

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This research reports on the implementation of a teaching program on an English classroom which incorporated the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This study can be regarded as part of Critical Language Awareness (CLA), a pedagogical wing of CDA, since it implemented CDA into a classroom practice. In this respect, this study examines the implementation of the principles of CDA in an English classroom, the effects it brings towards students' critical reading, and students' responses towards the teaching program. The study employed a qualitative case study which involved eighth grade of Junior High School students at SMP Al-Maliki Bojonegoro in odd semester 2016-2017. It used several data collection techniques including a phase of teaching in which the researcher acted as the participant observer, as well as students' reflective journals, and questionnaire. Data from all sources revealed that the implementation of CDA's principles develops students' critical reading in general. It also demonstrated students' positive responses towards the teaching program that it gave plenty of new insights for them and improved their critical reading as well. All these results indicate that the infusion of CDA into the teaching of reading is considerably effective in enhancing students' critical reading.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis, critical language awareness, students' critical reading*

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking ability is very essential to live life in a more meaningful way because it helps people make good decisions which are well thought of. This includes the ability to analyze issues, to make good decision, and to solve problems (Chaffee, 2000, p. 2). Consequently, critical thinking is important to be taught in formal educational institution, especially in higher education. One best circumstance to foster critical capacity is in the classroom, as an answer to Burke's (2010) criticism, that the prevailing curriculum, mainly in the context of education, does not prepare students with cognitive skills demanded by the workplace (in Nathan, 2010, p. 6). In this sense, language lesson can be regarded as one appropriate background since it focuses on studying language with all of its attributes.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is defined as "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social

power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text, and talk in the social and political context" (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). This definition suggests that CDA concerns on social and political issue that through language the social imbalance is potentially maintained. Likewise, CDA is also considered to focus on "gender issues, issues of racism, media discourses, political discourses, organizational discourses or dimensions of identity research" (Wodak & Weiss, 2003, p. 13). From the definition above, it can be seen that language, both in spoken and written discourse, is never value-free and it strengthens the view of 'language as a social practice' (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2002). The issue of abuse, dominance, and inequality are potentially manifested in it. It seems that there is still space for other researchers to develop reading activities from other critical perspectives. In this respect, Critical Discourse Analysis is another critical

approach which has a possibility to be infused in a reading classroom. Under its pedagogical wing, namely Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (Fairclough, 1992c) as cited in (Pennycook, 2001; Wallace, 2003), many researchers have developed CDA in their teaching. Farias' study (2005) in an EFL class in Chile reveals that CLA can contribute to the teaching and learning of English as a global language. Meanwhile, Smith (2004) outlines some practical aspects of CLA in an informal context of English teaching.

CLA's aim to build students' awareness on the use of language is the interest of the current investigation which believes that CDA generates a lot of benefits to the practice of language pedagogy, primarily in reading subject.

Regarding this, the present study undertaken a research on a critical reading teaching in Indonesia's EFL classroom whose major goal is to demonstrate the implementation Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the reading subject of tertiary level of education. The main distinctive feature of the present investigation from the previous ones is on the material of CDA to be implemented which is not taken from one framework but rather generally taken from the principles of CDA itself. The result of this investigation is expected to contribute to the pedagogical practice mainly to the reading teaching in Indonesia's EFL context.

METHOD

The present study employed a qualitative research by applying a case study as the specific research design (Alwasilah, 2002; Silverman, 2005). By qualitative research, the data gained are analyzed in a descriptive way to explore their attitudes, behavior, and experience (Dawson, 2009) which emerged along the teaching program. The research had been undertaken at 26 eighth grader of SMP Plus Al Maliki Bojonegoro, East Java in odd semester academic year 2016-2017. The data in this study were obtained by means of some techniques comprising a phase of teaching, included in it participant observation, student's reflective journals, and questionnaire. The use of these multiple

techniques aims to establish validity as the realization of triangulation (Maxwell, 1996).

