Critical Pedagogy and Socio-Political Issues in Language Teaching: Views from Turkey

Eser Ordem, Adana Alparslan Turkes Science and Technology University
Omer Gokhan Ulum, Mersin University

Abstract

Post-method era has been hailed in second language teaching, although a few practitioners have been able to use the tenets of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy aims to raise socio-political issues to emancipate both teachers and learners from power-centric ideas. The practical use of critical pedagogy has been the participatory approach that intends to discuss socio-political topics on the agenda. This study aimed to investigate the views of Second Language (ESL) instructors (N=20) teaching English in a preparatory school of foreign languages regarding the use of participatory approach. The study was qualitative and descriptive in nature. This study used two data collection tools composed of a list of topics and a semi-structured interview form. The results show that the participants hardly used the participatory approach and barely negotiated socio-political issues in classroom settings since they thought that these topics could be risky to discuss in the socio-political context of Turkey. However, almost all of them ideally believed that this approach should be applied in English language education.

Keywords: critical pedagogy; socio-political issues; participatory approach; transformation

Introduction

Power and power relations are not epiphenomenal, secondary or by-product of humanities (Newman, 2001). Rather, power is a central issue in critical pedagogy and related disciplines that entail developing a critical perspective towards a political or social movement, an idea, ideological and hegemonic practices (Newman, 2001). Critical pedagogy in language teaching holds radical ideas and concepts that aim to emancipate individuals from traditional and dogmatic thinking by criticizing power relations and political issues in education (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1998; Storey, 2015). Although various teaching approaches and methods that have been fruitful in many ways in that they have produced pivotal implications abound in language teaching, the methods in post-method era have been hardly used in this discipline. The history of these methods and approaches dates back to 1950s and 1960s when post-structuralism arose in sociology and philosophy (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Thornbury, 2013). Thus, critical pedagogy has a strong theoretical background in humanities. However, language teaching has long ignored its tenets and applications in classroom settings, although some progress has been experienced in recent years. One of the threats to the use of critical pedagogy has been neoliberalism that can be defined as a set of practices that minimize the power and effect of the state and maximize the power and autonomy of individuals that

are often conceptualized as entrepreneurs and those who responsible for their own choices in the market (Braverman, 1974; Block & Gray, 2016; Harvey, 2005; Mirowski, 2013). Therefore, neoliberalism uses all kinds of tools to find room to commodify any entity in language teaching as well by showing itself as a default or conventional system and discourse that entails decoding and deconstruction. Thus, it can be said that the rise of neoliberalism in 1980s has also, to some extent, prevented the use of critical pedagogy in second language education (Giroux, 1981, 1984; Philipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

One of the specific methods developed as result of discussions in the context of critical pedagogy is participatory approach which recommends that political and social issues need to be discussed in second language education (Auerbach, 1995, 2001;Berlin, 2005; Freire, 2000) Since textbooks and curricula frame and manipulate minds of learners, teachers and administrators in line with the tenets of neoliberalism, the use of participatory approach have been often discarded in classroom environment in particular. Thus, learners are taught topics that they hardly negotiate when they visit other countries, especially inner circle countries such as European countries, the USA, Canada and the others.

Critical Pedagogy in Language Teaching

Critical pedagogy in language teaching aims to centralize real life problems that agents of learning and teaching experience to act as active subjects inside and outside schools and classroom settings. Since textbooks and in-classroom activities deal with artificial and repetitive tasks, it is important to prioritize real life problems that are negotiated by individuals in the society (Pennycook, 1990; Sharma & Phyak, 2017; Thornbury, 2013). Life situations, development of critical thinking, dialogical process, learners' power of decision making and discussion of topics on the agenda are core elements of critical pedagogy in language teaching as well (Berlin, 2005; Khatib & Miri, 2016). Dominance of topics congruent with the tenets of neoliberalism is visibly seen in curricula of language teaching programs and textbooks because any socio-political issue that defies the principles of neoliberalism and these dominant cultures is deliberately concealed so as not to awaken teachers and learners (Holborow, 2015; Shin & Park, 2016). However, those in power in the government and schools agree to make an agreement with textbook publishers for the sake of so-called democracy and so-called progressive education through popular culture and populist discourses (Pennycook, 2018). Therefore, in the terrain of language teaching, critical pedagogy gains critical importance in that it can lead teachers and students to reflect upon what is given to them and what is pre-determined for them because they are seen as a priori subjects that need to follow a certain path while learning a second language. Agents of teaching and learning are silenced and expected not to object to what is given to them because the west has already established and prepared discourses and texts for non-western communities, which can be regarded as an orientalist perspective (Said, 1978). This is where critical pedagogy can be used to decolonize and deconstruct orientalist and hegemonic discourses in language teaching because Freirean pedagogy which is deeply rooted in its sociopolitical context has always been emancipatory (Au, 2017). This liberatory paradigm supports two basic elements, dialogue and problem-posing (Freire, 2000). Dialogue provides an opportunity for individuals to actively reflect upon reality and the status of their knowledge on a social level because individuals are social in nature, and dialogue is firmly established and grounded in sociality which opens up possibilities for social action, social change and social dialogue through active reflection (Freire, 2000). Another element in critical pedagogy is problematizing social-political issues that surround individuals and asking questions about issues on the agenda that take place outside schools as well. Thus, posing a problem is developing a

critical perspective towards conventional discourses (Freire, 2000). Thus, problematization of these discourses, daily experiences, pre-determined curricula and anodyne topics can lead individuals to think of what kind of action they might take for a social change in and outside their immediate context (Apple, 2011; Au, 2017; Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 1988).

