

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDIES

Editor: Do.Dr. Esin KUMLU

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**yaz**  
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*"Bu kitapta yer alan bölümlerde kullanılan kaynakların, görüşlerin, bulguların, sonuçların, tablo, şekil, resim ve her türlü içeriğin sorumluluğu yazar veya yazarlarına ait olup ulusal ve uluslararası telif haklarına konu olabilecek mali ve hukuki sorumluluk da yazarlara aittir."*

# FOSTERING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' CRITICAL THINKING AND READING SKILLS THROUGH FAIRY TALES<sup>1</sup>

Esin KUMLU<sup>2</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although much has been done, social equity is still a crucial issue, particularly in pre-service teacher education, where the perceptions, attitudes, and perspectives of future educators are formed (Kreitz- Sandberg & Lahelma, 2021; Kollmayer et al., 2020; Lahelma & Tainio, 2019; Lamptey et al., 2015). In alignment with this, The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) (<https://www.un.org/sustainable-development/gender-equality/>) aims to promote lifelong learning abilities to address gender disparities in education and social life. Education plays a critical role in promoting social equity and gender equality, and pre-service teacher education should focus on challenging societal norms by empowering pre-service teachers to become critical thinkers and readers to promote change. To achieve this end, a comparative analysis of fairy tales can raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and facilitate dialogue to promote gender equity. Integrating activities related to classical European fairy tales into pre-service teacher education curricula can significantly highlight the transformative power of literature

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<sup>1</sup> This study was first presented at the 4th International Conference on the Philosophy of Language, Literature, and Linguistics, ICPL 2024.

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for promoting a more peaceful world that embraces social equity by nurturing critical reading and thinking skills.

According to Mary Guy and Sean McCandless:

...social equity theory was nested in the social contract. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) asserted, for example, that the greatest good of all reduces to liberty and equality, neither of which can exist without the other. And John Locke (1689) argued that the purpose of government is, in large part, to secure natural rights. Thomas Hobbes (1660) claimed that inequality does not exist in the state of nature, but instead arises from civil laws, and that peoples' recognition of equality by nature is essential for a peaceful, just society. (2012, p.6)

They further comment on the issue:

To be clear, “equity” and “equality” are terms that are often used interchangeably, and to a large extent, they have similar meanings. The difference is one of nuance: while equality can be converted into a mathematical measure in which equal parts are identical in size or number, equity is a more flexible measure allowing for equivalency while not demanding sameness. (2012, p.5)

Despite achieving gender equality in different areas of society, pre-service teacher education still faces critical challenges in overcoming ongoing disparities and biases (Sigurdardottir et al.,2023; Beach, 2019; Zittleman & Sadker, 2002). Therefore, pre-service teacher education curricula should be viewed as a crucial medium to transform the attitudes and beliefs of future educators who can foster equality among

men and women. SDG 5 aims to “Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and girls,” as according to the United Nations, “The World is not on track to achieve Gender Equality by 2030” (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). In line with this, engaging in comparative literature circle activities focused on classical European fairy tales can be a powerful tool in raising awareness of gender equity among future teachers.

Comparative literature is a practical tool to empower future educators, helping them become critical readers and thinkers with diverse perspectives. Critical reading and thinking skills are essential in teacher education programs to cultivate critical educators dedicated to promoting social equity. To achieve this end, critical discourse analysis is a valuable tool in cultivating these essential skills in future educators. Catherine Wallace emphasizes the strong connection between discourse analysis and the development of critical reading skills, highlighting its profound impact on educational practices:

Critical discourse analysis and critical reading practitioners, attempting to develop critical perspectives to textual analysis, have looked to Halliday’s systemic-functional grammar (Halliday 1994), and this book is no exception” (2003, p.30) There is a symbiotic relationship between the language employed in literary texts and the ideology that utilizes language as a powerful medium to construct a knowledge. This showcases the critical importance of developing one's reading skills to unveil the deeper layers of meaning and ideology embedded within a text. As questioned by Wallace:

Does this mean that language contains ideology, that ideology is embedded within texts? This certainly seems the view of Kress in his claim, noted earlier, that texts are "saturated" with ideology, a view sharply at odds with that of Widdowson, for instance, who maintains



(personal communication) that Ideology is not an inherent feature of texts, but rather of interpretation. I want to argue that not only does text in in itself meaning, as claimed. (2003, p.31)

Critical reading can be identified as the first step in becoming aware of the power of language, and critical thinking skills can be identified as the second step. According to Diane F. Halpern,

Critical thinking is a widely used term that includes skills in applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information and the dis position to apply these skills (National Center for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction, 1991). The ability to think critically is almost always listed as one of the desirable outcomes of under graduate education (Halpern, 1988)” (Halpern, 2001, p.270)

Evaluating the world, understanding social inequities, postulating possible solutions for a more peaceful world require future educators who can read and think critically. To this end, this study aims to explore the effects of implementing a curriculum that encapsulates comparative literature circle activities on the pre-service EFL teachers’ perceptions of societal gender roles in fairy tales and their development of critical reading and thinking skills. The study was carried out to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Does the curriculum reinforce the development of the pre-service teachers’ critical thinking and reading skills?

2. Do the materials designed for the course content foster pre-service EFL teachers' to become critical readers and thinkers?
3. Does the development of critical reading and thinking skills help the participants recognize gender inequity in fairy tales and gain the ability to address it in the classroom?
4. How does the comparative analysis of the selected fairy tales, which involves comparing and contrasting the gender roles and characters, reinforce pre-service teachers' attitudes toward their profession and societal gender roles?

## **2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Advancing gender equity, and therefore social equity, is a fundamental issue in the field of education (Nugroho et al., 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2023; Moyo, 2022). Despite efforts to promote equal opportunity and fairness for all, the education system still struggles with specific gaps that perpetuating inequalities and biases (Baten et al., 2021; Evans et al., 2020). Therefore, empowering the curriculum is crucial to eliminate gender inequality (Mwakabenga & Komba, 2021). It is essential to focus on teacher education curriculum as a central force in advancing gender equality. Curriculums that address social issues can have the power to transform the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of future educators about social equity and societal gender roles. The complex dynamics of societal gender roles intersect with fairy tales, the earliest literary works that influence how to act like a man and a woman in society, in class, or in professional life (Ismail, 2023; Huang, 2019; Joosen, 2011; Bacchilega & Hermansson, 1998; Bacchilega, 1997). These timeless narratives have somehow turned into timeless cultural norms that define the

border of societal gender roles (Mirazanashvili & Qurdadze, 2020). In alignment with this, exploring and transforming gender stereotypes through fairy tales in pre-service teacher education can offer valuable insights into how analyzing classical European fairy tales can shift our perspectives and contribute to a more peaceful world.

The first story we have come across in this life is the one in which the *handsome and bold* Prince is ready to rescue the beautiful Princess who is waiting *passively and silently*, such as Cinderella, The Snow White, The Little Mermaid, and Rapunzel. Whether we are aware of it or not, the societal norms that act as dialogues between Princes and Princesses in fairy tales have become the inner voice shaping how we act in social life as men and women (Meland, 2020; Shaheen et al., 2019). The same voice, which is the language used in the tales, apparently reinforces traditional societal norms by shaping the perceptions and attitudes of children from an early age (Totibadze, 2019; Moiyviati, 2017). Jack Zipes, a renowned scholar in fairy tale studies, critiques the profound impacts of fairy tales in his prominent work *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*:

To talk about fairy tales today....It is no longer possible to ignore the connection between the aesthetic components of the fairy tales. Whether they be old or new, and their historical function within a socialization process which forms taste, mores, values, and habits. And it is to simple or simplistic to maintain that children need fairy tales more than any other form of literature to work through psychic. (2012, p.1)

