

The Contribution of Gender and Teaching Experience to Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Critical Pedagogy

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy values in teaching English with an emphasis on gender and teaching experience. For that end, a 33-item Likert-type questionnaire was developed. The researcher-made instrument was administered to 102 EFL teachers teaching English in language schools in Qom, Iran. The internal consistency of the instrument was calculated through using Cronbach Alpha. It showed a high reliability ($\alpha=.88$). The data was subjected to non-parametric Mann Whitney U test to check any potential significant difference between the levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers. The results revealed that there was not a significant difference between genders in all items except item1 ($p=.021$), item18 ($p=.017$), item19 ($p=.008$), item 20 ($p=.004$), item28 ($p=.000$) and item 31 ($p=.03$) since the p value for these items was less than .05 (Pallant, 2016). The Kruskal Wallis test was also run to investigate if there were any differences in CP perceptions across four levels of language teaching experience. The test statistics revealed no statistically significant difference in levels of CP perception across four groups of EFL teachers in all items except item 18 ($p=.034$), 19($p=.025$), 31($p=.01$) and 32($p=.027$) which were significant since the p value for them was less than .05 (Pallant, 2016). Then, the results of the study are discussed and some implications are presented.

Keywords: Critical Applied Linguistics, Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, Teaching Experience

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1. Introduction

Having been discussed for about half a century, critical pedagogy now emerges among the most primary novel issues in education generally, and in English language education particularly. Critical pedagogy originally comes from the Frankfurt School, but, Paulo Freire (1970) incorporated it into present-day education. Freire (1970) proposed distinction between two types of education, namely banking education, occurring when teachers attempt to transfer their knowledge and contents of their minds to the minds of the students (Bartolome, 1994), and transformative education, wherein education takes place with dialogue between teacher and student concerning world issues meaningful to the students, and fostering students' political and personal development with the intention of acting on the world to improve it. In transformative also known as problem posing education, education are not merely limited to classroom setting, but it has found its way into a wider and more authentic context (i.e., the society). In such a sense, the ideas of creating and promoting cooperation, fostering negotiation, balancing and distributing authority between students and the teacher, and among the students themselves, and stressing the psychological and humane aspects of education changes students to be social participants; that active and critical members in their society who gain the insight and courage to critique and challenge oppressive social conditions (Freire, 1972). In the same wane, teachers' role from being simple transmitters of knowledge changes to 'Transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 1988), who can get the opportunity to become aware of socio political issues not only to the benefit of their educational development, but also to the benefit of their individual and social transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

In Freire's viewpoint, in an educational environment, both teachers and students must be committed and responsible not only for demonstrating world experiences, but also for reinforcing knowledge (Freire, 1970). As Haque (2007) suggests Freire's pedagogy displays a critical model that presents a framework through which he provides a concept or an image of the world where in justice and equalities are sanctioned and fostered. It also provides the tool for transformational change further along in analytical processes. Mainly, the ambition of the Freireian critical framework is emancipation and freedom from oppression. Accordingly, the teaching and learning environment must be dialogic, provide empowerment and incorporate voice (Haque, 2007).

With the advent of critical pedagogy, some new concerns were added to the practice of English language teaching and learning which had not been focused before. Language education program was not just confined to the classroom setting anymore. Its goals and ambitions extended to the outside world by presenting some new principles, based of which, the role of English

language teachers, learners, and even policy makers of English language program was exposed to change. Even though critical pedagogy has defined new concerns in the field of English language teaching and learning, it seems that EFL practitioners have little literacy of such concerns. Moreover, little research has been done to investigate English language teachers' perception of critical pedagogy, especially, in Iranian context. Focusing on the main principles of critical pedagogy, the present article tries to present and validate a measurement scale for critical pedagogy wherein the internal consistency of the items are counted as paving the ground for further studies regarding factor analysis of such a scale.

