

Critical Reading Discourse of Pre-Service English Teachers in Turkey

May 2016 – Volume 20, Number 1

Gözde Balıkcı

Middle East Technical University, Turkey

<gozdebalikci2@gmail.com>

Ayşegül Daloğlu

Middle East Technical University, Turkey

<daloglu@metu.edu.tr>

Abstract

This case study was conducted in order to observe and investigate the critical reading discourse (CRD) of 27 freshman pre-service teachers of English at the department of foreign language teaching at a state university in Turkey. In addition, the study attempts to answer the question of how the critical reading discourse of the students is shaped through feedback, instruction, and time. The written and audio-visual data were collected in the Advanced Reading and Writing I and II courses, which are offered to first-year students in the Foreign Language Education (FLE) department. The results of the data analysis indicate that the critical reading discourse of the freshman pre-service teachers of English involves interpretive, evaluative, and responsive discourse. Evaluative discourse was found to be limited in students' written work and discussions when compared to interpretive and responsive discourse. The students also usually tended to evaluate the content of the texts rather than their form. It was also found that instruction about academic writing fosters critical thinking, but it was not sufficient to encourage critical reading.

Key Words: Foreign Language Reading, Critical Reading, Pre-service Teachers of English

Introduction

Reading, whether in a first, second, or foreign language, is a social, complex, and interactive process. One of the most general reasons for reading may be the need to be a part of a particular society. Members of any society need to cope with the demands of the society and keep up with it as well, and the most basic requirement of most societies has always been to enroll in a school whose priority is to teach and promote literacy

among its members. Shaull (1970) claims that schooling is not neutral and this practice may vary among different societies. He puts forward the idea that:

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (1970, p. 30)

Therefore, every member of a particular society must keep in mind that their schooling process may be under the effect of dominant ideology adopted by that society at a particular time. In addition to schooling, the use of language in a particular society can affect, dominate, and manipulate the people in intended ways and can help maintain the power of the authorities.

Thus, the need for a critical stance towards education and language has always been felt. Paulo Freire (1970), who can be considered one of the first critical educators, has named this maintenance of domination "oppression" and argued that oppressors who have power in society make use of science and technology to maintain their dominance over other people.

In order to be aware of this, there is a dire need to have a critical stance towards these practices, which can be hard to observe and detect most of the time. As a result, schools should also be responsible for encouraging and facilitating a critical stance towards authority, especially towards dominance and in Freirean words, oppression. Literacy, in this regard, becomes even more important. It was usually thought that if one could read and show that s/he understood, which was usually checked with the help of comprehension questions, s/he was a literate person. This was also due to the perception that reading was just a cognitive skill which was "the ability to derive understanding from written text" (Grabe, 2002, p. 51).

However, Freire and Macedo (1987) have emphasised that:

Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected. The understanding attained by critical reading of a text implies perceiving the relationship between text and context. (Freire, Macedo, p. 20)

For Freire, educators should view reading as a way to promote emancipation and empowerment of the people who are dominated and manipulated by the people who have power. In 1970, Freire wrote his influential book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, after working with poor adult workers who were faced with oppression; he taught them to read and write along with how to empower themselves through reading and writing. Although the workers were very poor and they were forced to work in very bad conditions in Freire's context, they learned how to read and write. Furthermore, the emancipatory literacy practices enabled them to have a critical stance towards the world.

The need for being critical has also been visible in second/foreign language reading. Catherine Wallace (1992), who called English as a Foreign Language (EFL) readers “marginalized,” has claimed that:

Their goals in interacting with written texts are perceived to be primarily those of language learners. What is missing is; an attempt to place reading activity and written texts in a social context, the use of texts which are provocative and a methodology for interpreting texts which addresses ideological assumptions as well as propositional meaning (Wallace, 1992, p. 62).

In addition, Wallace (1992) claims that interaction between the text and the foreign language reader is not equal, no matter how interactive the reading is. For Wallace, this is due to the fact that foreign language learners do not dare to challenge texts. One of the reasons for this can be that foreign language learners make use of the texts to learn the language itself. Texts may be considered as a source of new vocabulary and inductive grammar teaching. Therefore, instructors may not encourage students to question the text with a critical perspective.

In addition to Catherine Wallace’ works, Graman (1988), Macknish (2011), İçmez (2005), Bartu (2002), Kuo (2009) also attempted to incorporate critical literacy in foreign language teaching. For instance, Graman (1988), who followed Freire’s theories, claimed that English as a Second Language (ESL) materials were irrelevant to farm workers’ lives. Therefore, he tried to encourage students to generate their own themes that were relevant to their own lives and interests.

