

Overview of The Feasibility of Critical Pedagogy in The Egyptian EFL writing classroom

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to shed light on how critical pedagogy (CP) could be put into practice in writing classes. Implementing CP could help in improving the writing skills of the learners especially in terms of language proficiency, critical consciousness and empowerment. CP's relevance to writing classes is evident through its close alliance with modern schools of writing such as the genre based approach and Vygotsky's theory of constructivism. The paper presented some of the writing problems of EFL learners in

general and of Egyptian EFL learners in particular. Then, it explained the theoretical tenets of CP and how they could be applied in writing classes to promote the writing proficiency, critical consciousness and empowerment of the learners. Examples from the literature were also illustrated to demonstrate the way CP managed in actual practice to enhance the writing skills of the learners. CP proved to be a progressive educational pedagogy that could possibly replace the traditional writing pedagogy that could not solve many of the writing problems of the learners and the

difficulties they face.

Keywords:

Critical pedagogy, Problem posing paradigm, teaching writing, writing proficiency, critical consciousness, empowerment

المخلص :

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تسليط الضوء على كيفية تطبيق مفاهيم التربية النقدية (CP) في فصول تعليم الكتابة. التطبيق العملي للتربية النقدية في فصول الكتابة يمكن أن يساهم في تحسين المهارات الكتابية للمتعلمين؛ لا سيما من حيث إتقان اللغة، والوعي النقدي، والتمكين. ويتضح ارتباط التربية النقدية بتنمية المهارات الكتابية للطلاب من خلال ارتباط مبادئها الوثيق بمبادئ المدارس الحديثة في الكتابة؛ مثل النهج القائم على النوع، ونظرية "فيجوتسكي" للبنائية. وقامت الورقة

بعرض بعض المشاكل الكتابية لتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية بشكل عام، وللمتعلمين المصريين للغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية على وجه الخصوص، ثم استعرضت المبادئ النظرية للتربية النقدية، وكيف يمكن تطبيقها عمليا في الفصول الكتابية لتعزيز الكفاءة الكتابية، والوعي النقدي، والتمكين لدى الطلاب. وأبرزت أمثلة من الدراسات السابقة، وأوضحت من خلالها الطرق التي استخدمت بشكل عملي لتطبيق التربية النقدية من أجل تنمية مهارات الكتابة للمتعلمين، وتمكنها فعليا من تنمية المهارات الكتابية للطلاب؛ حيث أثبتت التربية النقدية أنها نوعٌ من التعليم التقدمي القادر على أن يحل محل طرق تدريس الكتابة التقليدية؛ لتقوم بذلك بحل العديد من المشاكل التي يواجهها الطلبة، كما أنها تذلل الصعوبات التي تعيقهم في تعلم الكتابة.

الكلمات الدالة:-

التربية النقدية، النمط الفرائري لحل
المشاكل، تعليم الكتابة، الكفاءة الكتابية،
الوعي النقدي، التمكين

Introduction

Critical pedagogy (CP) is a progressive educational pedagogy that regards teaching and learning as a sociopolitical process which shapes the way the learners understand of the social and political context in their community (Norton & Toohey, 2004). CP is a pedagogy that rejects the traditional view of education as a neutral process which is alienated from the social, political and cultural contexts of life (Giroux, 2010). It advocates an education that is situated the learners' real life experiences as well as the surrounding context of their society (Okazaki, 2005).

The aim is to qualify the learners critique and play an active role in the construction of the self, the other and the world. This could eventually pave the way for the social possibilities of change and transformation (Giroux, 2010). CP encourages the learners to be skeptical of and challenge all forms of domination, and social beliefs and practices that control their lives (Giroux, 2010). According to CP principles, the educational setting should play a vital role in enhancing the capacities of the learners and maximizing their engagement in reality and in independent learning processes (Giroux, 2010). The end result is expected to help the learners read the word and the world. That is to say, to get educated by understanding the words in books. At the same time,

the learners also try to comprehend the world, with its social, cultural and political aspects; it is a two-way process (Shudak, 2014).