2. Literature Review

Critical pedagogy (CP) also known as transformative education has roots in progressive education. It gained particular reputation through the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose experience teaching illiterate adults informed his widely read book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). As Kincheloe (2004) declares "Indeed, all work in critical pedagogy after him [Freire] has to reference his work" (p. 49). Presenting a new model of pedagogy, as Thornbury (2006) put it, Freire differentiated between "traditional models of education, treating learners as empty vessels to be filled by the all-knowing teacher", and "problem-posing model of education, which was a liberating education, based on equality, dialogue, and hope (p. 58)". Freire's pedagogy was mainly based on the interaction, dialogue, and balance of powers between teachers and students (McLaren, 2000). Additionally, the primary goal of such pedagogy was incorporating the social as well as political issues of the daily life critically into the curriculum. Rather than mere critical thinking, in order to call for completion of a series of educational practices and processes with the aim of generating a better learning atmosphere in its local context, and engendering a superior world in a wider context, that is, a global context, Freire (1998) proposed praxis as critical reflection and acting upon that reflection. In Freire's proposal, rather than being a mere educational technique, praxis means a way of living in educative practice of ours. The second prominent figure of CP is Henry Giroux. According to Kincheloe (2004) it is with the work of Giroux in the late 1970s and 1980s that the concept of CP is formed as we know it today. He, at that time, developed and established CP as a domain of study and praxis. Kincheloe (2004) adds that Giroux's ambition was to struggle for a critical democracy both in the U.S. and the world at large. This critical or radical democracy, as he employs the term, involves the effort to expand the possibility for social justice, freedom, and egalitarian social relations in the educational, economic, political, and cultural domains. Thus, Giroux's critical pedagogy "deploys both critique and possibility and their use in the struggle to expose the forces that undermine education for a critical

democracy” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 55). Therefore, the primary goal of CP is introducing liberating education (Freire, 1970), as well as representing a vision of a better and more human life (Giroux, & McLaren, 1989).

Moreover, recent developments in literacy education in some parts of the world demonstrate that pedagogy can begin from an appropriate reconceptualization of the subjectivism of progressive models, being reframed and pushed into a critical pedagogy which reinvests human agency in curriculum practice (Luke, and Baker, 1991). According to Moen (2008), CP plays a key role in establishing relations between the theory and practice in education. He believes that CP can be considered as the education founded on an ambition for recognizing the status quo and how the maintenance of this status quo above all benefits those in positions of power in society, as well as calling for and engaging with the existing alternative visions of the society. He believes that in CP, no longer are schools as sites where a neutral body of curricular knowledge is transmitted to students with various levels of success, but the schools change to centers wherein different social, cultural, and ideological constructs are of high importance. To have a better understanding of the concept of CP, its principles, its status in relation to other fields in education, as well as its similarities and differences with other critical approaches to education in general, and English language in particular, from among the vast literature of CP, some more significant issues must be called and discussed.

2.1. CP: An Approach to Education

Substantial modifications have occurred during the past decades in many aspects of education which have changed the definition and rationale of education. Some major modifications in the scope of education are due to the emergence of critical pedagogy (CP) (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1995) in education, through which teachers and students have found new identities and roles. Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and social movement that combines education with critical theory (Kincheloe & Steinburg, 1997). CP was first described by Freire (1972), and then was developed by Giroux (1988) and from then on, it has been now and then some contributions to the field. In Freire’s point of view, education means much further than transferring knowledge, it means the mutual and joint construction of the knowledge on the basis of the reality of the students’ lives. While banking education push the learners toward being domesticated, problem-posing education leads the learners toward being liberated. In the latter, communication gives sense to human life, and at the center of any experiences in education, there should exist dialogical relations. In problem-posing education, as its name offers, an emphasis was made on problem-posing. Such an emphasis along with authentic dialogue between students and teachers would result in critical consciousness. Freire (2005) declared:

“Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (p. 81). In essence, critical pedagogy, presumes that education can never be purely disinterested or neutral. Instead, it either functions to preserve the status quo, thus serving the power structures in a society, or it works to change the status quo through challenging, critiquing, resisting, or subvert those power structures. The domain of critical pedagogy normally is the latter set of functions (Thornbury, 2006).

2.2. CP: Political or Neutral

According to Kincheloe (2008), the tradition of critical pedagogy declares that no educational act is politically neutral. However, a specific remark on the political concept of CP is made by Moen (2008) wherein he clarifies that when CP refers to all educations as political and not neutral, it means that education should lead to developing and utilizing critical thinking skills, broadening one’s perspectives, increasing the awareness of miscellaneous essential social concerns, reshaping self-identities, generating new cultural values, founding redefined relationships in society, fostering basic structural changes, etc. As a result, CP does not believe the teaching of a fixed body of political thinking, but intends to help students in making sense of their lives, as well as finding ways of modifying their lifestyle in order to build up equal social structures. CP can provide the students with the opportunity to alter the potentials of their lives, and the ways they understand those potentials.

Following the ideology of Freire, Kincheloe (2008) provoke students of CP infuse their practice with radical love, the one which is compassionate, erotic, creative, sensual, and informed. Such a practice, as he put it must be made “to increase our capacity to love, to bring the power of love to our everyday lives and social institutions, and to rethink reason in a humane and interconnected manner” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 9). Knowledge in this context takes on a form quite different from its more accepted and mainstream versions. He believes that a critical knowledge must be noticed at its multiple levels and after all it must “seek to assuage human suffering” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 9).