Maria Tatar defines fairy tales as short narratives, including fairies and enchantment that signify the happily ever

after endings (Tatar, 1999). If it were a book, the impact of these short narratives would be much longer than they were. That is why, in a significant shift that began in the 1970s, fairy tale scholars have started to explore and analyze fairy tales from a psychological and sociological perspective. Reading fairy tales from a poststructuralist lens marked the beginning of a feminist stance in analyzing the classical fairy tales. Scholars such as Maria Tatar (1999), Jack Zipes (2002), Karen Rowe (2014), Marcia Lieberman (1972), Vanessa Joosen (2011), and Veronica Schanoes (2016) stress the need for a socio-psychological gaze to analyze and to understand the impact of the representation of passive-subservient female characters upon women. For instance, classical European fairy tales, such as Grimm's and Anderson's, have long been known for fostering gender serotypes by portraying passive, silent, dependent female characters. The construction of gender roles in these tales is established by performativity, where the passive female princesses perform gender roles (Butler, 1999) in line with the language of the patriarchy. As mentioned by Judith Butler:

Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. 1999, p.33)

From the lens of Butler, gender roles in fairy tales can be interpreted as culturally and socially prescribed actions. Like Butler, in her influential article, Marcia Lieberman draws attention to the often acknowledged impacts of classical fairy tales on the formation of girls' identity and acculturation. Her main argument is that these tales promote the development of

submissive, dependent, and helpless female characters through their idealized notions of beauty, power, and romance. As stressed by Lieberman, “In considering the possibility that gender has a cultural character and, origin we need to examine the primary channels of acculturation” (1972, p.385), which are the traditional fairy tales. Therefore, critical analysis of fairy tales and their use in education as a transformative force can be a powerful tool for bringing about positive change in society.

In her influential work *What is a Woman?: and Other Essays*, Toril Moi questions the transformative power of the education system on society:

in *The Stale Nobility*, for example, Bourdieu studies the way in which, the imposition of social power in the educational system is linked to the transmission or reproduction of power in other social spheres. The main function of the educational system, he argues, is above all to produce the prepare social belief in the legitimacy of currently dominant power structures. The covered diploma or exam paper becomes a token *social magic*, the emblem of a transformational exercise which truly changes the essence of the chosen elite. (1999, p. 305)

Moi’s insightful comments on the education system, rooted in Pierre Bourdieu’s *Sociology of Culture* (2020), are particularly relevant when considering the patriarchal language used in traditional fairy tales. These tales have historically served as a tool for the patriarchal language, portraying female language, body, and mind as spiritless entities. In light of this, using the feminist lens for the comparative analysis of fairy tales in pre-service teacher education could serve as a change agent to raise awareness of the power of the language for future educators.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Context and Participants**

The study was conducted within the pre-service EFL teacher education program at a state university in the west of Turkey, encompassing a diverse group of students from various regions of Turkey as well as international students. The participants enrolled in the “*Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching*” course during the fall 2023-2024 semester. The students ranged from second grade to fourth grade. Most students had teaching experience, and the number of fourth-grade students was high in class. Importantly, none of the students had taken a discourse analysis course on children’s literature before and had no prior knowledge about discourse analysis or literary analysis of fairy tales.

#### **3.2. Course Structure**

The students took the two-hour lectures throughout the fall semester of 2023-2024. The fourteen-week course was designed to raise awareness of the language used in fairy tales by fostering the students' critical reading and thinking skills. During the fall of 2023-2024, the elective course “*Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching*” was the setting of the study. Each course consisted of two-hour lectures taught by me as the researcher of the study (See Appendix (A)). Although 70 students enrolled in the course, approximately 50 students participated each week, and at least 5 students did not enroll. The fourteen-week course structure was as follows.

Week	Content	Modes of Instruction
1	The History of Fairy Tales	Lecturing fairy tales as a literary genre from a historical stance.
2-3	Marcia Lieberman <i>Someday My Prince Will Come</i>	Guided Discussion on the impacts of fairy tales on children.
4	Judith Butler, <i>Gender Trouble</i>	Lecturing what is gender and guided discussion on the topic.
5	Toril Moi: <i>What is A Woman?</i>	The analysis of societal gender roles in the selected works.
6	What is Comparative Literature?	Lecturing comparative literature theory and practice
7	Feminist Literary Criticism	Lecturing feminism and guided discussion on feminist literary criticism
8	Brothers Grimm: <i>Rapunzel</i>	The feminist literary criticism of the tale via group discussion.
9	Brothers Grimm: <i>Hensel and Gretel</i>	The feminist literary criticism of the tale via group discussion.
10	Discussion	The comparative literary analysis of the selected fairy tales. Discussion, narrative framework Semi-structured Interview
11	What is Post-modernism?	Lecturing post-modernism post-modern literature
12	The <i>Fight Club</i>	Literary analysis of the text
13	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Literary analysis of the text
14	Discussion	The comparative literary analysis of the selected fairy tales.

## 4. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

### 4.1. Narrative Research

For the qualitative study, narrative research is used to gather rich insights into pre-service teachers' experiences. As underlined by Creswell (2013), "Narrative research focuses on studying the lives of individuals, telling their stories as they experience events and interact with others over time" (p. 74). This approach, which values personal narratives is a powerful way to

explore and understand lived experiences through storytelling. In this study, narrative research is used to delve into a deeper analysis of the socio-cultural contexts in fairy tales used in class to understand the social phenomena. According to Connely & Clandinin (2000), "Narrative inquiry allows for the exploration of the complex relationships between individuals and their social worlds, offering a means of understanding how stories reflect and shape human experience" (p. 27). To this end, narrative inquiry was chosen to use the power of storytelling as a tool:

Perhaps because it focuses on human experience, perhaps because it is a fundamental structure of human experience, and perhaps because it has a holistic quality, narrative has an important place in other disciplines. Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields. The entire field of study is commonly referred to as narratology, a term which cuts across such areas as literary theory, history, anthropology, drama, art, film, theology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, education, and even aspects of evolutionary biological science. (Clandinin & Connely, 1990, p.2)

This study uses narrative inquiry to explore the participants' lived experiences. A single template based on an open-ended approach is designed inspired by Barkhuizen (2014, p.23-24-25-26) and Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008 (see Appendix A). In addition to narrative frames, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data (see Appendix B). The second part of the narrative framework was used for the interview to guide the discussion. The data gathered from "rewrite the ending activity" is also used to interpret the participants' lived experiences.



#### **4.2.Data Analysis Procedure**

The narrative frames, semi-structured interviews, and the data gathered from rewriting the ending activity were analyzed in the light of Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis procedure (2012). After becoming familiar with the data, the data was coded to label meaningful patterns. After the initial coding process, the following step was grouping the codes. Focusing on similarities and differences, the recurrent topics that emerged from the data were identified. Investigator triangulation was used to ensure the reliability of the findings. As

Investigator triangulation involves the participation of two or more researchers in the same study to provide multiple observations and conclusions. This type of triangulation can bring both confirmation of findings and different perspectives, adding breadth to the phenomenon of interest (Denzin, 1978). (Carter et al., 2014, p.545)

The themes were reviewed, defined and named after being analyzed with a peer debriefer from the same department. Together, we reread the data until a consensus was reached. A third researcher did not participate in the study for investigator triangulation, as the common themes were found by both the researcher of the study and the peer debriefer. In the last step, we defined and named the themes encompassing the analysis of the findings parallel to the research questions. Semi-structured interview questions were not applied to a group of students; instead, the questions were asked to the whole class, and the data was collected through guided discussion by taking notes. 50 students were given the narrative frames; however, 10 of them did not fill them out. Therefore, the narrative frames of 40 students

were analyzed. The student excerpts were not corrected grammatically to preserve their originality.

#### **4.3.Researcher Positionality**

As an Associate Professor of comparative literature and an instructor teaching literature courses for approximately 18 years, I have utilized my knowledge and skills to develop and implement the course. I have conducted various studies on fairy tales, and the peer debriefer specializes in language and literature within the same ELT department. It was significant to prioritize both etic and emic perspectives throughout the study to ensure the reliability of the research findings.

During the fall 2022-2023 semester, I had the opportunity to teach a small group of students the *Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching* course. Inspired by the qualitative data gathered from the research conducted throughout the course, which is the subject of an article in the press, I decided to focus on fairy tales and comparative literature circle activities once again, this time centering the curriculum around the stories of *Rapunzel* and *Hansel and Gretel*. The findings of the article in the press gave me the confidence to implement such a course structure to shed light upon the significance of developing critical thinking and reading skills of pre-service EFL teachers who will use these texts in their classes. As the number of studies that focus on the use of children's literature in pre-service EFL teacher education to raise awareness of thinking and reading critically is relatively limited, I felt empowered by the findings of the article in the press. The course design for the fall 2022-2023 semester has truly inspired me to shed light upon other pre-service EFL teachers to make a meaningful impact in the field of pre-service teacher education. My academic background and my perception of societal gender roles affected the study to a certain extent.