Macknish (2011) also investigated the extent and nature of the critical reading discourse that would emerge among Chinese ESL learners in Singapore over time. Macknish (2011) points out that in the discussions, interpretive discourse was observed to emerge more often when compared to justificatory and empowering discourse. In particular, empowering discourse was rarely displayed. According to Macknish (2011) lack of language proficiency did not hinder the process of critical reading. Rather, students needed more scaffolding, modelling by the teacher and practice. Macknish (2011) stated that students gained a more critical perspective and became more conscious by the end of the course, and she believed that “in the future they would engage in more transformative processes” (p. 459).

İçmez (2005) conducted a similar research study in Turkey using the methodology offered by Wallace (2005); this study aimed to investigate the impact of a critical reading course in a Turkish high school and attempted to explore the effect of the critical reading course on the students’ motivation towards reading. According to İçmez (2005), there are some disadvantages that EFL students have in a critical reading classroom. First, students have limited access to English outside the classroom, so they might have difficulty transferring and integrating critical reading to their lives outside the classroom. In addition, the EFL environment is a monocultural one where every student has a similar background. Thus, this environment may not provide students with different perspectives or experiences (p. 208). However, İçmez (2005) in her experience with the high school students, observed that students developed a critical approach to reading in spite of the disadvantages EFL learners experienced.

Studies focusing on critical reading (Bartu, 2002; İçmez, 2005; İçmez, 2009) are rare in the Turkish EFL context. Therefore, there is a need for more research to investigate these concepts and to integrate them into foreign language learning. This study attempts to bring a broader perspective to the field as it integrates and combines the notions of critical reading and thinking in foreign language reading. Before moving to the design of the study, the distinction between critical reading and thinking should be discussed. Macknish (2011) stated that the critical reading process encompasses both critical thinking abilities, such as identifying an author's fallacies and critical literacy perspective that focuses on power and social issues. Therefore, it is implied that critical thinking is related to analytical thinking skills, whereas the latter refers to the socio-cultural, ideological, and political agenda of the text.

In this sense, based on Macknish's (2011) framework, this paper attempts to define critical reading as a process involving both evaluating texts analytically and considering texts from a power perspective.

The development of the framework

Within the scope of this study, a new framework was created after the modification of two frameworks (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002; Macknish, 2011) that are frequently cited in critical reading and thinking studies. Although this framework was adopted and modified in accordance with the specific context of this study, it might set a model for future studies.

A number of studies (e.g., Macknish 2011, Kuo 2009) adapted the framework developed by Lewison, Flint, & Sluys (2002), who reviewed the range of definitions in research and literature over the last 30 years and synthesised them into four dimensions: disrupting commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action and promoting social justice. Due to the suitability of these four dimensions of the critical literacy model for our context, this framework was incorporated in our study's framework as well. In this framework, there were four constructs each of which are explained in detail below.

"Disrupting commonplace" refers to "seeing everyday through new lenses" (p. 383). This dimension includes going beyond the conventional, ordinary and routine way of thinking and adopting a broader perspective. In terms of "interrogating multiple viewpoints, empathising with other people and having the ability to "imagine standing in the shoes of others" are stressed. In critical literacy practices, there should be a "focus on socio-political issues" considering that language, power, and socio-political systems are interrelated. Lastly, the ultimate goal of critical literacy is "taking action and promoting social justice."

In addition to the four dimensions of the critical literacy model, Macknish (2011) included three discourses of critical reading, which combine interpretive, justificatory, and empowering discourse. Macknish (2011) merged the Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002) four dimensions of critical literacy into the interpretive construct. In the justificatory construct, "justifying interpretations, opinions, claims made in interpretive discourse with reasons, examples and rationale which allow argumentation to develop" are included. "Uncovering ideologies, dominant or potentially harmful discourse or

attempts to manipulate readers” are analysed under the frame of the empowering discourse.

For this study, these two frameworks were adapted in accordance with the students’ reading journals. In addition, the data revealed other discourses, such as a responsive discourse. Therefore, the framework used for this study was constructed with the help of other frameworks adapted in the critical reading literature and the students’ reading journals.

The latest version of the framework is provided in the Appendix. Below is the detailed description of the framework.

Interpretive Discourse: Involves detecting the main argument of the text, being aware of the evidence that the writer shows to support his/her stance, understanding and stating the purpose of the writer, detecting the hidden agenda or manipulative intents of the writer, being aware of the target audience of the text, and being aware of the context (i.e., when and where it is published, who is the author of the text).

