

Thereafter a sample of the lessons presented is taken and each lesson is critically analysed by the teacher-trainees and the teacher-trainer to establish its grounding theoretical framework and the accompanying phenomenon that defines the objective of ESL teaching and learning. The relevance of the Critical Language Awareness perspective is re-emphasized, and the evidence that this perspective is an important component of language teaching is provided in order to familiarise the teacher-trainees with how and why Critical Language Awareness is a significant component of language study. The teacher-trainees are then requested to each design and present yet another reading lesson, based on the same cartoon within the mode of CLA perspective. They will then critically compare their initial sample lessons and the new sample lessons in order to establish how the CLA perspective improves their language teaching practice and their learners' critical awareness to language learning. By so doing they pose more questions about their existence in their profession, and with their profession. They are therefore increasingly challenged and would be obliged to respond.

This course therefore prepares the ESL trainee-teachers to transform their teaching practice into a dialogical engagement between them and their learners mediated by the cognizable object in the form of the CLA English Second Language programme. The transcendental mode infused in the consciousness of the teacher-trainees will be shared with the latent one brought about by their learners. Both the learners and the teacher-trainees will continuously reconsider their reflection as they dialogue with each other. The teacher-trainee will be learning from the learners and vice versa.

5.7.3 A COURSE ON DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING

This course is set to develop critical thinking English language teachers. It is based on the conviction that the critical dimension to language use can be effectively incorporated in an ESL programme if the teachers' critical thinking is developed. The fundamental task is to assist teacher-trainees to locate the process and the nature of critical thinking. The key point is encapsulated by the questions posed in the quote below:

What characteristics do we look for in critical thinking? How can we recognize when critical thinking is happening? What are the chief capacities we are trying to encourage when we help people to become critical thinkers? What activities and processes are taking place when people are thinking critically (Brookfield:1987:5).

The course points to the teacher-trainees that critical thinking: is a productive and positive activity; is a process not an outcome; its manifestation varies according to the contexts in which it occurs; is triggered by positive as well as negative events; is emotive as well as rational. The overarching assumption of critical thinking is that:

- Identifying and challenging is central to critical thinking*
- Challenging the importance of context is crucial in critical thinking*
- Critical thinkers try to imagine and explore alternatives*
- Imagining and exploring alternatives leads to reflective skepticism (Brookfield:1987:7-9).*

An example of a course on developing Critical thinking could be modelled along the following lines. A pictorial signification or semiotic could form the basis of this course. Here teacher-trainees would be given a catalogue of pictorial communication such as advertisements, fine art magazines, and cartoons. They are expected to do a critical analysis of these and then illustrate how they could use them to design and present an ESL lesson that is couched within the CLA perspective. The first and critical point to learn here is that the driving force of critical thinking or reading is through asking questions and knowing which questions to ask. Let us take a pictorial advertisement that is accompanied by words with varying font sizes. To initiate their critical analysis, the teacher-trainees would be tasked to develop questions that would help them to identify key points or images they wish to tackle, link these with their existing knowledge, relate the images with the words, comments on syntax and the varying font size, contextualise and de-contextualise the whole advertisement, plot the gaps by showing inconsistencies and contradiction, and acknowledge their appreciation through sustainable reasoning. To further construct a balanced or well developed argument, they would be further tasked to imagine and explore alternatives. This should lead them to reflective skepticism - - the product of questioning.

Key to this exercise is the fact that the teacher-trainees are well prepared to instill the similar mode of questioning in their ESL classes, thus facilitating critical thinking. The lesson presentations are followed by a discussion in which both the teacher-trainees and the teacher-trainer raise questions to examine whether the framework of the questions behind the lesson design and presentation had been critical enough to develop critical thinking ESL learners. This background highlights the fact that language teaching, or teaching in general, cannot escape the need for critical thinking. The effectiveness of education rests on its ability to generate creative individuals, and this creativity is engendered by critical thinking. An accountable and

responsible language teacher-trainee uses his critical thinking to develop his learners' critical response on how language is used. Consequently, the learners develop critical language awareness to engage in critical self-reflection. This could mean a better understanding of, for instance, their own learning style resulting in better performance in their studies.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Critical Language Awareness is a conceptual resource of creating anew. It is a vehicle that creates consciousness with regard to the inherent traps set by language. It highlights the fact that language sets traps, controls and determines meanings, as such it is vulnerable to abuse (Marshall:1992:4). This chapter attempts to show that it is through language that education is a subject of mystification. This affects the way a curriculum is structured, teachers perceive and discharge their role, learners learn and experience the world. It also affects how a society defines itself. The common-sense assumptions are innumerable and if not taken head on it will turn the life of the already ignorant society into mechanical routine. These assumptions are linguistically constructed and it is the contention of this study that a critical awareness of how language is used to define humans and their activities as such, should be developed. The ideal starting point is a language classroom, ESL in the context of the current study, and an enabling programme to adopt is the Critical Language Awareness perspective.