## **5. FINDINGS**

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data indicated that many participants developed critical reading skills through discourse analysis, comparative literary analysis, and feminist literary criticism of the selected fairy tales. One of the major themes is the participants' development of critical reading skills, which is followed by three major themes: the development of critical thinking and reading skills and an awareness of gender inequity in literary texts. The participants' development of critical reading skills paved the way for them to think critically, and the data analysis underscored the significance of the thematic analysis, revealing that enhancing their critical thinking skills sheds light upon an awareness of gender inequity in fairy tales. The written templates were identified as PST with numbers in parentheses, while the interviews were identified as I with numbers in parentheses.

## **6. DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL READING SKILLS**

The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews and narrative frames indicated that almost all participants had read *Rapunzel* and *Hansel and Gretel* at least once. Before the discourse analysis of the fairy tales, they identified the tales with the following words: joy (PST30), funny (PST11), enjoyable (I4), educational (PST25), simple (I9), Glittery (PST29), sparkling (I15), utopic (I4), harmless (PST37), beneficial (PST28), creative (PST19), innocent (PST22). Most of the participants underlined that at the beginning of the semester, they thought that analyzing the fairy tales would be 'boring' because they believed that the tales had nothing to say new to students. As mentioned by PST4:

When I selected this lesson at the beginning of this semester, I wasn't so enthusiastic about it. But with each

passed week, this lesson caught my interest more and more, and in the week we wrote alternative endings to fairy tales, we compare them, discourse analysis became my favorite lesson, I did researches about discourse analysis I recommended it to my friends and thought that I was not aware of how to read critically.

Another participant stressed:

The course changed my perspective. I understand the importance of critical reading much more. At the beginning of the semester I wasn't aware of the necessity of critical reading skills but now, at the end of the semester I feel like my skill was improved. I now know recognize symbols, metaphors and representations in the tales. I have begun to read each text in the manner. (PST11)

PST 28 underlined:

This was by far my favorite course this term but because of the timing I always had to leave early and it really got on my nerves. For me, it is the lesson that actually intrigues me because it's like solving as puzzle; why did she wear green? → because she represents nature...For improving our cognitive skills such as critical reading the course altered the way I read and analyze a text. I become fully aware of how to read critically.

The participants emphasized the significance of using discourse analysis and comparative literary analysis to develop critical reading skills through the selected fairy tales; “After a semester of Critical Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching

course lessons, I now find myself more careful when reading I catch little details and therefore make it more enjoyable. I am glad to have this course” (PST34).

## **7. DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the participants’ improved critical reading skills enabled them to think critically. The written excerpts and interviews also indicated that the participants’ critical thinking skills were enhanced. Most of the participants used “critical thinking skills” as a term when describing how they had improved:

The fairy tales are analyzed comparatively and in terms of critical thinking I could observe my development. At the beginning of the course, I wasn't much aware of analyzing the texts in terms of the message that it intends to convey. Now, I can view the texts in a different manner. It give me a critical approach and perspective towards the texts. I can think critically to think about different perspectives while comparing them. (PST38)

The course altered my perception as a teacher in a way that is in favor of my students because I'm now more careful when it comes to choosing and using a fairy tale in my classes, I analyze it meticulously- The course content also showed me that there are so many stories effecting how we think not only about social roles but also about how we look. Now I do not really love such tales as much as I did in the past. Because they limit the way we think. This course developed my critical thinking skills so I can interpret the tales from my point of view. (PST12)

At the beginning of the semester I thought that the tales were innocent now I see they are not as innocent as I think. I can think critically and I read the tales completely different. Thanks to this course my perception has change. As a pre-service EFL teacher I now believe, in efl classes tales can be used to help to think critically as a student the course altered the way I think. As a critical thinker now I am ready to help my students to think critically. (27)

The fairy toles are helped me in terms of critical thinking, the so-called moral lessons they give and their structures to suppress women. At the beginning of the course, I wasn't much aware of analyzing the texts in terms of the message that it intends to convey. Now, I can view the texts in a different manner. It gave me a critical approach and perspective towards the texts. (14)

I think this course developed my critical thinking skills dramatically. (PST33)

Most of the participants referred to the term “critical thinking” and described its development using the words “approach,” “perspective,” and “lens.” They mentioned that the development of their critical thinking skills postulated a new approach, lens, and perspective in redefining societal gender roles as depicted in fairy tales and their impact on social life.

## **8. AWARENESS OF GENDER INEQUITY IN LITERARY TEXTS**

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed that participants’ enhancement of critical thinking skills fostered an awareness of gender inequity in literary texts. Most participants

underlined that the comparative analysis of the selected fairy tales through a feminist lens promoted their awareness of gender inequality represented in fairy tales. Importantly, the participants built a link between the representation of societal gender roles in fairy tales and social life:

The discourse analysis course made me aware of the influence of fairy tales on children and us by imposing traditional gender roles which tells woman to be silent and beautiful and tells men to be handsome and strong. I realized their impact on me as we analyzed fairy tales from a feminist lens. (I15)

The course content altered my teacher self by making me aware of the impact of the message beyond the lines on our students. As for my social self, now I know that I should be careful about what my words might mean...The stories in the tales are reflected in our daily lives. I become aware of gender inequality women are always passive. I must use modernized versions of the tales. (PST30)

I became aware about societal gender roles and the inequality. In the past I believed I could use these tales in my classes but now, and I believe I should teach the postmodern versions of the tales and teach the students the importance of gender equality. Girls can be powerful too. (I9)

I now believe that regarding societal gender roles in fairy tales female and male characters were characters were bound by the societies expectations and if they did not act according to what society wants, they would get punished. I will use different versions of the tales in my classes in which women are more powerful. (PST21)

Analyzing fairy tales from a feminist lens is important for me because in most fairy tales female characters are rather passive and the male characters are powerful. This course made me be more cautious of the societal gender roles in the tales and how they affect the way we act. I prefer to use modernized versions of the tales. (PST31)

Now I believe that regarding societal gender roles in fairy tales, there are so many subconscious messages about gender roles and they label woman and man about how they should behave, dress, and look like. Moreover fairy tales say what kind of a man is appropriate for marriage. This is unfair. There is inequality both for men and women. This is the same in real life. I didn't know they reflected our daily lives in such a strong way. (PST13)

I'm a woman and a teacher and it's important for me to be aware of the societal gender roles in fairy tales from a feminist perspective. Because I know that students might get wrong messages, while reading them the way they think might be shaped negatively. The course altered my perception as a teacher in a way that is in favor of my students because I'm now more careful when it comes to choosing and using a fairy tale in my classes, I analyze it meticulously- The course content also showed me that there are so many stories effecting how we think not only about social roles but also about how we look life. Now I do not really love these tales as much as I did in the past. Because they portrayed women as helpless being while portraying men as strong. This inequality is the thing I face in life. I will choose postmodern versions of the tales. (PST20)



The participants frequently used terms like “modernized,” “postmodern,” “modern,” and “different versions” of the tales to highlight their strategies for overcoming social inequity in the tales and the classroom.

## **9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Gender inequity has remained a critical issue in education and social life for the general well-being of society. In teacher education programs, gender inequity should be paramount to the curriculum to encourage teachers to act as change agents and turn inequality into equality. In the educational setting, comparative analysis of fairy tales as a tool to promote awareness of gender inequality can provide insights into how future educators can create a more egalitarian and inclusive learning environment. This study aims to transform pre-service EFL teachers’ perceptions of gender inequity by fostering critical reading and thinking skills using comparative literature circle activities.

