical reading is to analyze the language and the sources. And even compare the article with the others to help us not to be manipulated by the author* (email questionnaire, December 2005).

In this response, Shilin alluded to a wider range of CR processes including critiquing the author's 'positioning of readers' (*manipulation*).

In one focus group, Bailin confessed, *before I learnt CR I will always follow the author's opinion then change to another side very quickly (.) then after learning this I will have my own opinion (..) I think our minds become more mature* (focus group 3, 8 November 2005). According to this admission, Bailin felt she was not a critical reader before she took this course, though others argued that it was a case of her not being aware of her criticality before. Whether through increased understanding of CR or through raised awareness, it is clear that Bailin felt her thinking had transformed.

It should be noted that Xiaoli did not believe her CR practice had changed, *I think most of what I can express is based on what I learnt in Chinese lessons in China and so far I always feel so (*email questionnaire, December 2005). Nevertheless, Xiaoli did admit that her understanding of CR had changed, suggesting that by the end of this course she had developed greater awareness of what she was already doing.

By the end, students demonstrated more reflective thinking through a consideration of conceptual issues related to CR. Chen, for example said, *Formerly I thought critical reading is something one does on purpose… But later I thought critical reading is a kind of reading habit (*Chen, email questionnaire, December 2005). He showed he was making connections to deeper concepts like considering CR as a disposition rather than a skill.

Groups achieved transformation when discussions moved from dependence on guiding questions to self-directed investigations of texts. One student revealed this transformation when he commented that groups seemed to have been directionless initially, *yeah maybe at the beginning we don't know what to say so we just followed the questions but at the end you don't need to give us some questions because we have something to say* (focus group 3, 8 November 2005). This comment proves that as the course progressed students relied less on scaffolding by the guiding questions and took on the responsibility of directing the discussion themselves which suggests that the task itself transformed. Importantly it provides evidence that students underwent a personal transformation by engaging in CRD that was more meaningful to them.

In peer group discussions, demands for deeper exploration and justification replaced an acceptance of peers' cursory responses. This is significant because it suggests more connections were being made and reflects a transformation in students' perception of JD as a social good. In other words, while students claimed to value CR from the beginning, many came to the realisation that cursory responses were less powerful than more analytical and persuasive responses supported with relevant and credible justification. Similarly, increased evidence of metalanguage, CLA, and alternative constructions of texts indicates more connections were being made with the assistance of meditational tools. It should be noted, however, that these transformations were not consistent and degrees of criticality were displayed on different occasions. For example, shifts in engagement due to interacting

factors, like differences in individual preferences for certain CR processes or discussion topics affected displays of CRD.

The limited amount of ED displayed suggests that students did not value ED. Five months after the end of the course, eight students replied to follow-up email questionnaires about why ED was not often displayed. Responses varied, indicating that no single factor was accountable for the lack of displays of ED. There was a suggestion that we had not covered ED enough in taught sessions and, in retrospect, this was indeed true as we had usually focused on ID and JD. Other responses included claims that it was difficult, students forgot, it was boring, and it was too obvious. These last two points are significant because they imply that students did not place value on ED. Two students explained that they felt no need to display ED as they believed power relations were obvious. This point is well taken. Once a claim of author bias has been identified, explored, and justified, perhaps it is redundant (even condescending?) to explicitly point out that bias can reflect the author's ideology and an attempt to exert power over readers to propagate the ideology. On the other hand, some individuals may not have made the connections between bias and power and explicitly articulating the power relations may have benefitted them. For some, more teacher scaffolding might be needed to encourage students to value ED and raise awareness of empowerment that is achieved with critical consciousness.

No one claimed that talking about ideology or power relations things made them feel uneasy. In fact, Shilin stressed that she felt no discomfort in

criticising authorities which counters Polsky's (2003) claim that students are conditioned to grant authors too much authority (p.427). Conversely, Chen did suggest that the reason for not displaying more ED was conditioning of people*:*

> *In China, we usually do not read critically. For most people, they just believe in what they read. There do exist a small amount of people who doubt the opinions of some articles, but they seldom ask how and why. This may be caused by the Chinese traditional education, giving the attitude of humility to every child. Or someone would say this may be caused by the propaganda of the Chinese government over such a long period of time since the cultural revolution, making the citizens forget how to doubt* (email questionnaire, March 2006).

Notably, this response was given after the end of the course and not in the interview when I directly asked about CR experiences in China. This provides evidence of greater reflection and/or more willingness to share views. The fact that different perspectives were considered in this response demonstrates a consideration of multiple perspectives; and the choice of lexis – "*propaganda*" and "*making the citizens forget*" shows that a Patriotic Chinese identity was not enacted here.

Indeed transformation was not evident in all areas. For example, some students continued to assert that comparing authors' and readers' opinions was important and that an author's opinion was 'right' or 'wrong'. Students, however, tried to clarify their meaning. It seems they were interchanging terms, like 'right' for 'credible'/'reliable', and 'wrong' for 'flawed'/'unreliable', and references to the 'author's opinion' often meant 'viewpoint', 'stand', 'position', or 'ideology', though I cannot confirm that this is what all students meant. Additionally, some of what I identified as provocative features of texts were overlooked by students even during final discussions. As noted,

discussions of the impact of authors' ideology and language and power relations were also limited.

Beyond the peer group discussions, it was observed that in whole class discussions, displays of CRD increased. For example in one follow-up session, Kemei publicly observed that the author of Text 5 had referred to 'President' and 'Mr Chen' of Taiwan but 'Hu Jintao', the Chinese president, without a title. She realised that the author was positioning the Chinese president as less important than President Chen and demonstrated this through a display of ED. This point had not been raised in any of the peer group discussions. Other examples were also observed. Displaying this degree of CRD in whole class discussions was significant because it indicated that my presence was not a factor; and students were making more connections and showing that they saw value in displaying CRD publically in the large group.

Notably, students demonstrated evidence of CR in some of their written work (weekly assignments, project work and text book exercises) which they had not done earlier in the course. In his focus group, Rongjia confirmed that he was making connections:

> *I think I have got a lot of knowledge about CR to apply to the project because at the beginning when I read this (.)my article I found that the author seems neutral and I can't read it critically and then you gave me some suggestions to read critically and it seems that I can realise (.) see the critical things in the article and when I see other articles I can see this* (Focus group 3, 8 November 2005)

It was encouraging to see that students were applying the text analysis tools in unsolicited ways. Limited space in this thesis prohibits an exploration of their written work, but it confirmed that students viewed CR as a social good that could be transferred to other modes in this class and possibly beyond.

