Dynamicity of Transformative L2 Materials Preparation Model in EFL Classroom: Place of Critical Language Pedagogy in Teacher Education

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Abstract

Over the past decades, education took a critical-oriented shift. This perspective changed the role of teachers, students, and classrooms. A teacher's role changes from an instructor to a reflective practitioner, a student is considered an active agent of his/her learning, and a classroom is a place for identity endeavor. The assumption underlying such an approach conceptualizes education as a means for social control, not separated from social and cultural influences. This study sought to examine the impediments overshadowing the practicality of critical language pedagogy (CLP) and to explore English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' attitudes toward the dynamicity of transformative L2 materials preparation (TLMP) model. To undertake the study, the model was used in an M.A. language teaching methodology course with 40 prospective teachers. They were asked to write reflective journals (RJs) on several topics, followed by two class-assessments and two self-assessments, all focusing on the course procedure as well as learners' progress in attaining the intended outcomes of the course.

Notably, they were requested to report their personal beliefs towards the dynamicity and functional efficacy of the proposed model and the extent to which it contributed to promoting their critical thinking skills and intellectual development. Qualitative data analysis included an in-depth content analysis of written data derived from RJs. The results attested that the participants positively appraised the practicality of the model.

With the advent of the constructivist approach to education, instruction takes a critical and socio-political dimension. More precisely, the constructivist school challenges teachers and students to rethink the purpose of schooling, and the role that they might play as *"cultural workers"*- a term borrowed from Freire (1998, p. 30). These *cultural workers* can think critically and act transformatively (Freire, 2005; Moreno-Lopez, 2005). Kumaravadivelu (2003) states that teachers in constructivist orientation can theorize about their practices and perform their *personal theories*. To him, personal theories are those that teachers can employ in the classrooms based on professional assumptions, i.e., those that are generated by experts and are transmitted from centers of higher learning. From this standpoint, teachers and students take a new identity in a classroom. Teachers as unquestioned authorities turn to be facilitators and act by posing problems wherein both teachers and students engage with different aspects of the class procedures, such as the selection of the materials, assessment, evaluation, and their role in the classroom (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1989). Teachers go further as *"reflective practitioners"* and embrace the position of *transformative intellectual* (Giroux, 1988, p. 125) who can engage in a critical thinking activity where both teachers and students teach each other, and no one possesses authority over another. This reflects the constructivist notion in

which learners are not viewed as empty vessels to be filled with their teachers' knowledge (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Based on the different ways in which the main figures of the field, such as Freire (1970), Giroux (1997), Gore (2003), and Pennycook (2001) have looked at CLP, it is a philosophy of education and a method of teaching that pursues to raise teachers' and learners' power that enable them to critique and challenge the problems by helping them to build critical consciousness. Accordingly, CLP can be operationally defined as a dynamic framework of education which encompasses and encourages the ways of learning and teaching that are of adequate relevance to the cultural and sociopolitical realities (Giroux, 1997). This orientation rejects the *banking education*, a term coined by Freire (1970), as the process of transferring information, and embraces a view of education as consisting of the acts of cognition that occur through dialogue. Students and teachers become critical co-investigators in which no one teaches one another, nor is anyone self-taught. CLP considers learning as a social event where teaching is mediated by the world and cognizable objects, which in banking education are manipulated by the teacher (Keesing-Styles, 2003).

Literature Review
Philosophical Framework: CLP in a Classroom Context

From a theoretical perspective, CLP was extracted on a wide range of intellectual streams, including *liberation theology, Marxism, existentialism, radical Catholicism, phenomenology, the Frankfurt school*, and aspects of postmodern and poststructuralist thought (Giroux, 1997). It needs to be understood in the light of Freire's (1998) view on the nature of reality, which treats education as a form of cultural politics and as a medium to social justice and change (Couch, 2017). Freire (2005) rejected two positions that ignore the education and literacy: *(a) Mechanistic objectivism and (b) solipsistic idealism*. The former reduces consciousness to a mere copy of objective

reality; the latter sees knowledge as the creator of reality. While there are different versions of CLP, the central mission in a CLP classroom falls in the following axioms: (a) social fact can never be separated from the domain of value, i.e., social, political, cultural, and aesthetic values. (b) the nexus between a concept and an object is never fixed, (c) dialogue is a cornerstone of conscious and unconscious awareness, (d) knowledge is mediated by linguistic relation that socially and historically constituted, and (e) groups in society are unjustly advantaged over another group. To comply with this objective, the student should encourage connecting the course content to their real-world problem. The deep-rooted problem is what Pennycook (2001) calls the *"liberal Ostrichism"* to refer the theorists to consider the English language as political. Pennycook clarifies that the term "liberal *Ostrichism*" is one of the most commonly held in applied linguistics and "takes knowledge production to be an autonomous realm that is not connected to more general political views" (p. 29).

Transformative Pedagogy: Main Tenets

CLP has been used as an umbrella term in L2 professional literature which assumes different identities for teachers and students. Transformative Pedagogy (TP) has been used, a term by Giroux (1988), as a version of CLP. It is an activist pedagogy that combines the elements of constructivism and critical pedagogy by empowering students to examine their beliefs, values, and knowledge critically. The goal is to develop a reflective knowledge and to challenge the status quo to promote a democratic and emancipatory learning context (Freire, 2005; Moreno-Lopez, 2005). In TP, teachers, and students engage in dialogic relationships to empower each other for transformative intellectualism and offer students a perspective to voice their ideas (Clark, 2018; Kim & Pollard, 2017; McLaren, 1989; Shor, 1996). Teachers are seen as *transformative intellectuals* who should develop critical attitudes and skills among students (Kareepadath, 2018).