In her seminal work, *What is A Woman?*, Tori Moi emphasizes Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “Sociology of Culture.” Highlighting the influence of the education system on individuals, she mentions that:

in *The State Nobility*, for example, Bourdieu studies the way in which, the imposition of social power in the educational system is linked to the transmission or reproduction of power in other social spheres. The main function of the educational system, he argues, is above all to produce the prepare social belief in the legitimacy of currently dominant power structures. The covered diploma or exam paper becomes a token *social magic*, the emblem of a transformational exercise which truly

changes the essence of the chosen elite. (Moi, 1999, p. 305)

When considering societal gender roles, it becomes evident that one of the most influential power structures can be identified as the classical European fairy tales, notably written by the Brothers Grimm. That is why Lieberman identifies "...the possibility that gender has a cultural character and origin we need to examine the primary channels of acculturation" (1972, p.385). One of the primary channels is fairy tales, where women are portrayed as helpless, submissive beings kept in a house or in a castle waiting to be rescued. On the other hand, the patriarchal domain belongs to the active social life in which women have physical and psychological freedom. These stories, beyond their cultural influence, also find a significant place within the families as bedtime stories and later as tools to teach different language skills in classes. The power of fairy tales in language learning reflects Bourdieu's sociology of culture, which refers to the

natural superiority, levels of knowledge among students which are in fact largely the result of an informal learning process taking place within the family. (Johnson, 1993, p. 25)

Bourdieu argues that cultural capital, referring to the power structures in society, plays a crucial role in shaping the inequalities we encounter in social life. The power structures in the language used in Grimm's fairy tales can be identified as a source of cultural capital that results in gender inequity.

To this end, the pre-service teachers first read and discussed the seminal works on gender and societal gender roles to foster an awareness of the power of the language used in the

tales through discourse analysis. Then, in line with the course content, they compared *Hansel and Gretel* and *Rapunzel* comparatively. The participants built a connection between Butler, Moi, and Lieberman's ideas and the selected tales. For instance, "Rapunzel, locked up in a tower by a cruel witch, is found and initially rescued by her prince" (Lieberman, 1972, p.391) while Gretel needs her brother to survive. The participants realized that "Even so, Gretel is one of the most active of the girls, but her company is small (Lieberman, 1972, p.388). The thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the participants initially developed critical reading skills that unveiled the power of the language used in the tales. Most of the future teachers mentioned that the symbols and metaphors, which mirror the language used in the tales, brought to light the patriarchal discourse that champions gender inequity. The participants emphasized that they started to read a text critically, enabling them to analyze the unconscious messages used in the tales. The members of the cohort underscored the transformative power of critical reading skills in interpreting not just the tales but also any text in their professional and social lives. They noted that their development of critical reading skills improved their abilities to engage more critically with the language used in the texts.

The participants' experience, characterized by the transformative impact of critical reading skills, suggests that it contributed to the quality of their professional lives. Most of them emphasized that developing critical reading skills empowered them to make informed decisions in EFL classes. This ability was reflected in students' excerpts, where they noted professional development beyond the classroom. It is assumed that the participants' development of critical reading skills enabled them to think critically. Most of them suggested that critical thinking fostered their awareness of the subversive elements and societal gender norms in the tales, which shape societal gender roles and

the representation of women and men in social life. The findings underlined that critical thinking skills are a transformative agent for future educators.

The qualitative data analysis indicated that the development of critical reading skills was instrumental in cultivating the participants' enhancement of critical thinking skills. This development fostered their engagement with diverse perspectives, enabling them to apply the knowledge they gathered to real-life contexts in the EFL classroom. The enhancement of their critical thinking skills further empowered their awareness of gender inequity in social life. As emphasized by Diane Halpern:

When we think critically, we are evaluating the outcomes of our thought processes — how good a decision is or how well a problem has been solved. Critical thinking also involves evaluating the thinking process — the reasoning that went into the conclusion we've arrived at or the kinds of factors considered in making a decision. (2014, p.9)

The participants recognized that the critical reading skills made them aware of the power of the language used in the tales and its impacts upon individuals. Their critical engagement with the tales, particularly in analyzing the representation of female characters such as Rapunzel and Gretel, who are often portrayed as passive, dependent, and submissive characters living in the domains of patriarchal power, offered valuable insights into a potential action plan. This plan, if implemented, can act as a transformative tool in EFL classes.

The ability to think critically fostered the members of the cohort to become aware of the limited roles attributed to female characters in the tales. For instance, critical thinking encouraged them to explore the gender dynamics, societal expectations, and

power struggles between the patriarchal language and the female world. As mentioned by Diane F. Halpern,

No one can become a better thinker just by reading a book or even by just learning a set of thinking skills that would be useful if they were used. An essential component of critical thinking is developing the attitude or disposition of a critical thinker. Good thinkers are motivated and willing to exert the conscious effort needed to work in a planful manner, to check for accuracy, to gather information, and to persist when the solution is not obvious or requires several steps. (2014, p.20)

In relation to this, in a proactive stance against gender inequity, most of the participants have developed action plans proposing postmodern, modernized, or alternative versions of the tales to counter the unconscious messages that perpetuate the patriarchal discourse in these stories.

At the beginning of the semester, many students viewed the tales , such as *Rapunzel* and *Hansel and Gretel* , as innocent, enjoyable stories. At the same time, most students found the course content uninteresting, believing that the stories would not offer anything new to a pre-service EFL teacher. However, the discourse analysis, the feminist lens, and the selected works on gender empowered them to read and think critically. Most of the members of the cohort noted that they had never analyzed and read the classical tales in such a way. What is significant is that both female and male students became aware of gender inequity suppressed by the language used in the tales. For instance, in *Rapunzel*, the protagonist is expected to be silent, beautiful, and passive, while in *Hansel and Gretel*, the female protagonist Gretel is portrayed as dependent and helpless. On the other hand, male

characters are expected to sacrifice themselves and be strong. That is why the participants underlined that life is challenging for both girls and boys in social life, as the tales expect girls to be beautiful, silent, passive, submissive entities while expecting young men to be bold and courageous, regardless of their experiences. In addition to narrative frames and semi-structured interviews, the qualitative data gathered from the rewriting the tales' ending unveiled a fascinating transformation. The participants, especially the female ones, altered the ending of the fairy tales to create powerful female protagonists. It is significant to highlight that none of the male students created dependent, passive, helpless female characters. Instead, the students' narratives were action-centered. In the activity of rewriting the ending, some groups were exclusively male, while others were mixed. Notably, a few female students chose to work independently. These students, particularly the females, featured strong female protagonists and preferred to rewriting the fairy tales from the beginning, rather than altering the ending. This led to a significant change in the characters of Rapunzel and Gretel, who were transformed into powerful characters capable of controlling their lives and being active throughout the stories. On the other hand, most of the male pre-service teachers rewrote the tales' endings by concentrating on action in the stories depicting male protagonists. It should be noted that female participants, especially, created happy endings to emphasize the power of Rapunzel and Gretel, a departure from the original stories.

The analysis of the data indicated that the course content fostered egalitarian and transformative educational practices. Another salient aspect highlighted by the members of the cohort is the significance of critical thinking skills in enhancing more egalitarian instructional practices through the use of appropriate texts in EFL classes. The participants highlighted the transformative potential of enhancing their critical thinking skills

through fairy tales. Most of the members of the cohort emphasized that instead of using these tales in EFL classes as tools, they preferred to use the versions that spotlight powerful, active, independent female characters. The findings of the study highlighted the positive effects of enhancing critical thinking and reading skills. Data analysis revealed that the participants researched postmodern versions of the tales to develop a possible action plan to address social equity.

Social equity is one of the prominent issues of the modern world. An egalitarian and peaceful world is a must for the general well-being of individuals. Altering inequality into equality is possible because future educators are equipped with the essential skills, such as critical thinking, and reading skills, to promote equality for all. In line with this, pre-service teacher education should focus on transformative tools such as literature to foster these skills and alter the world. To achieve this, teacher education programs need to empower the critical reading and thinking skills of pre-service teachers for a better world.

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**(Appendix A)**

**MY CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND LANGUAGE  
TEACHING COURSE STORY**

**Your Story Part 1**

Please read the whole page and write a coherent story by filling in the spaces in the sequence provided.

**IN THE PAST**

I thought fairy tales were -----  
-----

I believed that in EFL classes fairy tales .....

**NOW**

Now, after having conducted discourse analysis of the selected fairy tales I think fairy tales are.....

As a pre-service EFL teacher I now believe, in efl classes.....

## **IN THE FUTURE**

In the future, as an EFL teacher, I would like to use fairy tales to.....