The phase of teaching also involved several techniques of collecting data; participant observation and students' reflective journals which are undertaken throughout the teaching. Observation involved note taking to record students' activities as well as the teacher's questions or stimuli during the interaction and instruction (Allwright, 1988), particularly in the process of discussion assessing texts by means of CDA's principles. However, the activities in the first and last sessions are less observed since the agenda in the first is still on course introduction and the latter on progress test. More detailed notes were then jotted down immediately after the completion of each session including to record some methodological issues, students' thoughts, and preliminary analyses in a form of field notes (Dawson, 2009, p. 112).

Here, the students were asked to write a journal immediately after the end of each session. This technique is applied as the complementary data mainly as feedback from students towards the teaching processes in order to construct validity (Maxwell, 1996). It is also done in order to gain information regarding students' understanding on the overall process, their feeling, opinion, and suggestion for the upcoming sessions as well as to record their learning process of what they got from the teacher as well as from their peers.

As to gain comprehensive information of the students' critical reading capacity, a questionnaire is utilized twice. First is pre-program questionnaire designed as preliminary input to indicate the participants' engagement with reading in general and reading English texts in particular, their understanding on the content of text, their criticality on reading, and their expectation towards the teaching program. Meanwhile, the second is post-program questionnaire containing questions to explore students' interest on the teaching, their opinion about the need of being critical reader including their criticality improvement, their understanding on the nature of text, the term

CDA, and their opinion and suggestion for further teaching program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students as the participants were involved in the decision making of topics for the overall reading activities. This stage is in fact a sudden decision which was unplanned before in the lesson plan along with the thought of the importance of carrying out this activity as a good starting point.

Deciding the Topics for Reading

At the beginning of the teaching and learning process, the students were offered ten topics to choose. They were *Mobile phones more dangerous than smoking, Cigarette advertisement should be banned from sport event, Vocational high school should be banned, Using motorcycle for student should be forbidden, National examination should be abolished, Using internet is very useful for education, Naughty student are most parent responsibility, Wearing uniform for student is not necessary, Homeschooling is not good, and Students should join defend the country*. These topics represent several genres, such as article, news item, speech, letter, and cover story.

The selection of the texts was based on several considerations. First, the texts were taken authentically as it is suggested that critical reading will best utilize authentic materials in a sense that they could be problematized in ways relating to the students' own realities (Wallace, 1999). Authentic texts itself are defined as "real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes" (Wallace, 1992, p. 145); designed for the native speakers which are real and not initially designed for language learners (Harmer, 1991); and produced not for teaching purposes but for a real communicative purpose (Lee, 1995).

This texts' category is interrelated with the second aspect that the texts selected were the 'community' ones, "which circulate in everyday life" (Wallace, 2003, p. 104) as to meet "the critical reading principle of 'reading against the grain'" and "influential in the wider cultural climate" (Wallace, 2003, p. 105). Third, the texts were also varied in

genre as to provide students with rich references and to give them access to different representation of linguistic choices (Wallace, 2003). Fourth, in line with the principle of CDA itself that it addresses social problem (Fairclough & Wodak, 2010), the offered texts also contained social and political issue that opened to lively discussion.

Distributing Pre-Program Questionnaire

The next activity in the preliminary phase was the distribution of the pre-program questionnaire which was designed as preliminary input before carrying out the course. The information to be collected consisted of the students' engagement with reading in general and reading English texts in particular, their understanding on the content of text, their criticality on reading, and their expectation towards the program which were spread out within eleven questions. The result reveals that all students except one confessed that they like reading, for the reasons which were varied from one to another. Most of them read for pleasure, and for getting information and adding knowledge. One different response said that reading for him was a prerequisite for fulfilling his hobby in writing, which is line with one of Grabe's purposes of reading, reading to write (2002, p. 13). It indicates his awareness of the inseparable relationship between reading and writing that develops an educated mind will always require the ability to read closely, write substantively, and think critically (Elder & Paul, 2009). Additionally, in critical reading point of view, one can only write critically when he/she is able to read critically as well (Knott, 2008).

The next topic required students' answers to indicate their understanding on the content of the text, triggered by the questions about the clarity of the information. The result showed that 18 out of 26 respondents said that it was not always clear; six responded sometimes the information was clear and sometimes not, while only two answered yes but without reasoning. However, these responses do not perfectly answer the question, since some of them misunderstood the question and referred to it

as the problem of grammatical and vocabulary deficiency.