TP advocates a constructivist dialogical perspective of knowledge. It aims to disclose the connections between knowledge and the cultural norms of the society. This perspective opposes the traditional theory of education that serves to reinforce certainty, conformity, and technical control of knowledge and power (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Dialectical constructivism posits that knowledge forms interactions among people. From this perspective, Kincheloe (2000) asserts that knowledge is socially constructed through the dialogue between "the world and human consciousness" (p. 107). Thus, TP seeks to support a dynamic interactive element instead of absolute dichotomies of thought or practice. This point of view is rooted in the dialectical view of knowledge. That is why Darder et al. (2009) maintain that TP endorses a flexible and flowing "view of human and nature that is relational; objectivity and subjectivity that is interconnected and a coexistent understanding of theory and practice" (p. 11).

A plethora of works (Atai & Moradi, 2016; Barjesteh, 2017; Bellis, 2018; Kincheloe, 2008; Shor, 1996) have been done in TP indicate that teachers can empower their students by incorporating the principles of CLP in the classroom context. Crooks (2009) notes the word empowerment has turned to be a password among critical pedagogists. In brief, TP is mainly concerned with the critique and elimination of human sufferings, the creation of consciousness, voice, hope, possibility, and the improvement of life through education. It results in the reconceptualization of the notion of education and transforms it into a means of justice. Giroux (1988) posits that empowering students to become critical and active citizens rests on teachers who have the potential to "combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful, active citizens" (p. 122).

Hidden Curriculum

Hidden curriculum (HC) popularized by Jackson (1968) comprised hidden cultural and social values inherent in all course books (Cunnigsworth,

1995). It refers to the tacit values, behaviors, and norms that reside in a system of education (Mc Lean & Dixit, 2018). Giroux (1988) defines HC as a side effect of an education that is learned but not openly intended, such as the transmission of ideologies conveyed in the classroom. To develop a critical perspective of learners, teachers should be equipped with vital tools that enable them to identify and expose the unstated ideologies inherent in curricula (Canagarajah, 1999). McLaren (1989) also points to the implicit nature of HC and its intention to make learners comply with the dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority, behavior, and morality. HC is the side effect in a system of education where different potential intellectual, norms, beliefs, cultural perspectives, cultural values, and curricular topics are transmitted implicitly. Teachers play a central role in forming ideas since students begin to learn ideologies and social practices from their teachers, peers, and environment. Giroux (1997) postulates that doctrines are not expressed verbally, but tacitly embedded in each system of education. The hidden curriculum, as conceptualized by L2 practitioners and researchers (Donnelly, 2015; Giroux, 1997; Kanpol, 1997; Mc Lean & Dixit, 2018) consists of teachers' attitudes, their role and the nature of their interaction in the classroom, learners' autonomy, language awareness, school disciplinary, and classroom climates. While these are not the only areas in which voice can be developed, the HC is nevertheless essential for the students to recognize. What seems to be shared among the variant description of HC is the existence of ideologies in educational practices and materials. Gore (2003) argues that doctrines are unconscious filters through which teachers and students experience social conditions. Gore maintains that they are not verbally expressed but tacitly impeded in educational practices, course books, and hence their hidden nature.

Regarding the fact that ELT has been considered a political activity, there is no doubt that language policymakers in Iran should not consider ELT a neutral affair. In other words, decision-makers should approach education and

materials development from a sociocultural and sociopolitical dimension. These views acknowledge the existence of a hidden aspect in ELT. The hidden layers, known as the *hidden curriculum,* are inherent in any educational materials, including ELT materials. Probably, one of the suitable approaches to domesticate ELT can be TP that keeps away the traditional extremes of rebuffing English thoroughly due to its linguistic imperialism.

The Critical Shift: HC in the ELT context of Iran

In the 1990s, ELT discipline decides to turn into a critical perspective. Kumaravadivelu (2006) attributes the evolution of this vital position in ELT to Phillipson's (1992) *linguistic imperialism*. Ghaffar Samar and Davari (2011) call this critical standpoint as linguistic imperialism theory. According to Aghagolzadeh and Davari (2012), "the appearance of a critical intellectual shift in applied linguistics has not only significantly challenged the mainstream ELT, but also has mostly introduced CLP as an alternative approach to the mainstream ELT especially in the Periphery" (p. 973). Within this framework, curriculum and materials development would be based on the assumption that no one program fits for all populations, and a set of the predetermined curriculum would ever be imposed in a program. It is assumed that foreordained program content contradicts the ideology of transformative teaching (Richards, 2013). Therefore, all curriculum decisions would rely on learners' needs in a program and the choices of what would be studied through negotiation or dialogical interaction (Giroux, 1997; Shor, 1996). Accordingly, creating and adopting materials within the framework of TP could be vital for EFL teachers. While materials are the essential elements in ELT programs (Richards, 2010), few studies have been conducted on the transformative second language (L2) materials preparation. With the lack of a model to adopt materials based on the tenets of CLP, Barjesteh and Birjandi (2015) developed a transformative L2 materials preparation (TLMP) model within the framework of CLP.

