

Implementing Critical Pedagogy into EFL Context to Reach Higher Order Level of Thinking by Bloom's Taxonomy

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Abstract: The primary goal of this paper is to promote critical pedagogy in the higher education system by applying it in the EFL context. Critical pedagogy is concerned with how educators can alter education from the banking model of education; due to the traditional way of teaching, learners are passive receivers, whereas, in the problem-posing method, students are active agents of their learning process. For this purpose, problem-posing and two-way dialogue were pedagogical actions to enhance students' critical thinking and communication skills. The present study intended to develop the student's speaking capacity, engage them to ask questions, and give reflections on the exposed issues. Five steps have been followed for problem posing; describe the content, define the problem, personalize the problem, discuss the situation, and discuss substitutes for the problem. The observation method was carried out to collect data among two classes containing 20 students each. Finally, the finding of this study proved that implementing critical pedagogy in EFL classrooms increases students' engagement with the curriculum and enhances their interactions in the school. In addition, students reached a higher level by Bloom's Taxonomy associated with their earlier rank.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Problem Posing, Bloom's Taxonomy, Banking Model of Education

1. Introduction

Critical pedagogy was introduced through the pedagogy of the oppressed by Paul Freire (Freire, 2020). Since then, numerous scholars have studied critical pedagogy and applied it in various fields. In education, critical pedagogy is a practical philosophy to enhance students' academic success and prepare them to improve society; this goal can be achieved if the students think critically not only in the classroom, but they must be critical thinkers in the community to fight inequalities to transfer both classroom and society (Duncan & Andrade, 2008). Critical pedagogy's fundamental aspect is raising awareness about power inequality in society through developing critical thinking in the education system. However, Freire played a vital role in developing literacy in Brazil's campaign. He recommended the method that transferee oppressed from being objective agenda in education into subjective of their self-government. The consideration is that students must behave in a way that they change their society which is best achieved by means of emancipated education (Boyd, 2016). In this context, autonomy is a key variable in language

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learning, so language learners should be self-directed (Yildiz & Yucesdal, 2020). Emancipated education could not be achieved through ancient teaching methods. The conventional method of teaching provides teachers with a set of pre-backpack tools and materials to transmit knowledge.

The major objective of education is to enhance the skills of students (Daskan & Yildiz, 2020). According to Freire's traditional system, teachers have absolute power over students; therefore, learning is surrendering to teachers' final authority. He refers to this kind of system and describes it as Banking System. The concept of banking systems originated from the idea that education becomes an act of depositing. Teachers depose information into students' minds, and students are considered depositors because they receive the information and repeat it. Therefore, from a memory standpoint, it can be stated that the more students repeat, the more lexical-and semantic knowledge they acquire, and the more lexical knowledge they acquire, the better their call (Tosun & Yildiz, 2015a). According to this system, students are empty vases, so they will be filled with information without understanding the core of knowledge. The teacher transmits commands without engaging students in the classroom and activity (Hamid, 2001). However, there are many studies on the banking system globally, but very little is known about the banking system in Kurdistan. Since the Banking System could not pay sufficient attention to students' role in the classroom as an active agenda, they failed to connect education to real-life experience. In contrast to the Banking system, Freire (2020) proposed a problem- a posing system in which teachers must give up on their absolute power and students take active responsibility for controlling how and what they want to learn; students will be enabled to think critically, engaging students to find problems based on the given topic to challenge and motivate students to solve them. For decades, students are not considered the core of the classroom but instead treated as a machine to absorb knowledge without engaging them in real-life experiences (Duncan-Andrade E, 2008).

In comparison to the previous decades, the responsibilities of educators nowadays are far more challenging. It is undoubtedly difficult to engage both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process (Yildiz, 2015). To make a good organisational structure, one must be dedicated to their job. When we look at teaching as a job in its own right, we see that dedicated teachers have a bigger impact not only on their students, but also on the larger communities where they work and their co-workers (Dayan & Yildiz, 2022). On the other hand, this paper aims to transform students' roles into operative individuals who can take responsibility for learning and for changing society. Teachers and students will be engaged in critical dialogue by initiating problem-posing methods in the classroom. Ladson (1995) argued that "dialogue help students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing the critical perspective that challenges societal inequities." Therefore, to promote critical thinking in the classroom and to rich the higher order of thinking by Bloom's Taxonomy, the present study aims to investigate the application of problem posing and dialogue in EFL classrooms to create an active individual in society.