A final point is noteworthy, in focus group discussions, students referred to engaging their critical stance when watching movies, reading news, advertisements, novels, and text books which counters Sengupta's conclusion that her students did not read critically beyond the sheltered ESL classroom. Specifically, students discussed the notion that all texts were biased and one individual explicitly argued that it was always possible to read critically, but it was not always useful, illustrating that students deliberately weighed the value of engaging CR practice in different contexts.

5.22 Chapter Summary

CR is complex, involving a range of processes that students in this context drew on in various ways and to varying degrees as they made their own connections, confirming that interpretations of CR are shaped by the understandings people have of it in different contexts. While no single model of what CR should look like exists, I have greater insight now into factors that can affect how it can emerge as CRD in this context.

This chapter addressed the three research questions and revealed insight into the students' changing metacognitive understandings and practice of CR in this context. Data from peer group discussions were presented and discussed

to illustrate the nature and extent of CRD students displayed and various interacting factors, including various forms of scaffolding, that influenced those displays.

The next and final chapter will highlight conclusions and implications that emerged from this discussion.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Overview

As described in Chapter 1, this research began with the observation of a seeming lack of evidence of CR expressed by PRC students in an L2 reading course in Singapore. Results of this study provide some insight into what CR looked like in peer group discussions of texts, revealing that the students do have critical dispositions and displayed all three varieties of CRD and all four dimensions of CL, albeit at variable levels and in small amounts. No definitive patterns emerged to indicate generalisable circumstances under which students displayed CRD, but various interacting factors did have some impact.

This chapter highlights the main results from Chapter 5, but the focus here is on drawing together general conclusions and implications in terms of research and pedagogy. Limitations are presented and, in line with action research, considerations for improving practice and further research are made. The chapter ends with reflections on the study and my own transformation.

6.2 Main Conclusions

SCT and social constructivism proved a suitable framework for examining CR in this study because the social interaction involving the students, texts, and other material and semiotic resources enabled forms of mediation that directly or indirectly helped CRD emerge. Evidence revealed that connections were being made between the text, constructed meanings, individuals' lifeworlds, and current practice.

That said, mediation was not always successful due to a complex interaction of factors, and development or internalisation in terms of strengthening students' critical stance was not always evident. Importantly, Vygotsky (1978) distinguished between learning and development claiming that "the developmental process lags behind the learning process" (p.90). This suggests that we should not expect the developmental process (internalisation) to necessarily occur with, or immediately after, the learning process (making connections); so what may appear as unsuccessful mediation during a learning activity may actually be effective in setting the learning and development processes in motion. I was satisfied, therefore, not only when students confidently displayed CRD, but also when they made demonstrated attempts to engage in CR processes.

Conclusions regarding the three research questions are presented next.

6.2.1 Students' Changing Metacognitive Understandings of CR

We can make several conclusions about the students' metacognitive understandings of CR. Firstly, individual differences and diverse lifeworld experiences make generalisations imprecise, but students were unified in their initial claims that they generally valued CR.

Secondly, over the duration of the reading course students' interpretations of CR broadened from a focus on analytic evaluation to a greater range of CR processes. That said, processes at the extreme CL end of the continuum, namely pursuing social justice, were never considered, likely due to the lack

of emphasis on this in class sessions and/or a perceived lack of value in this. Overall, the broadening interpretation of CR was due either to changing metacognitive understandings or more willingness to reveal understandings publicly, or both. Regardless of the reason, there was a transformation in reported metacognitive understandings.

Related to this, intervention by the teacher affected students' understandings in that students became more familiar with CR processes and my expectations as time progressed. The fact that certain processes were practiced more than others in class perhaps influenced some students to value those more than others.

Finally, encouraging students to engage in regular reflection about their CR understanding and practice seemed to elicit deeper thinking about conceptual issues such as the nature of CR as a disposition and making realisations about when a critical stance is employed.

6.2.2 Nature and Extent of CRD in Group Discussions

To make sense of the data, it proved necessary to apply an analytical framework based on three different models. This allowed me to identify varieties of discourse (Zeichner & Liston, 1985), characterise the CRD within that framework (Lewison et al., 2002), and analyse the wider contextual influences on the emergence of CRD (Gee, 2005).

Conclusions about the nature and extent of CRD begin with the fact that some students displayed CRD from the start, signifying existing critical dispositions. After relatively high average amounts of CRD displayed in the initial L1 and L2 discussions, the extent of CRD decreased considerably in discussions of Text 3 but then rose in a pattern of increasing average amounts. While interesting, this pattern does not conclusively indicate progressive development because individual group amounts differed, confirming the situated nature of discussions.

Admittedly, ID was the most common variety of CRD displayed throughout the course and it often emerged in nascent forms. In the latter part of the course, displays of CRD seemed to become more insightful, but, notably, students did not always identify potentially provocative features of texts and examples of ED remained limited, indicating that conditions for display of ED were never fully achieved.

6.2.3 Factors Affecting the Emergence of CRD

It can be concluded that various factors affect the emergence of CRD which leads to some insight into conditions under which students might or might not display CRD, but, again, the situated nature of the discussions means accurate predictions or generalisations cannot be made.

Language proficiency was not necessarily an impediment to critical awareness, supporting Wallace's (2003) claim that innate linguistic competence is not linked to criticality (p.193). It is possible, however, that

some students' perceived language proficiency may have occasionally hindered their willingness to display CRD.

Participation rates proved to have no consistent effect on displays of CRD, but analysis of participation rates established that no one repeatedly dominated discussions or remained silent, confirming that identities were situated, not static.

There is evidence that various forms of scaffolding affected displays of CRD. Firstly, guiding questions were useful in prompting students to engage in CRD, but in a prescriptive way which led primarily to displays of nascent CRD and mostly ID.

Secondly, teacher-led sessions and modelling proved helpful in encouraging increases in metalanguage and demonstrated LA and CLA, as well as considerations of alternative constructions of texts which prompted several displays of CRD and potentially led to more conceptual thinking. This indicates that students were applying processes practiced in class. Again, mostly ID was displayed, but greater awareness was raised and more connections were being made, confirming that, consistent with Love (2002), Jansson (2006) and Patel Stevens and Bean (2002), explicit teacher modelling and scaffolding is essential.

Thirdly, peer scaffolding was important for prompting displays of CRD as students emulated one another when they saw value in it. Notably, students

did not have to be experts to help their peers which supports Donato's (1994) and Wells' (2000) claims to that effect. JD also constituted more credible rationale due to peer scaffolding. Students sometimes explored authors' ideologies together, but they did not often critique resultant power relations. Whether peer scaffolding alone would be sufficient for helping students nurture their critical stance is not known, but, as students claimed to appreciate teacher intervention as well, they most likely benefitted from different types of scaffolding.

