FROM LIBERAL OSTRICHISM TO TRANSFORMATIVE INTELLECTUALS: AN ALTERNATIVE ROLE FOR IRANIAN CRITICAL PEDAGOGUES

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Introduction

Heras (1999) ascribed the failures and successes of an educational system to people's linguistic and socio-cultural interaction, which are under the influence of dominant ideology, institutional practice and social relations. Deeply rooted in different critical theories such as: queer theory, postcolonialism, anti-racism and feminism; critical pedagogy endeavors to promote the students' critical consciousness to challenge the domination and subjugation that may distort and constrain their modes of thinking and acting. Critical pedagogy suggests that a mere acquisition of language skills or communicative competence without a consideration of socio-economic inequalities or political injustices may just lead to maintaining the status quo or silencing the marginalized. Emphasizing the interested nature of knowledge, Pennycook (2001) coined the label "Liberal Ostrichisms" to refer to those practitioners or theorists who take an apolitical stance towards English Language Teaching and refuse to take any action against oppressive power and inequalities inherent in teaching and learning. Paulo Freire (1970) made a clear-cut distinction between Banking and Problem-posing education. The Banking model depicts a traditional, teacher-fronted and knowledge transmission view of teaching, where learners passively digest received information through repetition, memorization and drills without having any right to challenge, negate, or reconstruct this practically irrelevant and intact knowledge. Critical pedagogy, and especially Problem-posing education, on the other hand, is quite dialogical, critical and reflective in nature. It is essentially based on personal experiences and real-world issues meaningful to the learners, which lead to inspiring and supporting learners' cognitive, personal, and sociopolitical development. Instead of filling learners' minds with a fixed, pre-packed, dissociated knowledge; the problem-posing model replaces their empty minds with open ones. Critical Pedagogy is also a pedagogy of action: thought, reflection and theory need to lead to practice and action via praxis. Freire himself advocated "authentic praxis" instead of "pure activism" (Freire 1970: 52). Authentic praxis aims to empower learners and teachers to act upon and transform their sociopolitical context as a result of critical consciousness and language competence acquired in classroom. To do so, teachers must be involved in a Transformative practice based on their experiences, awareness and critical examination of values, actions and beliefs through problem-posing and emancipatory self-study research. By encouraging teachers to develop their own theories of practice, a social transformation at collective level is expected to follow, which turns the practitioner to become "an agent of social change". Like Freire, Gramsci (1971) emphasized the same concept of praxis or theory-informed-practice, which requires teachers/intellectuals to develop a relational knowledge by engaging in self-reflectivity, active participation in social resistance, becoming an agent of social change and striving for a future well-being. To delineate over the relationship among critical pedagogy, praxis and transformative intellectuals, Fishman and McLaren (2005, p.1) suggested: "Critical pedagogy investigates the relationship between education and politics, between sociopolitical relations and pedagogical practices, between the reproduction of dependent hierarchies of power and privilege in the domain of everyday social life and that of classrooms and institutions. In doing so, it advances an agenda for educational transformation by encouraging educators to understand the sociopolitical contexts of educative acts and the importance of radically democratizing both educational sites and larger social formations. In such processes, educators

take on intellectual roles by adapting to, resisting, and challenging curriculum, school policy, educational philosophies, and pedagogical traditions".

Interrogating an Educational System
From "Control Site" to "Democratic Sphere"
The educational system in Iran seems to be based on a Banking model, since it shares a great deal with it. The language classroom is conceived by the proponents of banking educational systems as a drab, self-operating and inherently conservative mechanism aimed to appropriate, distillate and domesticate all performed activities. Under this rubric, every institution has to determine a set of rigid rules that serves its interests and guides its everyday work. In this site of control, teachers are supposed to be well-trained robots, performing every article of a well-articulated hidden agenda that may not be asserted openly. These strictures dictate to the teacher: just teach to the test, focus on appropriate material, sustain your authority through not getting too friendly, and not letting students talk or leave before giving permission. Learners are not supposed to be living creatures, which breathe, think, make personal choice, with different ideologies, beliefs, interests, motivations, investments, ethnic diversity, but as somehow soulless, reactive mechanisms. By taking into account that we can learn a great deal from the very students we teach, it is imperative that "we transcend the monotonous arrogant and elitist traditionalism where the teacher knows all and the student does not know anything"(Freire 1985: 177). Under the guise of teachers, in fact, they could betray their learners by replicating and reproducing the dominant discourse, taking an apolitical or scientific stance toward knowledge, and avoiding interrogating classroom as "neutral site". But English Language Teaching (ELT) is not a technical business devoid of any value, interest and ideology. The language classroom shapes and is shaped by its sociopolitical and cultural context. It has an inevitable role in maintaining social injustice, class inequalities, discrimination, racism and sexism (Pennycook 2001; Canagarajah 1999). To change classrooms from site of control to what Giroux called "democratic public sphere", the teacher can act as a "critical ethnographer", who