In critical pedagogy, teachers are seen as transformative intellectuals that negotiate the hidden curriculum with students by focusing on issues such as democracy, justice, freedom, equality and equity (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1988) Thus, a dialectic relationship between teachers and learners is established because topics (not) covered in the curriculum shaped by those in power are constantly negotiated and reflected upon (Au, 2017; Giroux, 1988). Active participation of teacher-student and student-teacher is reinforced. Economic, social, political and cultural reproduction is critically discussed because schools are seen as places where ideology, domination, economic capital and hegemony exist (Au, 2017). Therefore, culture itself is also challenged because it can be no longer construed as an innocent entity. Rather, schools impose ideologies of certain cultures on students, which always remain to be deconstructed through social dialogue in a dialogic and dialectic relation. This kind of Freirean schooling understanding empowers students' conception of cultural power because teachers allow students' their own experiences to reified, which also provides a great opportunity for agents of schools to comprehend their strengths and weaknesses (Freire, 2000). Teachers and students establish a social dialogue horizontally on equal status by naming the problem in the world with collaboration (Au, 2017; Falzon, 2006). As a result of these dialogic efforts, social change is aimed. Reflection and action are strictly connected to each other in critical pedagogy. To emphasize this issue, Freire (2000) uses praxis that refers to simultaneous occurrence of reflection and action. In this sense, critical pedagogy denotes handling social and political problems inside and outside schools to create transformation in immediate and broader contexts. Since individuals are in nature social beings in critical pedagogy, social dialogue and dialectic relation become two indispensable elements of this model (Falzon, 2006; Freire, 2000). If students and teachers collaborate equally and actively negotiate meaning for social change in this system, then an order of specific discourse imposed by those in power as hegemonic or ideological apparatus is deconstructed, disrupted and challenged (Fairclough, 1992). By doing so, all kinds of oppression and domination are challenged and objected to so that individuals can be emancipated from ideologies and hegemony imposed on them through curricula and syllabi in schools that serve purpose of those in power that tend to exert repressive essentialism.

Participatory/Freirean Approach in Language Teaching

Critical pedagogy has ended in practical application in second language education as well in recent decades. It is called either participatory or Freirean so that learners can also situate themselves in a social context with their teachers in an emancipatory manner and so that both can name a topic or an issue for themselves instead of others' imposition on them. Thus, participatory approach can be regarded as applied version of critical pedagogy and critical theory because participation of learners and teachers is appreciated and motivated (Frye, 1999; Motlhaka & Wadesango, 2014). It is important to contextualize second language teaching classrooms by involving learners in each process of learning on a social and political level (Berlin, 2005). They are supposed to participate in each procedure and step of language education ranging from curriculum to in-classroom activities. Topics, themes and issues are selected and negotiated together in order for learners to be and feel empowered, which enables them to seek their legal rights and take precautions or action in case they may encounter a social, administrative or political problem in schools (Bartlett, 2005). The main aims of participatory approach are to bring socio-political issues on the agenda

into classroom settings (Jackson, 2007). Since each individual is assumed to be social and political and is understood within the framework of social justice and class, topics to be discussed in second language classrooms need to be chosen from real life events because political and social events that cannot be ignored affect both countries and individuals. Teachers and administrators should take risks to discuss political issues that could help all participants of teaching and learning emancipate themselves from ideological apparatus and oppression. Topics such as immigration, wars, trafficking, violence against women, child labor, LGBT/queer issues, animal rights, unemployment, global warming, capitalism, neoliberalism and drug addiction always engage our lives and minds. However, it is often clear that once teachers and learners step into classrooms, topics are changed into popular culture and anodyne issues owing to the design of the curriculum in accordance with the framework and desires of neoliberalism.

This study aims to unravel the views of English instructors in Turkey about socio-political issues on the agenda at national and international level. It is important to raise immediate issues experienced outside classrooms because negotiation of socio-political issues provides emancipatory perspectives and critical approaches for both learners and teachers. Inclusion of these topics by teachers, therefore, plays a pivotal role in understanding the importance of critical pedagogy, participatory approach and socio-political issues.