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

In response to the banking system of education, which can be easily noticed in the Kurdistan education system and the lower level of critical thinking among students, this paper attempts to transfer the banking system of education into student-centered education by promoting problem-posing and dialogue. Also, it attempts to enhance students' critical thinking to the highest order level by applying critical pedagogy. However, it identifies students' language needs from class activity during the observing stage.

1.2 The Hypothesis

This paper was completed under the shade of two possibilities. It is an attempt to answer core questions raised by facilitators nowadays. These teachers tend to prove the second possibility, putting the hypothesis into practice under challenging circumstances to achieve a solid result that helps the students and other teachers. The hypothesis is mentioned in the following points:

1. Critical pedagogy could not be applied within the traditional educational system due to the student's resistance toward the new teaching method.
2. Critical pedagogy could be implemented in different forms and frameworks.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Pedagogy

The origin of critical pedagogy is traced back to Plato and Socrata. This became a fundamental core of critical pedagogy when Plato challenged his student Socrata to think critically about philosophical, educational, and social issues. Later, Roses discussed how individuals could keep their inner goodness while connecting to the corrupted society; he believed education should focus on well-balanced free-thinking children (Guilherme,2017). Educators should have two wings. First, he must be qualified in his/her field. Second, he must know universal values such as stealing, honesty, loyalty, backbiting, parents' rights, time, health, and hazardous habits. Finally, he must execute these values in his/her life. Students can't be honest until their teacher is (Tosun & Yildiz, 2015b). Many educational events happened in history due to social movements and political agendas. For example, In the 1950s, many parts of the United States were separated by race (as well as many Chicano/a students) and were prohibited from attending school together. Following the elimination of schools, many school districts in the south closed many public schools and reopened them as private academies, allowing black children to be legally excluded (Abraham,2014).

Freire identified the reasons for society's failure to transform; banking education was all that was available. He attempted to establish a realistic educational alternative based on dialogue and problem-solving to revolutionize society (Saleh, 2013). This model allows teachers and students to discuss, analyze, and share their feelings and knowledge of the world (Regt & Osman, 2013). This strategy seeks to develop critical thinkers by investigating students' consciousness and thinking critically about the society they inhabit (Lee, 2003). In other words, unlike the banking system, which suppresses students' critical thinking.

Shih (2018) emphasizes three implications for the education method of critical pedagogy. First, individuals can be in dialogue with others with different critical views. Second, in practicing freedom in the classroom, teachers should be open to any criticism or disbarment that appears in the classroom. Third, curriculums planned should be fully person-oriented, and educators and teachers must be considered during curriculum planning. (Shih, 2018)

Sadeghi (2008) carried out a study on critical pedagogy in EFL classrooms. He discussed that students investigated social topics that generated critical awareness. As a creative thinker, the teacher plays an integral part in the problem-posing process: learning from students, welcoming and appreciating their

ideas, and engaging in the dialogical process. However, problem-posing has another dimension; it implies questioning and occasionally arguing with students to build their critical consciousness (Sadeghi, 2008). The central theme of Freire is that students are the center of learning. They can challenge their knowledge and must find solutions to their problems (Regt & Osman, 2013). Fries' work creates new hope for education and life itself. His writings liberated the education system.

In short, critical pedagogy arose from the necessity to change education in such a way that it understands the influence of social and political components present in different educational situations (Torres, 1993).

2.2 Utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy as a Tool for The Research Planning Process

Bloom's Taxonomy is considered a new trend and a recent movement in education; the scale measures the teacher's achievement and the academic system. The concept of learning has witnessed remarkable changes throughout history. All the movements and changes eventually happen for one aim: the development of the learning process and education. Bloom has dedicated his lifework to enhancing student education (Forhand, 2017). The Taxonomy is classified in a form that every teacher could use as the learning outcome for the classes; however, applying this hierarchy leads to challenges and obstacles, which are exposed in detail through the statement of the problem section in this paper.