I now believe that regarding societal gender roles fairy tales.....

Analyzing fairy tales from a feminist lens is important for me because

## **YOUR STORY PART 2**

Please tell me a little about how your journey started and how it ended in Critical Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching Course

- How did the course content alter your perceptions of your teacher self?
- Do you think the analysis of the classical fairy tales changed the way you interpreted your profession?
- How did the course content alter your perceptions as a social self?
- At the beginning of the semester I was.... / I thought..
- At the end of the semester I am... / Now I believe

(Inspired by Barkhuizen, 2014, p. 23-24.25-26).

**(Appendix B)**

How did the course content alter your perceptions of your teacher self?

Do you think the analysis of the classical fairy tales changed the way you interpreted your profession?

How did the course content alter your perceptions as a social self?



# **A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK BASED PROJECT: TERTIARY LEVEL EFL CURRICULUM PROPOSAL**

**İlknur KAZAZ<sup>1</sup>**

**Duygu AKTUĞ EKİNCİ<sup>2</sup>**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

At tertiary level EFL teaching, there are apparently many serious deficits such as technological backwardness, administrative prejudices, political impediments, curricular deficiencies and so forth. Some things are beyond instructors' depth to fix them. Still, to do their shares, they can make a contribution in healing the education system in Turkey by reforming the curriculums at institutions. In this study a curriculum renewal project is proposed for a State University School of Foreign Languages taking into consideration the goals and objectives determined according to the needs of the students. This curriculum has been developed phase by phase according to Brown's (1995) framework and the parts have been compiled to compose this portfolio.

- a) Articulating beliefs
- b) Needs Analysis
- c) Goals and Objectives
- d) Material Development
- e) Assessment

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The preliminary phase is about teacher beliefs on teaching English and the learning procedures of our students. In the second phase, the general characteristics of the curriculum have been proposed and the findings of the needs analysis conducted are discussed. The third phase expands on the goals and objectives determined in line with the needs analysis. In the fourth phase, the process for how some new materials have been developed or existing materials have been adapted is explained in a detailed way. Ultimately, the way and types of assessment under this curriculum is discussed.

## **2. ARTICULATING BELIEFS**

Teaching a foreign language to adults is quite different from teaching to pupil in many ways, and requires certain characteristics in certain contexts. Yet, the main thing that needs to be taken into account is the beliefs or the principles of the teacher and the way of teaching. With regard to Stern's (1983) framework, beliefs could be about anything. Coming deep within past experiences and providing a basis to the choices made actually the more aware instructors are of them, the better practice they may have. Those beliefs have an imperative order on instructors view of language. Is the language they want to teach rule governed or meaning based? Is it a means of self-expression or is it a way for getting things done? Instructors have an important role in bridging the language and social contexts as well. By understanding their own culture and the target culture, they should adapt the language to enable learners fit into social groups. They should see the learners as source of expertise not only recipients of knowledge. They, by providing examples, should help the students internalize that knowledge. In other words, learning requires mostly inductive teaching through eliciting and continuous communication. To this end, they need

to know themselves well, in order to fit into their teaching contexts. Considering all the things stated above regarding the framework, it would be fair to say that beliefs do not fit into teaching context fully. As the proponents of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, they should implement more collaborative activities which would foster students' communicative competencies. They should have more meaning-focused lessons. They should try to act as a facilitator and mentor to support students' zone of proximal development rather than acting as the sole information giver. They should pay attention to fluency in lessons and use much more authentic materials. They should have more listening for the gist and extensive reading activities. Furthermore, they should ask for students' ideas in choosing the materials and design the courses according to their wishes.

However, due to the heavy syllabus and low proficiency level, they hardly find time to do extra or fun activities. Little motivation and high affective filter are the other components that prevent them from using all of their capacity to teach. Students feel overwhelmed easily, because preparatory school is obligatory for them. No one comes voluntarily to learn English. It really takes time to get students to index a stance of sympathy towards English. They spend most of the time informing the students about the pragmatic aspects of learning L2 (e.g. they will need English for some courses in their departments, they will need English if they want to attend MA/MS/PhD programs, or they will need English because companies ask for English when hiring employees) in order to increase their motivation. Besides, they try to take into consideration their linguistic needs. The students are more exam-focused. They only care about passing the preparatory class, and this in turn makes the lessons more deductive and accuracy based. Under such circumstances, instructors unfortunately cannot expect autonomy and investment from the students.

In spite of all the negations for the perfect English lesson, they develop their own defense mechanisms, in other words, they find the mid-way. First and foremost they are using the guided discovery technique for metalinguistic structures. They don't spend a lot of time on mechanical exercises. They skip some rule-governed, drilling parts of the course book and assign them to students if they feel like they can handle them at home by themselves. In order to save time for communicative activities, they have the students work in groups. Group work also decreases the speaking anxiety of some students, so it is very beneficial. For writing, they deal with common writing errors in an anonymous fashion, instead of one-on-one feedback. If there is something that they don't understand by means of the correction code, they can share it in writing center of the institution. Other instructors can give feedback from there also. And for the exam preparation, they give the students some grammar and vocabulary tests or the exams of the previous years.

When they have something they did not understand, they ask about it during the break. These are some of the things that can be done to strike a happy medium. With more experience and advancements of technology, they will have better solutions and a more fruitful practice. Experience is bliss!

### **3. NEEDS ANALYSIS**

To this end, this project investigates the English language needs of tertiary level students in the School of Foreign Languages at a State University. It is not an English medium university, but there has been a decision by the university administration for departments to give 30% of the courses in English. It has a skill-supplemented program including main English course, reading and writing, and grammar courses. It divides the learners into three main proficiency levels, Beginner,

Pre-intermediate, and Intermediate, according to the results of the proficiency test administered at the beginning of the academic year.

Hereby, it attempts to find out the English language needs of the current students, and it is also attempted to refer to their both current and future needs when they start studying at their departments. A further aim of this paper is to make curricular recommendation for SFL based on the needs of students from different levels and administrative needs of various decision-making units. Since the school was founded, instructors, administrators, students' faculty teachers, and also students themselves have felt that the English level of the students is not satisfactory. Therefore, in SFL a needs analysis should be done in order to see the needs of students and also to develop clearly stated goals and objectives.

Since every year new departments are sending their students to SFL, it may be difficult for SFL to meet the English needs of the students in the future. Doing a needs analysis provides information to determine students', instructors', and administrators' beliefs about student's needs at this moment, and the differences and similarities among them. In this way, it can be decided how to structure the curriculum to fulfil the goals of instructors, students, and administrators. According to discrepancy philosophy, in general, needs can be defined as the gap between current and desired general proficiency level in language learning (Brown, 1995). In this approach, need is considered as the differences between the current level of knowledge and the ideal level. Both learners and teachers have perceptions related with the learners' development in language. Smith (1989) describes "need" in line with Brown's discrepancy approach, and says "a comparison of the current state and the desired state will reveal existing students' needs" (Smith, 1989, p. 24). At the institution, there are some mismatches between the

expected level for students and their present knowledge of language, and the discrepancy approach is aimed to find out the lacks. All levels of students should be at the same proficiency level at the end of the program as they will all be exposed to the same summative assessment at the end of the year. Since needs of different levels of learners may differ depending on the conditions they have, it is difficult to consider all the needs of learners. In order to solve this problem, this project focuses on the situation needs and language needs of the students. The situation needs include the pedagogical needs in relation with administration, and language needs yield information about the circumstances in which the language will be used, the dimensions of language competence involved, the learners' reasons for studying the language, their present abilities with respect to those reasons, and so forth (Brown, 1995). To that end, there should be negotiation between syllabus designers and students in deciding the prior needs. Another solution to make determining needs easy is to examine them at the proficiency level by being in touch with their teachers. Hence, a basis for reviewing the existing program is provided in this project. Such an implementation would be used for assessing whether students' needs have been met, what the weak and strong parts of the existing curriculum are, and what the necessary changes for improvement could be.

In an attempt to specifically and rhetorically point out the situation and language needs of the students, this project tries to; a) discover which level students most need training in particular language skills, b) identify the gap between what students need to do and what they can do, c) collect information about a particular problem students from different levels experience, d) to find out a course adequately addresses the needs of potential students according to Richards' (1984) framework.