In the context of Iran, there has been a huge concern over the issue of TP in ELT materials. To name a few, Meshkot's (2002) analysis of two types of textbooks revealed that hegemony of English and consumerism are two factors in the books. Similarly, Sadeghi Beniss (2008) concluded that the imported English textbooks are tools of cultural invasion of the west against other societies and Islamic values. Likewise, Keshavarz and Akbarimalek (2009) concluded that the ideological orientations of textbooks in Iran had a western discourse type. Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010) also found that the English textbooks in Iran represented a particular cultural value of inner-circle countries. The findings (Barjesteh, 2017; Belli, 2018; Davari, 2011; Mambu, 2014; Freeston, 2015) also confirmed that EFL language teachers were not much concerned with raising students' awareness about the hegemony of English. Thus, ELT should be examined from a sociopolitical outlook due to its linkage to the western political system. Various studies (Akbari, 2008; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Atai & Moradi, 2016; Clark, 2018; Niknezhad, Khodareza & MashadiHeidar, 2019) examined CLP from different perspectives such as "seeking critical classroom practice", "democratic assessment", "developing critical literacy (CL) by challenging learners", "adopting materials within the framework of critical pedagogy", and "appraising the discourse exchanges of EFL classroom." This study is an attempt to investigate the educational-political implications of CLP in the Iranian educational system with a focus on materials development. By and large, the purpose of this study is a step towards bridging the gap by providing ideological and practical aspects of L2 materials development. This study aims to examine the dynamicity of implementing the TLMP model in an EFL classroom at a postgraduate level in Iran. Learning about the role of teachers and students, the nature of their interaction, materials development, and assessment from critical perspective support conducting the present study. In other words, this research addresses this gap by exploring the possibilities of implementing the TLMP model to globalize L2 materials within the

framework of CLP. To undertake the study, the specific question motivating the research is as follows:

What are the prospective EFL teachers' attitudes toward the dynamicity of the TLMP model based on self-assessment and class-assessment in an L2 methodology course?

Method

Participants

A total of 40 EFL learners from Islamic Azad University, Ayatollah Amoli Branch, were recruited out of 53 subject pool who agreed to take part in the program in an obligatory course. To address the research question, purposive and availability sampling procedures were adopted for sample selection. The primary rationale for participant selection was to include the postgraduate student who can conduct a self and a class-assessment. They were all M.A. freshman EFL students with the age range of 23-40. They were studying teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) who took the training course in language teaching methodology with the researcher. Of all the participants, 31 (77%) were prospective teacher teaching at state-run high school, and 9 (23%) were freelance teachers teaching at different English language institutes. Their experience in teaching ranged from 5 to 16 years. The class consisted of both female ($N=28$) and male ($N=12$) around some of whom had been teaching English for one to twelve years. Table 1 indicates prospective and private EFL teachers' demographic information.

Table 1.

Teachers' Demographic Information

Participants		Gender		Level	Age range
Prospective EFL teachers	Private EFL teacher	Male	Female	M.A.	
31 77%	9 23%	12 30%	28 70%	40	23-40

Materials and Instruments

The present study utilized RJs and a contract grading system. The detail of each is explained below:

Reflective Journal Writing (RJW). This study incorporated Freire's empower of reflective inquiry consciousness and critical intervention whereby each student was asked to write a journal focusing on one or more issues of the topics discussed in the classroom. The students were asked to voice their opinion, to write about their understanding of the discussed topics, to share their experience, and to analyze the ideas expressed by their peers and their teacher in the class discussions. They were asked to reflect on different aspects of the course, such as materials selection, teacher and students' role, and assessment. They were required to write their assignments in English and avoid careless language mistakes.

Contract Grading System. In the philosophy of CLP, assessment and evaluation are considered to be a crucial issue due to its rejection of the psychometric testing as they only serve to fragment, narrow, deflect, and trivialize the curriculum. Still, they are used in school because it has been claimed that they are scientific tools that can measure students' progress (Kincheloe cited in Moreno-Lopez, 2005). The TLMP assessment rating scale, drawing on Shor's (1996) contract grading system, blended conventional and alternative assessment. This grading system was based on the course members' portfolios, which consisted of reflective dialogue journal, self-assessment, class-assessment, informed class participation, and final exam. Students were required to sign an assessment contract rating scale comprised of sections (A, B, C, and D). Each section determined students' level of involvement, quality, and quantity of works. Each student decided his/her grade in the end. Besides, they were asked to fill up a self-assessment rating scale comprised of 16 items in a Likert scale format. The questions were extracted from the literature and students' writing about the self-assessment. Students had to select the options based on the level of their involvement and

the quality of their activity. The teacher finally approved what was completed by the students.