CP has been introduced in the field for about two decades now (Lee, 2000). However, nowadays, there is still a strong interest in CP's principles and practical applications. Many progressive educators argue that CP should be adapted in their curriculum and syllabus (Ooiwa-Yashizawa, 2012). Operationalizing the CP theories and practices in terms of materials that could be used in classrooms is a persistent need of many teachers (Byean, 2011; Crookes, 2010; Ooiwa-Yashizawa, 2012). It is also essential to provide implementation strategies that would concretely make the CP principles applicable in classroom

(Byean, 2011). Then, teachers could apply it in their classes, assess its feasibility and evaluate it. This could be especially promising in the writing classroom which has been identified as the most relevant to applying CP principles (Lee, 2000). The aim of this paper is to shed light on how CP could be put into practice in writing classes to promote the writing skills of the learners.

1. CP's Relevance to Writing Classes

CP's relevance to and impact on writing could be explained in the light of the fact that nowadays, recent trends in teaching writing, especially the genre-based approach, have focused on contextualizing learning in the personal, social, political and cultural contexts (Lange, 2009). The practices and

principles of the genre-based pedagogy of writing show that it is very much relevant to the CP philosophy. In fact, the emergence of these rhetoric based approaches to teaching writing introduced CP in the writing classrooms (Thomas, 2011). According to Barnawi (2011) “theories of critical pedagogies are imbedded within post-process theories of composition” (p.191). Both emphasize the cultural, social and situational contexts, i.e., how language works in context. This is emphasized by Derewianka (2003) who stated that “Genres evolve within a culture to enable members of that culture to achieve their social purposes.” (p. 136).

They are also similar in emphasizing the collaborative interaction between the teacher and the learners which decreases

teachers' involvement and maximizes learners' independence. Since the CP principles and practices match those of the genre-based writing, it is expected that CP could help in enhancing the writing proficiency of the learners. This approach of encouraging the learners' knowledge, socio-political experience, and culture values is also expected to empower the learners' voices and promote their critical reflection (Park, 2010).

The epistemological conception behind the genre rhetorical movement is that the human mind should play an active role in the construction of reality (Thomas, 2011). The dynamic intervention of the learners in the process of meaning construction through language is highly prioritized (Thomas, 2011) as it encourages

them to speak out their voices and empowers them to be active participants in learning (Park, 2010). In that sense, the methodology applied within the genre approach draws on the work of Vygotsky and his social constructionist model (Elashri, 2013) which is in the same vein with CP. One of the principal objectives of learning language in genre pedagogy is to develop language skills, yet language is also be viewed as a means of producing and reproducing culture, and a marker of ideology (France, 1994). In all these aspects, genre pedagogy touches upon pivotal concepts in the Freirean CP, e.g., decentered classrooms, relevant topics and the power of language (Thomas, 2011).

Both genre pedagogy and CP are against the common belief that writing is a rote subject: one that is taught through lectures and memorization. They alternatively suggested that it is a process in which learning is a practice (Thomas, 2011). In the process of writing, teachers are recommended to encourage learners to discover new ideas and develop them, rather than focus on the form of writing and the correctness of the language (Thomas, 2011). Genre pedagogy and CP are closely related to the extent that some genre scholars in Australia led a movement to integrate both by challenging and deconstructing the conventional texts that the students are required to use in their educational contexts (Hyon, 1996). Through genre pedagogy, the learners can engage in critical

analysis of the dominant textual practices which in turn reflects the ideologies and values of the dominant culture. That is the reason why, it is characterized by being empowering, critical and conscious raising (Hyland, 2007).

Along the same lines, Hyland (2007) illustrated a number of key principles underlying genre-based instruction that establish more connections with CP. He describes writing in genre pedagogy as being a social activity whereby writing is depicted as a kind of communication that is expected to have a context, an objective and an intended audience. The second principle posits that writing is "needs-oriented" because of the way it is tailored to the academic, contextual and social needs of the learners. Genre pedagogy considers writing an activity that

has to have specified goals and outcomes and is closely tied to knowledge of language. The learners are encouraged to understand how language works and its role in different texts (Hyland, 2007); a notion which is quite similar to Freire's concept of reading the word and the world.

CP strongly advocates that materials, topics and subject matter should be related to the learners' social, political and cultural conditions (Ooiwa-Yashizawa, 2012). Another reason why CP is expected to develop the learners' writing skills is that CP also emphasizes the importance of linguistic skills (Byean, 2011). CP considers linguistic competence a tool that empowers the learners to fight back the oppressive powers in society and avoid being marginalized (Byean, 2011). In a

CP-based class, the teacher, among other roles, is expected to provide feedback on the learners' writings on accuracy and fluency (Byean, 2011). The teacher also helps them choose adequate rhetoric of the texts needed for the development of their argument. In that sense, the learners' lexical and grammatical accuracy, as well as their rhetorical choices are likely to improve (Byean, 2011).