The needs analysis proposed for SFL includes the following questions:

- What are the difficulties you encounter as a preparatory school student at SFL?
- Why are you learning English? Please put the following in order of importance assigning number (1) to the most important, number (7) to the least important.
  - ( ) To be successful in my department.
  - ( ) For further education (MA / PhD).
  - ( ) To get a good job.
  - ( ) To go abroad.
  - ( ) To interact with people from other countries.
  - ( ) To be able to read the related literature in my field.
  - ( ) Because it is obligatory.
- As 30% of the courses will be taught in English in your departments, which language skills would you like to have developed when you start studying at your department?
- What do you perceive to be the weaknesses and strengths of SFL?
- What are your suggestions for SFL to improve the teaching of English?

For a triangulation of the instruments used in this needs analysis, it is decided to use;

a) observations, b) questionnaires, c) focus-group interviews.

The observations of the predetermined classes yield detailed information about the classroom discourse in each proficiency level. The questionnaire that implemented for all students is designed to gather information from SFL students about their current levels of ability and expectations. Lastly, focus group interviews are done according to the insightful answers

gathered from the questionnaires and will concentrate on both the specific problems and suggestions of students from each level. The interviews are completed at the conference room with pre-determined students from each level. The information from the needs analysis might be made use of; a) as basis for existing program evaluation, b) as basis for planning goals and objectives for a future program, c) as basis for development of syllabus and teaching materials.

The results of this needs analysis matches Richards' (1984) four purposes by; a) finding out if a course adequately addresses potential students' needs will serve as a basis for development of syllabus and teaching materials, b) discovering which level students need most training in particular language skills will serve as a basis for program evaluation, c) identifying the gap between what students need and can do will serve as a basis for planning the goals and objectives of a future program.

To conclude, this needs analysis is useful for teachers and administrators in assessing the deficits of language program implemented, and in turn, proposing a process for curriculum development.

#### **4. GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

After the needs are determined, the nature and relationship among needs, goals and objectives of SFL were addressed at. The processes involved in specifying the instructional goals and objectives are explained, and the arguments for the use of those objectives in relation with the needs of the students are provided.

At SFL, all students from different proficiency levels are expected to be at the same level because of taking the same final exam at the end of the academic year. Therefore, the curriculum proposed will be designed accordingly. The source group is all



SFL students, and the target group is all tertiary level students in Turkey.

The needs analysis conducted has revealed that the situational needs are surpassed by language needs. According to the findings of the analysis, beginner level students need the most training in particular language skills to be at the same level with other proficiency level students. Beginner level students have to cover four levels of course books in order to reach the highest level, while pre-intermediate level students cover three and intermediate level students cover two course books. Since beginner level students have to cover more books, they are not able to develop adequate competency in the various language skills and some linguistic aspects are overlooked. For instance, due to the strict schedule, instructors cannot foster interaction through communicative tasks in the classroom. For this reason, students lack speaking competence in the beginner level. Likewise, writing is not given adequate importance by the teachers. These cases are less frequent for pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. Therefore, the time allocated for specific linguistic areas in these levels is sufficient compared to the lowest level.

When the abovementioned needs are considered, the curriculum proposed will be organized according to Brown's (1995) framework with the following goals and objectives:

**Goal 1:** The students will have gained the ability to communicate in English fluently.

**Objective 1:** Students will be able to accomplish communicative functions through pair tasks according to the given situation.

**Objective 2:** Students will be able to use appropriate styles, registers, conversation rules, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations.

**Goal 2:** The students will have developed effective writing competence by transferring their grammatical knowledge into their written output.

**Objective 1:** The students will be able to write a well-organized paragraph by using appropriate cohesive devices with correct grammatical structures.

**Objective 2:** The student will be able to produce an effective opinion paragraph which takes a stand for/against the given topic.

These goals and objectives are developed in such a way that compensates for the neglected productive skills with the help of authentic and meaningful tasks along with exercises. They were designed to align the level of all the students at the end of the year for the summative assessment, which was lacking in the current curriculum. By the same token, the goals and objectives defined will serve in developing students' awareness and proper use of these skills in line with the main course.

## **5. MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT**

In line with the needs analysis conducted, the findings of the questionnaire have revealed that the beginner level students need the most training in order to become at the same level with other proficiency level students as they are exposed to the same summative assessment at the end of the academic year. Hereby, they have to cover more course books than the pre-intermediate and intermediate level students do, which in turn cause them to develop inadequate competency in various language skills and some linguistic aspects. Due to the time constraints, the instructors are generally bound to the materials that are predetermined by the administration. However, the integrated skills course books come short of providing satisfying importance

to the productive skills as much as the receptive skills. The current curriculum doesn't focus on getting all the students at the same level in the summative assessment as could be deduced from the needs analysis conducted. Therefore, there is an obvious need for developing new materials to supplement the existing course book according to the needs, goals and objectives we have determined to form a basis for the curriculum we will propose.

In the institution, the course book implemented is New Headway 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Lacking exercises that activate the productive skills, the current course book does not convey the target structures successfully enough. According to the findings of the needs analysis, the lower level students expressed that they couldn't perform as well as the other levels at the final exam because they had to cover more books than the others and in a superficial manner. Nonetheless, since the developmental stages are followed throughout the book, it will not be excluded from the curriculum proposed. Just, some supplementary materials will be developed to compensate for the skills and structures the book has overlooked so far.

The materials will be both technological and paper-based with particular consideration to what skills necessitate. Initially, the productive skills will be concentrated on. For writing, a paper-based pack including the topics covered during classes to make a revision after the units will be created by the instructors working for material development committee. The pack will be supplemented with a CD that includes teachers' video tutorials about the topics covered, for example "How to write an argumentative essay?" will be explained in a detailed way by the assigned teacher in the tutorials. The reason why the video recordings are included in the pack is the same as our main aim for developing a new curriculum: we want our students to be at the same level by being exposed to the same materials. These tutorial CDs will also help eliminating teaching differences. For

the other productive skill, speaking, it is quite well-advised to include “interactive power points” to the curriculum. The material development committee will prepare these power point presentations after each unit, where the instructions and exercises are videotaped and the students will respond to them by recording their voices. These power points will be evaluated and given feedback by the class teachers. These extensive speaking activities will develop communicative competence and lower down their affective filter since the students will be speaking at a comfortable atmosphere. It will teach them how to speak without anxiety and pave the way for a more student-centered teaching. Moreover, in order for fostering the reading skill, Hot Potatoes software will be used to develop reading materials. Likewise, the exercises will be prepared by the relevant committee according to the levels of the students. The exercises developed by this software will assist the students think critically and will also motivate them. Using technology will not pose a problem for the institution since computer labs are used effectively. Lastly, grammar video tutorials will be prepared. Material development committee will prepare grammar power points about grammatical structures that the book covers. After they have been prepared, using interactive white boards they will be presented by the instructors and videotaped at the Distance Education Center. The videos will be uploaded onto the school’s web site for anytime student access. In this way, they will be very helpful online sources for the students during the mid-term and final weeks.

In short, it is decided to supplement the existing course book with skill-based packs, video tutorials, and software programs. Such a blend will not only make the instructors’ practices more fruitful but also will increase students’ success. As a result the lowest and highest level students will be at the same proficiency level in the final exam which will lead to positive washback and fair evaluation.

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

Up till now, as the first step of curriculum design, the needs of the students have been analyzed. Secondly, the related goals and objectives of the courses have been defined, and lastly, materials have been developed accordingly. Now, as the indispensable part of teaching, it is time for students to be assessed.

As main objective is to get all students at the same proficiency level at the end of the academic year, testing plays an important role in diagnosing what these students lack. Therefore, the instructors will have the opportunity to adapt their teaching to the needs of those students. In the first instance, it is highly important that the instructors working for the assessment and evaluation unit be trained on writing appropriate test items that fit our goals and objectives. As for this purpose, the administration will financially support the instructors for attending various national and/or international workshops as well as conferences about testing.