In terms of their own assessment towards their criticality in reading, most students said that they were not critical or in a modest way not really critical. The general findings suggest that students have heterogeneous ability and levels of understanding that requires precise direction in the process of reading activities. Students' linguistic recognition also needs to take into account as it often becomes drawbacks in second language reading (Grabe, 2002).

In this study, the test was also pursued to identify students' initial critical reading ability before the teaching program. It was firstly scheduled at the first meeting as an integrated part of activities in the preliminary phase. However, one additional session should be taken to perform the test because of the limitation of time in the first meeting. The test itself lasted for approximately 90 minutes as the students asked for extra time to complete it.

Undertaking Diagnostic Test

Diagnostic test question sheet, which is also used for progress test, contained nine questions synthesized from the experts on critical literacy and critical reading's question set. These questions identified the topic, the writer/producer of the text, the intended reader, the stance of the writer, the gap and silence, the intention of the writer, and the stance/opinion of the reader.

The text administered for the test was entitled *Mobile phones more dangerous than smoking*, the genre was article. Students' performance on the test was varied from one to another indicating their raw understanding towards the subject matter and considerably limited capacity of critical reading. Most of them were successful in identifying the topic and only six responses deviated from its correct answer.

Critical reading also involves the identification of the writer, his/her identity as well as his/her stance (Hood *et al.*, 1996, p. 90) which was realized in the second and third question. They asked who the writer is and to whom the text is directed, and where the position of the writer towards the subject

matter is. Most students responded to the question regarding the writer simply by mentioning the writer's name. The expected answer was actually not merely the name but the social identity or possible occupation of the writer that led him to write the article.

In this case, the test takers needed to identify the tendency of the writer as a clue to answer the question. Meanwhile, the position of the writer towards the topic he was discussing was figured out by, once again, looking at the tendency of the writer reflected on the whole text. Some participants said that the writer was in a neutral position.

This answer was regarded less accurate since the text shown strong tendency towards one side and neutrality in a text is something impossible even in the so called neutral newspapers. In this part, all participants failed in understanding the question resulting in not only wrong but also misdirection answers. It was not surprising since students were not used to deal with such a questioning and their previous reading subjects did not situate them in such engagement with text.

The last question which was scored asked students' agreement on the claim made by the writer. Although students were free to answer yes or no, they should provide relevant reason for their answer. It was this reasoning that was being assessed.

The overall result of the diagnostic test, however, does not solely indicate the students' capacity in critical reading since it was often found inconsistency in their responses. The participants who were accurate in answering some particular items were not automatically said to be critical as they were not successful on the other items. Some answers were even grammatically poor so the idea could not be captured. Some answers also demonstrated students' misunderstanding towards the text indicated by their deviated answers from what was being questioned.

The Teaching of Critical Reading

Pre-reading Stage

This section will describe the implementation of critical discourse analysis to promote students' critical reading. As

described before, the strategies used during the teaching followed the conventional stages of reading activity which is practiced from a critical point of view as developed by Wallace (1992, pp. 114-120; 1992, pp. 72-74). Within these activities, the principles of CDA, realized in a form of guiding critical questions consist of three levels of analysis: textual, discourse, and contextual levels, were infused step by step as to see the students' gradual comprehension on the concept. The use of critical questions at the first text was focused on textual and discourse levels. In the next reading, the discussion was tried to cover all levels but was still focused on particular triggering questions. It is commenced from the third reading of text entitled *Vocational high school should be banned* that students were trained to examine text by means of all levels of the guiding critical questions.

This initial phase is signified by the exposure of several questions adopted from Wallace (1992) which comprises questions such as what ways are there in which we might write about the topic; why do you think the text was written; and what the text is about. Another important activity is to let the students to provide their own questions, statements, or hypothesis regarding the text (Wallace, 1992).

The discussion of the first text *Mobile phones more dangerous than smoking* was started by probing the question why the text was written. "The text was written because there are a lot of bad effect of mobile phones. However, people needs mobile phones to communicate." Since the respondents were still dominated by the same students, the teacher then appointed some students to put forward their opinion. The appointment is not only to elicit the students' opinion, but more importantly to encourage them to speak up. As it is observed in the second meeting of explicit teaching, students had insight in fact but they feel reluctant to speak up and chose to be passive participants (Johnson, 2001).