Evaluative Discourse: Involves evaluating the justifications that the writer makes and deciding whether they are logical, evaluating the refutations that the writer makes and deciding whether they are logical, evaluating the language of the author taking the text into consideration, evaluating the tone of the writer (e.g., whether it is sarcastic or humiliating, among others), deciding whether the writer disrupts the commonplace, deciding whether the writer considers multiple viewpoints, deciding whether the writer focuses on the socio-political issues, and deciding whether the writer takes action or suggests a solution to issues discussed in the text.

Responsive Discourse: The researchers analysed the students’ reactions, their own opinions about the controversial issues (e.g., the use of the mother tongue, employee rights, and downloading). In this section, the data is analysed to answer whether the student develops a counter argument and supports his/her own argument by giving logical reasons and supports the argument presented in the text and giving logical reasons for it.

In addition, while putting forward their own arguments, students should conform to such criteria as; disrupting the commonplace, considering multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues and taking action. Therefore, if the student going beyond the ordinary develops empathy for others, takes socio-political issues into consideration, and finally takes an action such as suggesting a solution for the controversial issue, it can be concluded that the student is a critical thinker as well.

Having provided the development of the framework, the research questions are presented below:

Research Questions

Taking the need for being critical in foreign language reading into consideration, this case study aims to investigate the critical reading discourse of the freshman pre-service teachers of English in the Advanced Reading and Writing Course. The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent is the critical reading discourse reflected in students' written work?
2. How is critical reading discourse (CRD) shaped and constructed through
 - A. feedback
 - B. instruction
 - C. over one academic year in students' written work?
3. What is the nature of the critical reading discourse students reflected in their written work?
4. To what extent is the CRD reflected in students' whole class discussions?

In order to examine the critical reading discourse of the freshman students at the department of foreign language education, the Advanced Reading and Writing I and II courses were observed. The written data was also collected during two terms lasting 29 weeks. The students were required to keep a reading journal in which they would write their reactions and responses towards the texts they read. Along with the reading journals, Advanced Reading and Writing I and II courses were observed throughout two semesters to better understand the extent and nature of the students' critical reading discourse in the classroom. To this end, two courses were videotaped to analyse students' whole class discussions at the end of the year.

Participants

Participants included 27 freshman pre-service teachers of English at the department of foreign language education (FLE). They were nearly the same age and all of them are graduates of Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools. They successfully passed the OSS and YDS (the university entrance exams which are prerequisites for acceptance to undergraduate programs in Turkey) to qualify for registration at the FLE Department which accepts students with the highest scores on YDS exams. The students kept reading journals throughout the year and the journals were checked and given feedback by the instructor. At the end of the year, the students voluntarily gave their journals to the researchers.

Data Collection Instrument and Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was extensive. The syllabus of the course was already established, so the data collection process and the course were connected. First, all the journals were read twice, at the end of the final readings of the journals, a comprehensive framework to code the data was established as described below. While setting up the framework, the other frameworks used in the literature were modified taking the nature of the data into account.

Adopting the content analysis method, 27 journals were analysed, and the data were coded into the framework. The whole-class discussions (during the two weeks) were videotaped and the same framework was used to code and analyse the audio-visual data.

For each student, the researchers created a Word page titled S1 as shown in the Appendix. In this framework, one can find the entries S1 had written in the third and fifth weeks of the fall term and the entries S1 had written in the fifth, the tenth and the

fourteenth week of the spring term (in total five entries for each student). Each line represented the entry the student wrote in the journal. In accordance with the criteria presented in the framework, the entries students wrote in their journals were evaluated. If the entry did not meet the *purpose* criterion for instance, that is, if the S1 did not specify the purpose of the writer in his/her entry, the researcher put a cross (x) in the related box. If it was thought to satisfy the purpose criterion, then the researchers put a plus sign (+). After reading all the entries S1 wrote and completing the framework, the scores for each criterion were calculated. The performance of the student indicated by his/her scores on the table determined the extent to which the students could be regarded as critical readers and thinkers.

Validity and Reliability

The researchers did not intervene in the flow of the courses, nor did they suggest the instructor make any changes or adaptations to the courses. The researchers only observed the class during the year and in order to minimise the effect of the presence of the observer in the class, the researchers acted as participant observers in the classroom (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). They tried to blend into the classroom environment. One of the researchers was a full-time research assistant at the department and already assisting the course. Thus, she was participating in the classroom activities which helped her to blend into the classroom environment.