In writing classrooms, CP also focuses on helping the learners to realize that they are social agents expected to have potential choices in their lives which is "juxtaposed" with the choices they make as writers in their texts (Lee, 2000). That is to say, the learners begin to discover their abilities to construct meaning through writing, so writing becomes a social act (Lee, 2000). In CP, the learners are

active in the classroom, as well as in society (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). The learners are given the opportunity to act upon reality through the power of words (Freire, 1970).

However, according to Lee (2000), it is not important for teachers to meet the extreme objectives of CP. In other words, it is not essential that the learners engage in actual political actions in the society as a result of the critical writing pedagogy endorsed in the classroom. At least, CP develops the initiative for developing one's life and society towards better prospective. She further explains that teachers are not in control of the learning outcomes. Thus, they cannot enforce or impose their ends on the learners. She argues that "a distinction and a potential conflict

exist between the enactment of a critical pedagogy and espousing its content" (p.46). This means that there is a gap between the theory and practice on one hand. On the other hand, there is a gap between the expected outcomes and the actual ones. For example, writing in a CP context may not result in social transformation immediately, but at least it challenges the culture of silence (Lee, 2000). This silence can eventually result in frustration in a non-democratic society whereby learners prefer to distance themselves from a depressive reality (Izadinia & Abednia, 2010). There is hope in this case that the coming step is towards empowerment and transformation in society and not just in the learners' written texts. CP has the goal of providing the learners with an education that

prepares them for participation in a democratic society (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). In fact, transforming the society itself towards equality and democracy is one of the concepts inherent in CP philosophy (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012).

Through integrating writing with CP, learners and teachers can transform the traditional atmosphere of the classroom into a creative one that empowers them to have voices of their own (Momenian & Shirazizadeh, 2009). These voices develop through critical investigation of one's society and takes place through dialogue with others (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). In that new atmosphere, the learners can also acquire the writing skills by means of a process of inquiry into the nature of the actual real life

problems facing their community as learners (Spener, 1992).

Its relevance and importance are also clear in the light of the vast social and political transformations that are taking place in the Arab world with the advent of the Arab Spring. Learners need the revolutionary principles of CP to develop critical consciousness and empowerment in their writing skills, which could eventually help them improve and change their social and political milieu. According to Crawford (1978), CP's potential is especially promising after revolutions, e.g., Cuba. In fact, Crawford describes Freire as "a voice out of the Third World which is not only speaking, but is being heard." (p.1). This shows its relevance to the atmosphere of a country like Egypt which is in a desperate need

of an educational, as well as a social reformation.

The theoretical underpinnings of CP draw on two main concepts: dialogue and problem-posing. Dialogue refers to the process of two way communication between the teachers and the learners in which the contributions of both are appreciated (Freire, 1970). According to Freire (1970), both the teachers and the learners possess knowledge. The teacher offers academic knowledge, whereas the learners have knowledge of reality and culture. Both parties communicate to learn with and through each other (Shudak, 2014). The importance of dialogue in Freire's philosophy is not only restricted to education; he considers dialogue an "existential necessity" (Shudak, 2014).

The second and in fact the main concept in the CP philosophy is the PPP. In the PPP, education is considered a continuous cognitive process in which the teacher does not assume superiority of knowledge. It is not education for or about the students; it is education with the students (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) regards the process of teaching and learning in the PPP as a process of liberation and humanization. The learners are encouraged to actively question the status quo, recognize the oppressive societal forces which leave a negative impact on their personal values and lives. Freire calls it the pedagogy of freedom as opposed to the pedagogy of domination offered by the banking paradigm (Freire, 1998)

According to Boyce (1996), in this PPP, the learners experience themselves as knowledgeable people. They are no longer objects that are acted upon, but subjects who play an active role in their learning process. Boyce (1996) identified a number of steps through which this transformation could happen on part of the learners by "writing, critically examining knowledge in a field, identifying the individual aspects and social context of a problem, and identifying possible collective actions" (p.7). These steps are meant to move the discussion of personal analysis to social analysis, and then to the action level. Language is an indispensable tool in this process, Freire in his educational vision, considers language or what he calls "the word" a powerful

instrument in social transformation (Thomas, 2011).