The Study

Research Questions

1. What do English instructors think about the teaching of socio-political topics in classroom settings?
2. What do English instructors think about critical pedagogy and the use of participatory approach in teaching English?
3. What topics would English instructors discuss in an ideal setting where democracy would be developed?

Methodology

This study used critical reflection as a method. Critical reflection entails thinking critically over a problem, topic, event, idea and enigma and enables individuals to come up with solutions and recommendations by going beyond superficial thinking or what is already given to individuals in their social, political or educational settings (Brookfield, 1995; Hickson, 2011; Schön, 1983). In this process, when individuals encounter a challenging situation on a social or political level, they are asked to make attempts to take action and develop a critical perspective towards risky or challenging situations. Thus, individuals are asked to critically reflect upon social and political issues or other challenging situations and topics so that they can improve new perspectives. Critical reflection consists of reflection on action, reflection in action, reflection for action and reflection about action (Schön, 1983). This study is limited to only reflection on action that can be defined as a meta-cognitive process explaining what individuals think and do. Reflection on action has three dimensions that can be listed as personal thought, deliberate action and critical reasoning (Van Woerkom, 2010; Dinkelmann, 1999; Tillema, 2000). Personal thought is related to awareness of one's own beliefs, acts, actions, ideas, behavior and attitudes. Deliberate action entails bringing explanations and reflection upon the context and setting where practice is implemented. As for

critical reasoning, it deals with the possible consequences of their immediate acts, beliefs, behaviors and ideas. Critical reflection aims to focus on the gap between what individuals think and do in their settings or contexts.

Topics that contained social and political elements were given to the participants. The topics given were thought-provoking and were not included in the main curriculum and syllabus. A semi-structured interview form was also provided to elicit the views of the participants regarding the use of participatory approach. Socio-political topics on the agenda were extracted from national and international newspapers. These socio-political themes were composed of minorities, gender, LGBT, religion, national/international political issues such as Trump's policies and Turkey's political stance, race, sex, sex education, social issues such as child marriages in Turkey and nuclear weapon risks, nationalism and evolution.

Participants

The study was carried out with 20 instructors in a preparatory school of second languages. Each participant taught English at least 24 hours and had an average 5 year experience. Language leader and Oxford EAP textbooks were used. Four main skills were aimed in the curriculum. The intended level was B2. English for Specific purposes was also taught 2 hours a week.

Procedure

The researchers browsed 10 national and international newspapers online and extracted socio-political issues on the agenda between September and October in 2018. Different striking topics that caused social and political negotiations in Turkey were listed. In the second stage, a focused group interview was conducted with the participants in a university meeting room. They were given the topics and asked whether they discussed these topics in their classroom settings. The participants were also given information about the content and nature of the study as well as critical reflection process. They were asked to give information as a warm-up activity about the content of the curriculum and syllabus that they used in their department and classrooms. They were also asked to list the topics that were covered in global textbooks and to list the topics that they negotiated in classroom settings. In the third stage, the participants were given the list of topics that were chosen by the researchers and asked to list which topics they would discuss in an ideal setting where they would be able to take risks in their immediate context. They were later given certain topics released in the national and international newspapers and were asked whether they would negotiate those socio-political issues in their classrooms as a part of participatory approach. They were also told to justify their reason why they answered so. After the data were collected and analyzed, the findings of the study were shown to the participants to obtain feedback so that validity and reliability of the findings could be provided.

Findings

The overall findings show that the participants tended to ignore socio-political issues in ESL classrooms since they reported that they had to follow the curriculum and textbooks. It was found that only anodyne topics were mentioned in the classroom settings because the current political atmosphere of Turkey would put them into a risky position. Therefore, they found the negotiation of socio-political issues on the agenda rather threatening and risky.

Findings Related to the use of Participatory Approach

All the participants reported that they were partially familiar with the participatory approach while majoring in English Language Teaching during their BA. Critical pedagogy and participatory approach was only once mentioned because modern approaches such as communicative language teaching were regarded as more important when compared to participatory approach. However, they stated that they never used this approach in their classrooms because of different reasons:

> *I am, to some extent, aware that participatory approach involves socio-political issues. However, my department, where I work as an instructor, does not allow us to discuss such risky issues. In addition, I have to follow the global textbooks that include different topics. I have difficulty even discussing these topics in my class. (P1).*

> *I do not think that I can do a lot in the class because Turkish students are not ready to discuss daily topics such as politics and social issues because we do not have this democratic culture. Besides, the administrators push us to follow the curriculum shaped by the curriculum office. There seems no slot for other kinds of discussions. (P2).*

Informants described the difficulty of using the participatory approach because of socio-political and departmental reasons. The participants tended to avoid taking risks to discuss national and international issues, although they were aware that the approach was important as a method to debate real life topics. They reported that the students were not ready because the education system did not equip them with a democratic background. Thus, it can be said that there seems no room for discussion of socio-political issues owing to the historical background of Turkey and the students that have been often told not to raise or comment on these issues. Another possible and strong problem we claim is that the current political atmosphere could not allow them to raise these risky issues because any kind of criticism of the government or the history of Turkey as well as LGBT marriage would cause them to experience serious problems such as forced resignation, dismissal and imprisonment. Therefore, both teachers and learners find themselves rather disadvantaged because neoliberal policies in this political atmosphere in Turkey find a relaxing place for themselves, and the main agents of learning and teaching are unable to discuss those issues in the classroom setting.