Bloom's Taxonomy is divided into two primary levels, each into three stages; the lowest levels of thought are knowledge, comprehension, and application; it is noteworthy that according to the current educational system in Iraqi Kurdistan Governmental Region. Most academic settings attempt to reach the comprehension stage. Hence it is considered a remarkable achievement, while the core aim of education resides in shifting students' capacity from application to creativity level. The highest levels of thought are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. For that reason, the study depended on the classification of cognition levels according to Bloom's Taxonomy's hierarchy only for shifting the stages of cognition. In other words, the examiner designed the lecture plans in the term that covers the level of "knowledge" to the level of "evaluation," that is, by using various materials for achieving the best results which fulfill the study's purpose meanwhile do not contradict the current educational system.

Furthermore, the teachers attempt to implement each level of cognition through different methods and materials to match the curriculum requirement and the cognition level on Bloom's Taxonomy hierarchy. In other words, each level was executed with productive conduct to fulfill the skill. The plan was designed as the following:

1. Remembering level (using videos, documents, and self-paced learning).
2. Understanding level (tracking, assessment, and addressing questions).
3. Applying level (showing solid examples, games, and role-play).
4. Analyzing level (through debates, discussion, and problem-solving).
5. Evaluating level (peer-editing, presenting, and competitions).
6. Creating level (collaboration and group work to solve problems).

This framework helped the teachers to organize the classroom and execute the tasks effectively.

2.3 Statement of the Problem

This study's first and foremost challenge was implementing the student-centered methodology associated with the curriculum and the current institute's evaluation and assessment system. The assessment was one of the crucial obstacles to the process; using the student-centered methodology could not encounter the exact requirement of objective assessments. Students could not just pick one of several correct answers on an assessment. Instead, they had to come up with their own answer and think more critically (Ulker & Yildiz, 2021). The objective assessment involved one fixed answer; no subjective measurement was needed. Hence it could be graded by a machine. The assessments mainly contained multiple-choice, true-false, and writing. The writing part was the only subjective part of the test, so objective questions occupied most points. Xu (2016) states that this type of assessment can only reach the lower-order cognitive abilities (knowledge, comprehension, and application); however, a well-formed test could achieve a higher order of cognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. For that reason, it was not possible to concentrate on subjective tasks only to enhance critical thinking skills. Second, time management created another challenge; the application of the project aligned with the academic semester when teachers had to cover specific units in a particular period; extension, this project was not applied in all the classes, so it was challenging to apply and follow up. Last, students' attitude was another challenge for teachers; most showed resistance and were not motivated to take an active role in the classroom. As the teachers observed, there were several reasons for students' resistance; some lacked the confidence to be active, and others lacked the knowledge or ability to explain. On the other hand, most students study to get high grades on the exam; they do not study to develop their skills and abilities throughout the learning process.

2.4 Methodology of Data Analysis

The framework of the research paper is designed according to Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy approach to teaching. The current study aimed to reach the highest cognitive level of Bloom's taxonomy. The problem-posing and dialogue approaches were applied in the process of class activities. The study was applied at TIU, the university, in two different classes during the fall semester of 2021-2022. The sort of study was qualitative to observe and describe the classroom interaction. The study's main purpose is to examine students' engagement with the shift in teaching style; therefore, the researchers applied observation to collect data. Observation is an efficient technique used to observe the behavior, collaboration, or social background of an individual or a group of people; hence, it is mostly used in the social sciences and by teachers in their classrooms (Kawulich, 2012).

2.5 Research Framework

Freire (2020) claims that the fundamental step of problem-posing education is identifying the generative theme (Green, Byeongkil, & Daekweon, 2015). Therefore, the initial step of the study attempted to identify the generative theme to set the following step accordingly. Students' obstacles and struggles while learning English as a foreign language were selected as a generative theme. Although universities struggle to attract students, meet their expectations, and maintain their contentment (Khan & Yildiz, 2020), the theme was chosen due to students' concern regarding this issue. According to university regulations, students of all departments must study English for an entire academic year. The purpose of this theme was to enhance students' critical thinking regarding the curriculum and enable them to identify the problems that they face

on a daily base. Moreover, it promotes dialogue among the students and improves their communication skills. The method was implemented by using codification followed by a dialogue session. The coded materials used in this study were based on the units of the used curriculum, designed differently to meet Bloom’s Taxonomy’s hierarchy requirement. After covering the units of the book, a discussion paper was given to the students, the questions were in English only, and the purpose of this step was to help them brainstorm and prepare them for the dialogue session. The dialogue sessions have been managed as small groups, peer-to-peer conversations, and debates. The teachers applied “direct observation,” which includes observing without interfering with the objects or students in the setting (Kawulich, 2012). The following sample shows some of the questions the teachers used and the level of Bloom’s taxonomy to which the question resembles (Kawulich, 2012):