Learners' critical consciousness (CC) and empowerment are two of the key principles in the PPP model of CP. They turn education into an act of freedom achieved by choosing topics relevant to the learners' existential experiences and democratic decentered classrooms (Freire, 1970). In that PPP environment, the teachers and the learners trust each other and believe that their involvement will matter. They develop a new identity to replace the old one constructed by an oppressive society and culture.

The learners need to sharpen their writing skills, critical consciousness capacities and power of expression to meet the needs of their courses, as well as their future career. Besides,

according to Lange (2006) one of the focal aims of the writing class nowadays is to arm the learners with the skills developed by CP to be able to transform their society with their writing in the future and also to resist the dominant discourse (Okazaki, 2005). In that sense, CP has a twofold function: it enhances the learners' linguistic skills needed for academic, professional and personal requirements, as well as sharpens their critical consciousness and empowerment to reflect on reality and eventually transform it (Byean, 2011). It is true that social transformation may not be achieved immediately, but at least CP guides the way to pursue it (Byean, 2011). Research needs to "work in contextualizing the possibilities and projects of critical pedagogy within a writing

classroom, negotiating ways to engage students in an examination of the political implications and consequences of their texts, their position as readers, their investment in being authors, and the relations of a given classroom" (Lee, 2000, p. 88).

2. Writing Problems in EFL Writing Classes

Teaching writing is, in fact, one of the most challenging areas in language classrooms and it is even more difficult in the EFL context (Chaisiri, 2010). This is attributed to the fact that the learners are rarely exposed to the English language outside their classrooms and they are not familiar with the conventions of writing in English (Chaisiri, 2010). The problems faced by the EFL writers seem to be global ones. For example, Lin (as cited in

Chaisiri, 2010, p. 181) states that in Singapore, EFL learners who finish their secondary education find difficulty in writing effectively for academic or real life purposes. Similarly, EFL learners struggle while learning writing in Korea as reported by Kim (as cited in Chaisiri, 2010, p.181) and in Thailand as stated by Foely (as cited in Chaisiri, 2010, p.181). They consider writing the most difficult skill in their English language learning practices, especially in dealing with grammatical errors.

Malaysian learners also have problems in their writing tasks, especially in terms of language use, e.g., grammar and punctuation and their L1 interference (Ghabool, et al. , 2012). Iranian EFL learners, likewise, produce argumentative essays that are

characterized by being short, fragmented, not organized, full of grammatical and spelling mistakes, as well as lacking a good introduction and a convincing conclusion (Fahim& Rod, 2012). In Turkey, EFL learners fail to express their thoughts in English in writing and their argumentative essays have many unsupported claims (Alagozlu, 2007).

Arab EFL learners are no exception. A study by Huwari & Al-Kasawneh (2013) exposes the fact that the writing performance of the Saudi university students is weak and attempts to explain the reasons behind this weakness. The learners' poor performance is attributed to their insufficient grammatical knowledge, lack of practice, as well as their inappropriate educational background. Ahmed (2010)

focuses on the organizational problems that Egyptian EFL learners face in essay writing, namely the cohesion and coherence problems. The learners' written texts demonstrate problems like parallelism, repetition, sentence length and lack of variation, as well as the misuse of certain cohesive devices. In cohesion, they produce sentences that are fragmented in terms of semantics which results in sentences that are unrelated in meaning (Ahmed, 2010). Ibrahim (2013) also reported in a document analysis he conducted that Egyptian learners tend to produce paragraphs that are incoherent, out of context and ending abruptly; a matter which makes their written products incomplete and incomprehensible.

Egyptian EFL learners study English for about 12 years before joining university. This is attributed to the fact that English is a compulsory subject from grades 1 to 12 in Egypt's national curriculum. In spite of that, and like most Arab learners, they encounter major problems in writing (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). The learners face difficulties in writing effectively and they consider writing one of the most difficult language skills to master (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). Egyptian EFL learners end up joining university with an underdeveloped ability to produce a well written essay.