Findings Related to Discussion of National Topics

National topics such as political, social and cultural issues were not covered by the instructors because these topics could cause confusion and segregation in the classrooms. They reported that it was safer to discuss the topics covered in the global textbooks. Thus, national topics were ignored in ESL settings. The participants were given some topics to ask them whether they discussed them in the classrooms. Some of these topics on the agenda were violence against women in Turkey, sexual harassment, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, Syrian immigrants, Syrian children in the streets, stray animals, terror in Turkey, political elections, American Pastor Brunson in Turkey, worsening Relations between Turkey and the USA, Saturday mothers in Turkey whose children were killed years ago, lost and killed children in Turkey, child marriages in the eastern part

of Turkey, Turkish economic crisis, same-sex marriage, LGBT march and parade, Islam and evolution. However, they reported that all the topics listed above were risky and unspeakable even in Turkish:

> *I can discuss these topics individually with my close friends. However, at the university we cannot debate these topics even with our colleagues. I understand what you mean but we need to be realistic. We cannot discuss these issues in Turkey. I do not think that I can dare to raise these topics in ESL classrooms. While talking, I find myself in a risky education. I trust you. I hope you will not give my name and university name. (P5).*

> We all hear these topics every day. I work in a public university. Thus, it seems unlikely to talk about them in our department. We know the political situation in Turkey. We are not in Europe. The curriculum is strict. Our students do not have this background. Maybe they want to talk about them. But things may go worse in the classroom because they may feel disturbed. (P16)

The participants developed the fear of discussing socio-political issues in their immediate context at national level. The fact that they cannot raise these issues in their classrooms and even department is the reality itself that they directly experience. Another issue is that they lack the belief that the learners have sufficient democratic skills and background to negotiate these topics and fear that confusion and conflicts may arise in the classrooms, which are actually sine qua non of radical democracy, critical pedagogy and participatory approach. However, the political effect of those in power has a suppressive and oppressive role in them. Thus, what is not discussed in ESL classrooms is not only socio-political issues at superficial level but is that power relations are not addressed.

Findings Related to Discussion of International Topics

The participants were interviewed about international topics on the agenda. The findings show that they preferred to talk about the topics covered in the textbooks that included international issues such as pollution, global warming, technology, different cultures, places, travel and holiday. However, the participants were told that these topics lacked socio-political issues. All of them reported that socio-political issues were not covered in global textbooks that also molded the content of the curriculum. Socio-political issues at international level were nuclear weapon risk between North Korea and the USA, criticism of capitalism, neoliberalism, feminism, LGBT rights, religious topics, minorities, racism, apartheid, gender, colonization, tension between Venezuela and the USA, trafficking, terror in the Middle East and the USA, sexual identities, immigration, child labor, genocide, mass murder and wars. However, the participants reported that they never mentioned these topics in the class since they were found risky and outside the curriculum:

> *I am responsible for following the curriculum given by the curriculum office. I follow BBC, CNN and NY Times but I cannot talk about those topics. We do not have time for those topics. In addition, our students do not follow these topics. They just want to learn general English. They can learn these issues on their own. My responsibility is to follow the curriculum. (P7)*

> *I know that these topics are important. However, it is not easy to discuss these topics in the classrooms because political issues are risky in our department. They tell us to avoid these*

issues in the classroom because some students may show reaction. Therefore, I also avoid these issues. Our system, I think, is not ready. (P8)

The participants came up with different reasons not to discuss socio-political issues at international level because the political atmosphere was not democratic enough for them to take risks. In addition, the administrators also told them to be cautious in the classrooms. One of the participants reported that it was the learners' responsibility to learn socio-political issues and that their responsibility was to follow the curriculum given to them. Thus, it seems that they did not provide the learners with opportunities to raise these international topics in the classroom settings.

Findings Related to Ideal Situation of Social-Political Issues

The participants were asked about the ideal situation of socio-political context to discuss various topics that they found risky in their immediate environment. All of the participants reported that if democratic setting at macro and micro level were ready for learners and teachers, they would negotiate socio-political issues. Thus, they said that democratic attitudes and behaviors of socio-political context, administrators, teachers, curriculum office and learners were the main criteria for them. They were asked which topics they would prefer to discuss in ESL classrooms at national level.