Next important point is about how the assessment tests are implemented. In the institution, a placement test is implemented at the beginning of the year. After the students have been assigned to their levels, it is of utmost importance that their progress is assessed through achievement tests which prepare the students for the summative test at the end of the year. Hereby, the instruments used to assess students' learning need to be taken into consideration. Since the use of authentic materials are proposed to teach each skill, the test items should also be authentic. The parallelism could be achieved only by implementing non-standard assessment. For instance, to assess students' writing competence, writing portfolios will be used. Moreover, for speaking skill, the students will be evaluated on peer-feedback. Out of the interactive power points they have prepared, the

students will be asked to provide feedback to each other through Screencast-O-Matic that they send to each other and the instructor. In addition, reading tests will be conducted by using Hot Potatoes with a time-limit at the presence of the instructor at the computer labs. As most students bring barriers to learn grammar, testing grammar should be more communicative to make it more motivating and less challenging. Therefore, testing will be in line with teaching and create an opportunity for speaking. Designing the test in a student - student interview format in which the students ask and answer questions using the target grammatical structures with a picture stimulus will test grammar communicatively.

Regarding all the tests, timing will be determined by the assessment and evaluation unit in order to have a standardized testing for all the proficiency levels, and to prevent the teacher effect.

With this type of testing mentioned above, not only the instructors, but also the students and administration will benefit from the results and types of assessment. The instructors can revise their pre-determined syllabi and modify their teaching accordingly. Students will monitor their own progress through non-traditional testing and improve their learning. As for the administration, testing will make apparent whether the curricular goals have been achieved, which in turn will create a self-criticism possibility on behalf of them.

Consequently, testing is a significant part of a curriculum. It informs instructors on their own teaching practices as well as proving reflective feedback through the grades of the students. All the types of testing, including formative, summative, and informal assessments such as in-class testing, is essential in providing information on the achievement of the pre-determined goals and objectives of the course.

## **7. FINDINGS**

The purpose of this project is to have an insight into the issues in curriculum development and evaluation for language programs, and through it instructors also had the opportunity of sharing ideas and developing materials in accordance with their beliefs as English instructors and the results of needs analysis for the institution. The idea of reforming the existing curriculum to prepare a proposal for curriculum development for the institutions they work for must be every teacher's dream, as it is likely that there many deficits along with the curricular deficiencies exist at tertiary level ELT institutions. Thanks to bringing this project to completion, the challenging and meticulous process of developing a curriculum is experienced, which provided an invaluable experience in the decision-making process so far. The opportunity of obtaining awareness on the utmost need to plan every step carefully in line with the previous step/s provided information that curriculum development is a constant process having diverse variables.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

With this project comprehending the concept of 'good teaching environment' is complemented via a well-developed curriculum. In the institution, the materials are generally chosen by the stakeholders who have taken into consideration neither the ideas of the instructors nor conducting a needs analysis of the students having different proficiency levels. Therefore, the project is a good implementation including the considerations of the neglected points in the curriculum development process. As regards to the critique of the project proposed, it would be fair to mention that the needs analysis phase of the process, which dwells theoretically on the other phases, might have been conducted with some time constraints. However, when the

curriculum developers take each phase including various issues into account, the instructors, stakeholders and students can make good use of this proposal.



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# **THE EFFECT OF TECHNOLOGY USE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS IN PRESCHOOL PERIOD**

**Merve BAŞKUTLU<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The preschool length, which covers the age of zero to six, is a vital length wherein improvement happens maximum unexpectedly and substantially influences the subsequent years. In this length, there are very essential tendencies in phrases of social-emotional, physical, language and cognitive improvement of children (Dursun, 2009; Steel, 2015; Uyanık ve Kandır, 2010). Language improvement has an essential area in influencing the social, emotional and cognitive improvement of the child. In addition, language improvement is understood to be a aspect withinside the method of hassle fixing and dating constructing and cognitive improvement, which influences the socialization of the child, questioning skills, idea improvement method. In different words, language improvement interacts with different regions of improvement and development is accomplished together (Senemoğlu, 1989). It is thought that once the language utilized in all regions of lifestyles is supported at an ok degree beginning from the preschool period, it undoubtedly impacts the educational and social improvement of the character all through his / her lifestyles (Aydoğan and Koçak, 2003). For this reason, assisting the kid for speech at an early stage, growing suitable

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environments, providing powerful stimuli and making plans sports assist his language improvement; It additionally facilitates to apply the language improvement ability at the best degree. Children want language to fulfill their social communicate needs, to gather sociocultural values and to specific themselves (Mussen, Conger, and Kagan, considering 1990; Yıldırım and Koçak, 2016). According to Chomsky (1968), the pioneer of psycholinguistic theory, which states that language is an innate mechanism, environmental situations decide which language can be utilized by the kid, however can't provide an explanation for the language studying process. The cappotential to gather language is the talent this is innately withinside the kid's brain (Temel, Bekir and Yazıcı, 2014). According to Vygotsky (1986), surroundings and lifestyle have an effect on a kid's development. In the absence of someone to manual the kid, the kid will now no longer be capable of expand his reviews and could have problem in know-how the shape of language.

## **2. CHILD AND TECHNOLOGY**

Technology today is not only limited to toy inventions for children, but also includes computers, televisions, cameras, mobile phones, mp3 players and many other devices. Many of these tools can be seen not only in educational areas, but also in preschool areas (Morrison, 2007). Today, the term technology is departing from its former meaning. Technology is increasingly used to refer to different types of electronic devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones (Bergen, 2007). There are now many different toy options in children's lives, both electronic and non-electronic. Even in simple furry toys, the ability to respond to commands supported by a computer chip can be observed. The toy industries create 20 new interacting products each year (Newman, 1999). Even in simple toys, the existence of features

such as speaking, moving, obeying commands using computer-aided chips gives children the option of speaking, reading, teaching letters or numbers using toys. Children are both able to react to toys and receive reactions from them (Bergen, 2001). Research has recently been conducted on children's relationships with technology, but it is still unclear how technological toys affect children's cognitive and behavioral development (Fromberg Bergen, 2006). However, some case studies have been conducted on this subject. In one of them, a 2-year-old boy who learned to read books with computer technology was also seen to apply the click positions in the program with his own father after learning the interaction with this "talking book". He obeys his father's clicking commands, and when he asks his father for something, he gives the click commands in the app (Smith, 2002). This behavior is an example of the influence of electronic toys on the assimilation process in the formation of the schemes discussed by Piaget (Bergen, 2007). The increasing spread of technology has led to questions in the minds of society about its role in the lives of preschool and primary school children. Since children's brains are still developing, they are not as easily adapted to rapidly changing technology as adults. Children who still need real real-life experiences have to observe ordinary interactions themselves. Most of the concerns are that the virtual world created in the technological environment is stealing these experiences from children (Plowman, McPake and Stephen, 2010). However, there is research showing that these concerns are not as widely accepted by families as they are reflected in the media (Plowman, McPake and Stephen, 2010). Likewise, there is also research showing that there is not enough evidence about these social developmental inhibitory traits, especially in preschool children, that children do not constantly look at the television even when the television is turned on at home, or that it varies as shared experiences as opposed to programs watched with the family, and that children are actively communicating

(Plowman and McPake, 2013). In today's world where technology is highly developed, especially generation Z children grow up intertwined with the internet. This situation affects the language development of children from various points. Livingstone (2002) has clearly shown that a child's exposure to the internet in the preschool period creates short- and long-term changes by attributing the effects of children's use of the internet primarily to their changes in daily life and then to the change in their perspective on life. In the preschool period, when children make significant progress in terms of language development, their introduction to the internet has various effects, both positive and negative, both in the short and long term (Shields and Berhman, 2000). Summers et al. (2013) based on Microsoft founder Bill Gates' 'Generation I' speech in 2000, said that the generation that grew up with the production of the first Apple after 2007 was literally an internet generation and provided their communicative experience through touch. This suggests that language development for the post-2007 generation is quite stagnant, with the use of touch tools gradually weakening the use of spoken language (Summers et al., 2013). The influence of the environment on children's language learning processes and the development of their vocabulary is quite large. Especially for the child who does not go through a full education in the preschool period, the mother guides the child in learning, gathering and using words. In this period, mothers who constantly talk to the child and teach the child new words contribute a lot to the language development of the child (Linebarger and Walker, 2005). Like the mother and the environment, the stimulating elements in the environment have a great impact on language development. Televisions, which have a place in our lives as entertainment, news or habit in daily life, affect the level of language development of children. In a study, Linebarger and Walker (2005) observed 51 children from six months to 30 months of age and investigated how much the cartoons they were

shown had an impact on their language development. In this research, it has been observed that children have made progress in language development with the presence of characters who encourage children to speak, especially among cartoon heroes, and characters who ask questions to children from television and use new words. However, the obvious effect of cartoons in which only dialogue is watched on children's language development has not been measured (Linebarger and Walker, 2005). If the daily television viewing time exceeds 2-4 hours, it pacifies the child's brain and causes learning retardation in the child. This situation has a negative effect on the language development of the child. A child's only passive watching of the events in front of the screen, not practicing or not adding anything to his life in practice will cause language regression for the child and will also start to have learning difficulties because he cannot use what he has learned. In the preschool period, children who watch television for more than 4 hours have insufficient vocabulary, it is seen that they cannot learn their mother tongue except for certain words, and their language development slows down. However, the use of slang and vulgar words on television, especially in uncensored broadcasts, is among the points that will adversely affect the language development of the child (Ertürk, 2013).