In addition to being participant observers, the researchers also acted as interpreters. Johnson (1997) points out that a researcher may not be objective as their own perspectives can affect the interpretation and the analysis of the study (p. 284). Therefore, the researchers were aware that their own backgrounds and perspectives can affect their way of interpretation and analysis. In order to minimise this effect, both of the researchers read all the journals separately twice. Then, they met on a regular basis to develop a framework until they decided on the final version of the framework. The researchers read two of the journals together and coded the data into the framework in order to ensure that they were in mutual agreement with regard to the criteria. Then, they read the remaining the journals separately and reliability analysis showed that 90% of the analysis matched.

Findings

The Extent of CRD in Reading Journals

It must be kept in mind that it is difficult to assess the full extent of CRD for students. However, three broad categories, that is interpretive, evaluative and responsive discourse, emerged from the analysis of the reading journals and the whole class discussions. These three broad categories may also shed light into the nature of the CRD of students, which will be discussed later. The number of entries touched upon the constructs of the interpretive and evaluative discourse in both fall and spring terms showed that the number of entries declines towards the right part of the framework. This framework can also be considered as a continuum in which the difficulty level of items increases to the right hand side. Therefore, the students apparently had difficulties in detecting hidden agenda, and target audience of the writer. In addition, they did not make a judgement as to whether the writer considered the multiple

viewpoints, disrupted the commonplace, focused on socio-political issues, and took action. To sum up, in terms of evaluative discourse, students were not successful in assessing the texts in these dimensions. Below are tables showing the extent of CRD reflected in journals.

Table 1. Interpretive Discourse Emerging from the CRD Journals

	argument	evidence	purpose	hidden agenda	target audience	context
The number of the entries that meet the criteria in the fall	54	40	6	0	1	3
The number of entries in the fall term	54	54	54	54	54	54
%	100%	75%	11%	0%	1%	5%
The number of the entries that meet the criteria in the spring	75	69	33	3	6	11
The number of entries in the spring term	81	81	81	81	81	81
%	92%	85%	40%	1%	7%	13%

In addition to interpretive discourse dimension, performances on evaluative discourse can be presented as below in Table 2:

Table 2. Evaluative Discourse Emerging in Journals

	refutation	justification	word choice	language	tone	commonplace	multiple viewpoints	socio-political	take action	Overall evaluation
The number of the entries that meet the criteria in the fall term	9	19	5	7	2	1	0	0	0	11
The number of entries in the fall term	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
%	16%	33%	9%	12%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%	20%
The number	33	43	5	9	8	1	2	0	0	14

	refuta- tion	justifi- cation	word choice	lan- guage	tone	common- place	multiple view- points	socio- politi- cal	take action	Overall evalua- tion
of the entries that meet the criteria in the spring term										
The number of entries in the spring term	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81
%	40%	53%	6%	11%	9%	1%	2%	0%	0%	17%

In terms of responsive discourse, the framework cannot be considered to be a continuum as in evaluative discourse because students may agree or disagree with the text. However, it is observed that students generally tend to agree with the ideas argued in the texts. Students supported the writers in 27 out of 54 entries in the fall term, while in 13 out of 54 entries students disagreed with the texts. In the spring term, this situation did not change. Students agreed with the writers in 56 out of 81 entries in the spring term, while in 38 entries one could observe counter arguments. Therefore, it can be claimed that students have a tendency to show agreement with the writers.

Students were also successful in considering multiple viewpoints; they could grapple with the issues in broader perspectives. However, in other respects, such as either disrupting the commonplace or focusing on socio-political issues, students seemed to be unsuccessful. Students made progress in terms of finding reasonable solutions to the problems addressed in the texts in spring term.

Table 3. Responsive Discourse Emerging in Journals

	counter argu- ments	reason	supporting argument	reason	disrupting the commonplace	multiple viewpoints	socio- political	take action
The number of the entries that meet the criteria in the fall term	13	13	27	19	2	10	1	5

	counter arguments	reason	supporting argument	reason	disrupting the commonplace	multiple viewpoints	socio-political	take action
The number of entries in the fall term	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
%	24%	24%	50%	40%	3%	18%	0%	12%
The number of the entries that meet the criteria in the fall term	38	39	56	52	1	24	5	16
The number of entries in the spring term	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81
%	46%	46%	69%	64%	1%	29%	6%	19%

The CRD through Feedback and Instruction

When the FLE 135 (in fall term) and FLE 136 (in spring term) course syllabi were analysed closely, it could be seen that there is a gradual development from basic reading skills such as previewing and skimming to higher-level skills such as understanding the figurative language and synthesizing. Therefore, with the help of a well-planned course, students improved their ability to interpret the texts, read between the lines, evaluate the writer according to different aspects, and respond to them in an appropriate way.

