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Considering the Accountability of Iranian ESP Instructors Regarding the Critical Pedagogy Components

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Received: May 14, 2021 ▪ Reviewed: June 12, 2021 ▪ Accepted: July 16, 2021 ▪ Published: August 30, 2021

Abstract:

Critical pedagogy (CP) is a term taken from critical thinking, a post-method approach and a newly flourished paradigm in thinking about education. The present study considered the applicability of critical pedagogy among Iranian instructors who teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the extent to which they put such issues into practice in an ESP course. In this study, 100 ESP instructors, chosen through purposive sampling, who taught various subjects in four state universities of Iran participated in various study phases. Since this was a mixed design study, the data was gathered through a Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, reflecting some significant and profound facts about the issue under investigation. Using various statistical procedures such as descriptive statistics, factor analysis, independent sample t-test, and Radnor's model, the researcher analyzed quantitative and qualitative data. Results of the questionnaire followed up by a semi-structured interview revealed that although the instructors have been teaching ESP for several years in tertiary levels, some of them showed a lack of knowledge on critical pedagogy as a methodological approach to teaching English. Moreover, they introduced some obstacles to implementing the CP issues in their classes. This article concludes with suggestions and recommendations for ESP instructors to develop a critical-oriented classroom. In-service training courses can be of great significance for instructors unaware of critical pedagogy issues.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, critical thinking, English for specific purposes instructor, EFL methodology.

考虑伊朗静电除尘器教师对关键教学要素的责任

摘要:

批判性教学法 (CP) 是一个来自批判性思维的术语, 是一种后方法方法和一种新兴的教育思考范式。本研究考虑了批判性教学法在教授特定用途英语 (静电除尘器) 的伊朗教师中的适用性, 以及他们在静电除尘器课程中将这些问题付诸实践的程度。在这项研究中, 通过有目的的抽样选出的100名静电除尘器教师参与了不同的学习阶

段，他们在伊朗的四所国立大学教授各种科目。由于这是一项混合设计研究，数据是通过批判性教学态度问卷和半结构化访谈收集的，反映了有关所调查问题的一些重要而深刻的事实。使用描述性统计、因子分析、独立样本t检验和拉德诺模型等各种统计程序，研究人员分析了定量和定性数据。问卷调查结果随后进行了半结构化访谈，结果表明，尽管教师已经在高等教育阶段教授静电除尘器多年，但他们中的一些人缺乏作为英语教学方法论的批判性教学法知识。此外，他们在课堂上实施CP问题时遇到了一些障碍。本文最后为静电除尘器教师开发批判性课堂提供了建议和建议。在职培训课程对于不了解关键教学问题的教师来说意义重大。

关键词：批判性教学法、批判性思维、特定目的英语讲师、英语方法论。

1. Introduction

The most frequently used concepts associated with critical perspectives such as critical literacy, critical pedagogy, and critical language awareness in the field of education have been studied by a group of experts who are rooted in the critical theory of pre-World War II Frankfurt School (Azimi, 2007; Pinar & Bowers, 1992; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) which advocated a Marxist analytical model making use of injustice and class subjugation as the primary elements for understanding human experience (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Emerging from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, the critical pedagogy concept is often associated with the work of researchers such as Freire (1970), Luke (1988), McLaren (1989), Giroux (1992), and Simon (1992), who have a lot in common in their perceptions about critical pedagogy. Such realizations, accompanied by propositions and introductions by some famous leading figures, were influential in flourishing basic assumptions and principles of critical pedagogy.

In English language teaching, critical pedagogy is an attitude towards language teaching and learning that makes a nexus between classroom context and a wider social context and aims to bring about social transformation via education. Canagarajah (2005) stated that the concept of critical pedagogy had been around in the ELT profession for almost several decades; however, the implication of its concepts and components has recently come into vogue. Most of the texts and discussions about critical pedagogy have been restricted to its underlying rationale, and critical pedagogy has been practiced little in the real world of the classroom, for which it was introduced. Contrary to popular opinion in the L2 learning literature, critical pedagogy is not a theory but a method of learning and teaching (Canagarajah, 2005), or, as Pennycook (2001) introduced it, it is "teaching with an attitude."