Table 1. National Topics to be Discussed in an Ideal Classroom Setting

Item	f		%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Feminism/women studies in Turkey	18	2	90.00	10.00
Syrian immigrants in Turkey	17	3	85.00	15.00
Children in streets	16	4	80.00	20.00
Child labor in Turkey	16	4	80.00	20.00
Violence against women	11	9	55.00	45.00
Child marriages	8	12	40.00	60.00
Murder of Jamal Khashoggi	6	14	30.00	70.00
Child abuse	6	14	30.00	70.00
Religious topics (Islam, Christianity)	5	15	25.00	75.00
Islam and evolution	5	15	25.00	75.00
Economic crisis in Turkey	4	16	30.00	70.00
International politics of Turkey	4	16	30.00	70.00
LGBT issues	3	17	15.00	85.00
Sexual harassment in Turkey	3	17	15.00	85.00
Terror in Turkey	3	17	15.00	85.00
Sex and sexuality	2	18	10.00	90.00
Islam and LGBT	1	19	5.00	95.00
Political issues in Turkey	1	19	5.00	95.00
Minorities in Turkey	1	19	5.00	95.00
Nationalization/Patriotism	1	19	5.00	95.00

The findings show that the informants tended to avoid discussing gender and political issues even if they were told that they would teach in an ideal setting where democracy would be

developed, while they opted to debate topics such as feminism, women issues, Syrian immigrants and child-related issues at higher percentages. The possible reason why they would discuss women and immigration issues is that Syrian immigrants are constantly perceptible and noticeable in their daily lives and violence against women is often represented in the media in Turkey. However, the participants held more critical views about international politics because it is possible that they answered the question based on the socio-political context in Turkey.

Table 2. International Topics to be Discussed in an Ideal Classroom Setting

Item	f		%	
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
EU and Turkey	19	1	95.00	5.00
Islam and Europe/America	18	2	90.00	10.00
Immigration policies	18	2	90.00	10.00
Trafficking/Drug addiction	17	3	85.00	15.00
International politics (America, Iran, North Korea…)	17	3	85.00	15.00
Racism/Apartheid	17	3	85.00	15.00
European and American politics	17	3	85.00	15.00
Colonization	15	5	75.00	25.00
Criticism of capitalism/neoliberalism	14	6	70.00	30.00
Feminism/women studies	14	6	70.00	30.00
Evolution/Intelligent Design	12	8	60.00	40.00
Nuclear weapon risk	11	9	55.00	45.00
America and terror	11	9	55.00	45.00
Health system in the USA	10	10	50.00	50.00
Terror in the Middle East	4	16	30.00	70.00
Ideologies (Marxism, anarchism, socialism…)	3	17	15.00	85.00
LGBT issues	3	17	15.00	85.00
Sex and sexuality	2	18	10.00	90.00
Same-sex marriage	1	19	5.00	95.00

The participants preferred to negotiate topics such as EU, Islam, immigration policies, trafficking, international politics, racism, apartheid, colonization and feminism at higher percentages, while they tended to avoid discussing issues such as terror, same-sex marriage, LGBT and sex/sexuality at lower percentages. The participants showed hesitation about debating gender, terror, same-sex marriage at both national and international level. However, their choice of socio-political issues differed considerably considering national and international context even if they were told that they would discuss those issues in an ideal setting where democracy would be developed.

Discussion

This study aimed to unearth the views of ESL instructors in Turkey regarding the use of participatory approach in the preparatory school of second languages. The overall results show that the instructors did not negotiate any social or political issues in classroom settings, although they were partially aware of the importance of the participatory approach. Although they believed that these topics needed to be discussed, they did not negotiate them owing to political reasons that force them to discuss only anodyne topics which hinder criticisms of power relations in the society

because they all found these topics risky and divisive. Thornbury (2013) criticizes topics chosen in textbooks which hardly allow authentic topics to be discussed in classroom settings. Philipson (1992) also develops a critical perspective to warn practitioners of neoliberal practices reinforced through English that should not be imposed as a lingua franca. Another perspective regarding the discussion of socio-political issues is that it is only English that has been validated in the context of European Union, although western countries stress the importance of diversity (Philipson, 1999, 2011). Giroux (1988, 2011) stresses the fact that teachers need to develop a critical perspective towards elements of dominant cultures because there are always excluded cultures and minorities that are hardly discussed in education. In line with this idea, Philipson (2003) states that language policies need to be deconstructed to have more liberal policies. Auerbach (1995) also emphasizes that power relations and socio-political issues are hardly negotiated in language education and that political issues need to be addressed. In addition, participatory practices can be exercised, although some conflicts might be experienced in classroom environment (Auerbach, 2001). Thus, teachers and learners should take risks of discussing risky topics, even if certain dilemmas can occur. Similarly, Berlin (2005) also considers participatory approach an effective teaching method and reveals that learners should be familiarized with individuals and groups having different racial, political ethnic, cultural, social, linguistic and economic backgrounds. Kubota (1998) also mentions that ideologies of English should be criticized in Japanese culture to create a meaningful social transformation by raising critical consciousness and awareness. Shin (2007) also addresses the importance of global English as glocalized in Korea. However, both studies hardly mention that socio-political issues need to be negotiated in classroom settings so as to deconstruct neoliberal practices of inner circle English. Therefore, the tenets and practices of participatory approach are not cited in these studies. Ricento and Hornberger (1996) say that it is practitioners that determine the content and choice of curricula. However, it seems that Ricento and Hornberger ignore the macro perspective, socio-political context where teachers or instructors may fear raising socio-political issues because criticizing those in power, policy makers or political parties entails taking serious risks. Therefore, some researchers where radical democracy is not developed tend to improve only soft discourse or mention only anodyne topics under the umbrella term of culture which is not equal to cultural politics.