Several factors contribute to this problem. The first and the most important one relates to the teaching approaches. There is a tendency to depend on teacher-

centered methods in classes in which the learners are not given sufficient opportunities for practice (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). Having good composition skills is essential for passing all the other academic courses successfully (Ahmed, 2010). In academic life, writing courses are usually perceived cornerstones in university English curricula (Barnawi, 2011). Writing is also a basic requirement for professional development and careers in the future. In professional and social contexts, the need for mastering written and spoken communication in English is getting increasingly important because of the growing demands of globalization (Benites, 2012). As such, writing is a crucial skill in the academic, professional and social life. This is why it is

essential to help university students develop their writing skills by exploring more innovative and promising approaches.

Another problem documented in the Egyptian EFL writing classrooms is the lack of critical consciousness on part of the learners. The learners complete their university education with a minimal ability to think critically and to establish connection with the outside reality (Derince, 2011). They are not encouraged or trained to think critically because the curricula do not seem to promote the development of this skill; that is to develop critical consciousness (Derince, 2011). In fact, even on the pedagogical level, little attention is given to critical thinking in college writing classes (Barnawi, 2011) in spite of the fact

that the students are expected to master it. Barnawi (2011) argues that “Rather than blindly accepting the ideas of others, college student writers are expected to critically question the validity of ideas in written texts, and they are encouraged to judge the ideas of other people to show authorial presence, which shows the autonomy of their thoughts.” (p. 190).

The Egyptian educational system is generally depicted as one that favors teachers’ dominance, fosters learners’ passivity, rote learning and memorization (Ibrahim, 2013). The learners are encouraged to memorize what they study rather than engage in critical thinking processes (Ahmed, 2010). Rote learning is required for passing the exams and then the learners forget

all the knowledge they were exposed to, once they are done with the exams (Khuankaew, 2010). The traditional educational system is based on a test-oriented structure which tends to suppress creativity and critical thinking (Barnawi, 2011; Byean, 2011; Derince, 2011; Ibrahim, 2013). The learners are expected to acquire ready-made information without any inquiry (Alagozlu, 2007). According to Shor & Freire (1987), these traditional educational settings are set up to foster ideas and practices that hinder the development of critical thinking and they provide education of a poor quality.

The end result is that the country has huge numbers of graduates who lack both in-depth knowledge and critical consciousness skills. Besides, in

the job market, employers look for more than academic knowledge and technical skills. They hire people who can transform the work environment effectively by being problem solvers, creative and analytic, that is to say, people who have critical thinking skills (Bobrowski & Cox, 2003). Nowadays, many EFL educators stress the need for enhancing critical thinking skills in EFL college writing classrooms (Alagozlu, 2007). The learners are expected to employ critical thinking skills to question the validity of arguments and to judge the ideas of others (Alagozlu, 2007).

Critical consciousness is the broader concept of critical thinking that includes awareness of the socio-political context and linking it to one's education. It has

proved to be an essential ability needed for developing the quality of university education and also ensuring better job opportunities and a better career (Bobrowski & Cox, 2003). In a broader sense, it is an essential tool for the emancipation of the human mind (Derince, 2011; Freire, 1970; Freire, 1974). This is why the learning environment should make it possible for the learners to achieve critical consciousness (Freire, 1974). Freire (1970) believes that progressive educational methods promote it by developing awareness of the context and making sure the learners become conscious that they are active participants in the learning process, i.e., subjects and not objects. Education, in that sense, becomes an instrument of power and choice.

From a Freirean critical perspective, most of the current writing pedagogies in the EFL writing classes adopt the banking method of instruction. In this method, the way classes are conducted tend to be teacher-centered. In these writing classes, the learners exert an effort to follow the teachers' directions correctly and they do their best to meet their expectations (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). According to Thomson (2010), this banking method does not lead to any genuine learning, only memorization and recitation. The students learn facts, but they are unaware of what to do with this knowledge. In the light of this, the rote mechanical processes of teaching should be avoided (Freire, 1974). The learning experience would be more fruitful

if they were encouraged to be active agents in their process of learning, not just mere recipients (Freire, 1970; Freire, 1974).

Being subjects will empower the learners to gain their own voices through resisting dominant discourses. Empowering the learners will qualify them to fight the oppressive power regimes in the micro world of the classroom and in the society at large (Derince, 2011). They will develop creative and transformative experiences as they integrate the knowledge they acquire in the classroom into their existential reality (Thomson, 2010). This way, it will be possible for them to form new identities (Okazaki, 2005). Today's philosophy of education should aim at empowering the learners to

act freely and consciously (Ibrahim, 2013).