Pedagogical theories of philosopher John Dewey (1980) have a great impact on the critical pedagogy movement. In his book "Democracy and education", he asserted that education must be a transformative experience. Dewey (1980) believed that an ideal classroom should be a place where students use trial and error to develop needed skills for engaging in a genuine or an ethical and democratic citizenship. Following

Dewey's ideas and thoughts, Kuang (2007) claimed that critical pedagogy aimed to question the power relationships between teachers, students, institutions, and society and elaborate on how ideologies emerging from power, politics, history, and culture can constantly influence the education system. Moreover, Crooks (2010) mentioned that critical pedagogy tried to clarify the relationships between authority and power and cast light on the nexus between knowledge and power. Wink (2005) believed critical pedagogy was concerned with challenging unequal power relations in interactions among individuals and institutions. Furthermore, he was concerned about the cultural, political, social, and historical impacts on the schools or institutions. He highlighted power issues and how they were related to teaching and learning in a classroom setting (Wink, 2005). Critical pedagogy moves the classroom context into a wider social milieu, believing that whatever occurs in a classroom setting should prepare the learners to make a difference outside the classroom or find solutions to real-world problems and situations (Baynham, 1995). In the realm of teaching and learning a language, critical practice is "about connecting the world with the world. It is about recognizing language as ideology, not just a system. It is about extending the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

1.1. English Language Teaching (ELT) and Critical Pedagogy

For the first time, critical pedagogy appeared in the realm of education by Paulo Freire (1970). Some other prominent scholars such as Giroux (1992), Luke (1988), and McLaren (1989) have developed ideas and suggestions on critical pedagogy. However, the common points of their ideas and notions can be summarized as cooperative learning, consciousness-raising among learners, nexus between educational setting and a wider community, and critical thinking about injustice or inequalities prevailing around us. Norton and Toohey (2004) stated that advocates of critical approaches to second language education are interested in finding relationships between language learning and social developments while discussing the importance of critical pedagogy in the realm of language learning and teaching.

Language, in this view, is more than a medium of speech or communication; it is a practice that forms and is formed by how language learners see themselves, their social context, their backgrounds, and their potential possibilities. It is necessary to modify the beliefs of language teachers and others to create a more valuable pedagogy for language classrooms. Learning a second or foreign language can be seen as "education rather than the acquisition of a skill" (Guilherme, 2002).

Critical pedagogy (CP) resembles a tree with several main branches. It is primarily concerned with teaching students and teachers the self-esteem necessary to challenge society's power dynamics (McLaren, 2003; Peterson, 2003), allowing them to achieve the "voice" they deserve within that society. Critical pedagogy considers education to be a political endeavor (Kincheloe, 2008) to raise students' awareness to make them more mindful of societal power games and their role in them (Burbules, 1995). It is called "equitable pedagogy" (Pennycook, 2001), and it was developed to allow marginalized students the "freedom to express themselves."

Despite the great value placed upon critical pedagogy, its implications in ELT, and the role of TEFL in the Iranian educational system, no one has attempted to investigate the influential position of critical pedagogy implications in ESP teaching courses in Iranian universities. This study aims to look at the use and applicability of critical pedagogy in ESP classes and the obstacles to doing so. Therefore, the main objectives of the current study are to shed light on the status of critical pedagogy in ESP courses in Iranian universities and explore the main barriers in practicing CP in Iranian educational contexts. In other words, we are going to observe how critical pedagogy can cover various dimensions of educational, racial, and cultural factors because critical pedagogy accounts for various issues, including social, economic, political, and cultural ones, which can directly or indirectly influence the process of language learning and teaching in different educational levels including tertiary one. The great motivation behind doing the current study is to find ways to improve the language teaching skills in general and ESP teaching in particular concerning the implementation of critical pedagogy components in the Iranian educational context.

1.2. Related Studies

Critical pedagogy has been an intriguing issue for the last three decades, and scholars in different fields of study have carried out a great number of research projects on this kind of pedagogy all around the world. Milner (2003) suggested that pre-service instructors could greatly benefit from critical pedagogy in their educational experience and teaching, focusing on the implications of critical pedagogy on racial awareness. Critical pedagogy encouraged instructors to reconsider their attitudes toward

students and their learning experiences, and they should recognize students as whole persons who could play a role outside of the classroom, in society. Moore (2013) noted that instructors could only expect to provide "an additional edge of consciousness" to their pupils when discussing the importance of instructors' effect on language learners. Instructors and institutions might adopt a wide range of approaches to their pupils, environments, ideas, and personalities (Moore, 2013).

Taking critical literacy issues into account in an EFL context such as Indonesia, Gustine (2018) reported that teachers with five or seven years of teaching experience in different school levels showed a lack of knowledge on critical literacy as a methodological approach to teaching English. Moreover, another study carried out by Aunurrahman et al. (2017) in Indonesia revealed that due to the limitations in the critical thinking capacity of some tertiary EFL students, they had little control over their schematic structure and linguistic features of argumentative writing. In addition, the authors suggested that the university lecturers take into account explicit teaching and cooperative learning activities to minimize the students' difficulties and maximize their academic writing and critical thinking capacity.

Yilmaz (2009) also explored the overall attitude of a group of elementary school teachers toward critical pedagogy in a research carried out in Turkey. He stated that the participants' perspectives, opinions, and critical pedagogy ideas differed significantly due to their varying educational backgrounds, job environments, and educational levels. Many scholars have suggested that teaching critical thinking abilities to students and implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom can help students improve their reasoning skills (Purnomo et al., 2020; Aini et al., 2020).