In today’s dominant modes of pedagogy, questions about issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism, religion, and other social dynamics are rarely asked. Wink (2005) putting it in a nutshell defines CP as a sort of education which confronts unequal power relations in interrelations between individuals and institutions. Additionally, he highlights the historical, cultural, social, and political weight on schools, welcoming issues such as

power and its relationship to the practices of teaching and learning in the classroom setting. He also emphasizes that CP deals with how methodology can be influential, that is, how the method of delivery influences the progression and content of knowledge construction.

Freire (1970) in his famous book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" notifies purposely about prescription as a domination tool. As he clarifies, "One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into the one that conforms to the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, "the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor" (pp. 46–47). In line with Freire's ideology, Burbules & Berk (1999) stipulate that "in the language of critical pedagogy, the critical person is one who is empowered to seek justice, to seek emancipation" (p. 50). Collins (1998) defines engagement in critical pedagogy as being "realistically involved in enlarging the sites within our institutions where genuine, no coercive dialogue and reasonable opposition to oppressive bureaucratic controls can emerge" (p. 63). Giroux (1994) believes that the ambition of CP is to enlighten the relationship between authority and power. The power relationships between students, teachers, institutions, and society are challenged and under question within CP educational framework. Likewise, it pays striking attention to the connection between knowledge and power. As such, it questions the role of institutional power within the process of knowledge creation.

Based on the mentioned remarks, and many other statements in different sources on CP, one can conclude that critical pedagogy includes understanding curriculum as political text. Such curriculum does not confine itself to what traditionally used to happen in the classroom; i.e., the transference of knowledge from teacher to students; however, the real life issues come to the classroom, and as a result, there exists cooperation, co-construction, negotiation, and the exchange of information and knowledge between teacher and students, and among the students themselves pertaining the world issues. In such educational setting, no longer issues such as supporting human rights in general, workers' rights, children's rights, women's rights, supporting feminism as a movement against sexism, sexist oppression and exploitation, stepping for peace, environmental sustainability, Third World solidarity, social, economic, and political justice, etc. are neglected; yet, these issues are considered indispensable parts of education program. It must be noted that as Giroux & McLaren (1995) put it the complex issue of CP "is not physically housed in any one school or university department, nor does it constitute a homogeneous set of ideas" (p.29). In fact, one cannot jail the vast concept of critical pedagogy in some

short literature. This is why the present article does not claim to cover all the related issues; however, stipulates that the factors and statements offered here as some principles of critical pedagogy are from among the most important controversial ones.

2.3. CP: A Different Approach in Being Critical

It will not be exaggeration if one claims that the concept and definition of critical pedagogy, and its related literature cannot be covered in one short essay or even in a single book. Different scholars have looked CP from different aspects, some of which even dissimilar. As Keesing- Styles (2003) put it the literature of critical pedagogy is extremely wide and the content often intense and puzzling. Regarding the association between critical theory and critical pedagogy, she maintains that although critical pedagogy shares some considerable historical and contextual grounds with critical theory, the latter links itself with problems related to the socialization of people for existence in society, usually a society defined by dominant discourses, and this is also the starting point for critical pedagogy. In fact, critical pedagogy has its roots in critical theory, and the two enjoy many common philosophies and approaches. However, CP is, different from critical theory in that it is foremost an educational reaction to oppressive power relations and inequalities existing in educational institutions. It focuses on subjects related to opportunity, voice and dominant discourses in education and searches for more equitable and liberating educational experiences.

Moreover, there exist differences between critical literacy, critical thinking, critical applied linguistics, and critical pedagogy. As Quang (2007) put it from among different orientations to critical literacy, one is the Freirean-based critical pedagogy. Others are, for instance, feminist and post structuralism approaches, and text analytic approaches. He believes that the coverage of such a domain is rather different from that of critical applied linguistics, since critical pedagogy is used broadly across many areas of education.

2.4. CP and Critical Thinking

Critical thinking in Moen's (2008) words is "disciplined intellectual analysis that combines research, knowledge of historical context, and balanced judgment. Critical thinking entails "the careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgment about a claim" (Moen, p. 145). Critical thinking means self-reflective thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. Another way to describe it is reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or what action to take. A person who thinks critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information,

efficiently and creatively sort through this information, reason logically from this information, and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enable one to live and act responsibly in it. Developing critical thinking skills helps to increase social and political consciousness.

Labone (2004) discusses the underlying assumptions of critical theories, and the emphasis they put on the vital role of schools within society in fostering issues of social justice and power. She forefront the necessity of extending teachers' role beyond classroom concerns and developing skills that empower students to change their life chances. While both critical thinking and CP enjoy critical perspectives, and in many ways they are interrelated, they are rather different in purposes, practices and approaches.