Procedure

This study aimed to examine the feasibility of the TLMP model in a teacher education program. To this end, the proposed model was implemented among 40 prospective EFL teachers in the course of L2 teaching methodology in an M.A. ELT program. The approach adopted in the course was the one that considered the class as an opportunity for students to engage in the process of critical reflection on different aspects of teaching and learning an L2 and developing and revisiting their learning styles within a supportive atmosphere of dialogical interaction. This approach seems to contradict students' learning styles and strategies that have been trained in a baking system of education. To establish a dialogic nature, a negotiated syllabus was run to encourage students to participate actively in the process of designing and running the course content because it was assumed that a predetermined syllabus contradicts the philosophy of TP. To make this happen, numerous topics pertinent to the course were introduced to the students in a tentative syllabus as an initial roadmap. Accordingly, the readings and the sequence of the materials were negotiated considering the students' needs, interest, background knowledge, and their real-life concern. They were permitted to contribute papers to the class and give feedback on the course content, its sequence, and how it was conducted. They were also free to study the materials from the proposed reading lists to find papers and chapters from journals and books. Some topics were also assigned rooted in the ideas that appeared from the class discussions. When it seemed too difficult for them to select the proper materials, the researcher would guide them on the reliability of the source from which they received the course content.

Furthermore, they had to analyze the materials in light of their real-life experiences furnished with the comprehending of each reading. They were

required to read the voted topics before each class meeting to analyze critically and to respond to the questions appropriately. The researcher tried to treat the readings in a questioning manner. Following discussions, they were required to write an RJ as the course assignment on the discussed topics to gauge their perspectives. The discussion and the readings were regarded as prompts for dialogue journal writing (DJW). The course contents extended the participants' theoretical knowledge, and class discussion would provide them with a touchstone to share their ideas on the issues raised in the class. The researcher clarified that DWJs should indicate an in-depth reading of the course and should serve for some pedagogical purposes such as expressing students' voices, interacting with the teacher and their classmates, and writing to discuss the topics critically. To avoid undue perplexity, the researcher emailed one journal sample to their mailbox addresses. Some course members wrote ten journal entries as one part of the course assignment, while some others were reluctant to write the RJ. The researcher read each journal and gave them handwritten feedback delivered in person by raising other relevant issues and questions, asking for clarification of the vague sentences, directing for further reading, presenting his ideas. The course evaluation was based on a contract grading system that consisted of the reflective dialogue journal, self-assessment, class-assessment, informed class participation, and the final exam.

To explore the dynamicity of the proposed model and to probe students' progress during the course, they were asked to write two class-assessments and two self-assessments to reflect on the course process and their development. This was done to gauge their attitudes toward the efficacy of the model as a critical course, and how oriented practices inform their intellectual development. They were guided to write (a) class-assessments to reflect on the effectiveness of the course in terms of materials selection, the teacher and student role, and assessment norms, and (b) self-assessment in to evaluate their progress during the course. Finally, the data were subjected to thematic

analysis to tap the participants' perspective on three aspects of the TLMP model, namely, format and presentation, content and sequencing, monitoring, and evaluation. A total of 160 journal entries were qualified for the theme analysis.

Data Analysis

A qualitative research method was adopted to undertake the study. Qualitative analysis is aimed at searching for themes or patterns which are grounded in data (Tan, 2010). Following Heigham and Croker's (2009) guideline for the research design, exploratory design best suits the rationale of the current research to make legitimate conclusions when little is known about the social construct under investigation. The data were obtained from 160 journal entries, two self-assessments, and two classroom assessments. Lee (2007) postulates that DJ promotes dialogic interaction between teachers and students in written communication. This interaction has numerous advantages such as promoting reflective practice, self-evaluation, class-assessment, developing autonomous learning, fostering self-confidence, and making a process-oriented classroom (Flecha, 2000; Ghahramani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Lee, 2007). The data were analyzed qualitatively concerning three dimensions included in the TLMP model. To analyze the data, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was applied. Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006) classified two commitments of IPA: the *phenomenological and interpretative* requirements. Following Larkin et al. (2006) dimensions, this study used a phenomenological procedure for analysis, i.e., what a given experience was like. The data were captured via DJs, then some patterns of meanings were developed and reported in a thematic form to explore students' perspectives on the course procedure. Notably, a bottom-up approach for analysis in IPA was adopted. This means that DJs were sign-coded into reductionist themes and categories. After color-coded and conceptual coding, some themes emerged from different sources:

(a) the participants' direct quotations (b) the researcher's intuition, and (c) a review of the related literature. To ensure the credibility of the data, the emerged themes were cross-checked with two colleagues holding Ph.D. in TEFL.

Results

The themes that emerged were classified into two phases. The first phase dealt with the themes from class assessment and the next concerns to the themes from self-assessment. Drawing upon the rich literature on CLP, eight sets of themes emerged out of the content analysis of writings. Notably, eight themes were formulated from class-assessments and self-assessments. As stated above, each theme was supported by related literature and the researcher's intuition. Table 2 delineates the apparent themes from both class-assessment and self-assessment.