### **3. FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION ON CHILDREN**

The first five years of a child's life are the most important time for learning a foreign language. From birth to five years, the neurophysiological functions of the child and its brain are very strong, and with the help of these methods, language is automatically registered in the brain. The child writes what he hears, as if recording a tape (Bikchentayev, 2004). A foreign language is a second language that can only be built on your

native language. The most important thing in foreign language education is not to make your mother tongue your second language. Success in learning a foreign language depends on the level of maturity of the native language (Kotil, 2002). The world of children is very different from the world of adults. In order to teach language to children, it is not enough to be an expert in the language being taught, but it is also necessary to be guided by knowledge of child psychology.

Games, stories, songs, cartoons, videos play an important role in the children's world. If this understanding is applied, children will quickly learn the rules of another language. A variety of books that suit children's interests can be used for foreign language learning, including cartoon characters. You should teach by showing the object itself or a picture. Plain text should be avoided. The first step in learning a foreign language is listening. This starts repeating the words. Children demonstrate a structure that guides them to learn by making decisions. Words should be taught as a whole, not in parts. Teaching short sentences is the next step. You can use a picture book for this step. Picture books are important because by analyzing words and pictures, children can more easily understand what is being said (Angı, 1999).

#### **4. USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

The use of technological tools in learning and teaching activities can be effective in promoting learning, improving teaching and enriching the face, and managing the work of those who use these technologies in education. Computer education is gaining popularity due to reasons such as the growing demand for education, the rapid increase in the number of students, the increase in information and complexity, the lack of teachers

without knowledge. Importance of skills and individual differences. Computers today are sold with hardware that supports multimedia. With the help of this tool and various types of software, you can improve your listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Writing readings on a computer using a multimedia device, a sound card and listening to them using a suitable computer will improve the student's learning ability. Listening skills. In this case, students have the opportunity to listen to the reading section several times.

By using sound cards, speaking and reading skills can also be developed. Audio analysis software ensures that words are pronounced correctly. Using spell check software can improve your writing skills. When students enter the text, the computer detects the wrong words in this text (Çevik, 2001). Videos are a great source of information and a great presentation tool. It ensures that real life is presented in the classroom in the best possible way. Videos are a great source of information and a great presentation tool. It ensures that real life is presented in the classroom in the best possible way. There are many messages in a short space in a video film. Short projects lasting a few minutes can be reduced to an hour of class time. You can transmit the communicative images of the language learned to the students in a clear and understandable way through a video. Through communication, students can easily identify gender, clothing, relationships between them, social status, their work and their characteristics. You can also briefly observe facial expressions, hand movements, tone of voice, all actions and better understand the events. In this sense, video has become one of the most important technologies in foreign language teaching (Soy, 2001).

This video really explains and shows the actual use of the language. Recently, it has been emphasized that the most effective way to learn a foreign language is the communication method. According to this approach, the goal of teaching a foreign



language is for students to communicate easily with other people in the community who speak that language. Videos that show actual language use are great. Thanks to visual training, what has been learned is reinforced and previously learned is consolidated (Soy, 2001; Fukushima, 2002).

The use of recording in language training is important for listening, imitation and repetition. The language lab provides these opportunities to students. Teaching in the language classroom is based on listening to pre-recorded audio tapes with teachers and students repeating the information aloud in each group. In these studies it is also possible to record the repetition with the students. When the student listens to his speech again, he can recognize the mistakes he made and correct them by telling the truth. Hearing aids are mainly used to teach pronunciation, develop listening comprehension and motor skills. The most important thing when using an audio device is that the audio group is clear and distinct. Otherwise, the research will not produce the desired results (Demirel, 1990).

## **5. TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION INTO PRESCHOOL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT**

Today, technology has become an integral part of children and their lives. Children have the opportunity to learn easily using a variety of technological devices, including televisions, smartphones, digital cameras, tablets, and computers (McManis Gunnewig, 2012). These tools have a great impact on children and their daily lives, shaping their communication with the environment, their understanding of fun and learning. For this reason, it is not necessary to prevent children from using technological devices, but it is necessary to ensure that these devices are used to support children, their development and learning.

Technology is an effective tool for children to learn. Technology supports children, their development, and learning when used appropriately for educational purposes (Epstein, 2013; McManis Gunnewig, 2012; NAEYC, 2012). Research has shown that technology increases social interaction with children and supports social skills (Brooker Siraj-Blatchford, 2002; Heft Swaminathan, 2002; Lee Oand#039; Rourke, 2006). Technology has a positive impact on children's acquisition of academic skills that support their readiness for elementary school.

Educational programs have been found to be used to develop children's academic skills in language, literacy, mathematics, and science (Daugherty, Dossani, Johnson, Oguz, 2014; Li, Atkins Stanton, 2006). Technology supports children and their individual learning by providing opportunities for immediate feedback. At the same time, technology provides children with an environment in which to solve problems and share ideas (Yelland, 2005). Among the main characteristics that are sought in the materials used in the nursery school are criteria such as materials that support the child's development and the ability to use them independently for various purposes.

Considering technological tools as assets, these key criteria should be considered when using technological tools (Yelland, 2005). Children have been shown to learn and create knowledge through free computer use (Papert, 1998). Children learn robotics programs developed based on construction education principles (Bers, Flannery, Kazakoff Sullivan, 2014) and this program has been shown to support their creativity (Pardamean, 2014). Likewise, it has been noted that there is a benefit to the active integration and use of technological and media tools appropriate to the child and his level of development and the use of old school materials (NAEYC, 2012).

Research has shown that when used appropriately for developmental purposes, technology provides children with skills that support their development and prepare them for elementary school (Brooker Siraj-Blatchford, 2002). Therefore, when using technology in the kindergarten classroom, the goals and reasons for use are important. Although teaching children to use technological tools such as computers, keyboards, mice and digital cameras was the goal chosen in the first step; This is not a sufficient goal.

Like other traditional resources used in early childhood education, technology should be used to enrich play with children, acquire knowledge and skills through play, learn through exploration, and problem solving. The purpose of technology is not to replace traditional college learning materials, but to support the legacy and provide children with a variety of diverse and varied learning experiences. In short, technology should only be used as a tool to support children and their learning and development (Epstein, 2013; Haugland Wright, 1997). Technology captures children's attention and allows them to interact with technological devices for long periods of time. For this reason, technology is used at home and at school to provide peace and quiet (AAP, 2011). Children are exposed to television, video games or computer games, relying only on what they see at home and at school. In our country, it has been established that children aged 4 to 6 watch television an average of 2 to 4 hours a day (Erdoğan and Baran, 2008). Furthermore, research shows that the use of these non-interactive technologies does not support children and their abilities (Plowman Stephen, 2007).

The purpose of using technology tools is to support children's learning and development, not to keep them busy and quiet. Technology use should not interfere with children's opportunities to interact with friends, family, and community necessary for healthy development. In addition, some

technological tools such as computer games are used to teach math, alphabet and language skills to children who are far from their lives. Programs that remind children not to encourage them to think this way have been shown not to benefit children (Haugland, Wright, 1997).

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# ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDIES

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