In an investigation of critical pedagogy training for a group of in-service teachers in Singapore, Zhang (2009) discovered that critical reading training courses greatly affected teachers and learners. The participants stated that their critical thinking ability in multiple parts was enhanced due to receiving such educations. However, Yilmaz et al. (2016) claimed that cultural characteristics of the society play an essential part in Turkish society when it comes to the interaction between cultural values and critical pedagogy. They believed that inequality does not need to be challenged because it is accepted as a natural occurrence in society. In other words, qualities such as consent, obedience, and unquestioning acceptance are emphasized more. There is minimal questioning of current procedures in cultures like Turkey, where there is little involvement or supportive atmosphere.

In Iran, a cross-sectional study conducted by Sahragard et al. (2014) investigated the practicality of critical pedagogy components of 20 language teachers with different academic degrees. Their study's results indicated that although language teachers were more or

less familiar with critical pedagogy's underlying principles and components, they were not free to implement all of the CP principles and components due to some institutional constraints. They also reported that participants with higher academic degrees, mostly those with a Ph.D. degree, were much fonder of this pedagogy.

Another line of inquiry by Zare-Behtash et al. (2017) highlighted the practicality of critical pedagogy principles studied in the Iran Language Institute (ILI), which was supported by the Iran Ministry of Education. Results of their study indicated that language teachers in ILI were familiar with the issues of critical pedagogy and the significant role they play in the scope of language teaching and learning. However, ILI teachers claimed that institutional limitations, pre-arranged schedules set by the Institute, and teachers' burnout were among the most considerable obstacles preventing teachers from applying critical pedagogy components and principles in their classrooms.

Regarding the syllabuses of ESP coursebooks in Iranian educational contexts and their correspondence with critical pedagogy components, Khoshsima and Izadi (2017) drew attention to the unattractive texts and monotonous contents of most ESP books published by SAMT organization (the organization for researching and composing University textbooks in humanities). They believed that instructors teaching ESP courses in Iranian universities were bound to use these coursebooks and their stilted prose. Therefore, there remains no space for the creativity of the instructors and students coping with such texts.

Regarding the same issues on academic textbook contents, Razmjoo and Raissi (2010), studying some aspects of ESP books in Iran, reported that participants were dissatisfied with the contents and organizational features of the ESP books. Moreover, Ahmadi and Rahimi (2012) mentioned several factors as hindrances to ESP learning among Iranian university students, among which textbooks' inefficiency was the most prominent one. However, another study carried out by Ghalandari and Talebnejad (2012) on the evaluation of some ESP textbooks revealed that ESP textbooks in medicine are appropriate texts for medical English for Iranian physicians and compatible with student's needs and achievements.

Despite the significance of applying CP principles by instructors, it is unknown whether Iranian ESP instructors who teach ESP to Iranian students at tertiary levels employ the CP principles. More specifically, it is not yet known whether different components of the ELT curriculum in general and ESP curriculum in particular, which are widely practiced in the educational system of Iran, including textbook development, teaching styles and strategies, and testing methods and outcomes, are all in line with principles of critical pedagogy. As a result, the

current study's key goals are to cast light on critical pedagogy in ESP courses in Iranian universities and investigate the main challenges to critical pedagogy implementation in Iranian educational settings. Therefore, the present study aims at providing answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent are Iranian ESP instructors familiar with critical pedagogy and its underlying components?
2. What are the main barriers to applying CP principles from the viewpoints of ESP instructors?
3. What are the suggested remedies for establishing CP principles in tertiary education?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The design of a study primarily depends on the research questions the study addresses. Due to the nature of the current study, the main research questions can be characterized as quantitative-oriented questions, qualitative-oriented questions, or mixed questions. Therefore, the present study employs a hybrid design in which the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative data. In the procedure of design, data collection, and data analysis of mixed-method studies, both qualitative and quantitative elements are employed. Qualitative and quantitative data collection might take place in a concurrent or sequential framework. Converting the qualitative data to a quantitative form or vice versa is another aspect of mixed-method research. In this study, the data was collected in sequential order. Quantitative data analysis methods were utilized to answer the first type questions, while qualitative data analysis methods were employed to answer the second type questions (Questions 2 and 3). The present study's data collection and analysis techniques fit within the category of quantitative research, followed by a survey design.

2.2. Participants

A total of 100 ESP instructors teaching various subjects in four state universities of Iran participated in this study. 35 ESP instructors were chosen from Shiraz State University, 25 cases were chosen from Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, 22 instructors were randomly chosen from Yasouj University, and 18 cases were randomly chosen from Yasouj University of Medical Sciences. Among 100 participants, 68 instructors were Ph.D. degree holders, and the rest were MA degree holders in various subjects. Since the researcher aimed to gather data from ESP instructors who had special knowledge and academic status to provide the most relevant information, this study employed purposive sampling, a technique in which the researchers rely on their judgment when choosing population members to

participate in the study. The samples for qualitative questions were selected from among the participants answering the first question. In qualitative studies, the number of participants depends on the data saturation point where no new information is obtained from the interviewees. At this point, the interviewing phase is terminated. The instructors participating in this study were all met in their working hours at the universities. All participants became aware of the study's purposes and were assured that the data would be confidential.