The strategies applied in pre-reading stage in the subsequent sessions make use of other questions proposed by Wallace (1992) "Why the topic has been selected in the first place?" as a guidance in the discussion of texts *Mobile phones more dangerous than*

smoking. When this question was raised, all students could not grasp the meaning. The teacher assumed that their confusion was caused by the phrase *in the first place* whose meaning is similar to *to begin with* (Spears, 2005, p. 342) or simply firstly. Thus, in the discussion of *Mobile phones more dangerous than smoking*, the question was explained by firstly removing the phrase in order to simplify the explanation before eventually telling them the meaning. It was said that what they need to consider was the point of why the topic has been selected, why the writer chose to write this topic.

The last strategy applied in the pre-reading stage is by letting the students to provide their own questions, statements, or hypothesis regarding the text (Wallace, 1992, p. 114). This strategy was used in the texts *Using motorcycle for student should be forbidden*, *National examination should be abolished*, and *Using internet is very useful for education*. It might be their first experience to start a lesson by stating their own opinion or hypothesis, not by being asked questions as they used to get it previously. It was signified by their surprise and question, "What is the question, Mam?" in the reading of the text *Using motorcycle for student should be forbidden*.

The opinion above indicates students' thinking to relate the matter to the context of social world taking place in Indonesia which is of the concern of CDA (Wodak, 2002). It means that they have background knowledge which is activated at the time they read text. This point has, to some extent, met the first principle of critical discourse analysis that makes social problem as one of its concern.

While-reading Stage

While-reading stage is the core phase of the implementation of critical discourse analysis in the reading lesson. In this phase, students were usually asked to make group of five in which the grouping can be based on either the students' list or their seats or once they might choose their own partners. The grouping was intended "to argue through cases for one interpretation or point of view" (Wallace, 2003, p. 186) that enable them to discuss as well as share ideas. Most

importantly, a research proves that discussion can promote and advance comprehension of reading and higher-order thinking skills. Within groups, students were given time to read the text for approximately fifteen minutes. While reading, students were also asked to observe the text by means of the guiding critical questions provided earlier.

While reading the first text on *Mobile phones more dangerous than smoking*, students were asked to focus on two levels of questions to maintain the focus on this first reading. During group discussion, the teacher was walking around to observe the dynamic in the groups, to ensure that students “engaged in effective dialog” (Fisher, 2011), to assist opinion of the less outstanding students, or in short, to encourage “good discussion” that Fisher point out that good discussions give students opportunities to identify specific text material that supports their position and to listen as other students do the same.

In the course of an effective discussion, students are presented with multiple examples of how meaning can be constructed from text (Nathan, 2010, p. 7). It can be seen from the visit to group two consisting of students #2, #4, #14, #23, and #25. Since some members of the group were already active in the class, the discussion went lively as everyone contribute to the discussion. However, it seems that there was less opportunity for those of silent students (#23 and #25) to join the discussion since it was dominated by the outstanding ones. Thus, the role of the teacher is encourage the less active students to put forward their opinion and participate in the discussion as suggested by Fisher (2011). The same cases occurred on other groups in which it was the active students who seemed more involved in the discussion. Similar strategy was used to assist students to take part. These pictures took place at least until the third reading of text that most students eventually spoke up although not all of their ideas were relevant. One important point is that some students later could break the ice and feel more freedom to put forward opinion. Students also asked questions during group discussion as raised by students #24 and #15 who asked

about attribution of adjective or other words to the subject matter and metaphor. Although these items had been explained in the previous meeting, it seems not enough as they got difficulties when they were faced with text to analyze. The answers to these questions were not directed to these groups only but to the whole class in order to anticipate the same confusion among students. Moreover, all students were invited to raise questions and clarify their misunderstanding of the guiding questions given.

Reading the text *Using internet is very useful for education*, the students worked on the same procedures. They firstly read the text individually but still sat in group. In the group discussion stage, students were asked to evaluate text by means of all levels of questions but were focused on particular triggering questions.