Empowerment could be partially achieved by engaging in a dialogical relationship with the teacher (Freire, 1970), at least to decide on the writing topics (Gui, 2008). The learners write on topics that are sometimes imposed on them and are detached from current events and controversial issues in their society, as well as their cultural background. The learners find difficulty expressing their ideas or incorporating their own voice in their essays (Barnawi, 2011). The learners tend to be afraid to express their points of view because they know they will not be appreciated or validated (Alagozlu, 2007). They are unaware of the value of their ideas and their importance. Their failure to state their own claims

and assert them is attributed to their lack of voice (Alagozlu, 2007). They also do not have the chance to think and talk about their role as learners, or make any choices. The Egyptian learners should be active participants in their process of knowledge construction and the means through which this knowledge is developed (Ibrahim, 2013). In addition to deciding on the writing topic, the learners' ideas and voices also need to be heard in their writing rather than simply memorizing or reproducing information from the different learning resources or sample essays.

Lee (2000) argues that it is important to encourage the learners to demonstrate authority in their texts and to speak from position of power. The learners

need to experience themselves as knowledgeable beings (Boyace, 1996) not as “collectors or catalogers” as Freire (1970) puts it. In other words, the learners need to be empowered. Generally speaking, critical educators have often emphasized the importance of empowering the learners by considering their voices in designing the curriculum (Hong&White, 2012). By becoming empowered, the learners will be able to express themselves in writing in a more effective and confident way (Ibrahim, 2013). They will also develop the ability to demonstrate their voice in writing and acquire fluency (Ibrahim, 2013).

3. CP in EFL Writing Classes

Evidence of the possibility of developing writing skills by employing CP techniques is

demonstrated in the literature. For example, Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini (2005) conducted a qualitative study employing an ethnographic research design. The study investigated how CP's dialogic interactive mode can contribute to dialogue journal writing in a critical literacy context. The research questions in the study investigated how interactive dialogue journal writing in a critical context can provide a productive opportunity to empower EFL high school learners. The study also examined the way through which interactive dialogue journal writing may help the learners to resort to critical self-reflective writing that move beyond descriptive uncritical writing. The participants in the study were 30 sixteen year-old male students in a private high

school class in Tehran. The study was conducted in their English class which met twice a week, 3 hours each, for a whole academic year encompassing two consecutive semesters.

For the class procedures, the teacher used the official English book and added extra activities which included reading extra texts on different topics, viewing English movies, class discussions and different writing activities including dialogue journals. The students were required to write journals on weekly basis during the whole school year and they were free to choose the topics they like. The teacher read the journal entries every week and responded to them focusing on the content of the message. The main source of data was the journal entries; a total of 600 entries. Data was also

collected through informal written interviews with six open ended questions which were meant to generate the learners' ideas about their experience with CP and dialogue journal writing. Data from these two sources was analyzed qualitatively.

The results showed that critical dialogue journal writing contributed to empowering the learners by providing them with an opportunity to have voice and to be heard. The analysis also demonstrated a transformation in the learners' mode of writing from the descriptive and personal modes to the critical and creative ones. This shows that dialogue journal writing generated an opportunity of employing critical self-reflective writing which is a major goal of critical literacy.

Apart from focusing on critical journal writing, Park (2010) carried out an action research to investigate the application of CP in the Korean EFL writing context. The goal in this study is to shed light on the pedagogical possibilities and the challenges of adapting CP in a Korean EFL college writing class through a video authoring project. The focus here is different from Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini (2005) who were mainly concerned with examining CP in the context of interactive journal writing. This study researched three questions; the first one examines how to apply the theoretical notions of CP in an EFL writing classroom. The second one seeks to know what struggles and conflicts exist in an EFL classroom incorporating CP. The last question addressed the

issue of whether or not the students are empowered in the EFL writing tasks adopting the video authoring project.

The participants in the study were 15 Korean college junior students; 12 males and three females. They were enrolled in an academic writing class designed to help them construct argumentative writing and explore social issues. The course lasted for a whole semester in which the learners were required to participate in the tasks of developing and authoring two short video productions. They were also asked to engage in essay writing tasks after a series of dialogic class discussions. Data was collected through several sources such as field notes, observations, tape recording of classes, interviews, group discussions, students' reflections,

video productions and the learners' essays. Data was analyzed qualitatively from a CP perspective by analyzing the students' participation through the various sources of data.