2.3. Research Instrument and Procedure

Two types of data gathering instruments were used in this study. The first instrument was the Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire developed and validated by Pishvaei and Kasaian (2013). The reliability of the questionnaire estimated via the Cronbach's alpha coefficient has been reported as 0.93, which could be considered highly satisfactory and reliable. The questionnaire includes 24 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Therefore, the scales were typically coded from 1

to 5. Some of the scales were reversely coded to balance the scores.

The data collection procedure was performed during the 2017-2018 academic year in the universities in Iran mentioned above. Following the current study's design, the researcher employed two different phases for data collection. First, the quantitative data was collected through a Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire distributed among the participants to fill in. Second, the qualitative phase was conducted through a face-to-face interview, and the participants were informed about the purposes of the study and signed the consent form.

For confirming the underlying constructs of the Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire, factor analysis was run on the data, and the results revealed that the questionnaire includes five major components. In their study, Pishvaei and Kasaian (2013) also reported five main components for this questionnaire; therefore, the current study results supported their claims about the underlying constructs of the Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.863	35.365	35.365	10.863	35.365	35.365
2	2.325	7.462	42.845	2.325	7.462	42.845
3	1.822	5.943	48.863	1.822	5.943	48.863
4	1.483	4.806	53.666	1.483	4.806	53.666
5	1.340	4.357	58.064	1.340	4.357	58.064

Table 2. Rotated component matrix

Items	1	2	3	4	5
1				.658	
2	.710				
3				.612	
4	.755				
5				.723	
6	.815				
7				.573	
8			.591		
9					.556
10	.504				
11		.784			
12			.522		
13					.734
14	.747				
15		.608			
16	.580				
17					.785
18		.575			
19	.658				
20				.545	
21			.635		
22		.660			
23		.765			
24			.523		

Based on loadings of the factors on questionnaire items, the extracted components were named different items. The categorization is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Components and their corresponding items

Components	Corresponding Items
1. Doubting the legitimacy of the ELT run by native speakers	2, 4, 6, 10, 14, 16, 19
2. Utilizing local materials to oppose the ELT hidden intentions	11, 15, 18, 22, 23
3. Legitimizing attention to the ideology behind ELT materials	8, 12, 21, 24
4. Opposing pre-EIL misunderstandings	1, 3, 5, 7, 20
5. Prioritizing the basic principles of EIL	9, 13, 17

The first factor represented through items 2, 4, 6, 10, 14, 16, and 19 was "Doubting the legitimacy of the ELT run by native speakers". The second factor was loaded on items 11, 15, 18, 22, and 23 and was called "Utilizing local materials to oppose the ELT hidden intentions". The third factor named "Legitimizing attention to the ideology behind ELT materials" included items 8, 12, 21, and 24. The fourth component, including items 1, 3, 5, 7, and 20, was "Opposing pre-EIL misunderstandings". Finally, the fifth factor revealed through items 9, 13, and 17 was "Prioritizing the basic principles of EIL".

The second instrument for data gathering was a semi-structured interview that invited participants to express their ideas and attitudes toward critical pedagogy, the

obstacles to applying it, and the educational implication of critical pedagogy. The interview questions were checked by some experts and university professors for their quality and soundness. The in-depth interview was conducted with 21 participants chosen randomly, and each interview session lasted between 20 to 50 minutes, with an average of 35 minutes. In most semi-structured interviews, the interviewees are asked open-ended questions to express their ideas about the topic freely and without any limitations (Ary et al., 2010). The interview questions used in this study are presented in the Appendix.

2.4. Data Analysis

The current study employed the required analytical techniques to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. In the data analysis for quantitative questions, descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and independent-sample t-test, were estimated. As the nature of qualitative questions suggests, qualitative approaches were used to analyze the data. This study employed Radnor's (2001) step-by-step guide to qualitative data analysis. Interviews were first transcribed verbatim, and multiple copies of the transcripts were printed. The transcripts were read for topic ordering to draw out and list the topics linked to the original research question. These were listed on a sheet of paper and color-coded for use as a reference guide for subsequent readings of the transcripts.

The second, careful reading of the transcripts helped the researchers identify the explicit and implicit categories emerging within each topic. The researchers color-coded the categories using colors that corresponded with the colors of the topic that they are part of. In the case of more than one category in a topic, we used numeric coding. The third reading for content helped identify quotes that are in line with each category within the topics. Then, the researchers labeled the quotes according to the category they represented. Keeping the master copy intact, we then used the word processor to save the categories and quotes on separate Microsoft Word documents representing each topic. These items were printed and read again to look for small details of meaning to understand the data, interpret them and write down the descriptions of our interpretation.