Thus, students' spring entries were found to be longer and more fluent and include more critical reflection when compared to the fall term. The students apparently developed themselves, and they started to read the texts from a new perspective. In addition, they could reflect on what they read more critically. Furthermore, in the spring term, with the help of courses on research skills, citation, and APA style, the students wrote in a more academic style.

In terms of feedback given at the end of the fall semester, a majority of the students were provided with nearly the same guidance, which was to "include more critical reflection." The instructor generally gave short feedback and those were naturally not comprehensive enough to explain "how to be more critical" in detail. However, the ongoing courses helped students to gain more critical perspective. In addition, as it can be seen from the section, *The Whole Class Discussions*, the instructor presented a number of

texts and facilitated discussion. Therefore, this classroom atmosphere also guided students about the way of critical reading along with the feedback.

When the Tables 1, 2, and 3 are analysed carefully in order to report the improvement in CRD in spring term relative to the fall term, it can be seen that the students made progress in each sub-category of the three discourse types except for the *word choice, language, and overall evaluation*, which were categorised under evaluative discourse. The same number of entries was found to evaluate word choice of the writer in both fall and spring terms. Thus, there is no improvement found in this sub-category. In addition, while 7 out of 54 entries evaluated the language of the writer in the fall term, 9 out of 81 entries evaluated the language of the writer in the spring term. Furthermore, the students tended to ignore the overall evaluation of the texts.

The Nature of CRD

In this study, critical reading is thought to be a combination of interpretation, evaluation of the text and producing a response and reaction to it. It is found that all the students were successful in interpreting the texts. However, while few students focused on evaluation of the texts, the majority of them responded directly to the ideas addressed in the texts without evaluating the writer's style or word choice. Students generally summarised their opinions in a sentence rather than touching upon "disrupting commonplace," "considering multiple viewpoints," "focusing on socio-political" and "taking action" aspects in both the fall and spring terms while evaluating the texts. Therefore, the results showed that the students had a tendency to respond to the texts rather than evaluate them directly.

Whole Class Discussions

During the two terms FLE 135 and FLE 136, courses were observed and some of them were videotaped. However, two of the courses of the FLE 136 in the spring term will be highlighted here to better explore the nature of the critical reading discourse in the class discussions. It is thought that the classroom discussions will help readers to hear the students' voices and opinions better. In this way, along with the students' scores presented in the previous sections, one can have the chance of reading the description of the students' critical reading discourse.

The criteria in the framework are considered and followed in the classroom discussions of the texts. The instructor first introduced the texts (i.e., writer, target audience, purpose and context of the texts and the main arguments). Then, evaluative discourse followed as in the framework. The students were encouraged to evaluate the texts considering the list of criteria in the framework during the discussions. Finally, students were asked to respond to texts and voice their own opinions as in the responsive discourse. Thus, it can be argued that the discussions also followed a similar path to the one followed in the written discourse.

Although the number of the students signed up for the course was 24, a few students generally volunteered to participate in the discussions to share their opinions and reflect upon the issue. When the instructor asked a question, students generally answered the questions in chorus. Only a few volunteers, usually the same students, wanted to share their opinions related to the issue. It was observed that some of the

students who took the floor switched to Turkish (their native tongue) especially when talking about their own experiences or memories. In addition, one student used a well-known Turkish saying to sum up the topic, while the other student opted for Turkish to use language sarcastically. Furthermore, it is apparent that they tended to give short answers while speaking in English. It is observed that the instructor generally guided the discussion and the amount of teacher talking time is more than that of student talking time.

The School is Bad for Children

In the ninth week of the spring term, the instructor presented the text *School is Bad for Children* which was written by John Holt in 1969. It is a highly argumentative and effective essay that published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in the USA. The instructor took some sentences from the text and prepared some questions to guide the discussions. She used a Power Point presentation to present the quotes and the questions. She also brought the music video of the song "Another Brick in the Wall" by Pink Floyd. As the students were provided with the course schedule and the reading materials at the beginning of the semester, they had read the text before they came to the class.

As mentioned earlier, the instructor's questions guided and directed the discussion. At the beginning of the lesson, the instructor first asked whether the title of the essay *School is Bad for Children* was a successful one for an argumentative text. All of the students gave short answers such as "summarising the whole text, attracts students, drawing attention, challenging." The instructor, as one of the main goals of the course was to teach writing paragraphs and essays, wanted students to think about the way an argumentative essay was written. She emphasised that it should persuade the readers so that students should choose their titles in accordance with the types of text they are going to write. Following the slides, the instructor asked who the writer was, where he was from, and where the text was published to learn whether the students were aware of the context of the essay; this awareness is prerequisite for critical reading and thinking. The students gave the correct answers in chorus. The instructor asked about the type of the text and target audience of the text. While some of the students said that this text was for a specific audience, others stated that the writer targeted a general audience. Showing the related slide, the instructor explained that if the source of a text was a magazine or newspaper then the text was written for a general audience.