Concerning the difference between critical thinking and CP, Burbules & Berk (1999) state that critical thinking is principally aimed at the individual and mostly ignores the pedagogical relations, occurring between teacher and learner, or between learners, but critical pedagogy focuses more on collective action so "individual criticality is intimately linked to social criticality" (p. 55). Based on Moen (2008) remarks, the most important purpose of a critical pedagogy is to assist students build up and employ their critical thinking skills by cultivating the ability to recognize the perspectives being presented in analysis of social phenomena and to aid them start to ask the important questions that need to be asked in order to recognize the urgent necessity for everyone to become involved in working together to create a more economically and socially equitable society. Moen (2008) also emphasizes that significance of CP lies in the fact that it helps students become broad-minded, and critical thinkers, capable of processing information in the most skillful, accurate, and rigorous manner possible, in a way that it leads to the most reliable, logical, and trustworthy conclusions, upon which they can make responsible decisions about their lives, behavior, and actions with full knowledge of the assumptions and consequences of those decisions.

2.5. CP vs. CALx

The concept of critical applied linguistics (CALx) for some scholars such as Davies (2007) is little more than a critique of other orientations to applied linguistics. He provides the following definition "a judgmental approach by some applied linguists to 'normal' applied linguistics on the grounds that it is not concerned with the transformation of society" (p. 161). This is while according to Quang's (2007) words it is possible to suggest that critical applied linguistics is a way of thinking and doing, a "continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire and action" (p.36).

Regarding the differences between critical applied linguistics and critical pedagogy, one can assume the existing differences from

Pennycook's (1997) definition and model (2001) for critical applied linguistics by which it will be a separate field of study with its own latent principles, and different from the Freireian critical pedagogy. Calling for a critical applied linguistics for the 1990s, Pennycook argued for the "need to rethink language acquisition in its social, cultural, and political contexts, taking into account gender, race, and other relations of power as well as the notion of the subject as multiple and formed within different discourses" (p.26). In trying to explain what is meant by critical applied linguistics, Pennycook (2001) proposed the concerns and domains of the discipline. In his model the concerns are as follows: A strong view of applied linguistics; A view of praxis; Ways of being critical; Micro and macro relations; Critical social inquiry; Critical theory; Problematizing givens; Self-reflexivity; Preferred futures; and Heterosis. Moreover, based on Pennycook's model the domains of critical applied linguistics are: critical discourse analysis and critical literacy; critical approaches to translation; critical approaches to language teaching; critical approaches to language testing; critical approaches to language planning and language rights; critical approaches to language, literacy and workplace settings. One of the most important things emphasized in Pennycook's (2001) model is the notion of 'praxis' which mediates the relation between theory and practice. Regarding defining critical pedagogy, Pennycook (1990) takes a bit different and more general position: "Critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching and curriculum in-formed by critical social theory that "seeks to understand and critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop pedagogical practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling, but also the wider society" (p. 24). Moreover, we should always bear in mind the basic assumption of CP "that the human occupation is to take action which changes the world for the improvement of life conditions" (Crawford, 1978, p. 2).

2.6. CP in Language Education Programs

Researchers have shown that in the classroom as an educational setting, students can dynamically contribute to decision-making process, and if given opportunity to think in a critical way, to speak their minds and make their voice heard, they can get profoundly and vigorously involved in all aspects of the learning and teaching procedure (Alford, 2001; Freire & Macedo, 2003; Ranson, 2000). In doing so, teachers' roles are modified; therefore, there is a need for teachers to be well acquainted with the principles of critical pedagogy, and in their new roles, they should try their best in the classroom to pave the ground for such a phenomenon to take place in education. Concerning the modified role of the students in critical pedagogy, Freire (1972) believes that good students in CP are typified not as those who would submissively consent themselves to be filled with knowledge, but as autonomous learners who can critically evaluate, criticize,

and put under question not only the materials they are studying but also the context they are living in. Consequently, in CP's view, students can play key role in strengthening democracy, creating a more just society, and positioning education in a process of progressive social change (Kellner, 2000). Regarding students and teachers' modified roles in CP, Canagarajah (2005) states: "Critical students and teachers are prepared to situate learning in the relevant social contexts, unravel the implications of power in pedagogical activity, and commit themselves to transforming the means and ends of learning, in order to construct more egalitarian, equitable, and ethical educational and social environments" (p. 932). Indubitably, CP is different from other educational philosophies since its major focus lies with classroom practices with an emphasis to learning that goes beyond the classroom into the community.