3. Results

For answering the research questions posed in this study, the results of data analysis are presented here. The quantitative data gathered through the Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire helped answer the first research question regarding the familiarity of Iranian ESP instructors with critical pedagogy and its underlying components. In addition, the qualitative data offered some insights regarding the applicability of critical pedagogy

components and the obstacles presented in the implementation of such issues. Furthermore, the qualitative data provided information that can help English language teachers in general and ESP instructors in particular put the critical pedagogy principles into practice and familiarize their students with such issues. Since there is some overlap between the research questions posed in the study, answering each one may illuminate some dimensions of the other questions. Therefore, the answers have a complementary nature and provide a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

For ensuring that the Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire is reliable enough, the scale's reliability was investigated in terms of the total scale and the five subcomponents of the scale separately. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability coefficient of the Critical Pedagogy Attitude Questionnaire

1. Doubting the legitimacy of the ELT run by native speakers	0.80
2. Utilizing local materials to oppose the ELT hidden intentions	0.79
3. Legitimizing attention to the ideology behind ELT materials	0.82
4. Opposing pre-EIL misunderstandings	0.81
5. Prioritizing the basic principles of EIL	0.78
Total	0.80

The reliability coefficient of the factors extracted from the questionnaire appeared to vary between 0.78 and 0.82, and the total reliability of the scale is 0.80, which can be considered an acceptable internal consistency (Kline, 1999).

Based on the five underlying factors discussed in the above section, descriptive statistics were run to gain insights into the participants' viewpoints on each component of the critical pedagogy. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of scores on CP components

Factors	Mean
Factor 1: Doubting the legitimacy of the ELT run by native speakers	2.57
Factor 2: Utilizing local materials to oppose the ELT hidden intentions	2.93
Factor 3: Legitimizing attention to the ideology behind ELT materials	2.11
Factor 4: Opposing pre-EIL misunderstandings	2.48
Factor 5: Prioritizing the basic principles of EIL	3.59

As shown in Table 5, the participants are mostly aware of the fifth component, "Prioritizing the basic principles of EIL" (mean = 3.59), the second one, "Utilizing local materials to oppose the ELT hidden intentions" (mean = 2.93), and the first component, "Doubting the legitimacy of the ELT run by native speakers" (mean = 2.57). However, the order of their awareness of the other two

components was as follows: "Opposing pre-EIL misunderstandings" (mean = 2.48) and "Legitimizing attention to the ideology behind ELT materials" (mean = 2.11).

Therefore, ESP instructors are mostly aware of prioritizing the principles of English as an International Language (EIL). At the same time, they are not fully familiar with the ideologies behind the English language teaching (ELT) materials. From the means observed in Table 5, it can be inferred that the majority of the ESP instructors who participated in the study are not fully familiar with the issues of critical pedagogy and its underlying components.

However, in some cases, the participants with a Ph.D. degree were aware of the components of critical pedagogy. They could elaborate on them and how they can be effective in language teaching and learning. It seems that MA degree holders who teach ESP at Iranian universities are not coping with CP issues. This fact was also revealed through running an independent-sample t-test where the mean score of MA degree holders was 1.71 ($M = 1.71$ and $SD = 0.45$), and the mean score of Ph.D. degree holders was 3.76 ($M = 3.76$ and $SD = 0.86$). Therefore, the P-value was less than 0.05 ($P = 0.000$ and $P < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference between instructors with MA degrees and instructors with Ph.D. degrees regarding the awareness and implementation of critical pedagogy principles. Furthermore, these claims are discovered in the qualitative phase of the study, where the differences become apparent. Therefore, the qualitative phase of the study elicited answers to the first research question and elaborated on the obstacles presented to the instructors at the tertiary level in Iran.

The qualitative phase of the study provided the answers to the second and third research questions. To this end, a face-to-face, in-depth interview was conducted with 31 participants who were chosen randomly. The participants taking part in this phase also completed the questionnaire in the quantitative phase. After conducting the interviews, they were transcribed verbatim. Analysis of the interview data revealed that several underlying themes such as instructors' unawareness, organizational obstacles, and learners' unwillingness were implicitly or explicitly extracted from the interviews. These themes are more highlighted in the following section:

3.1. Instructors' Unawareness

Almost majority of the participants with MA degrees argued that they are not fully familiar with the concept of critical pedagogy, and they certainly practice teacher-oriented activities in their classrooms.

Participant 10 (MA degree holder): *I graduated 25 years ago, and at that time, these issues were not so prevalent among academic people. Therefore, we did not cope with the critical pedagogy issues when I was a*

university student. Now, I am teaching ESP and other courses for more than 20 years, and I have not considered the issues you are talking about. Maybe some points are discussed implicitly, but honestly speaking, during my teaching experience at the tertiary level, I have not explicitly focused on critical pedagogy components.