The findings of the study indicated that the experience of the practical application of CP in EFL classrooms yielded productive opportunities. The pedagogical possibilities of the successful implementation of CP in language classrooms outweighed the challenges. The Korean EFL learners were initially reluctant to comply with critical literacy discourse. However, in the process, they started to engage in the critical skills of identifying, interrogating and resisting dominant social, political and cultural assumptions. They also perceived its value in authorship

and building their own knowledge. The students' participation in the video authoring project increased their participation rates and empowered them with a sense of CC and responsibility. In spite of the challenges, the study emphasized the importance of adapting CP to EFL contexts to empower the learners.

Other studies in the literature narrowed down the focus of investigation from CP to its major concept, the PPP. A number of studies in the literature examined the PPP's capacities in relation to the writing skills of the learners. For example, both Fahim and Mirzaii (2014) and Fahim and Rad (2012) researched the effect of the PPP on the learners' argumentative writing skills, as well as their critical thinking skills. Fahim and Mirzaii (2014) conducted an

experiment to assess the impact of Freire's problem posing approach, exemplified in dialogic critical thinking, on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing. The participants were upper-intermediate EFL learners studying at a language institute in Tehran, Iran. The study targeted 43 eligible male participants whose age range is 17 to 41.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design whereby the participants were selected through cluster sampling; that is whole classes randomly selected from all existing classes. Then, the learners in these classes were randomly assigned into either the experimental and control group. The former included 21 participants and the latter comprised 22 participants, all constituting four classes. The

experimental group received traditional writing instruction in addition to tasks that involve dialogic critical thinking, which constituted the treatment in the study. The control group, on the other hand, received only traditional writing instruction. Both groups received 19 sessions of instruction and two extra sessions for the pretest and posttest, one for each.

The study examined three null hypotheses; the first one stated that the scores of the experimental group in the pretest and the posttest are not significantly different. The second one assumed that the control group scores in the pretest and posttest are not significantly different. The third one hypothesized that the posttest scores of the experimental and the control groups do not show

significant difference. The writing performance of the two groups was compared via a pretest before the administration of the treatment and a posttest after the treatment. Both tests included a four paragraph argumentative essay in an in-class activity within a time limit of 30 minutes.

The tools in the study included these tests, an analytic scoring rubric of argumentative writing and the dialogic critical thinking materials. When comparing the scores of the pretest and the posttest, the results showed that both groups performed better in the posttest. They made statistically significant improvements in argumentative writing in the posttest. Thus, the first and the second hypotheses were rejected. The third hypothesis was also rejected

because the results demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the writing scores of the two groups on the posttest. The group exposed to the dialogic critical thinking, i.e., experimental group, exhibited a superior performance.

Similarly, Fahim and Rad (2012) attempted to solve some of the writing problems faced by Iranian EFL learners by using the dialogic method of teaching, as manifested this time, in Shor's problem posing approach. The study is of an exploratory nature and it researched two questions; the first one examines how the PPP is employed to improve the argumentative writing skills of the learners and their critical thinking. The second question evaluates the learners' attitudes and perceptions towards practicing the PPP in their

writing class, which is not researched by Fahim and Mirzaai (2014).

The participants in the study were 20 female university students and graduates whose age ranged from 19 to 28. Their English language proficiency is of an intermediate level. Data is collected through three different sources; the first is a background questionnaire to trace the history of the participants' writing instruction. The second source is the participants' written texts which include two argumentative essays and 10 journal entries for each participant. The third source is the stimulated recall interviews to assess the learners' attitudes towards the whole experience. The data was collected over a period of three months within three phases corresponding to the

three different sources mentioned above and then it was analyzed qualitatively. Shor's nine principle agenda for critical thinking, adapted from Freire's PPP, is used to analyze the data obtained from the three sources.

Analysis of the learners' texts demonstrated that they developed the line of their arguments in a more effective way which is attributed to their improved critical thinking skills. They also produced essays that are more organized and well developed, and were able to critically evaluate their own writing. This goes in line with the findings of Fahim and Mirzaii (2014). The analysis of the data in the interviews, on the other hand, showed that the dialogic practice in the problem-posing technique triggered a positive attitude towards the

writing task. The participants reported that they developed better skills of analysis and argumentation.