Norton and Toohey (2004) assume that CP associate to English language learning with reference to social change. Moreover, the authors maintain that CP empower the view of language as a social practice constructing the ways students can better know themselves when learning English. Consequently, students become more conscious about their surroundings and also about their role in global community if they can comprehend the culture manifestations and speak English. Crookes and Lehner (1998) assert that CP should be carefully considered as goals in the teaching of EFL. Reagan and Osborn (2002) believe that as foreign language educators, we need to continue our efforts to move beyond what might be called technicist concerns about the teaching of foreign languages. Debates and discussions about alternative teaching methodologies certainly have value, but we must also address the social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts in which we teach, and in which languages are used. Taking a strong position, they summarize their statements by saying that language study must become a core element in the teaching of critical perspectives for life in a democratic society. Regarding the role of CP in teaching EFL, Pennycook (1999) states:

Given the global and local contexts and discourses with which English is bound up, all of us involved in TESOL might do well to consider our work not merely according to the reductive meanings often attached to labels such as teaching and English but rather as located at the very heart of some of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time. (p.346)

Moreover, by tradition and experience, we have recognized that it is our job not only to teach students the linguistic basics of the English language, but also to provide them with an introduction to the cultures, literatures, and indeed, the worlds of the speakers of the target language. The face of English language teaching has been undergoing many shifts since the

last decades, moving from being formalists to activists, from method-based education to the post-method phase. More recently, we have also been emphasizing on communicative, psychological, and social aspects of language teaching and learning, as well as the culture of target language, teachers and learners' identity, and so forth. Yet, although the values of the methods and approaches must not be ignored, from critical point of view, as teachers we are to present broader educational goals and thus reconsider the functions and purposes of foreign language education for our students.

Given the fact that critical pedagogy enjoys the potentiality of modifying the role of the teachers, students, and even the policy makers, and elevating their attitude and behavior toward a more critical, effective, dynamic, liberating and perfectionist education program not only in the educational setting level but also at the level of society, and even more broadly, at the global level, and also considering that EFL teachers, as highly important members of English language program, who are not and should not be divorced from CP, the concept of CP and its practicality in English language education program, the teachers' literacy about their potential roles as well as those of students and language policymakers in educational settings must be stressed. Critical pedagogy struggles to pave the way for teachers to free themselves from being mere passive technicians (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) or just the transmitters of knowledge whose sole responsibility is to practice others' theories and transfer given information to students. CP considers teachers transformative intellectuals (Freire, 1972) whose responsibility is to change their educational, and local community in specific, and the global community in general. Consequently, teachers integrate themselves to society as members rather than isolating themselves only as knowledge transmitters in educational settings or classroom situations.

Even though supporters of critical pedagogy have been more active over the past years in contributing to CP literature, for instance nurturing some mindful, energetic and critical students (Freire, 1972; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006), there is still much to fulfill the prerequisites, and demands of CP, or to act appropriately when posing CP problems. More studies on language teachers' perspectives of CP could also provide language teachers and education programmers with shedding lights on teachers' professional identity continuum i.e. past, present, and aspirational identity of language teachers (Salimi, Mostafaei Alaei & Najjarbaghseyah, 2016) that has been a visible gap in recent literature (Behin, Esmaeili, & Assadollahi, 2018). The present study intends to address the existing gaps by answering the following questions:

1. Is there any statistical difference between the levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers?

2. Is there any statistical difference in CP perceptions across four groups of teachers with different levels of language teaching experience?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were 102 EFL teachers, teaching English at English language schools in Qom, Iran. Fifty teachers with three years of English teaching experience or less comprised 49 % of the participants. Four teachers with three to five years of English teaching experience comprised about 4 % of the participating teachers. The language teachers with five to 10 years of such experience were 22, forming about 21.5 % of the participants, and 25.5 % of the participating EFL teachers comprising 26 people had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Fifty-six of the respondents were male teachers (approximately 55%) and 46 female teachers (approximately 45%).

3.2. Materials and Instruments

On the basis of the literature on CP, a Likert-type questionnaire was developed to investigate the EFL teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy in their language teaching profession. The "Critical Pedagogy in Language Education Questionnaire" contained 33 items with a Likert-type agreement scale ranging from 1 to 6 representing: 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- somewhat disagree, 4- somewhat agree, 5- agree, and 6- strongly agree. The internal consistency of the instrument was calculated through using Cronbach Alpha. It showed a high reliability ($\alpha=.88$).