Table 2.
The Themes Emerged from Class-Assessment and Self-Assessment

No	Dimension	Theme
1	Class-assessment	-Democratic model of teaching -Changing orientation -Integrated teaching -Teacher and student interaction
2	Self-assessment	-Maximizing critical consciousness -Raising self-awareness -Empowering learner autonomy -Developing critical literacy

The first phase of the study dealt with exploring the themes that emerged from students' class-assessment. The following classification deals with the main themes from class-assessment:

- *Democratic Model of Teaching*
- *Changing Orientation*
- *Integrated Skills*
- *Teacher and Student Interactions*

Democratic Model of Teaching. The theoretical foundation of CLP deeply rooted in progressivism. This movement concerns with advancing democratic ideals. Thinking and reflection are the cornerstones of this movement. McLaren (1989) maintains that Dewey's work is inconsistent in "his attempt to link the notion of individual and social (cooperative) intelligence with the discourse of democracy and freedom" (p. 199). The idea of 'democracy in the classroom' implies in a nexus between knowledge-theory-praxis spectrums. It does not employ at an abstract or philosophical level. Nor is it suggested to involve learners in the discovery process of research and scholarship. Democracy in the classroom might reflect in courses with a more applied focus or those at the upper-level of undergraduate education. Freire (1970) endorses the role of dialogue because he believes that dialogue formulates a form of rapport between teacher and learner. Accordingly, Shor (1996) postulates that dialogic negotiation motivates students to voice their ideas and to minimize teacher talk. As Freire notes, "dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world to name the world" (p. 69). He maintains that "without dialogue, there is no communication and. without communication, there is no true education" (p. 73).

Many participants wrote that the class was different from the others because they had felt voicing their ideas. The frequent theme was experiencing a democratic classroom. The following examples directly quoted from the prospective teachers' RJs clearly illustrate this point:

A: For the first time in my life, a teacher shared power with my classmate. Our opinions were important. I hope we experience the same class in the next term.

C: I know that I have the right to express my idea because every single person has a different point of view... Thank you for teaching us how to tolerate different ideas …. Thank you for this democratic classroom.

Some of the participants wrote about the hidden aspect of the class as it invited
them to study the course differently:

S: *The class, syllabus, and the exam were different. At first, it was like a menu,
because our ideas were important…We learned cooperation, voicing our
opinions without fear, teamwork, and tolerating the opposing views….*

Changing Orientation. The proponents of CLP believe that materials
should help students reflect on the different issues of their life. In other words,
materials developers encourage those materials that motivate students to
reflect on various aspects such as cultural, social, political, and economic
(Mambu, 2014; Richards, 2010; Shor, 1996). The following excerpts delineate
participants' views from early toward the end of the course.

F: *This class opened a new window to my mind. I understood that language
is not just learning language skills. We (teachers) have more responsibility
like improving learners' awareness, their social development…. Now I
found out the reason why Islam simulates the role of teachers as
[a]prophet".*

H: *… this class is an example of a Paradigm Shift [in my experience]. I am
one of the best-known English teachers who have taught 20 years at high
schools in Babol. I should thank God for entering this university…. I should
change my orientation [in learning] toward a critical, social, and
humanistic perspective.*

The content analysis of the prospective teachers' journals revealed
changing the orientation of learners from instrumental toward integrative.
Early on in the course, it was found that their attitudes were in line with the
instrumentalist perspective. This shift might be due to the features like
integrating both language skill development and social development, inviting
students to go beyond the course content, sharing ownership of the course
content and procedures with a critical perspective of the course.

Integrated Skills. Materials should provide learners with an opportunity
to develop meta-linguistic knowledge as well as the activities which help the

learners to self-evaluate or assess their language development. Giroux (1988) stresses the importance of providing the learners with an opportunity to connect the word with the outside and the recall world situation.

Writing RJs were a means that prospective teachers considered as a way to communicate. Although the goal of the course was to extend the participants' theoretical knowledge and to help them read, reflect, discuss, and write about the fundamental concepts and principles of ELT from a critical perspective, the goal was obtained along with the improvement of the participants' language skill. The essential aspect of the course took the parallel use of all language skills into account. Almost all of them reported that the four strands integrated into the course as depicted below:

T: *I am happy that we passed a general English course in our methodology class because we had to read, write, speak, and listen for every week. At first, I could not sleep at night because of my poor English, but I think I owe my language skills to this class.*

The critical approach adopted in the L2 methodology course invited the participants to go beyond the sentence level and to develop a deeper understanding of a real-life concern. The topic was a venue for discussion and expressed the voice of the learners. The readings list and the topics per se would not help them with the whole task. The skills and activities used in the TLMP model help them pave the way. The content analysis of students' writings revealed that the course procedures provided learners with receptive exercise in listening and reading through negotiation. The following excerpt illustrates the above claim:

G: *In my opinion, we pass a writing course through RJs. The content of the subjects made me study different articles and books to understand the concepts because I should read in the class. I figure out that there is a significant difference in my understanding.*

Teacher-Student Interactions. After the researcher read over the journals, three interrelated sub-themes emerged from teacher-learner

interactions. They were classified as *teacher and student role, teachers' handwritten feedback, building a rapport with students*. The detail of each theme is presented as follow:

    Teacher and student role. It can be inferred from the literature review that teachers and students share authorities and responsibilities in a critical language classroom. More precisely, the teacher acts as a facilitator. Giroux (1997) believes that a teacher in CLP helps learners to be cultural producers. He maintains that teachers are coordinators in CLP classrooms. McLaren and Leonard (1993) find that CLP dissocializes teachers from autocratic teacher-talk. Analyzing the journals revealed that the TLMP model changed their perceptions regarding the role of the teacher and learners. Almost all of them built a positive image regarding their function. The following extracts delineate some evidence for their perceptions:

H: *It was fascinating for me to follow this kind of class and method of teaching. At first, it was hard for me to catch up, but it was a chance. I like the interaction between teachers and students because the logic was dominant, not the force.*