Bloom’s Taxonomy 1 Knowledge (lowest level) 2 Comprehension 3 Application 4 Analysis 5 Synthesis 6 Evaluation (highest level)	
Teacher’s Question	Bloom’s Taxonomy level
Make a PowerPoint presentation about one of the most famous mountains in Kurdistan.	3
Write a short report about the place in the picture and share the information with your friend in the class.	4
Arrange an expedition to one of the historical places in Kurdistan.	5

Sample 1

Students have studied an article about some explorers who arranged an expedition across Australia; the questions are like the concept of the curriculum. Through reading the article, they gained some information about the issue.

Sample2

These questions were challenging for the students; they had to interact differently. They faced some difficulties responding because they were used to objective questions rather than subjective ones.

Teacher's Question	Bloom's Taxonomy level
1- How do you arrange an expedition to Australia?	3
2- What kind of difficulty will you face?	2
3- How long does it take to complete the expedition?	1

2.6 Data Analysis

According to the teachers' first observation, 70% of the students in both classes interacted efficiently with the first sample because the questions were relevant to the materials they studied. They could easily answer the questions and discuss them in small groups. They used similar words, concepts, and solutions as in the article. This result proves that students could interact better with questions on (Knowledge (the lowest level), Comprehension, and Application). At the same time, only 30% of the students could interact with the second question sample. They were creative, found solutions, and coached in class. At the end of the semester, the teachers observed a remarkable change in students' behavior toward critical questions.

Students were encouraged to work independently and confidently in English. It was curiosity that drove them to find out more. They were motivated to investigate potential answers since doing so would make them feel useful and responsible. Moreover, the learner's sympathy for the target language and the student's learning motivation were both boosted by an understanding of the cultural meaning and feelings of the target language (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Second, implementing critical questions was another motive for them. It was opposite to traditional questions, which require answering by memorizing. The diversity of critical questions/tasks stimulated the students to think critically. Furthermore, students' involvement increased both physically and mentally. They devoted a large amount of energy to the task experience. They were emotionally engaged in the classroom, leading to a high level of involvement in the class (Finn, 1989). Since the subject was vocabulary, the students could remember vocabulary because they worked together to find meaning and put it into sentences. At last, the teachers observed a significant change regarding group work, opposite to the initial time; by the end of the project, they preferred working in pairs which led them to enhance their communication skills. They could easily share their ideas and use the language to express themselves.

3. Conclusion

Critical pedagogy is the recent methodology that attempts to convert the stereotype of education and upgrade it to a different dimension. The learning process is not limited to transferring knowledge and expecting to receive it from the students. Most academic institutions have attempted to develop the curriculum and materials; however, methodology development is more significant. In addition, the educational system is required to stimulate students to become good citizens in the future. This paper aimed to integrate elements of critical pedagogy to shift traditional teaching methods to the student-centered method. Accomplishing this aim was challenging under the circumstance of the existing system of the institution. The teachers have chosen the tasks cautiously to align with the curriculum and the sort

of assessment. The first step was identifying the generative theme by demonstrating students' obstacles and struggles while learning English as a foreign language. Second, enhance students' critical thinking toward the curriculum and engage it daily. Third, promoting dialogue significantly improved their communication skills, collaboration, and group work. By applying critical pedagogy, remarkable changes were noticed, exclusively problem-posing and dialogue approach and students' competency increased. Students' speaking and communication skills improved. Students started to find a solution to the problems and explain it clearly. The cognitive level shifted from understanding to applying, analysing, and synthesis. To sum up, Critical pedagogy could effectively be applied in EFL/ESL classes to shift the student's cognitive level. Problem-posing approach increases the engagement of the students in the classroom teachers and facilitators could apply critical pedagogy through different educational processes. Teachers can shift their teaching methodology individually in alignment with the curriculum and institution's instruction, yet the traditional objective assessment is a concrete barrier.

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