3.3. Procedure

Initially, the major values of CP were tailored into 50 statements in the form of Likert-type items. Afterward, the items were distributed to 6 EFL teachers of intermediate and advanced levels to check their mechanics of writing, readability and comprehensibility. Following their comments, some modifications in terms of wording, diction and structure was done to increase the self-containedness of the questionnaire. Then, 5 experts in the field of critical pedagogy expert-judged the items; as a consequence, the items were reduced to 33 items, with some of them merged and some others deleted. Finally, the newly developed questionnaire was administered to 102 EFL teachers with language teaching experience ranging from 3 years of experience or less to more than 10 years.

3.4. Data Analysis

The internal consistency of the instrument was calculated through using Cronbach Alpha. The data was subjected to non-parametric Mann Whitney U test to check any potential significant difference between the

levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers. The Kruskal Wallis test was also run to investigate if there were any differences in CP perceptions across four levels of language teaching experience.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The reliability of the data was determined through using Cronbach Alpha and the result showed a high reliability ($\alpha=.88$). The data was also subjected to nonparametric Mann Whitney U test. The test revealed that there was no significant difference between the levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers except in the following items: item1 ($z=-2.314$, $p=.021$), item18 ($z=-2.379$, $p=.017$), item19 ($z=-2.636$, $p=.008$), item 20 ($z=-2.843$, $p=.004$), item28 ($z=-3.584$, $p=.00$) and item 31 ($z=-2.156$, $p=.03$).

As shown in the following statistic table of nonparametric Mann Whitney U test (Table 1), there was no significant difference between the levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers in most items of the questionnaire (except the above-mentioned ones) since the p value for them is more than .05 (Pallant, 2016).

A Kruskal-Wallis test was also run to investigate if there is any difference in CP perceptions across four levels of language teaching experience (Group1, (hereafter GP), $n= 50$: 3 years or less; Gp2, $n= 4$: 3-5 years; Gp3, $n= 22$: 5-10 years; Gp4, $n= 26$: 11 years and more). The test statistics (Table 2) revealed no statistically significant difference in CP perception levels across 4 groups of EFL teachers in all items except items 18 ($p=.034$), 19($p=.025$), 31($p=.01$) and 32($p=.027$) wherein the p value is less than .05 showing significant difference (Pallant, 2016).

Table 1

Results for Mann Whitney U Test Statistics

	Test Statistics ^a						
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
Mann-Whitney U	211.50	285.50	249.00	318.0	235.0	272.00	298.5
Wilcoxon W	487.50	561.50	525.00	594.0	511.0	678.00	574.5
Z	-2.31	-.81	-1.44	-.07	-1.68	-.98	-.46
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.02*	.41	.14	.93	.09	.32	.64
	Item8	Item9	Item10	Item	Item	Item 13	Item

				11	12		14
Mann-Whitney U	240.00	317.50	291.00	311.5	305.5	311.00	312.0
Wilcoxon W	516.00	593.50	697.00	587.5	581.5	587.00	718.0
Z	-1.65	-.08	-.64	-.20	-.32	-.22	-.20
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.09	.93	.52	.83	.74	.82	.83
	Item 15	Item 16	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21
Mann-Whitney U	262.00	258.00	257.00	203.0	187.0	177.50	287.0
Wilcoxon W	538.00	534.00	663.00	479.0	463.0	453.50	563.0
Z	-1.21	-1.27	-1.55	-2.37	-2.63	-2.84	-.68
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.22	.20	.12	.01*	.00*	.00*	.49
	Item 22	Item 23	Item 24	Item 25	Item 26	Item 27	Item 28
Mann-Whitney U	260.50	319.00	242.50	274.0	218.0	321.00	141.0
Wilcoxon W	536.50	725.00	518.50	550.0	494.0	727.00	417.0
Z	-1.21	-.09	-1.57	-.93	-2.02	-.02	-3.58
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.22	.92	.11	.35	.04*	.98	.00*
	Item 29	Item 30	Item 31	Item 32	Item 33		
Mann-Whitney U	285.50	270.00	211.50	238.5	223.0		
Wilcoxon W	561.50	546.00	487.50	514.5	499.0		
Z	-.72	-1.02	-2.16	-1.67	-1.94		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.46	.30	.03*	.09	.05		

a. Grouping Variable: Gender, *p ≤ .05

Table 2

Results for Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistics

	Test Statistics ^{a,b}							
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8
Chi-Square	3.30	.97	3.54	.06	7.83	5.91	2.66	3.31
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.34	.80	.31	.99	.05	.11	.44	.34
	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15	Item 16
Chi-Square	.74	.48	3.61	2.29	1.44	2.46	.65	1.69
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.86	.92	.30	.51	.69	.48	.88	.63