Participant 12 (MA degree holder): *I have always tried to teach ESP courses the same way I was taught when I was a University student. The instructor came into the classroom, mentioned some points, gave us some texts, and we were supposed to translate them. Therefore, I am not familiar with critical pedagogy components and their roles in my ESP courses.*

3.2. Organizational Obstacles

Besides the lack of background knowledge and experience to understand and apply critical pedagogy principles in their teaching, some participants stated that there are some barriers in education and teaching system which do not allow us to follow our teaching principles in the classroom setting. The following quotations illustrate the point more precisely:

Participant 15 (Ph.D. degree holder): *I know that the textbook per se does not provide everything for the students. As a university professor, I should try to make my students aware of the issues and phenomena around them. Sometimes, I think it is necessary to talk about social, political, and cultural, and even economic issues in a language classroom. However, the institutional limitations may not let you do whatever you wish in the classroom. A language teacher should take all of these issues into account, if possible.*

Participant 19 (Ph.D. degree holder): *I know what you are talking about, but sometimes I cannot implement the methods I have for teaching an ESP course because I am supposed to cover a coursebook proposed by the university syllabus. I may not find enough time to focus on some other sources and issues. I think this method can kill an instructor's creativity.*

3.3. Learners' Unwillingness

Another theme extracted from the participants' responses was the issues related to language learners. The instructors mostly complained about learners' lack of motivation, their different proficiency levels and learning styles, and the classroom size. Regarding these issues, two other participants mentioned some interesting points:

Participant 22 (Ph.D. degree holder): *To implement critical pedagogy components in the language classroom, both teacher and students should be eager enough. However, in most of my language classes, I do not find my students interested in the issues of critical pedagogy, and I think they do not like to think and behave critically. Besides, in the majority of the cases, the university instructor is supposed to cover and teach specific books or materials provided by the syllabus, and*

moving beyond the borders of the pre-arranged syllabus is not accepted by the university or the department.

Participant 28 (Ph.D. degree holder): *I know what you are talking about and how critical pedagogy can change and improve language learners' thinking. But, whenever I want to talk about critical issues in the classroom, I do not get any positive feedback from my students. I think they are more interested in traditional ways of teaching and do not like to hear new issues presented by the teacher. Sometimes, due to a large number of students in a classroom, there will be no enough time and energy to introduce and apply critical issues in such crowded classrooms. Because students in a class have varying degrees of competency, several concerns must be avoided; your teaching technique must be tailored to lower levels of pupils, and you cannot present any topic. It is preferable to practice through established techniques of language instruction."*

It can be inferred from the points mentioned above and comments provided by some ESP instructors who participated in the current study that knowing critical pedagogy principles is not the same as putting them into practice in a real language classroom. Some ESP teachers with higher academic degrees claimed that they understand what critical pedagogy is and how its principles play an essential role in language teaching and learning. Still, they are not totally free to practice such concerns in their language classes owing to the many challenges and obstacles uncovered during the qualitative phase of the study.

4. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The present study aimed at investigating whether Iranian ESP instructors at the universities of Iran support the CP principles and whether they implemented such issues in their classes. To this end, in the first phase of the study, a valid instrument with highly acceptable reliability was administered to a group of ESP instructors. In the second phase, some participants chosen randomly took part in an interview for further explanations and justifications.

Regarding the first research question, the results of the quantitative section indicated that ESP instructors are mostly aware of giving priority to the principles of English as an International Language (EIL). At the same time, they are not fully familiar with the ideologies behind the English Language teaching (ELT) materials. It was also revealed that the majority of the ESP instructors, mostly with MA degrees, are not fully familiar with the issues of critical pedagogy and its underlying components. However, the participants with Ph.D. degrees were aware of such components and could elaborate on them and how they can be effective in language teaching and learning. This finding is consistent

with the findings of Sahragard et al. (2014), who studied the practicality of critical pedagogy components among Iranian language teachers with different academic degrees. Moreover, Bartolome (2004) argued that teachers would become part of the curriculum as coursebooks, unit periodicals, and information sheets by only transmitting the information.

This finding can be supported because most learning and teaching theories and principles, including critical pedagogy and post-method issues, are mainly covered at post-graduate levels. However, MA holders who teach ESP at Iranian universities are not coping with CP issues and do not take them into account in their ESP classes. In line with these findings, Gustine (2018) claimed that although some participants know critical literacy and its pedagogical model in English teaching, they seem reluctant or hesitant to put them into practice to develop a critical literacy-oriented English classroom. Gustine (2018) believed that teachers' educational background played an undeniable role in helping them design and develop a critical English classroom. Moreover, he added that through higher education, instructors might gain advanced knowledge, skills, and the confidence to develop their English classroom to be more critical. However, in another study carried out in Turkey, Yilmaz et al. (2016) concluded that participants' opinions on cultural values and critical pedagogy principles do not differentiate according to tenure and their fields of study. In the present study, these claims and facts about the role of the instructors' educational background are discovered in the qualitative phase, where the differences become apparent.