Text topic undoubtedly had an affect on displays of CRD, but, in conjunction with individual preferences and other influencing factors, sometimes topics generated enhanced displays of CRD, while at other times limited them. As such, critical dispositions were activated when readers felt passionate about a topic (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007); conversely, evidence also emerged showing that increased emotion perhaps led to irrational feelings that limited critical engagement (Janks, 2002). Related to this, support emerged for Wallace's (1995) claim that a lack of topic knowledge is helpful but not necessarily essential for eliciting critical engagement.

Some forms of scaffolding worked indirectly by opening up a discursive space in which to engage CRD. Specifically, the use of L1 in initial discussions and non-critical varieties of discourse helped build group trust and familiarity which were useful for creating conditions for peer scaffolding. Exploratory talk also provided opportunities for CRD to emerge, but these were not always taken up. When they were, mostly nascent CRD was expressed as students raised

questions and challenges but did not usually display ED. There were various reasons for this including lack of interest, insufficient scaffolding for making the connections, and perceived lack of need. In other words, students did not always value displaying ED.

It should be acknowledged that effects of scaffolding were different for different individuals which means that transformations varied. This, however, is to be expected as Kalantzis and Cope (2000) point out, "transformation by and large works better for some groups of people than for others" (p.122).

One final point should be noted. Countering Sengupta's conclusion that her students did not read critically beyond the sheltered ESL classroom, several students in this study claimed to engage a critical stance outside the reading class.

Clearly, complexities exist in dialogic interactions as various influencing factors interact and individual awareness and values differ in different contexts. The resulting effect was that displays of CRD emerged in degrees and intermittently.

6.3   Revisiting Identity, Agency and the 'Chinese Learner'

This thesis opened with a quote by Polsky (2003) about educational and cultural conditioning of students. Traditional transmission models of teaching have undoubtedly contributed to students' lack of questioning of authors, but, if by culture, Polsky (like Atkinson, 1997) is referring to ethnicity, this was

clearly not the case in this study. In fact, evidence showed that these Chinese students confidently challenged authors in peer group discussions, and stereotypes of passive, uncritical Chinese learners who keep quiet to maintain group harmony were not substantiated. At times, some students did appear silent or uncritical, but the reasons for this cannot be attributed to culture because, at other times, the same students were talkative and displayed CRD. Indeed, dynamic, multiple identities emerged in group discussions.

Interestingly, various aspects of identity sometimes impacted the emergence of CRD. In particular, the manifestation of Chinese patriotism sometimes enhanced displays of CRD while at other times limited them. Like the influence of text topic on CRD, it is likely that at times, pride or discord with this aspect of identity elicited a critical stance (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007), while at other times emotion may have obscured rational and critical engagement (Janks, 2002).

Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) advocate recognising and building on the uniqueness of individuals in the language classroom and claim:

> …the view of L2 learners and users as agents interacting with other agents allows us to argue that the learning process will necessarily result in different outcomes for different people. Thus, standardization is anathema to the theory and its pedagogy (p.157,158).

I would add that the complexity of social interactions also results in different outcomes for the same people in different contexts. The important conclusion here is that identity and agency are complex, dynamic, and dependant on a variety of interacting, contextual factors; hence, cannot be generalised.

6.4   Limitations of this Study

My work, like any research, holds my own biases and subjectivity. I tried to capitalise on my dual role as researcher and teacher by viewing my findings through two different lenses, but, despite my conscious attempt to be as objective as possible, I am aware that my concern for the students and their progress may have biased my perspective.

Because I incorporated opportunities for CR into the course and made significant interventions, the students undoubtedly identified my stand as advocating CR. This may have impelled them to demonstrate an artificially positive attitude towards CR in order to please me, the person whom they knew would be determining their course results. The guiding questions, too, may have shaped the students' interpretation of CR. I can confidently justify these interventions as scaffolding, though they likely skewed the students' original interpretations of CR. Regardless, the point of raising critical awareness is to transform perspectives, so I do not consider this a problem.

Another factor related to my intervention was limiting the selected texts to newspaper articles which may have suggested to students that only this genre of text is representational or worthy of CR. To overcome this perception, I spent a few sessions focusing on CR practices with other genres of text. That students debated the neutrality of different genres of text in focus group discussions suggests this was not an issue.

Wells (2000) was correct in saying that institutional constraints affect teaching and learning. This course was not a dedicated CR course and had to accommodate various syllabus objectives that took priority because they would be formally assessed. Time spent on CR meant that some time was diverted from other aspects of the course. I had informed students that by engaging in CR processes they could concomitantly practice and develop their comprehension skills, and they did not voice any concerns about this. It is possible, however, that some individuals silently resented spending time on CR. Nevertheless, the displays of CRD that emerged indicate that, as Sengupta (2002) discovered, students can overcome "the imposed contextual constraints, if only they are helped with appropriate pedagogical support" (Conclusion section, para.2).

Wallace (2003) discusses difficulties in characterising power in dichotomies, determining the presence or absence of power, as well as the ambiguities of empowerment (p.60). Not being a dedicated CR course, there was not time to fully explore power issues in this reading course. Nevertheless, given the constraints, I am satisfied with the insights that I gained as it was confirmed that when opportunities are provided and circumstances are conducive, CRD- including ED- could emerge in group discussions. I am quite optimistic that in certain conditions, all varieties of CRD can be facilitated.

The fact that I was collecting data added another agenda to my work which a regular teacher would not necessarily have. Nonetheless, my research agenda paralleled my pedagogical agenda in that CR was valued, and

seeking ways to help students raise and display their critical awareness was an objective. Moreover, looking for evidence of teaching effectiveness and successful learning methods is something that reflective teachers do.

In terms of data analysis, I do not pretend to hold a wholly objective view and recognise that my findings, as in most qualitative studies, are open to other interpretations. Multiple understandings of CR plus the complexities involved in interpreting social interactions and varieties of discourse made analysis rather complicated. Trying to validate the students' interpretations of CR by acknowledging them in their displays of CRD added a layer of complexity, and trying to characterise and measure instances and 'quality' of CRD sometimes posed challenges as tensions arose from overlapping and embedded categories. That said, I did not expect the analysis to be simple, as Jansson (2006) concedes "where one discourse type is contained within another matrix of contexts is rather complex and not so easy to detect" (p.674). Westgate and Hughes (1997) point out that trying to recognise, let alone define, 'quality' in classroom talk is imprecise. I acknowledge the complexities of my analytical tools and recognise that they both benefited and constrained my analysis at times. I am satisfied, however, that the limitations did not invalidate this research.