	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21	Item 22	Item 23	Item 24
Chi-Square	.79	8.68	9.33	7.26	6.17	4.88	4.14	4.12
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.85	.03*	.025*	.06	.10	.18	.24	.24
	Item 25	Item 26	Item 27	Item 28	Item 29	Item 30	Item 31	Item 32
Chi-Square	2.56	3.92	2.34	6.66	3.74	5.58	11.31	9.19
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.46	.26	.50	.08	.29	.13	.01*	.02*
	Item 33							
Chi-Square	6.54							
Df	3							
Asymp. Sig.	.08*							

a. Kruskal Wallis Test, *b.* Grouping Variable: Experience, * $p \leq 0.05$

4.2. Discussion

In the first place, the internal consistency of the research-made instrument was calculated through using Cronbach Alpha which showed a high reliability ($\alpha=.88$). Then, the data from the questionnaire was subjected to non-parametric Mann Whitney U test to check significant difference between the levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers. The results revealed that there was not a significant difference between gender in all items except item 1 (Language class should be linked with local socio-cultural, historical, political and linguistic environment), item 18 (Language learners' linguistic and cultural understanding can be sources of knowledge and motivation for social participation), item 19 (A language education program should help language learners become aware of their own culture, and accept and affirm their cultural identity), item 20 (Language class exercises and practices should be related to learners' living experiences), item 28 (A language teacher is an autonomous intellectual rather than a classroom technician) and item 31 (A language education program should enable learners to define themselves as active participants in their social life). Therefore, the answer to the first research question of the study is given: there is not any statistical difference between the levels of CP perceptions in the male and female EFL teachers. The low level of significant difference in the majority of items regarding gender implies that such perceptions probably are not under the influence of some individual differences. In other word, the scale here appears to be irrelevant to gender differences. Although According to Dörnyei (2005) "...individual differences (IDs) are characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be

shown to differ from each other” (p.5), here, in our context, at least regarding gender no difference is seen. Yet, it should be noted that IDs are definitely the key issues related to many social, psychological, local, cultural, etc. factors, and thus more research will be needed before one can present any pre-judgment or judgment . For instance, further studies can be done in completion of the present study, and better results can be achieved if an interview is made to achieve more pieces of information and to find out more implications. Moreover, since the related literature in CP lacks such correlations, it can be suggested that one may find significant differences in other individual differences than gender differences; therefore, new researches must be done to fill in the gaps. Regarding the exceptional items, it could be discussed that social environment and culture of the language teachers would be a defining factor of their gender presentations of CP. It means that culture might have a meaningful variable in language teachers’ gender in CP.

In terms of the second research question, the test statistics revealed no statistically significant difference in levels of CP perception across four groups of EFL teachers in all items except items 18 (Language learners’ linguistic and cultural understanding can be sources of knowledge and motivation for social participation), 19 (A language education program should help language learners become aware of their own culture, and accept and affirm their cultural identity), 31 (A language education program should enable learners to define themselves as active participants in their social life) and 32(A language education program should be aimed at the empowerment of learners to be critical upon wrong practices and inequalities in the educational system). Since the majority of the items (29 out of 33) showed that there was no difference between the less experienced teachers and more experienced teachers, we conclude that there is not any statistical difference in CP perceptions across four groups of teachers with different levels of language teaching experience. Accordingly, it could be discussed that teaching experience could play a little meaningful role in language teachers’ interpretations of CP. This finding is in contrast with some studies on language teachers’ professional development and identity (Salimi, Mostafaei Alaei & Najjarbaghseyah, 2016; 2017), although there are few studies in terms of CP. As it is given, difference in the means of these items is rather significant. The results showed that except the items above, the mean rank of the less experienced and more experienced teachers in all other items were close or even in some cases almost the same, substantiating that teacher’ levels of experiences are not in line with CP perceptions. Based on the results, one may interpret that CP perceptions are rather innate than being acquired or being pertinent to teaching experiences, or they can be related or bound to many other factors such as community, culture, etc.

Through the study, the researchers intended to introduce some principles of critical pedagogy extracted from different existing literature about CP. Some of the characteristics of CP, which are normally introduced and suggested to be applied and practiced in education program by the proponents of CP might be getting involved in group discussions in the classroom; talking about local and global issues; providing students with the opportunity to broaden their own perspectives and bring in examples from their everyday lives to relate to the issue under discussion; critical yet constructive analyses of social issues leading to broadening one's own perspectives, and strengthening the critical thinking skills; recognizing, accepting, and respecting one's own as well as others' culture and society; confronting and critiquing one's own ideas, beliefs, biases, etc. ; empowering the educators and enabling students to become engaged motivated and eager citizens, who are capable of building a more brilliant and superior future for all; and so forth.