Regarding the purpose of the text, students agreed that the purpose of the writer was to persuade readers and criticise the system of education generally. S24 found the style of the writer "liberal," but he did not explain further why he found him to be liberal. "Critical, subjective, not serious, sexist" were the adjectives students used to define the writer's tone. S34 said, "He is sexist because he always says *he* for the students but he uses *she* for a teacher who is a bad person." In response, the instructor reminded the class that the text was written in the 1960s when that kind of language was not considered to be sexist. Then the same student said, "If a writer is sexist, is it a point of view or style of the writer?" The teacher replied that "it is a style and it can be a point of view. The writer is being sexist in his/her style." Then, the instructor asked whether the students found the text easy to read, fun to read. Students generally answered this

question by taking the language of the text into consideration. S18 commented that the “vocabulary is simple, everyday language...” Further, the instructor showed the video and the song “Another Brick in the Wall” began. The instructor tried to encourage brainstorming “look at the image of the teachers in the clip” and asked the question “what is represented here?” after pausing the video. In the video, there was a dark school with a gloomy atmosphere with students whose faces were identical. S24 answered, “Machines, making some kind of students, like a factory.” The teacher, referring to the part of the clip, commented that “this is totally a dark picture reminding us of the Gestapo; in schools usually we have such a terrible system.” S31 referring to the lyrics of the song “we don’t need no education” objected in Turkish and said, “*Ama şarkının isminden de eğitime ihtiyaç duydukları belli oldu*” which means: “*It is already apparent that they need education considering the name of the song*”. This student tried to emphasise the ungrammaticality of the name; however, S24 disagreed and commented that “it is a bit ironic way of saying this. This video shows us the education system encouraging rote learning and critical thinking is totally discouraged.”

When the video finished, the instructor showed the quotes from the texts and asked students “what does this mean?” and wanted them to reflect on the sentences. These questions generally aimed at checking student comprehension. Most of the students talked about what they understood from the passage, and two of them talked about their own experiences in high school. S18 commented, “I think the problem is that there are lots of silly things and there is force. For example if they gave me chance to choose what to learn, if they did not force me to memorise some dates in the history classes I would love history. Maybe I would love to read history books, novels, rather than memorising the dates.” At the end of the class, the instructor asked, “So we become teachers. What should we do? Should we get rid of this system?” S26 replied, “Start changing the system, we should change something.” The other student added: “We should rely on practical things not always theoretical.”

The Teacher Who Changed My Life

The last text that was studied in the class was the “The Teacher Who Changed My Life” by Nicholas Gage. It was not an argumentative text; rather, it was the life story of the writer who was a refugee in the United States. The writer described his process of adapting to a new country and his teacher “who paved the way for his career as a famous writer” in the article.

The teacher gave students information about the writer and his background. In addition, as the beginning of the story took place in Greece and in the Cold War period, the instructor talked about the Cold War and the Greek Civil War. The same questions (i.e., context, target audience, tone, the language) the teacher asked for the text “School is bad for Children” were asked again. The students answered these questions in chorus. However this time, it was observed that students evaluated the writer with a more critical stance. The students generally focused on the content, rather than the style of the author. Upon the teacher’s question “what do you think about the text?” one student commented, “I think he mentioned his change, transformation, he focused his life rather than his teacher.” Another student said, “I think anybody could help him, teacher does

not change anything.” The point that got the most reaction from the students was the teacher’s sending the student’s paper to a competition without the student’s permission.

The teacher then drew students’ attention to the words *freedom, Newland*, which were frequently used by the writer while talking about the United States. While S46 student commented: “America is perceived by the land of opportunities by most of the people,” S26 said that “as a refugee escaping from a war, it is normal to see any country as a land of opportunities.” Student 35, criticizing the positive attitude of the writer towards America, said, “The country that changed my life would be better title.” S3 added, “When I first read the text, I think it is a good text, but after thinking critically I changed my mind. The goal of the text is different. It tries to persuade us that America is free country and land of opportunities.” When the teacher asked whether the text tried to impose American values on the readers, all the students agreed.