6.5 Implications for CR Pedagogy and Research

Unlike many action research studies, this study did not aim to solve a problem or promote change for its own sake. Rather, the aim was to develop an understanding of CR practice in this context to provide deeper educational

rationale for facilitating CRD in an L2 reading comprehension course and consider course changes or improvements if deemed necessary. With the understanding gained, some findings from this work have implications on CR pedagogy and research.

Firstly, conditions and opportunities must be provided for students to display CRD. Sengupta's (2002) point is worth repeating here: the courses we offer must support CR. We need to make CR a less 'questionable venture' and enable both L1 and L2 teachers and students to see value in it. To this end, maintaining a space for reflecting, discussing, and debating issues related to CR is important, and accepting contextualised understandings and interpretations of CR makes it possible to work within imposed constraints to facilitate CR.

Secondly, perceived obstacles to CR like language proficiency, ethnicity, metacognitive understanding, and lack of topic knowledge should not be used as excuses for limiting CR opportunities or ascribing labels to certain learners. Arguably, displays of CRD may be limited or enhanced by these factors, and awareness of this can help teachers determine when scaffolding may or may not be needed.

Thirdly, providing not one but several forms of scaffolding is necessary to meet varying needs, expectations, and interests in different contexts. In terms of scaffolding, there are some things that might improve CR practice in this particular context, namely devoting more time to a broader range of CR

processes in teacher-led sessions, and allocating more time for group discussions and post-discussion de-briefings. To address the concern over the emphasis on deconstruction (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007), writing tasks could be added in which students would construct alternative texts. This could strengthen a sense of agency and empowerment.

In terms of research, this study alone cannot offer a definitive basis for defining, 'teaching', or practicing CR in L2 reading courses, but it might inspire further reflection on theory and practice, or praxis, which can lead to understandings in other contexts. By documenting these understandings, a body of research linking CR pedagogy and L2 learners at post-secondary level can be established.

6.6 Recommendations for Further CR Research

Some insight was gained from this research in terms of students' understandings of CR, how it might be recognised in practice, and factors influencing the emergence of CRD; but more questions arose about the complexity of CRD. For example, why were some seemingly provocative issues not raised by students when others were?, how much tacit awareness did students have about power relations in texts, particularly after exploring bias?, how did students assign value to CR practice in different contexts? While it may not be possible to attain answers to these questions, they are areas that need more attention.

Further research on facilitating scaffolding of CR in peer group discussions with L2 learners also seems warranted, and areas that this study could not pursue might be explored, like the relationship between displays of CRD and length and/or fluency of turns, peer groupings, and different genres of text. In addition, deeper analyses of individual transformations and various aspects of identity might be investigated. Finally, it would be interesting to duplicate this study with L1 students and compare results.

It is also hoped that this study can help promote further action research studies as legitimate forms of inquiry (Noffke, 2002).

6.7 Personal Reflections on the Research

Consistent with Dewey's (1933) beliefs and action research approaches, this study involved continual reflection and it is with a reflection that I would like to conclude this thesis.

From this research, I gained some insight into the complexity of facilitating CR in an L2 classroom. The observed transformations in metacognitive understandings of CR were satisfying and, because I had observed a complete lack of evidence of CR in previous cohorts, I was content when these students displayed any CRD, even in nascent forms. Furthermore, I was pleased that results challenged stereotypes of uncritical Chinese learners and that language competency was shown not to be an impediment to critical awareness. After reflecting on my teaching and the students' practice,

however, I was disappointed that I was not able to facilitate greater displays of CRD, particularly ED.

What I did not expect was how much I would be questioning and transforming my own interpretation of CR. I had begun this study with a view of CR in academic terms as an analytical interrogation of texts with consideration of multiple perspectives and alternative constructions of texts but with less emphasis on power relations. Mid-course I realised that my own interpretation of CR had broadened to include a greater power perspective. As a result, my focus on nurturing some CR processes more than others may have benefited students who needed help raising their critical awareness in those areas, but possibly I was doing a disservice to others who may have perceived my expectations to be limited to certain CR processes.

That said, I am optimistic that understandings of CR representing a wider range of processes can be fostered in L2 reading courses. Moreover, I had attempted to empower the students to publicly question and challenge authors by arming them with tools, resources, and opportunities for activating and displaying their critical awareness. To that end, I saw some degree of success.

The goal of pursuing social change, however, remains ambitious to me as I question how learners can realistically be empowered to do this, for whose benefit, and at what cost? Institutional constraints do limit this goal in Singapore, as Cheah (2001) claims, and, with their vested interest in passing

their examinations, the students may not have placed value on 'taking action' against social injustices. Nevertheless, acknowledging that CR is shaped by the understandings people have of it different contexts, I maintain that a sufficient goal of CR for this group of students is personal transformation in the sense of awakening their critical stance to enable them to be more aware of the impacts of text constructions and see value in displaying CRD. In my view, raising awareness is an acceptable start for helping students "participate fully and democratically as informed, critical, and responsible members of the many overlapping communities and interest groups that constitute contemporary society" (Wells, 2000, p.60).

Appendix A

Interview Questions (early in course)

1. In your opinion, what is CR?
2. Did you learn CR in China –in Chinese and English?
3. Do you believe that CR is important? Why?/why not?
4. How do you know if you are reading critically?
5. How would you describe your critical awareness now?
6. Do you feel that you read Text 2 critically? Why? / Why not?
7. Do you think that the group discussion helped with your CR?
8. Is there anything else that helps (or could help) you with your CR?

E-mail Questionnaire (mid-course)

1. In your opinion, what is CR?
2. Was there any instruction or encouragement or practice of CR at Junior College? Explain.
3. Do you think we should read critically? Why?/Why not?
4. How do we know if we are reading critically?
5. When discussing a text, how can we demonstrate that we have read it critically?
6. When discussing a text, how can identify if someone else has read it critically?

E-mail Questionnaire (1 week post-course)

1. Has your interpretation of CR changed since Jan. 2005? Explain.
2. Has your critical awareness changed? Explain.
3. How did you feel about discussing texts critically in small groups?
4. Did any of your ideas or opinions change after discussions with your peers?

E-mail Questionnaire (5 months post-course)

<u>Why didn't you discuss more about the authors' ideology and whose interests the texts served</u>?
(you may tick more than one reason)

☐ Do you feel I did not teach you enough about these things?
☐ Does talking about these things make you uncomfortable? For example, some people may be worried about criticising authorities.
☐ Do you feel that talking about these things is boring?
☐ Do you think these things are not part of CR?
☐ Do you lack experience discussing these things?
☐ Do you have difficulty identifying these things?
☐ Do you have another reason? What is it?