For answering the second and third research questions, a semi-structured interview was conducted, in which the participants were free to talk about various issues regarding the implementation of CP components. Some ESP instructors believed that they do not know the issue under investigation and follow their own outdated and inefficient teaching methods. However, some participants familiar with the critical pedagogy and its relevant issues stated that they do not feel free to put such issues into practice in their ESP classes due to some obstacles and barriers.

Using the qualitative techniques, the researcher came into several underlying themes, including instructors' unawareness, organizational obstacles, and learners' unwillingness, which are considered the main barriers for applying critical pedagogy from the viewpoints of ESP instructors. The findings of Maki (2011) and Sahragard et al. (2014), who considered that the primary challenges to using critical pedagogy at the tertiary level were class size, top-down educational system, learners' reluctance, and other factors, are consistent with our findings in this study. To put it another way, Maki (2011) and Sahragard et al. (2014) stated that although Iranian language

instructors at various levels claim to be aware of critical pedagogy components, they do not feel free to integrate these issues in their language classrooms due to the pre-planned and pre-meditated decisions imposed by the top-down educational system of the country.

Furthermore, Pishghadam and Mirzaee (2008) argued that topics related to postmodernism, such as critical pedagogy and critical thinking, are not incorporated in the Iranian educational system, a centralized and top-down system. In a similar sense, McLaren (2003) claimed that concealed ideologies and curriculum make instructors and educators slaves to the economic and political system, preventing them from following their interests and creativity in the classroom. Regarding the same issues, Wilson (2016) also remarked that by providing careful scaffolding and sustaining high engagement, we might help students become more critical readers and more conscious thinkers as they progress through their studies. The results are also in line with Giroux (1992) and Freire (1970), who have emphasized that education is always political, and instructors and learners within any educational system and society should become transformative intellectuals and cultural workers who are capable of identifying and redressing the inequalities, injustices, as well as myths of an often unfair world.

In another study conducted in Qatar, Romanowski and Amatulla (2016) stated that educational reform could not be a top-down procedure, but it must circulate throughout the school, universities, communities, and societies. Reformers and all stakeholders must peruse taken-for-granted ideas and practices. It is a must to engage in cultural reflection, develop a language of possibility, develop effective and appropriate schools for a particular context, and not surrender to outsiders and theory makers who sell their educational products.

In his views about the particularity of post-method, Kumaravadivelu (2003) believed that a language teaching program intended to be practiced in an educational context must account for a particular group of teachers and a particular group of learners having specific goals within a particular institutional context which is embedded in a particular socio-cultural milieu. Therefore, it can be inferred that a one-size-fits-all policy cannot be a good prescription for all language teaching and learning situations. In other words, individual differences and needs should be taken into account, and all language learners should not be tarred with the same brush (Alibakhshi, 2011). These findings and the current study's results are also supported by Kramsch (1994), Phillipson (1992), whose main concern was the worldwide spread of the English language. They argued that such rapid spread of the language across the globe should not be considered a homogenizing factor leading to the vanishing of cultural differences. Rather, the increasing use of the English language worldwide offers a medium of instruction to express and explain these differences.

Regarding the potential remedies, which are the focal point of the third research question, it can be concluded from the qualitative phase of the study that the inclusion of some in-service training courses can familiarize the ESP instructors with the post-method issues, including critical pedagogy and its relevance to the world beyond the language classroom. Similarly, in a study conducted by Gustine (2018) in Indonesia, it was concluded that apart from teachers' formal education, some instructors should take part in short in-service training courses or professional development programs to improve their professionalism relevant to English teaching and learning in general, and critical literacy in particular. Moreover, Yilmaz and Karatepe (2013) determined how Turkish EFL student teachers studying at Uludağ University could contextualize their lessons during school experience and highlighted the extent to which participants could employ various techniques at the primary education level to make the lessons more relevant to the real world of language learners.

In the present study, some participants objected that organizational barriers such as centralized education system, centralized testing system, prescribed teaching methods, rigorous teacher training programs, and educational goals prevent the instructors from applying their creativities during an ESP course. Therefore, coursebook designers and stakeholders must change outdated coursebooks and syllabuses to free language teachers and instructors of the shackles of old theories and principles. In line with the above-mentioned issues and claims, results of a study conducted by Yilmaz and Karatepe (2018) showed that language teachers in Turkey need to go through some training programs in which they will learn to actively practice contextualization techniques through which they will be able to present language topics in a meaningful way and thus relate the English language to the language learners' real lives. Moreover, results of their study indicated that participants were not able to perform critical reflection on the use of contextualization strategies; therefore, they concluded that it is necessary to emphasize the significance of reflection during the teacher education process and create opportunities to pave the way for the student teachers to reflect on their practices.