L: *The role of the teacher was just significant and nothing else. He invited us to cooperate, to negotiate, and to discuss the topics. He was like a coordinator or mediator than what we had the image of a teacher.*

    Teachers' handwritten feedback. Freire (1970) highlights the use of dialogical interaction as the pedagogy of knowing due to its authentic situation, students' life experiences, concerns, and problematic issue in their society. This idea echoes Vygotsky's theory of ZPD in which people learn with the assistance of others. Freire (1998) maintains that through authentic negotiations both teachers and students benefit from a relationship where one knowing a topic is supported with another knowing the issue. Many of the learners positively admire the teacher's feedback on each entry:

C: *Thanks for your handwritten feedbacks. I enjoyed the comments for clarification of the vague sentences, directing for further reading…*

E: we thought you do not have time to read the papers. To my surprise, your comments under the paper were the best, and the first thing I looked at.

Building a rapport with students. Needless to say, teachers seek to create positive emotional contexts for enhancing teaching and learning. L2 professional literature supports the centrality of the teacher-student relationship. Kanpol (1999) believes that a teacher in a CLP class is not the authority. Teachers can employ their power to sow the seed of affinity, which, in turn, raises an educational alliance. This type of relationship boosts social and personal development among learners. The following direct quotes shed light on students' positive reactions to the course and a friendly relationship with their teacher:

P: I should thank you because we learned cooperation and group work. I think the interaction between teacher and students was much better than the interaction between students themselves…

As indicated earlier, the second phase of this study dealt with exploring the themes emerged from students' self-assessment. In this section, students were asked to evaluate their own progress during the course. The following section presents the second recurrent set of themes that emerged out of the content analysis of RJs. The themes are classified and discussed as follow:

- *Maximizing Critical Consciousness*
- *Raising Self- Awareness*
- *Empowering Learner Autonomy*
- *Developing Critical Literacy*

Maximizing Critical Consciousness. One of the main goals of education is to promote learners' thinking ability. Coming to critical consciousness, it is a process whereby students foster a capacity to think critically. It is defined as a process by which students achieve an awareness of the social realities which discover their abilities to recreate them. Heaney (1995) distinguishes *consciousness-raising* and *conscientization*. He points out that the former is the result of banking education. Thus, it is influenced by the transmission of

knowledge. The latter implies achieving new levels of awareness as the subject in the real world rather than an object.

To help learners obtain a critical consciousness, they were asked to reflect on the course contents. The subjects were invited to answer some questions *such as,* what is the pedagogical application of the method? Is it applicable in the context of Iran? What are the suggestions regarding the limitations? The researcher hoped that posing such questions and inviting students to discuss and voice their ideas might help the learners' foster critical consciousness. The following excerpts illustrate the development of this ability among the learners:

L: *I read all the materials, but I surprised why I am not able to answer the questions. I know because I used to memorize. Your brilliant questions in the class indirectly taught me how to study.*

P: *During this course, we gradually started to think critically utilizing RJs and classroom discussions. It was a new way of learning.*

Raising Self-Awareness. From the CLP perspective, what learners need is not merely a set of linguistic skills but a realization of a sociocultural engagement and an act of meaning-making. This turns to be a form of social action that can shape people's worlds. Freire (1998) postulates that the main objective of CLP is to foster creative activity on the side of students. Hence, learning language skills is only logical when it is interwoven with language awareness and social development. Similarly, Crooks (2009) posit that interrogating students' real-life problems can develop learners' critical knowledge, critical thinking skill, and their autonomy. The participants made some notes about their attitudes regarding the dynamicity of the TLMP model. More precisely, they wrote that this course had contributions to their self-awareness, self-seeking and self-exploratory learning. For instance, many of them acknowledged incorporating RJs into their classroom, which helped them revise their ideas.

B: Through writing, I found my problems because I could compare my notes with my classmates. I could add and revise some parts. Many thanks that you asked us to revisit the topics from my perspective.

Participants' writings delineate that they are more conscious of their previous uncritical habits and learning strategies. They became more aware of the constraints imposed on the memorization of the textbooks. Correspondingly, they reorganize their positions and learning habit. The following quotations confirm such claim:

O: I came to know that memorization is not the only way to learn. In this course, we learned the topics through research, discussion, [and] writing. I will do the same strategy in all my classes.

Empowering Learner Autonomy. From the proponents of CLP, the purpose of education is to promote students' autonomy by problematizing their real-life concerns. Problematizing students' real-life situations encouraged prospective teachers to think critically and to analyze their life situation. The content analysis of students' writings revealed that incorporating the TLMP model could help the learners develop their autonomy in learning. The excepts illustrated below show students' perspective regarding the course procedure in fostering learners' autonomy:

R:... Thank you that you learn [taught] us how to learn. I feel the power when I realized I could contribute to the construction of the syllabus.

T: ... I should confess that I've learned many things. .... I can stand on my feet, and I learned how to search about things I need…, how to ask questions, how to direct my learning and how to contribute the discussion.