Appendix B

Sample Guiding Questions

Text: *What is on the mind of the young in China?*

1. What issues are being discussed?

2. Why has the author written this article? Who is the intended audience?

3. How does the author organise/develop his main argument?

4. Is the author's reasoning logical or flawed in any way?

5. Is the author stating facts or expressing opinions or both? How do you know?

6. What does the author *mean* when he writes: "young people often look ahead to the future while the elderly look back on the past"? When you read between the lines, what do you think he *really* means?

7. How strong is the evidence to support the author's statements?

8. Are any words or phrases ambiguous? Is any significant information missing? Are any assumptions made?

9. Is there any bias evident in this article? Whose interests are being served by this article (ex. teachers, students, administrators, parents, governments, youth, elderly, etc.)?

10. Whose perspectives on these issues are not included? Are there significant omissions or over-generalisations, for example, are different groups talked about as if they were one homogeneous group?

Appendix C

Sample Analyses: excerpts from discussions of texts 1-8, various groups

Key:

Metadiscourse	Descriptive Discourse	Interpretive Discourse	Justificatory Discourse	Empowering Discourse

Text 1 (L1), group 3

line no., speaker	Transcript	Analysis
102. RJ	don't you think he is generalising too much? he categorises all youths into one type	RJ exerts agency by shifting the topic and suggests that the author is generalising **=disrupts the commonplace**. Recognises that the author is **positioning** Chinese youth as homogeneous.
103. WA	he puts all the young of the country into one kind =	RJ finishes WA's sentence. Together they imply that differences should be considered = **disrupts the commonplace**. No examples are provided despite RJ seeking this.
104. RJ	= who have the same kind of ideas(.) is there anyone different?	
105. ZY	[[of course there are different people	ZY agrees but doesn't expand or give examples. Peers don't seem to see the need/value in giving examples.
106. JW	[[he is not putting all together(.) he just singles out one kind of youths to discuss	Challenges the author's construction of the text = **disrupts the commonplace**. Reiterates generalisation.
107. K	he is just saying [what he says]	Vague observation
108. RJ	[so he is generalising too much]	Repeats claim of generalisation**.**
109. JW	you mean he should point out that what he says is about one particular kind of – ?	Seeks clarification by paraphrasing. Interrupted
110. RJ	yes(.) he says it's the young in China which means <u>all</u> the young in China	Expands on the generalisation with emphasis =**disrupts the commonplace.**
111. JW	then you have to add something after each sentence?	JW questions RJ's claim. Seems unconvinced, implying that more explicit details would be cumbersome.
112. RJ	I feel he is generalising too much (…)	Ignores JW's question and just repeats his claim
113. WA	in fact his perspectives are very good and –	After a pause, WA supports the author's perspectives but is interrupted before he can explain
114. RJ	you think his problem lies in the line of argument?	RJ problematises the argument (not the perspective) =**disrupts the commonplace**.
115. WA	yes	WA confirms but doesn't expand. He probably feels there is no need or no value in expanding.
116. JW	what we are discussing now is the idea	JW refocuses on the content

117.	WA	the ideas are no problem	Makes an observation implying there is no need to discuss things that are not problematic.
118.	JW	[[this focus has been discussed and finished already	= procedural talk. There is some disagreement about what they should be discussing.
119.	K	[[really? what we are discussing is the idea?	
120.	ZY	I don't think so(.) I think we are discussing the line of argument	
121.	WA	[[we should move away from the idea	
122.	RJ	[[the idea should be no problem	
123.	ZY	[[probably nobody would disagree with him(.) everyone agrees(.) it is the <u>way</u> [he presents it]	Considers views of readers but makes a generalisation himself by saying everyone would agree. Iimplies that the argument is convincing but the style (building on K's word) is not acceptable, so problematises the style of the writing =**disrupts the commonplace.**
124.	K	[the writing style]	Agrees by repeating
125.	WA	so I think he should add some examples anyway	Maintains argument & **disrupts the commonplace** by suggesting examples are limited
126.	RJ	I don't think it is a matter of examples(.) he gives the audience the impression that (..)	Challenges WA's claim and implies there are other problems =**disrupts the commonplace**. Gives up before explaining what impression is given.
127.	WA	you mean he put it too briefly and adamantly?	Seeks clarification and suggests that perhaps the author wrote in a limited way =**disrupts the commonplace.**
128.	ZY	this is his right	Observation made. ZY and JW defend this as the author's style while WA and RJ criticise it as a problem
129.	JW	this is the writer's writing style(.) others have no right to -	
130.	RJ	so I'm expressing my own opinion	Asserts his stand. No apparent concerns about avoiding opposition to maintain group harmony.

Text 2, group 1

127.	W	most of France welcome the Muslims but France want to keep its own traditional language so –	**Focuses on the sociopolitical** by considering the wider social system. W avoids generalising by adding "most".
128.	LH	I know but do you think? do you think this is a wave?(..) the author say this is a *wave of* -	Agrees but continues to problematise the author's assumption =**disrupts the commonplace** and focuses on the choice of words. Shows language awareness (*wave* of Islamic extremism). LH clearly disagrees with the author's interpretation of extremism.
129.	W	yeah	
130.	LH	Islamic extremism(.) this is not Islamic extremism	
131.	W	what do you think about it?	
132.	LH	Islamic extremism is Islamic radicalism (.) this is not	Expands and emphasises that the author has not adequately explained

		Islamic extremism(.) this is that(.) they cannot come into(..)they cannot keep(..) they want to keep their own culture(.) this is not Islamic extremism(.) Islamic extremism is something radical	the link to the growing wave of extremism **=disrupts the commonplace**. He **justifies** his claim with **intrinsic rationale** - contrasting radicalism & extremism. LH recognises that the author is **positioning** Muslims as extremists.
133.	W	xx	
134.	LH	yes that is not the case	Agreement
135.	W	Muslim is just -	
136.	LH	so I don't think this is this paragraph is logical(.) so what do you think? [to XM]	Questions the construction of the text **=disrupts the commonplace.** Seeks other opinions- seemingly as collegial gesture- but LH's confidence & forcefulness of his claims suggest he is only looking for support.
137.	XM	no what do you think? [to W]	XM defers answering
138.	W	I think this is just a supporting idea not the conclusion so it doesn't need supporting details	Downplays LH's claim of flawed logic by presenting his observation. Some debate over supporting idea vs. conclusion.
139.	LH	but this is conclusion	
140.	W	No	
141.	LH	but you see but a *large measure of it is self-imposed*(.)part of it is some reasons but *a large measure of it is* what what what(.) if this is not the conclusion what is it?	Tries to **justify** the author's conclusion/stand with **textual rationale** but he does not express it clearly. By "what what what", he means "etc."
142.	W	this is supporting detail	Both maintain their opposing views, showing that maintaining group harmony through silence is not necessary
143.	LH	this is not supporting details	
144.	W	I think the last sentence is conclusion(..)	Claims the last sentence reveals the author's conclusion/stand **=disrupts the commonplace.**
145.	MZ	so now I want to know if this passage is logical(.) the last part is the conclusion?	Problematises the logic of the text = **disrupts the commonplace**
146.	W	just the -	
147.	XM	I think the last paragraph is all the conclusion	Opinion given.
148.	LH	our argument is the last paragraph is logical or flawed? I think it's flawed	Poblematises the logic of the last paragraph **=disrupts the commonplace**. He doesn't seem to see any need to elaborate further**.**
149.	MZ	so you think the conclusion is more than this?	Attempts to summarise
150.	LH	yeah	
151.	MZ	and you think this is not the conclusion(.) just the details?	
152.	W	he thinks this is all the conclusion but I think it is supporting details	