It should be noted that the participants of the present study were only teachers of English as a foreign language, and teachers of other subjects were not included. The research may be replicated in some other educational settings than English language program. Moreover, the study is counted as making only a scale of CP, with measuring internal consistency of the given elements. It can be much better if some qualitative research is done, so that the study will be extended further to a main study including factor analysis with a minimum number of around 250 participants to have further interpretation of the loading factors in terms of consistency.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study started with a brief definition and explanation of critical pedagogy concept mainly on the basis of the viewpoints of Freire (1972), Giroux (1988, 1999), Pennycook (1990, 1994, 1999), Kumaravadivelu (2003, 2006), Canagarajah (2005), as well as some other scholars of the field. Then, a brief review of the related literature was presented. Based on the review done on the related literature, one may conclude that though there have been some studies concerning CP, one cannot find a comprehensive scale based on which the perception of the teachers of English as a foreign language about CP is assessed. As such the study was done to fill in the gap by developing a questionnaire measuring the Iranian EFL Teachers' perception of critical pedagogy. More specifically, As language education is local and contextual bound, and CP principles are rather universal, teachers in their society, based on the particularities of their own contexts, should become aware of the main tenets of CP and adopt and adapt these principles in order to create a new progressive dynamic change rather than sticking to the traditional education. By defining the concept of

CP as well as presenting some of its principles in this study, we meant to suggest that teachers of English can be influential on their students and their society, and also can be more reflective as well as critical upon themselves, their attitudes, their actions, and their education program. Moreover, we tried our best to display possible relations of the two independent variables of sex and experience to CP perception level. The findings of the study, however, proved that gender difference is unrelated to the perception level of CP in Iranian EFL teachers, and also difference in the levels of teaching experience seems to be insignificant. This implies that CP perception may be bound to some other variables, and so in need of further research.

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Appendix: Critical Pedagogy in Language Education Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the perception and attitudes of the English teachers regarding critical pedagogy in their language school activities. Please indicate Your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

Gender: Male Female

Teaching experience: 3 years or below 3 - 5 years 5 – 10 years

more than 10 years

No		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Language class should be linked with local socio-cultural, historical, political and linguistic environment.						
2	A language education program should consider learners' needs, objectives, and interests.						
3	A language education program should enable learners to investigate their own cultural identity.						
4	Both learning and teaching are political processes.						
5	Language is NOT simply a means of expression or communication.						
6	Language class should make learners understand their own social and cultural surrounding.						
7	Language is a practice that should make learners ready for the future life.						
8	Language syllabus should be modified based on the local, individual, and social needs of learners in a particular context.						
9	The first task of a language teacher is to make learners feel free to challenge the educational system.						
10	Language teachers should provide opportunity for learners to think critically in order to improve the education program.						
11	Language teachers should provide opportunity for learners to improve their social life.						
12	Language teachers should skillfully critique social injustice.						
13	Language teaching should NOT be limited to making learners acquire a set of skills or knowledge divorced from their lives.						
14	Learners should have dialogs about real-world issues (e.g. public health care, human rights) in the language classroom.						
15	Most of the class time should NOT be devoted to the language teacher's talk, only because he/she may be the transmitter of the knowledge.						
16	Most of the class time should be devoted to the language learners' talk about their real life knowledge and experiences.						

17	Language learners should have opportunity to have interaction with each other and with the teacher.							
18	Language learners' linguistic and cultural understanding can be sources of knowledge and motivation for social participation.							
19	A language education program should help language learners become aware of their own culture, and accept and affirm their cultural identity.							
20	Language class exercises and practices should be related to learners' living experiences.							
21	A language education program should view teachers as "free professionals" who have the right to theorize what they practice and to practice what they theorize.							
22	Language teachers should present logical reasons for their actions and events in the classroom.							
23	Language teachers should make learners involved in class activities.							
24	Language teachers should negotiate with their learners about teaching/learning materials based on their local situation.							
25	A language education program should create a capacity in learners to struggle for freedom and equality in society.							
26	A language education program should encourage teachers to get engaged in community activities.							
27	A language education program should give learners voice and let them express their ideas and beliefs.							
28	A language teacher is an autonomous intellectual rather than a classroom technician.							
29	A language education program should play a central role in how learners understand themselves and the world.							
30	A language education program should enable learners to notice the features of language, power, and their culture in society.							
31	A language education program should enable learners to define themselves as active participants in their social life.							
32	A language education program should be aimed at the empowerment of learners to be critical upon wrong practices and inequalities in the educational system.							
33	A language education program should be aimed at the empowerment of teachers to be critical upon wrong practices and inequalities in the educational system.							

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