However, these topics are hardly represented in global textbooks and curricula (Gray, 2010; Thornbury, 2013). Lee (2014) also found that participatory approach was hardly used in ESL classroom for North Korean refugees and that the refugee learners were seen as low achievers because of the approaches used and curriculum applied. Similarly, Fredricks (2007) used the tenets of critical pedagogy in Tajikistan with ESL learners and stressed that using critical pedagogy could be beneficial in ESL classroom by providing opportunities. Shin and Crookes (2007) also applied critical pedagogy in Korean ESL classrooms and found that using dialogues critically in classrooms might promote both learners and teachers that were not resistant to the use of critical dialogues. In the context of Turkey, the role of intercultural competence has been emphasized, although cultural components were found to be largely absent in curricula (Atay, 2005; Atay et al, 2009). Devrim and Bayyurt (2010) also found that the participants in their study reported that various cultural elements should be included into textbooks to emphasize the importance of local cultures as well. However, these findings hardly show that socio-political issues need to be negotiated in ESL classrooms because emphasis on culture is not equal to cultural politics, that is, criticism of cultural issues. Rather, these studies tend to regard international and local cultural issues as stable and normative, which do not entail being criticized. However, critical pedagogy and participatory approach are radical in that they aim to transform societies within the framework of radical and plural democracy, which are hardly negotiated in the context of language teaching

in Turkey (Atay & Ece, 2009; Çelik & Erbay, 2013; Demir & Yavuz, 2017; Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998; Kirkgoz, 2009; Önalan, 2005; Sariçoban & Kazazoğlu, 2012; Tekin , 2011a, 2011b). These studies tend to avoid developing radical discourses regarding English language education in Turkey since the political context of Turkey seems to allow narrow space and hinder the discussion of socio-political issues in classroom settings. Therefore, it might be right to say that these soft and anodyne discourses reinforce neoliberal practices more intensely in Turkey. English language itself is constantly exercised and reinforced by excluding other identities, languages and radical socio- political issues that may put teachers at risk. If language teachers desire to be intellectuals in Gramscian sense, they need to be aware of dangers and risks of neoliberal practices. Unless radical discourses and actions are developed, dominant cultures are sustained in Turkey and other related-cultures otherized under the effect of postcolonial discourses. Skutnabb-Kangass (2000) also interprets neoliberal practices as linguicist and linguistic genocide because English is often reinforced as a lingua franca. In addition, Skutnabb-Kangass and Dunbar (2010) maintain that the use of English without developing a bona fide critical perspective and respecting de facto diversity is a crime against human rights. Skutnabb-Kangass and Philipson (2010) claim that constantly exercising English as a lingua franca can be viewed as murder. Thus, it can be interpreted that discussion of socio-political issues at each level is an important step to produce discourses of cultural politics, radical and plural democracy intended to transform society and individuals by creating competing interpretations whose aims are not to attain a finalized and absolute solution but rather to be based on contingencies and pluralistic interpretations.

Conclusion

This study showed that ESL instructors in the school of foreign languages were aware of the topics discussed in the media since they followed them in both national and international newspapers. However, it was found that they hardly negotiated these topics in the classrooms because of the limitations in the curriculum imposed on them and the current oppressive political atmosphere in Turkey. In addition, the instructors hardly received classes regarding critical pedagogy, participatory approach and critical thinking. Thus, it can be said that the instructors had little chance of intervening in the curriculum that hardly left any gap for them to make changes in the curriculum. It can be interpreted that socio-political issues were not given as tasks for the learners to discuss them. Only soft issues that would be unlikely to cause disagreements or offend anyone were debated in the classrooms. Therefore, we can interpret that learners taught English in line with the topics serving neoliberalism and learners' ability think critically is impeded. Therefore, curricula in English language teaching need to be revised and to include topics covered in critical pedagogy and participatory approach. In addition, ESL instructors need to be taught critical pedagogy, critical discourse analysis and participatory approach so that they can also develop critical perspectives towards curriculum and in-classroom tasks. Radical democratic attitudes can be developed in English language teaching by also emancipating instructors from neoliberal textbooks that impose only anodyne topics that are hardly encountered in social settings. Instructors need to take risks while raising socio-political issues even if topics may lead to conflicts, sine qua non of democracy. Thus, critical discourses should be developed to lessen the effect of the hegemony and thin ideology of textbooks and curricula. Instructors should also make great efforts to take initiatives and free themselves from oppression of global textbooks and the imposed curricula.