Text 3, group 2

14.	SH	do you think there is a bias in the content?	SH continues to position herself as group leader by posing questions. She problematises the text by questioning bias (metalanguage) **=disrupts the commonplace**.
15.	C	yeah	
16.	SH	where?	Seeks evidence of bias
17.	C	the writer	
18.	SH	the writer tend to support the -	
19.	C	support the science(.) not the Christian	Makes suggestion of author's stand= **disrupts the commonplace.**
20.	SH	support the science?	SH questions C
21.	C	maybe I guess	Tentative response shows lack of confidence
22.	SH	I think um(…) I think both sides are mmm also mentioned and nearly the same and also just state the truth	SH makes observation. She thinks the writing is balanced? What is truth"?
23.	C	this one is not mentioned	C seems to have changed his mind after SH's probing and now implies a limitation claiming the author's stand is not revealed in the text= **disrupts the commonplace.**
24.	SH	this?	
25.	AF	this?	
26.	C	opinion is not clear(.) not mentioned.	
27.	SH	it's 1-2-3-4-5 lets say begin we begin 10 paragraph 10 and 11 and 12 paragraph did it show something?(..)	SH wants to explore (problematise?) certain parts of the text and directs others. Her question is vague
28.	C	they show some financial events	Description only
29.	SH	mmm ok there is something to do with the whole context?	SH seems to be trying to draw responses from her peers. She is trying to make connections.
30.	C	no	
31.	SH	what?	
32.	C	uh(..) actually its(..)I don't know why the writer should write this paragraph because I don't know what's the purpose of this paragraph	C is confused about the issue of money, but, by framing his comment as an exploration of the author's intention, he **disrupts the commonplace.**
33.	SH	yeah me too I'm confused(.) is it anything to do with the financial(..) to support his opinion to show that there are 2 sides of it 2 sides of the(.) two sides(.) one side is creationism and the other is science(.) I just don't know why the author showed finance too(.) do you know?	Explores the construction of the text for further meaning = **disrupts the commonplace.** She is clearly trying to make connections.
34.	C	mmm	
35.	AF	uh don't ask me	AF deflects the question & seems resistant. The group is admittedly

			not familiar with the topic, but could they also be put off by SH's probing?

Text 4, group 2

52.	AN	but what do you think the second part of the article says or does? it says his family can't believe it's true he died	Problematises the purpose of second part of the text. Her use of "but" suggests there is a contrast= **disrupts the commonplace.**
53.	MJ	yes I said that	
54.	AN	do you think it's useful?(..) it's just kind of [whispered](….)	
55.	SH	yes from this we can(..)	
56.	AN	I think the author just wants to persuade the readers to to know it is not (..) it is a bad thing	Suggests the author's purpose = **disrupts the commonplace.** AN's use of "persuade" shows she recognises that the author is trying to have an **impact on the readers** i.e. convince them that race crime is a serious thing.
57.	SH	yes	
58.	AN	and they said he wants the readers' side(..)	??
59.	SH	[whispered] wants sympathy	Realises the author is trying to **impact the readers** by eliciting sympathy.
60.	SH	I think from this we can look clearly at the five young men(..)	
61.	AN	I think the author should write something about maybe the police(.) the laws(.) the judges(.) the judge's side because if he just write something [from the family and friends(.) not about what the audience thinks-	**Considers multiple viewpoints** that are missing in the text.
62.	MJ	[oh the family and friends	repeats
63.	SH	or the society's opinion(.) different point of view	Makes a connection from AN's claim and **considers another viewpoint** missing in the text.
64.	AN	yes(..) yes and he can give us more information about the five youth	Adds that there is also information missing from the youth's perspective= **disrupting the commonplace** Knowledge is created here as peers build ideas with one another.
65.	MJ	oh how they do-	
66.	AN	yes	
67.	MJ	and how they think and why they did this	Makes connection from AN's claim and gives more examples of missing information **=disrupts the commonplace**
68.	SH	yes should pay much more attention on it	Agrees and elaborates that more focus [on the youths' motive for the

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			crime] is needed= **disrupts the commonplace.**
69.	AN	yes much more points of view	Loops back to consideration of **multiple viewpoints** – implies an alternative way of constructing the text with more perspectives, more voices heard.
70.	MJ	from different people(..) mmmmm(…)	
71.	SH	and we can see the words that he uses such as *slap punch stomp spit*(.) are they all negative(.) do you think so?	Instigates a topic shift and **disrupts the commonplace** by problematising the language used in the title. Shows language awareness.
72.	AN	yes negative(…) uh(.) do you believe the five youths just do such things and killed the person?(..)	Agrees but doesn't expand on SH's claim. She loops back to the motive for the crime.
73.	SH	uh	
74.	AN	I mean just because he don't have a cigarette lighter they kill a person?	
75.	K	[I don't think so	
76.	MJ	[I don't think so because he said they could light their cigarette by his cigarette	Peers see value in discussing the motive & exchange opinions. Their fascination (& AN's disbelief) with this aspect seems to impede the development of CRD.
77.	SH	maybe I think that's just an excuse to ask for a light	
78.	MJ	a small excuse	
79.	SH	yes(…) maybe bad to kill him.	
80.	AN	do you think they really wanted to kill this man?	
81.	MJ	no	
82.	SH	have fun	
83.		[laughter]	
84.	MJ	they only want to beat him	SH means they killed for fun. The others find this amusing. AN suggests they didn't mean to kill him.
85.	AN	or(..) don't want to kill him(…)	
86.	SH	I think there must be something wrong in their spirit	
87.	MJ	mind(.) in their mind	
88.	K	yeah(.) maybe	