The first aspect assessed in the group one’s analysis of text is the textual aspect which refers to the attribution of the issue. In the same way, what was mentioned by group three regarding the address of education reference is also part of this attribution. It means that both groups started their evaluation from the narrowest range to the wider level of analysis.

Group three present more complete analysis by involving genre analysis in the discourse level to see the possible coverage of the source of information that for them were balance, two from the state public officers and other two from the so-called liberal sides. Both groups highlighted the identification of the writer or its organization to figure out the tendency of his writing. They came to the same finding that the attribute of the writer or the producer’s identity as a western was reflected from his writing, higher tendency on liberal one and on a slight criticism on the law which is upheld by Islamic community. To critical reading perspective, their ways of thinking has shown judgment about how a text is argued as well as the ability to figure out the writer’s ways of thinking about the topic (Knott, 2008) by means of CDA’s principles in this respect.

The reading of other texts in the subsequent sessions made use of all the levels

in the guiding critical questions whose discussion was not restricted to the sequence of the questions but on particular intriguing issues. Reading the text *Students should join defend the country* for instance, the first session of the lesson was as usual reading and discussing in groups followed by group presentation and classroom discussion. Since it was the fourth text, the students were already familiar with the questions that their group discussion looked lively. During all sessions of discussion, the researcher paid a special attention to the less-active students by checking their involvement in the discussion and letting them to put forward their opinion as a response to a particular question. It was done to foster all students to be good readers who are actively involved in the text; they constantly able to interrogate and interact with it, and predict what is coming (Gibbons, 2002). The overall teacher student interaction was also done to encourage “dialogic teaching” that refers to “the kinds of verbal interaction that stimulates thinking, facilitates learning, and expands awareness of self, task and environment” (Fisher, 2011, p. 92).

Post-reading Stage

This stage signifies the end of reading activity in every session. Taking the reference from Wallace (1992), students’ activity was asking question to predict to whom the text is addressed. In the reading of the first text on *Mobile phones more dangerous than smoking*, the students responded simultaneously as similar question appeared in the diagnostic test. Regarding this, the lecturer directed the students to see another aspect of the writing of the text. It was questioned in what kind of media the text was published. If it was published in the internet, what consequence it will bring and more specifically, in what site it is displayed, whether in public media or in private website like blog or *facebook*. Here, students were provided with many options for them to think of the possible targeted readers.

Since the same question was applied to all post-reading activities, it can be identified that students’ answers were typical, considerably correct though. In the

reading of the rest texts, students predicted that the texts were directed to the parties who contradicted with the argument presented by the writer. In the text *Using internet is very useful for education* for instance, student #17 was the first to respond saying that the targeted readers might be those who agreed with the *internet* upholding in the school. Likewise, reading the text *Cigarette advertisement should be banned from sport event*, student #6 said that the text was directed to smokers. Meanwhile, in reading *Homeschooling is not good*, the lecturer asked student #18 to answer the question. Her answer was similar, the readers targeted were the proponent of homeschooling which in fact was irrelevant since this speech was delivered by the artist that must have homeschooling.

The Effect of the Teaching Program towards Students’ Critical Reading

In order to gain a clear picture of how the teaching program contribute to the students’ critical reading, the following section will initially discuss the positive effect of the teaching followed by its negative side on the students reading.

The Positive Effect

The major positive effect of the teaching program is the enhancement of students’ critical reading when it ended. This progress is indicated in the students’ initial ability prior to the teaching program and after the program. It can be identified from data taken from several sources including observation, students’ reflective journals, as well as the results of students’ performance in the diagnostic and progress tests.

In the reading of subsequent texts in the following sessions, students demonstrated better critical ability indicated by their better understanding on the guiding questions as their answers to it were getting more accurate. Additionally, the discussion was no longer dominated by those of outstanding students but some students who were previously relatively silent also started to take part. The progress of students’ critical ability cannot merely assessed from everyday activities, but it should be based on their own

confession whether or not they get new insight and enjoy the teaching whose answers can be disclosed through two sources of data, students' reflective journal and post-program questionnaire. The reflective journals provide fruitful information of students' day to day understanding of the material but it is hard to be extracted.