References

Apple, M. W. (2011). Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy and the tasks of the critical scholar/activist. *Revista e-curriculum*, *7*(3), 1-21.

Au, W. (2017). The dialectical materialism of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. *Reflexão e Ação*, *25*(2), 171-195.

Auerbach, E. (1995). The politics of the ESL classroom: Issues of power in pedagogical choices. In J. Tollefson (Ed.), Power and inequality in language education (pp. 9-33). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Auerbach, E. (2001). "Yes, but…": Problematizing participatory ESL Pedagogy. In P. Campbell & B. Bunaby (Eds.), Participatory practices in adult education (pp. 267-306). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Atay, D. (2005).Reflections on the cultural dimension of language teaching. Language and Intercultural Communication, 5(3, 4), 222-237.

Atay, D., & Ece, A. (2009). Multiple identities as reflected in English-language education: The Turkish perspective. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, *8*(1), 21-34.

Atay, D., Gökçe, K., Çamlibel, Z., & Ersin, P. (2009). The role of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *10*(3).123-136.

Atay, D., Zeynep, Ç., Pinar, E., Özlem, K., & Gökçe, K. (2009). Turkish EFL teachers' opinions on intercultural approach in foreign language education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *1*(1), 1611-1616.

Bartlett, L. (2005). Dialogue, knowledge, and teacher-student relations: Freirean pedagogy in theory and practice. *Comparative Education Review*, *49*(3), 344-364.

Berlin, L. (2005). Contextualizing college ESL classroom praxis: A participatory approach to effective instruction. New York: Routledge.

Best, S., & Kellner, D. (1991). Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations. The Guilford Press: New York.

Brookfield, S. (1995). Becoming a critically reflective teacher. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). Becoming Critical: Education, knowledge and action research. London: The Falmer Press.

Çelik, S., & Erbay, Ş. (2013). Cultural perspectives of Turkish ELT coursebooks: Do standardized teaching texts incorporate intercultural features?. *Education & Science/Egitim ve Bilim*, *38*(167).

Devrim, D. Y., & Bayyurt, Y. (2010). Students‟ understandings and preferences of the role and place of „culture‟ in English language teaching: A focus in an EFL context. *TESOL Journal*, *2*(1), 4-23.

Dinkelman, T. (1999). Critical reflection in a social studies methods semester. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *27*(3), 329-357.

Dogancay-Aktuna, S. (1998). The spread of English in Turkey and its current sociolinguistic profile. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural Development*, *19*(1), 24-39.

Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Falzon, C. (2006). *Foucault and social dialogue: Beyond fragmentation*. London : Routledge

Freire, P. (2000). Pedagogy of the oppressed (Trans. M. Bergman Ramos). New York: Continuum

Fredricks, L. (2007). A rationale for critical pedagogy in EFL: The case of Tajikistan. *The Reasding Matrix*, *7*(2), 22-28.

Frye, D. (1999). Participatory education as a critical framework for an immigrant women's ESL class. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(3), 501-513

Giroux, H.A. (1981) Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling. Philadelphia:Temple University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1988). Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Giroux, H.A. (1994) Doing cultural studies: Youth and the challenge of pedagogy.Harvard Educational Review 64 (3), 278–308.

Giroux, H. A. (2011). On critical pedagogy. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Gray, J. (2000). The ELT coursebook as cultural artefact: how teachers censor and adapt, *ELT Journal*, 54 (3), 274–283.

Hickson, H. (2011). Critical reflection: Reflecting on learning to be reflective. *Reflective practice*, *12*(6), 829-839.

Holborow, M. (2015). Language and Neoliberalism. London : Routledge.

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). Modernization, cultural change, and democracy: The human development sequence. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Jackson, S. (2007). Freire re-viewed. *Educational Theory*, *57*(2), 199-213.

Khatib, M., & Miri, M. (2016). Cultivating multivocality in language classrooms: Contribution of critical pedagogy-informed teacher education. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, *13*(2), 98-131.

Kubota, R. (1998). Ideologies of English in Japan. *World Englishes*, *17*(3), 295-306.

Lee, M. W. (2014). A participatory EFL curriculum for the marginalized: The case of North Korean refugee students in South Korea. *System*, *47*, 1-11.

McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (2014). Research methods for English language teachers. Routledge. Montessori, M. (2013). The Montessori method. Transaction publishers.

McLaren, P. (1988). Schooling the postmodern body: Critical pedagogy and the politics of enfleshment. *Journal of Education*, *170*(3), 53-83.

Motlhaka, H. A., & Wadesango, N. (2014). Freirean participatory approach: Developing interactive listening skills in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(11), 101-101.