Regarding critical pedagogy and its implementation in various educational settings, Chlapoutaki and Dinas (2016) enumerated some problems: a). the instructor with difficulty perceiving and accepting this particular pedagogic approach due to his/her ideological origins or lack of relevant knowledge, b). the learners responding negatively because they question the new approach, ignore, or fail to accept the critical educational process, c). the persons in charge of educational policy and stakeholders with a superficial view toward critical pedagogy and not attempting to create conditions for its implementation. They also believe that to overcome these

difficulties, a great emphasis is laid upon the teacher's role and the school structures. That is, the teacher has to renounce his authority and independence, "stand out" of the system, and direct his students with reflection, flexibility, and knowledge. Such an attempt cannot thrive "in a vacuum" because it needs a suitable educational policy framework. On the other hand, this is a matter of social and political attention that creates identities at an individual and national level.

Finally, the findings of this study and other related research conducted in Iran and other countries demonstrated that English language instructors in general, and ESP educators in particular, seem to have a good attitude toward critical pedagogy and its importance. However, implementation of critical pedagogy components has experienced certain challenges due to various types of hurdles and barriers at various educational levels and contexts, which must be taken into consideration by educational policymakers and stakeholders to pave the way for the application of such post-method concerns in all educational institutions.

This study was an attempt to cast light on the application of critical pedagogy among Iranian ESP instructors. The eventual outcomes extracted from both quantitative and subjective strategies revealed that not all ESP educators knew about such issues and the members with lower academic degrees (for the most part MA holders) were not completely mindful of basic instructional method and the role it can play in the system of language educating and learning. Notwithstanding, according to the possible point of view, it tends to be reasoned that the ESP educators, being comfortable with CP issues and standards, are not capable or not permitted to carry out basic teaching method standards in the majority of the cases.

The presence of some obstacles and impediments, including organizational barriers, personal attitudes, learners' unwillingness, top-down educational system, etc., in Iranian educational settings and tertiary levels does not allow teachers and university instructors to move beyond the pre-arranged syllabuses and coursebooks. Although some instructors had positive views toward the implementation of CP in their language classes, findings indicated an absence of CP in most Iranian universities. Therefore, the results of the current paper can instigate educational decision-makers and stakeholders to review their educational policies and teacher training programs for the types of training that include the CP principles and how such issues can support teachers to become more competent and efficient in their language teaching experience.

Providing and introducing critical issues in the educational curriculum and syllabus, teachers can assist students in developing required skills and prepare them to critically examine the power structure that exists in the

world beyond the classroom. Other implications of the study can be a call for easing educational procedures to problem-posing procedures to involve language learners and instructors in the learning process. In future research studies, some other profound aspects of critical pedagogy and their impacts on various language teaching and learning dimensions can be investigated through more accurate statistical procedures.

As the concluding remark, from both quantitative and qualitative sections of the current study, it can be stated that incorporation of some in-administration or in-service training classes can acclimate the ESP educators with the post-method issues, including basic teaching method and its importance with the world outside the educational context. The remarkable results of this study can familiarize the language teachers in general and ESP instructors in particular with the issues of critical pedagogy and their great significance in the realm of language teaching and learning. The main novelty of the current study is the investigation of such issues among ESP instructors in Iranian tertiary levels. The subject was ignored in previous studies regarding critical pedagogy and ESP teaching and learning in the Iranian educational context.

5. Limitations and Further Study

It is worth mentioning that due to some limitations, firm conclusions cannot be drawn from the present study. While conducting the study, the researchers encountered certain limitations which make the generalizability procedure somehow difficult. The first limitation of this study was the participants' selection because this could alter the outcomes if the same study were to be repeated in a different educational setting. The second limitation of the study was the proficiency level of the participants. The proficiency levels of ESP instructors were not the same. Therefore, this factor may influence the generalizability of the current study's outcomes.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Faculty of Education of the Chabahar Maritime University, Shiraz University, Yasouj University, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, and Yasouj University of Medical Sciences for facilitating this research project and to the reviewers who provided valuable inputs and points for the perfection of this scientific article.

Co-authors' Contributions

The authors were involved in conducting research, collecting and analyzing data, creating and reviewing articles under the obligations of research group members.

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Appendix

Interview Questions for the Qualitative Phase of the Study:

1. What do you know about critical pedagogy?
2. Have you ever heard of the concepts and principles of critical pedagogy?
3. Do you like to follow the CP principles in your classes? Explain, please.
4. How can language teachers implement CP components in their classes in the best way?
5. What do you think about the obstacles of CP principles implementation? Explain freely, please.
6. Are the students eager to follow CP principles in a language classroom or even outside the classroom? Explain, please.
7. What is your suggestion for the implementation of critical pedagogy components in a classroom?