Text 5, group 4

89.	LH	because he <u>strongly</u> believe that <u>only</u> *American government can settle the problem* so I think it is quite biased	Proposes author's beliefs/stand= **disrupts the commonplace.** LH emphasises the words "strongly" & "only"=focuses on the wider **sociopolitical issues** that influence the construction of the text. Claims bias and **justifies** with **textual rationale**.
90.	XM	maybe(…)	

91.	ZY	so there is there are a lot of quotations of President Chen and(..) most of them are very emotive	**Disrupts the commonplace** by suggesting that the quotations are emotive (metalanguage). ZY doesn't give an example or explain how they are emotive.
92.	WA	some of the quotations is that the author want to show the situation of the Taiwan government but some of the quotations the author want to(.) um write here and prove himself's opinion(.) his own opinion	Tempers ZY's claim by exploring the purpose of some of the author's quotations – he suggests some are just descriptive but others are there to reflect the author's opinions – WA implicitly recognises that the selection of quotations is strategic= **disrupts the commonplace.**
93.	ZY	mmmm(…) I think it's reasonable	ZY reflects on this and agrees
94.	MZ	do you think he should put something about Hu Jintao? President Hu?	**Disrupts the commonplace** by suggesting that some information is missing so the author's view is limited.
95.	ZY	yeah(..) he just uh made the assumption that(.) Hu Jintao will never accept such kind of offer by(.) by President Chen	Claims author made assumptions =**disrupts the commonplace.**
96.	LH	I think this author is very extreme(.) actually he talk about this politics only from the gift of the panda(.) actually I think the panda is just a gift of friendship and there is nothing(..) no no necessary(..) it is not necessary to talk so much about democracy uh diplomacy	**Disrupts the commonplace** by problematising the author's stand. He seems defensive about the pandas being a gift, seems influenced by his patriotism to China.
97.	ZY	this problem(..) I think this is also a presupposition of this whole article	**Disrupts the commonplace** by suggesting that the whole article presupposes that a problem exists.
98.	MZ	yeah	He problematises the idea of the "gift" as act of political diplomacy. No
99.	ZY	they say that it is diplomacy and I'm not sure about that	exploration of the reason or timing of the gift.
100.	LH	well I think this is only a friendship between people and handled by the government	Gives his opinion expanding on his earlier turn, showing the patriotic aspect of his identity.
101.	XM	yeah Beijing government want to show friend show them friendly(…)	XM also defends it as just a friendly gift, showing the patriotic aspect of his identity.
102.	ZY	no one can say whether it is diplomacy or not	ZY challenges this.
103.	LH	yeah so it is a presupposition	LH believes that the word, 'diplomacy' is a 'presupposition'= **disrupts the commonplace**
104.	WA	but I think in fact actually many western analysers think that it is diplomacy because China has employed [this] once to(..) China has sent America a panda a pair of pandas	Considers wider **sociopolitical** influences on the construction of the text. He **justifies** this claim with an example from history (**intrinsic rationale).**
105.	LH	yeah	
106.	WA	it is although the Chinese government said that it is	Identifies contrasting interpretations

	friendship(.) but western analysers say that it is panda diplomacy	

Text 6, group 1

177. SH	is there any problem about this? it's ok to get Swiss scientists to point out this problem?	Problematises the use of Swiss scientists =**sociopolitical** aspect
178. MJ	I think why the author quotate this evidence is because he want to show that in 1980(.) uh 1970's some scientists believe that about 1000 live but now uh in first paragraph(.) the more(.) the most is about 40(.) so the baiji dolphin is endangered animal now	MJ ignores the issue of the scientist's nationality and focuses on the author's purpose for including this information=**disrupts the commonplace**. He uses **intrinsic rationale** to **justify** the author's construction of the text.
179. SH	yeah the author used a strategy of comparison(.) it can give the readers a great impression that the baiji dolphin is(..) [endangered	SH supports this claim and recognise that the author is using a technique to **impact on the reader**. She implies that the statistics are meant to shock.
180. K	[endangered(..)	
181. RJ	I think SH just said why is <u>Swiss</u> scientist? I think because uh now(.) at this time China is just uh barely(..)uh the revolution uh	RJ brings the discussion back to the scientist and tries to **justify** it with **intrinsic rationale**. He focuses on the wider **sociopolitical** aspect (influence of cultural revolution).
182. SH	[the cultural revolution	
183. K	[the cultural revolution	
184. RJ	the cultural revolution	The others try to help clarify/construct the knowledge together.
185. SH	at the beginning	
186. K	in the 70's	
187. SH	1979 to uh 1969 to 79	
188. RJ	so he may(..) tell the he wants to tell the reader that at this time China didn't uh [notice	
189. K	[pay attention	RJ summarises the result.
190. RJ	pay much attention to the environment so uh he shows that Chinese pay attention to the environment too late	
191. SH	possible	
192. RJ	but he didn't consider that during the cultural revolution China have a lot of problems and the government have a lot of things to deal with(..) maybe they didn't have the time and money to do this	Defends the Chinese government and indirectly criticises the writer for not mentioning this =**disrupts the commonplace** & **sociopolitical focus**. Shows patriotism.

193. MJ	possible [SH laughs] (…)let's move to the next(..) I think this paragraphs show the environmentalists' opinion about the baiji dolphins(.) I think so	Recognises satire in RJ's claim and finds it humourous. MJ tentatively agrees and exerts agency by redirecting the discussion. He describes the next paragraph.
194. SH	which paragraph?	
195. MJ	the last two	
196. W	I think this is the possible idea to save the baiji dolphins	Gives opinion.
197. K	mmm?	
198. W	that means to catch 15 baiji in three years and to transport them to the Shishou sanctuary(..) and the possible reason and idea to solve these problems and-	Summarises.
199. SH	but the author give us the problems met to transfer it	Describes text.
200. MJ	mmmm…	
201. RJ	I think he didn't give us uh convince us to support the transfer the dolphin(.) because I think no matter which the river it is(.) the problem will(..) he want to tell the problem is very hard to solve because we should change our whole opinion of the government(.) of the people so I think -	Makes connections to **sociopolitical aspects**. He recognises the powerful government influence and sees the need to change mindsets of readers and government. But he asserts that the author is not convincing enough so it will probably be an unachievable goal= **impact on the reader.**
202. MJ	yes	
203. RJ	and it will cost lots of money(..) not convinced enough	
204. MJ	he wants to show the difficulty to protect the baiji dolphins	Suggests author's purpose= **disrupts the commonplace**
205. SH	and also inferred this from the subheading *badly needed financial help* -	Justifies RJ's claim about money with **textual rationale**. Implies that the author's **hidden agenda** is to seek financial support
206. MJ	yes	MJ agrees but K and W remain quiet -through disagreement or lack of interest or knowledge?