At this stage, the teacher reminded the class that while in this text Nicholas Gage wrote about the good sides of America, he also discussed the Watergate Scandal, which was a major political scandal in the United States. Student 10 laughed and said in Turkish “köprüyü geçene kadar...” which meant “hold a candle to the evil.” The instructor continued and stated, “So the American dream came true for him. What is the American dream? Actually, the American dream is whatever your position is; you can climb up the ladders of the success. Everybody can achieve this dream.” Towards the end of the lesson, the class discussed the pros and cons of the United States. They decided that “it can be the most powerful country in the world, but we have to question the issues such as democracy and freedom in the America.”

Considering the classroom discussions within the framework of CRD, the results suggested that with the help of the instructor’s feedback, students improved their ability to look at the texts from broader perspectives and grasp the text’s main idea. They could detect the arguments, the evidence the writer showed, and the writer’s refutations. They also started to think about the possible hidden agenda of the author besides the ostensible purpose. They developed an awareness of the importance of the writer’s background, the source of the text, the time, and the place the text was written. Students started to ask the question “for whom is the text written?” They started to evaluate the writer’s words and language although their evaluation was not given in detail.

As to *disrupting the commonplace, considering multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues and taking action*, there was a gradual development in critical thinking and reading. Students took an important step in gaining awareness of questioning the commonplace, thoughts that everybody believes without thinking, they broadened their perspectives, and suggested logical solutions to the issues.

However, the instructor’s guidance in the discussions was clearly observed. The instructor prepared the questions and asked students to answer them. The discussions were always initiated and stimulated by the instructor. Therefore, the students were actually on the way to becoming autonomous critical readers.

Summary of the results of the whole class discussions

- Most of the students were found to be reluctant to participate in the discussions and did not want to raise their hands to voice their opinions.

- Some of the students used their mother tongue although the medium of instruction was English.
- Teacher talking time was obviously more than student talking time.
- The instructor guided and facilitated the discussions most of the time.
- The students and the instructor focused on the content of the texts rather than the form.
- The discussions also followed a similar path to the one followed in the written discourse. The interpretive and evaluative discourses emerged mostly from the whole class discussions.

Summary of the Results

The general results of the analysis may be summarised as follows:

- It was observed that the critical reading discourse of the freshman pre-service teachers of English at METU involved interpretive, evaluative, and responsive discourse.
- In general, evaluative discourse was found to be limited in students' written work and discussions when compared to interpretive and responsive discourse. They also usually tended to evaluate the content of the texts rather than their form.

Interpretive Discourse

- Students were found to be successful in understanding the main argument; however not all of the students could show the evidence which the writer put forward.
- Students did not mention the target audience of the text, the context of the text and most importantly, the hidden agenda of the text, which might be considered as one of the most significant indicators of critical reading in both terms.
- Students were found to state the purpose of the writer in spring term more often than they did in the fall term.

Evaluative Discourse

- The evaluation of the “disrupting the commonplace, multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues, taking action” were not observed in the students' written work.
- Word choice, language, and tone of the text were also not mentioned as often.
- The students evaluated the refutations and justifications stated by the writers more often in the spring term than compared to the fall term.

Responsive Discourse

- Students were found to agree with the writer more often than they disagreed.
- When they disagreed with the writer, they always gave the reasons for their counter arguments; however, when they agreed with the writer, some of them did not give their own reasons.
- The students did not focus on the socio-political issues and go beyond the commonplace in their written work.

- They were observed to suggest plausible solutions to the problems addressed in the texts in the spring term.
- They were found to take multiple perspectives into consideration more often in their entries in the spring term.

The results of this study showed that students were successful in critical thinking; however, it is apparent that they were not as successful in critical reading as they were in critical thinking. Additionally, they were found to be more successful in responsive discourse.

In most of the studies reviewed (Kuo, 2009; Lewison et al., 2002; Macknish, 2011), it is emphasized that one should not expect all the dimensions of critical reading to emerge at once. This study also suggests that it may not be possible to reach all the dimensions of critical reading at once. It is a slow and gradual process. Moreover, Macknish (2011) found out that empowering discourse was rarely displayed when compared to justificatory and interpretive discourse. Empowering discourse in Macknish's framework included the hidden agenda of the writer and potentially harmful discourse. These items were also in the framework used in this study. The participants of this study also did not mention these criteria in either their written work or discussions.

In terms of language proficiency, Macknish (2011) suggests that lack of proficiency did not hinder the process of critical reading. However, most of the students in this study did not want to participate in the discussions. One of the main reasons for the low level of participation may be the lack of proficiency in speaking the target language because some of the students were observed to switch to the native tongue while they were speaking.