Besides, involving learners as active decision-makers in determining the course contents and evaluation criteria, encouraging them to participate in class discussions, and motivating learners to express their voice helped run the class in a dialogical manner. Moreover, it provided an opportunity for learners to go beyond only transmitting ideas. Thus, another major theme was shaped by the participants' assertions. More specifically, many students reported that

the course procedures in the class empowered them to become more independent and self-directed:

L:....*studying [the course contents from] different perspectives, expressing our voices, and evaluating our leaning was just great. They helped us feel more independent than before.*

P: *Many thanks that you encouraged us to develop our picture toward the concepts. I feel more powerful and independent when I express my ideas. I do not fear anymore.*

As illustrated above, many students had positive attitudes toward implementing the TLMP model. The realization of their autonomy was their assertions about the ability to gain voices, maximizing learning ability, and learning how to learn. In the educational system of Iran, learners are traditionally silenced and given no idea beyond the textbook. Thus, breaking the "*culture of silence*" (Freire, 1998, p. 14) is an excellent endeavor toward learner autonomy and their way of learning or what they cited in their journals as" *empowermen*t" in learning. Likewise, Shor (1996) considers empowering education as an attempt to involve learners participates in their learning. He maintains that this helps learners move toward transformation and gain their voice.

Developing Critical Literacy. Freire (1970) posited that materials should reflect learners' daily real-life situations and that an inquiry of their concrete social reality should foster critical knowledge of the possibilities for action and change. He implemented this experience in the culture circles to engender a method of teaching literacy to adults based on his theory of conscientization. Numerous studies have reported that merely being able to use the language and teaching language skill do not meet the requirements. Pennycook (2001) postulated the necessity of doing more than teaching language skills at the functional level within a competency-based program. Based on the philosophy of the CL approach, the power of reading and writing is at the primary phase, which is not the ultimate goal of ELT. Likewise, the

participants in the current study believed that they improved their reasoning skills. Many students reported that RJ provided them with an opportunity to go beyond merely expressing ideas and help them develop reflection. Following numerous researchers (Clark2018; Kareepadath, 2018; Kim & Pollard, 2017), RJs offer students a perspective to voice their ideas and promote critical attitudes in dialogic interaction.   The following examples illustrate this major theme:

L: *Writing reflectively and looking critically were the best things that I learned from this class.*

N: *During this course, we gradually started to be able to think and discuss critically through RJs and classroom discussions.*

To encourage prospective teachers to deal with the text critically and dialogically in the present study, a negotiated syllabus was run. The subjects were encouraged to read the books in a questioning manner, to discuss them through different lenses, and to write an RJ the discussed topics with personal experience in mind. The following examples illustrate how learners actively reconstruct knowledge instead of a passive recipient of knowledge:

C: *We came to know that the underlying ideas are important. When I read a paper now, I try to understand the underlying message. We became familiar with many hidden aspects.*

H: *… we found that there is no need for memorization because you told us the CL and the depth of understanding is important. The exciting part was your interest in our ideas on a subject matter.*

Discussion

The analysis of students' class-assessments and self-assessments uncovered their attitude toward the TLMP model and how the critically-oriented practices informed their intellectual development. They were asked to focus on the course procedures and their progress. While the literature addresses the theoretical underpinnings of TP, Shor (1996) argues that there

is less literature that supports the practicality of the theory of TP in the classroom. Gore (2003) confirms the idea that some of the best writings of critical approaches presented little empirical strategies to incorporate in the school. Moreover, many of these theorists provide too little explication of what attempts are made within these educators' classrooms to virtually apply this theory into practice (Keesing-Style, 2003).

The TLMP model provided a call to action for this study to probe the dynamicity of the proposed model in an L2 methodology course. The results indicated positive shifts in the learners 'intellectual ability, self-awareness, autonomy or self-determination, self-seeking, self-confidence, literacy, and subject knowledge. Students' positive attitudes, their willingness to experience similar courses, and their disinclination with the other courses revealed the dynamicity of the proposed model. The contents analysis from the students' RJs revealed joined goals of developing communicative language abilities and critical understanding of their surroundings.

The findings of the present study are in line with several studies (Bruenig, 2005; Flecha, 2000; Ghahramani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Lee, 2007; Niknezhad et al., 2019) that stressed incorporating dialogue journals into a classroom. Their findings reveal different positive effects of DJW such as in-depth understanding of complexities of teaching (Lee, 2007), bridging the gap between theoretical and practical aspect (Woodfield & Lazarus, 1998), reconstructing education and learning in their context (Flecha, 2000), providing an opportunity to voice their ideas (Niknezhad et al. 2019), helping students develop independence and taking charge for their learning (McArthur, 2010), breaking the *culture of silence*, gaining a voice to freely express themselves, engendering willingness to communicate, providing dialogic learning (Bruenig, 2005; Freire, 1998), and fostering creative learning instead of memorization (Ghahramani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005).

The findings also expand knowledge of critical thinking. This study provides new insight into learning knowledge. It helps students think critically

about what they read in the L2 methodology course via an RJ. Incorporating an RJ into the methodology course helped the students reflect on different aspects of the class. In line with his study, learners develop an ability to reflect their experience and their present situations. Moreover, the findings are in line with (Cervetti, Paradales & Domoco, 2001), in that their CL program help learners challenge the knowledge they receive and help them approach the texts critically and not to take them literally. Additionally, the findings reveal that incorporating the TLMP model in the methodology course shape a critical environment among the prospective teachers because they could extend beyond the texts. In other words, the proposed model helps them go beyond the memorization of materials and improve critical consciousness. This provides them with an opportunity to move toward independence and take charge of their learning.