Whereas Fahim and Rad (2012) studied learners' attitudes as a secondary issue in their study, Hong and White (2012) focused mainly on learners' attitudes. Hong and White (2012) reflected on Chinese students' perceptions towards the teaching of EFL writing in Chinese higher education. The study started by describing the educational setting of EFL writing classes in China and reported that negative perceptions were common among Chinese EFL learners. The authors stated that the learners were frustrated because whenever they try to find voice and creativity in their writing, they were subjugated by considerations of status and

discipline values in their educational system. After that, the study provided an example of how PPP could be put into practice to provide alternatives and possibly better methods of teaching in the Chinese EFL writing context.

The authors provided illustrations from progressive writing programs in a Chinese university, e.g., Southern University that clarified the potential of PPP in developing authentic and individualized voice in writing. This was achieved by revising the curriculum in a way that encouraged the learners to connect their personal lives and socio-cultural milieu with their English writing. Four sequential stages of writing were employed to conceptualize this change: write for passion, write for argumentation, write for creation

and the last stage is writing for publication. The study presented as its data excerpts from the learners' and the teachers' opinions that reflected that PPP's implementation enhanced the verve for writing. The study also reported that PPP motivated the learner's to have their own voice in writing. A voice which was often suppressed by traditional approaches, but it is now emancipated through CP's progressive practices.

Unlike Fahim and Mirzaii (2014) and Fahim and Rad (2012) who focused on argumentative writing skills, Rafiee, Vahid Dastjerdi and Tavakoli (2014) researched PPP with respect to promoting the process and quality of writing. Rafiee, Vahid Dastjerdi and Tavakoli (2014) conducted an action research study which aimed

at raising the critical awareness of Iranian EFL learners of rhetorical organization in their native language and the target language through implementing the PPP. To this end, the study employed the dialogic aspect of PPP and its emphasis on the cultural aspects of structuring a text. The study sought to answer three research questions; the first one investigated the impact of instruction of critical contrastive rhetoric on the process of L2 writing. The second question addressed the way instruction of critical contrastive rhetoric affects the learners' written product in terms of increasing its quality. The study also examines how it affected the learners' attitudes and perceptions.

The study was conducted in a writing class which lasted for one

semester, four months; the class covered four credit hours, 100 minutes per week. The study employed purposeful sampling techniques whereby the participants included 12 senior university students, four males and eight females whose ages ranged from 21 to 26. They were enrolled in a writing course at a state university in Iran. The class procedures included analysis of contrastive examples from writing samples, writing activities, discussions and dialogical and problem posing processes between the learners and the teacher.

The study employed qualitative and quantitative methods for data analysis. Data was obtained from different sources such as observations, interviews, class discussions and questionnaires. A critical literacy

instruction framework was worked out in the data collection procedure to trace the participants' change of perception and product. The results indicated that instruction of critical contrastive rhetoric improved the learners' understanding of the process of writing texts in L1 and L2. They started to understand relations of power and dominant discourse, how to have access to it and how to create new meanings in their writing. Analysis of the pre/post essay writings of the participants showed that the quality of the post essays were better in terms content and organization patterns. In general, implementing the dialogic aspects of PPP seemed to increase the learners' awareness of the complex rhetorical distinctions between Persian and English. The participants also reported in the

interviews and the questionnaires that course helped them improve their understanding of critical contrastive rhetoric. The positive perceptions conveyed in this study share common grounds with the positive attitudes depicted in both Fahim and Rad (2012) and Hong and White (2012).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, as shown from the literature and in spite of the challenges, CP demonstrated remarkable capacities on improving the learners' writing abilities (Derince, 2011; Fahim & Mirzaei, 2014; Fahim & Rod, 2012; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Gui, 2008; Hong & White, 2012; Park, 2010;; Rafiee, et al., 2014). Implementing the problem-posing paradigm of CP is expected to have potential for enhancing the learners' writing

proficiency, critical consciousness and empowerment. Writing based on CP principles initiates the processes necessary for achieving good composition skills, critical consciousness and empowerment (Byean, 2011; Lee, 2000). Okazaki (2005) postulates that it is a cyclical process in which critical consciousness and empowerment simulate dialogue and writing. This eventually results later in improved language proficiency. On the whole, the literature tended to support the feasibility of CP in EFL writing classes including the Egyptian one.

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