This study also indicated a few results similar to İçmez's (2005) study, which was also in the Turkish context. İçmez's participants also developed a critical perspective towards the texts they read in spite of the disadvantages EFL learners experience such as limited exposure to the target language and a monocultural environment. In this sense, one could observe in this study that EFL learners could also develop a critical stance with the help of instruction and feedback as they are developing proficiency in two languages.

Conclusion

This descriptive case study investigated the extent and nature of the CRD of freshman pre-service teachers of English at a state university located in central Anatolia, Turkey. There were several significant implications arising from this study.

First, the students who participated in the study will become teachers of English in four years. They may be in the position of choosing the reading materials, texts, and books to teach the language. Therefore, they need to have critical perspective while selecting and preparing the texts for the lesson. This case study indicates that critical reading is such a broad concept that it cannot be compacted into the Advanced Reading and Writing course which already has an overloaded syllabus. Hence, taking the importance of critical reading for our teachers into account, there is necessity for a course on "Critical Reading" in the curriculum of FLE departments. At the least, an elective course should

be offered to the students. Then, the course may be evaluated to determine its usefulness for the students at the FLE departments.

As stated earlier, literacy may both serve as an oppressive force and as a source of empowerment for everyone in society. Therefore, it is not only teachers of English who need this course to gain awareness of the manipulative force of language and texts over their lives.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The main aim was to observe and describe the critical reading discourse emerging among students throughout the courses. Therefore, more class time could be spared for instruction on critical reading. To better explore students' critical reading discourse, students may be provided with some specific cases to elicit their responses. In addition, students may be instructed about "disrupting commonplace, focusing on socio-political issues."

In addition, since this is a case study conducted with the freshman pre-service teachers of English, the sample size of the study can be increased to better understand the extent and nature of CRD. Pre-service teachers of English in their second, third or last years at the department could be observed to explore the development of their critical reading discourse. The students were also not interviewed to ask for their opinions and perceptions about the course. It should be asked whether they found the course useful or not. In the same vein, the instructor may be asked for her opinions about the course and critical reading. The critical reading discourse of the same students in their first language could also be investigated to observe whether the instruction in foreign language reading effects first language reading as well. Finally, the CRD of students in other departments at different levels of proficiency in English could be investigated to understand the CRD of language learners across different levels.

About the Authors

Gözde Balıkcı is a research assistant working at the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. She is also PhD student studying Teaching English as a foreign language, reading in a foreign language, critical pedagogy, and teacher education.

Ayşegül Daloğlu is a professor in the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. Her areas of professional interest include curriculum and materials development and evaluation in English language teaching, English language teacher education, and teaching English to young learners.

References

- Bartu, H. (2002). *A critical reading course*. İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

- Freire, P., & Mecedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
- Grabe, W. (2002). Reading in a second language. In R. B. Kaplan, *The Oxford handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 49-60). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Graman, T. (1988). Education for humanisation: Applying Paulo Freire's pedagogy to learning a second language. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(4), 433-448.
- İçmez, S. (2005). The impact of a critical reading course in the Turkish high school context. An Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation submitted to University of Warwick.
- İçmez, S. (2009). Motivation and critical reading in EFL classrooms: A case of ELT preparatory students. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*, 5(2), 123-147.
- Johnson, R. B. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2), 282-292.
- Kuo, J.M. (2009). Critical literacy and a picture-book-based dialogue activity in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 10(4), 483-494.
- Lewis, M., Flint, A. S., & Sluys, K.V. (2002). Taking on critical literacy: The Journey of newcomers and novices. *Language Arts*, 79(5), 383-391.
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Macknish, C. J. (2011). Understanding critical reading in an ESL class in Singapore. *TESOL Journal*, 2(4), 444-472.
- McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (1997). *Research methods for English language teachers*. London: St. Martin's Press.
- McKay, S. (2006). *Researching second language classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Shull, R. (1970). Foreword. In P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (pp. 29-35). New York: Herder and Herder.
- Wallace, C. (1999). Critical language awareness: Key principles for a course in critical reading. *Language Awareness*, 8(2), 98-110.
- Wallace, C. (2005). *Critical reading in language education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Limited.

Appendix: The Critical Reading Discourse Framework

weeks	texts	Interpretive Discourse						Evaluative Discourse							Responsive Discourse										
		argument	evidence	purpose	hidden agenda	target audience	context	refutation	justification	word choice	language	tone	disrupting the c	multiple	socio-political	take action	overall	counter a	reason	supporting a.	reason	disrupting the	multiple	socio-political	taking action
S1																									

© Copyright rests with authors. Please cite TESL-EJ appropriately.