The findings indicate that hybrid avenues of the subjects are fortified in interactive groups, among other reasons, because learners' contributions are equally respected by the arguments provided. The findings reveal that students can reach deep understandings of subject knowledge through teachers' feedback, negotiation, discussion, and questions posed in the class. The results support the theory of dialogic learning (Flecha, 2000). The findings echo Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogic teaching in which dialogue and interaction between teachers and learners help learners foster autonomy and actively engage in the classroom discussion

In line with Vygotsky (1978), who stressed the role of feedback in students' learning, the feedback provided for the learners expanded the existing literature on learning through interaction and cooperation. The analysis of students' writings revealed that they enjoyed interaction and collaboration through teacher's handwritten feedback. The findings of the present study revealed that teachers' feedback, class discussion, and negotiation provided those opportunities. The prospective teachers discerned that negotiation in the class paved the ground for sharing their ideas by

engaging in argumentative processes, listening to their peers' opinions, and expressing their perspectives.

Additionally, the feedback provided in the present study enabled the researcher not only to share his ideas by engaging in argumentative processes, find out learners' explanations, and communicate with them but also to provide a close rapport among the learners. This interaction could motivate social development among learners because it could give a heart to heart talk and help learners develop their voices and identities. Freire (1970) considered this type of interaction as the cornerstone in CLP programs, which opposed the lecture format in the banking model. This could minimize teacher talk and maximize student talk.

The results of this study expand the existing knowledge of maximizing learners' CL ability. The findings are inconsistent with (Cervetti et al., 2001; Shor, 1996). More explicitly, the content analysis of students' self-assessment improves their intellectual ability, self-awareness, and self-directed learning. As stated earlier, the main mission of TP is to develop the CL of learners. While having this mission for action, TP has been blamed on a macro-level system critic than engaging activity at a micro-level in a classroom reality (McArthur, 2010). Bruenig (2005) addresses the weakness of TP as it is only about theory and politics without sufficient action that it claimed to offer. Akbari (2008) asserts that the practical implication of CLP has not been acknowledged. He maintained that some proponents of CLP might conclude that it lacks practicality. The findings of the present study discredit the claim that CLP is only limited at the conceptual level. The thematic analyses confirm that language policy-makers, materials developers, teachers, and EFL learners can implement the theoretical aspect of CP in their classroom. It is interesting to compare the above findings with those of Kanpol (1999) who contends that TP is "theoretically visionary but lacks the practical tools to accompany it" (p. 1). While the practicality of TP seems to be gloomy, this empirical research is an attempt to incorporate its principles in L2 classroom discourse. Unlike the

common criticism leveled on the practicality of TP, the findings of the current study reveal that most of the participants favored the teaching method. Since the model was implemented at an L2 methodology course, one can safely judge its practicality more deliberately.

Mindful of the promising findings and positive attitudes released by the participants, the researcher is pleased with implementing the developed model in the classroom. Overall, the results indicated that the proposed model had positive effects on students' personal, social, and educational development. Despite the rewarding learning process, there were significant impediments about the results discussed above. First, there was a conflict between students' old habits of the banking model and the newly-transformative-based model in learning. Due to the tension aroused between their old schooling bias and the critical orientation of the TLMP model, the prospective teachers felt turmoil, at least, at the early of the course. Some of them were confused on how to connect the subject knowledge to their academic situations, and how to write an RJ as a course assignment. Some others were reticent in the class discussion, waiting to see what happen as the course proceed. A small number of the students had a deep sarcasm in their tone regarding the course syllabus. The dissatisfaction raised was due to a conflict between memorization-based schooling and critically oriented schooling.

Conclusion

The participants were found to consider the course has promising effects in their progress. More precisely, they reported that the course procedure helped them improve their intellectual ability. It invited them to go beyond the course content and reconstruct the subject knowledge autonomously through dialogical interaction. Simply put, interactions helped the learners make meaning in their classrooms. Many of the participants believed that negotiation and reflection on the contents created a linkage between the theory and practice, which provided a helping hand in learning the subject

knowledge. Notably, it maximized their learning engagement and learning opportunity due to the alliance between the content and daily reality. Correspondingly, it provided a hybrid course where some of the class time was replaced without class activity. Given the transformative nature of the study, this paper concludes that this study helped the learners develop a critical understanding of the subject knowledge and engendered their interaction. Notably, the positive effects of the TP brought about the prospective teachers' personal, social, and educational development is inevitable due to the positive changes reported in their RJ. The changes improve learners' self-efficacy, self-awareness, communication, CL, and building a rapport in the classroom. This study suggests educational authorities revise their policy in the implementation of programs for teacher education. The findings may help authorities develop a democratic and interactive model of teaching to maximize critical consciousness, self-awareness, autonomy, and CL of the learners. However, there are various frustrating impediments for the practicality of such TP in Iran, i.e., top-down policy, centralized system, authoritarian nature of schools, forward syllabus and curriculum, limit class time, and large classroom size, to name but a few (Barjesteh, 2017). These impediments are socially and culturally bounded. Thus, educational authorities should provide the infrastructures for the practicality of TP. Accordingly, a further survey study is recommended to investigate the challenges to TP integration from administrative insight.

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