Newman, S. (2001). *From Bakunin to Lacan: anti-authoritarianism and the dislocation of power*. United Kingdom: Lexington Books.

Pennycook, A. (1990). Critical pedagogy and second language education. *System*, *18*(3), 303-314.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction* . Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Pennycook, A. (2018). *Posthumanist applied linguistics* . New York: Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (1992). Linguistic imperialism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (1999). Voice in global English: unheard chords in Crystal loud and clear. Review article on 'English as a global language' by D. Crystal. Applied Linguistics, 20:2, 288-299.

Phillipson, R. (2003). English-only Europe? Challenging language policy. London: Routledge. Phillipson, R. (2009). Linguistic imperialism continued. New York: Routledge, and Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Phillipson, R. (2011). The EU and languages: diversity in what unity? In A. L. Kjær & S. Adamo (Eds.), Linguistic diversity and European democracy (pp. 57-74). Farnham: Ashgate.

Said, E.W. (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Sarıçoban, A., & Kazazoğlu, S. (2012). Topic preferences of Turkish ELT students and teachers in text books. *Sino-US English Teaching*, *9*(2), 887-892.

Schön, D. (1983). The reflective practitioner – How professionals think in action. New York: Basic Books.

Sharma, B. K., & Phyak, P. (2017). Criticality as ideological becoming: Developing English teachers for critical pedagogy in Nepal. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, *14*(2-3), 210-238.

Shin, H., & Crookes, G. (2005). Exploring the possibilities for EFL critical pedagogy in Korea: A two-part case study. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies: An International Journal*, 2(2), 113-136.

Shin, H. (2007). English language teaching in Korea. In *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 75-86). Springer, Boston, MA.

Shin, H., & Park, J. S. Y. (2016). Researching language and neoliberalism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *37*(5), 443-452.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. & Dunbar, R. (2010). *Indigenous children's education as linguistic genocide and a crime against humanity? A global view*. Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino: Galdu, Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous People.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. & Phillipson, R. (2010). The global politics of language: markets, maintenance, marginalization or murder. In Coupland, N. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Language and Globalization* (pp. 77-100). Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Storey, J. (2015). Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction. New York: Routledge.

Tekin, M. (2011a). Discussing the unspeakable: a study on the use of taboo topics in EFL speaking classes. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*, *7*(1), 79-110.

Tekin, M. (2011b). Breaking The Shell: A Study On Turkish Students'reactions Towards Sexual Identity Issues In The Language Classroom. *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, *7*(3), 216-231.

Thornbury, S. (2013). Resisting coursebooks. In critical perspectives on language teaching materials (pp. 204-223). Palgrave Macmillan: London.

Tillema, H. H. (2000). Belief change towards self-directed learning in student teachers: immersion in practice or reflection on action. *Teaching and teacher education*, *16*(5-6), 575-591.

Van Woerkom, M. (2010). Critical reflection as a rationalistic ideal. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *60*(4), 339-356.

Eser Ordem, PhD, is an assistant professor in English Translation and Interpreting at Adana Alparslan Turkes Science and Technological University. His current research and primary areas of specialization include radical pedagogy, cultural politics, cognitive linguistics, philosophy of language, Marxist Humanism and post-anarchism. He published a book titled 'The Discourses and Displacement of English in Turkey' examining colonialism, post-colonialism, Orientalism, Occidentalism, Neoliberalism, Radical Pedagogy and Linguistics Human Rights. He has published several international peer-reviewed articles on radical pedagogy and cognitive linguistics. He worked at the University of Berkeley, Binghamton University and Syracuse University as a visiting scholar. He also received a wide range of advanced graduate classes in linguistics from The Netherlands National Graduate School of Linguistics. Dr. Ordem received a research grant from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey. Dr. Ordem is currently writing a book regarding Marxist Humanism and Radical Pedagogy and a dedicated researcher in the field of critical human rights.

Omer Gokhan Ulum, PhD, is an associate professor in English Language Teaching at Mersin University. He specializes in critical pedagogy, cultural studies, language ideology, language hegemony and second language education. His research interests cover foreign language education,

language teacher education, education policy, culture, culture in language education, ideology, bilingualism, pragmatics, discourse, and discourse analysis. He respectively worked as a language assistant at Moseley College in England, an English teacher in the Ministry of Turkish National Education, a research assistant at Hakkari University and a lecturer at Adana Alparslan Turkes Science and Technological University. He has published a lot of international peer-reviewed articles on critical pedagogy and second language education. He published a book titled 'Ideology and Hegemony of English Foreign Language Textbooks'. He attended a big number of international conferences on foreign language education as an oral presenter, a moderator, and an organizer in such countries as Poland, Spain, and South Africa. He is the head editor of International Journal of Educational Spectrum. Dr. Ulum also received a research grant from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey to conduct his research at Tennessee University.