Text 7, group 4

75. B	I think the author write this article(.) just want to give alarm to Canadians and the Canada government and the author is not totally against Canada=	Suggests purpose and author's stand **=disrupts the commonplace.** Recognises that the author wants to elicit fear= **Impact on reader**

76. WA	mmm	
77. B	=because at the last 3 uh last 4 [paragraphs it shows] some Canadians' views about this and it calls for the Canadians to stop ignoring some environmental problems	Provides **textual rationale** to **justify** claim of author's purpose.
78. XL	[he explains the reasons]	
79. WA	mmm	
80. B	that's the main purpose I think, ask Canadians to pay more attention to the environmental issues and stop *falling asleep behind the wheel*	Elaborates on author's purpose**= disrupts the commonplace.** Adds credibility by quoting text.
81. WA	but I still don't think this article is balanced	Problematises the construction of the text for being biased= **disrupts the commonplace**
82. B	why?	B questions WA's claim
83. WA	for example(..) he didn't if he want to keep the balance of this article he will..he or she?	WA wants to clarify the author's gender –not to uncover underlying histories- just to know whether to say 'he' or 'she'.
84. ZY	don't know	
85. B	oh you mean she should show two sides view on this problem?	Makes connection and clarifies that author lacks bias= **disrupts the commonplace**
86. WA	yeah	
87. B	yeah I I she didn't talk about the Canadian public the Canadian public	Identifies missing perspectives= **multiple viewpoints**. Agrees and builds on idea. "just" indicates that viewpoints are missing.
88. ZY	just the environment the environment	
89. B	yeah just some environmentalist and some spokesman. Didn't include the public people. How the native Canadians feel about this issue	Expands on missing perspectives. **Considers other missing viewpoints** from native Canadians
90. ZY	yeah	
91. WA	and the statistics I don't think it is very clear(.) I don't think it is clear enough	Finds ambiguity in the use of statistics in the construction of the text =**disrupts the commonplace**
92. B	but it(..) this article is aimed for the public so you don't have to very exact statistics to tell this I think	Proposes target audience as **justification** for the construction of the text =**intrinsic rationale.** B claims that the public will accept the text as is.
93. ZY	and I think the 20% and something and some 18 or 15(..) this kind of statistics I think it's clear enough	Supports B's justification with example of statistics (**textual rationale**).
94. B	yeah I think it's clear enough	

Text 8, group 1

78. LH	what do you think of the different ideas of beauty? the author think that it's more easy for the Chinese to accept the cosmetic surgery because of Chinese -	Asserts agency by shifting the topic. Seeks opinions by problematising author's notion of beauty =**disrupting the commonplace.** Implies there are alternative ways to construct notion of beauty. Using questions, LH is not revealing uncertainty, he's positioning self as group 'leader', probing others. He's interrupted
79. XM	[which paragraph?	Looks for the place in the text
80. LH	*the different ideas of beauty*(.) the words in bold	quote in text
81. B	yeah there	Points
82. LH	so do you agree the Chinese will accept cosmetic surgery because we don't have such religious beliefs as westerners?	Considers wider **sociopolitical** aspect by comparing Chinese and westerners' beliefs. Realises the author positions atheists as freer to make decisions about cosmetic surgery. Seeks opinions as 'leader'
83. B	no I don't think so because there are many against cosmetic surgery(..)	'I think' =opinion, not tentativeness. **Considers multiple perspectives** (missing voices) to **justify** her disagreement= **intrinsic rationale**
84. LH	so do you think the author has generalisation or not evidence?	Suggests generalisation =**disrupts the commonplace**. Continues to probe others as 'leader'
85. B	yes yes I do	Agrees - strongly
86. J	xx	
87. MJ	this is only the author's opinion	Observes that this is an opinion
88. J	yes	
89. B	but it is according to Bao(.) the professional(..)	Observes this as cited source, not author's words; considers Bao a professional
90. XM	there's only one professional(.) only one professional	"only" =a limitation; implies author bias =**Disrupts the commonplace**
91. B	because Chinese people are more xxx	by identifying a lack of evidence.
92. MJ	so this sentence is not so easy because it is only one person means it has bias	MJ makes connection from XM's claim to author bias (metalanguage) XM makes connection between bias & unreliability.
93. XM	yes it is not very reliable	XM & MJ clearly do not value the text.
94. MJ	is he very famous?	Problematises Bao's credibility =**disrupts the commonplace**; =building on claims.
95. XM	[I don't know this person] I don't know this person	Unclear if XM & B state fact or implication –'if I don't know him he can't be very famous'? Positioning selves as authorities or admitting lack of knowledge?
96. B	I have never heard of this person(..)	
97. J	maybe is a doctor or professor of this surgery(.) He want to advertise this operation	Suggests **hidden agenda**– advertising the surgery. 'Maybe' opens claim up for exploration
98. MJ	because operation of cosmetic surgery is very expensive	**Justifies** need to advertise using **intrinsic rationale** implies making

		money.	
99. XM	yes(.) he can earn a lot of money	Explicitly reveals **hidden agenda**– financial gain	
100. J	yes xxx…		
101. MJ	in paragraph(..)which paragraph? the author puts Korea compare with Chinese	Describes content	
102. XM	yes		
103. B	Korea?		
104. MJ	Korea(.)because Korea is the most biggest cosmetic surgery operation in the world		
105. B	Oh(.)the third paragraph second page		
106. MJ	so what's the aim of this whether the author compare with that?(..)	Problematises author's construction of the text, use of comparison **=disrupts the commonplace**. Uses question to probe others, not to show uncertainty (l.104 suggests MJ may be aware of impact of comparison)	
107. B	I think Korea is very popular(.) it is used in Korea(.) so in China it is just beginning doing it	Suggests **sociopolitical aspects**- powerful influence of Korean pop culture = **Intrinsic rationale** as purpose of comparison to Korea. Reference to Korean technology builds on the **intrinsic rationale** =making connections =collaborative exploration & construction of meaning.	
108. MJ	the technique the technology in Korea cosmetic surg-		
109. LH	surgery		
110. MJ	surgery is much more		
111. J	yeah		
112. KM	and maybe he want to compare the Asia Pacific Rim with America so he give some examples of Asian countries like different ideas of beauty about this(..)	Makes connections to wider **sociopolitical aspects** comparing Asia & America, power of globalisation **=intrinsic rationale** for Korean reference.	
113. J	maybe he shows the Korea situation to show what will China be like tomorrow(.) he want to show us that China will be like Korea one day	Highlights power of globalisation & 'aspirations' of China? (cosmetic surgery industry, technology) =**Sociopolitical** influences. Makes further connections as **intrinsic rationale** for Korean comparison.	

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