The Negative Effect

A critical reader is expected not to take things for granted mainly regarding any kinds of information one get from his/her reading, but at the same time not fall to another kind of harsh criticism towards the subject matter. It is in line with one criticism to CLA that instead of enhancing students' critical capacity, it leads to 'instruction in ideological partiality' (Wallace, 2003), in which the criticality towards a text is realized by being judgmental on it. What is expected from a critical reading teaching program is that both teacher and students are not only able to criticize the texts but also obtain higher awareness of their own observation (Wallace, 2003). However, the expected outcomes cannot fully achieved as teaching critical reading, or other kinds of criticality in literacy, is not an instant process. It takes time as some say it requires a lifetime instruction (Beyer, 1997) and the teaching of critical literacy itself in some developed country, such as Australia, is undertaken from the early (Look at Hancock, 1997).

CONCLUSION

The CDA-based reading teaching program incorporated in this study has resulted in students' critical reading improvement in general. This conclusion is mainly drawn by looking at the implementation which includes two phases. The first is preliminary phase comprising several stages. They are the introduction of the teaching program, the joint decision of the topics for reading, the distribution of diagnostic test and the performance of preliminary questionnaire.

The second phase is the teaching program covering stages of explicit teaching of CDA-based guiding critical questions and SFL-related framework for critical reading

and the teaching of critical reading itself. The teaching of critical reading is divided into three activities: pre, while, and post-reading activities.

CLA's aim to build students' awareness on the use of language is the interest of the current investigation which believes that CDA generates a lot of benefits to the practice of language pedagogy, primarily in the reading subject.

The success of the teaching can also be identified from some sources of data, mainly classroom observation and progress test. Students' discussion based on the guiding questions went lively both in the group and classroom discussion. Most of them were also able to provide relevant responses to the questions. Additionally, students' improvement was also signified by the active participation of those who were considered as passive students before the teaching program was carried out.

In line with the above conclusion, the teaching program has a greater positive influence towards the promotion of students' critical reading. Not only from the researcher's observation and the result of test, the complementary data from students' reflective journals as well as post-program questionnaire also reveal their confession that the course had improved their reading habit and more importantly their critical reading. They also realize that being critical in reading is of paramount importance in the current era since there are wide range of information nowadays that should be well-selected. Nevertheless, there is a negative effect the program has on the students that some of them tend to be judgmental in evaluating the texts.

Regarding students' responses towards the teaching program, data from students' reflective journals as well as post-program questionnaire reveal students' enjoyment during the teaching though there was time they felt bored and tired since the situation was not really supportive. Some students also confessed that the techniques applied by the researcher were new for them and regarded better than the previous reading lessons they have taken. It indicates that the way CDA's principles implemented in

the teaching is significant to promote students' critical reading. Finally, students' positive responses are also completed by their suggestion to the teacher to give grammatically easier texts and include Indonesian texts and literary texts.

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Monkey

A guy walks into a bar with his pet monkey. He orders a drink and while he's drinking, the monkey jumps all around the place. The monkey grabs some olives off the bar and eats them. Then grabs some sliced limes and eats them. Then jumps onto the pool table, grabs one of the billiard balls, sticks it in his mouth, and to everyone's amazement, somehow swallows it whole. The bartender screams at the guy "Did you see what your monkey just did?". The guy says "No, what?" "He just ate the cue ball off my pool table-whole!". "Yeah, that doesn't surprise me," replied the guy. "He eats everything in sight, the little bastard. Sorry. I'll pay for the cue ball and stuff." He finishes his drink, pays his bill, pays for the stuff the monkey ate, then leaves. Two weeks later he's in the bar again, and has his monkey with him. He orders a drink and the monkey starts running around the bar again. While the man is finishing his drink, the monkey finds a maraschino cherry on the bar. He grabs it, sticks it up his butt, pulls it out, and eats it. The bartender is disgusted. "Did you see what your monkey did now?" he asks. "No, what?" replies the guy. "Well, he stuck a maraschino cherry up his butt, pulled it out, and ate it!" said the bartender. "Yeah, that doesn't surprise me," replied the guy. " He still eats everything in sight, but ever since he swallowed that cue ball, he measures everything first..."

(Source: <http://www.study-express.ru/humour/funny-stories.shtml>, picture: www.google.co.id)