explores how learners can be equipped with critical language awareness to appropriate English and resist the dominant linguistic and pedagogical forms: "It is important to understand the extent to which classroom resistance may play a significant role in larger transformations in the social sphere. Rather than being objective institutions removed from the dynamics of politics and power, schools are actually contested spheres that embody and express struggle over what forms of authority, types of knowledge, forms of moral regulation and versions of the past and future should be legitimated and transmitted"(Giroux 1999, p.196). Providing a liberal atmosphere in the classroom, in which learners are encouraged to set up collaborative learning communities, challenge information and assumptions in their text books, express their choice and gain a voice, is an inevitable prerequisite for converting the classroom into a public democratic sphere; a site for critical inquiry, reflection and transformation.

Proletarianization of Teacher
It seems that the underlying rationale of the Iranian English Language curriculum is to ensure a principled conformity, which is a tendency to reduce teachers to the status of specialized technicians who transmit a predetermined set of discrete information and instructional procedures through a teacher-proof method, and highly standardized tests. The unvoiced assumptions behind this agenda is to legitimate management pedagogies that ignore the teachers' role in preparing learners to be active and critical citizens, make teachers turn a blind eye to oppression, reinforce it or avoid falling into the pitfall of interrogating their educational system. Most teachers enter the profession with a dream of making a difference, by assuming an activist role and seeking a bypass to numerous impediments in controlled conditions. But, there is no room for developing a critically appropriate syllabus which fits specific pedagogical concerns. We have to bear in mind that the educational system which silences and marginalizes critical intellects instead of nurturing them is an oppressive system.

I Resist, Therefore I Am

Critical pedagogy suggests that the primary goal of education should be to develop critical thinking ability in both teacher and learner to expand their understanding of life, question the objectivity and authority of value-free knowledge, and aptly using the acquired competence and experience to improve themselves and ameliorate the outside world. It seems that the Iranian educational system has failed to materialize these requirements (Sadeghi 2008). Had it done so, the country would not have fallen into such a drastic pedagogical deterioration and socio-cultural crisis. Thus, Iran, like many other countries, is in high need of democratic educational reform. But, as teachers, we have ourselves as the first party to blame. Like ostriches, we, Iranian teachers, are hiding our heads under the ground and pretending to be completely ignorant of what happens around us. We avoid disagreeable situations simply by refusing to face them. Now, it behoves us, as the forerunner of reform, to take the first steps and resist. A rational resistance may entail a critical enquiry into the following issues:

- Is teaching a technical, value-free business or indispensably a political act?
- Can teaching be an instrument for fundamental positive social transformation?
- Does teaching aim to empower the learners to critically reflect on socio-political injustice?
- Can teaching lead to betterment in the world?

In order to provide affirmative answers to the questions, one would have to make a transformation in perspective towards teaching. Actually, one needs to be a "Transformative Intellectual".

Reconstructing a New Perspective

Transformative Intellectuals, a term coined by Henry Giroux (1988), means teachers are critical reflective professionals who a) have the knowledge, competence, willing and skills to reflect, interrogate and act upon power hierarchy that keep them subjugated, and sustain the status-quo b) relate their conceptual pedagogical knowledge to the actual teaching practice, and continuously engage in praxis c) connect their teaching to the wider sociopolitical context, d) and eventually use these dispositions to act as active agents of social change. To put it in nutshell, Transformative Intellectuals refer to teachers who are critically engaged in a deep, structural shift in their consciousness and feeling toward teaching and learning, which leads to permanent improvement in their action. It begins with a feeling of disequilibrium; an acknowledgment of unconsciously held believes and ideologies, their origins and consequences; an interrogation of taken-for-granted assumptions; a constructive and critical reflection leading to revision of perspectives and performance.

Teachers shouldn't naively succumb to the prescriptions thrust upon them under the labels of value-free, neutral knowledge or scientific methods. They must interpret appropriate, critique and transform the knowledge. They must help learners to develop into active citizens and engage in social change. To be transformative and emancipatory agents, teachers need to be explicitly political and show ethical concerns "As teachers and scholars, we are bearers of critical knowledge that should empower others to make sense of their position in the world, become alert to the ideological workings of the cultural process, discover the neglected or suppressed aspects of the tradition, and seize the initiative to disrupt the hegemonic order" (Kecht 1992). Transformative intellectual has to be aware of the specific needs of different communities within the context as well as promote intercultural encounters, however shocking they might be. The teachers themselves have to be open to change, that is, to be prepared to reconstruct their own perspectives if there is evidence to their incorrectness.

By viewing the teacher as an intellectual:
1- every routine activity involves thinking
2- human has capacity to integrate thought and action (no segregation of conceptualization and actualization)
3- teacher is an active, critical reflective agent, not a deposit of knowledge
5- teacher can exert control and power over curricula, material and methodology

6- teacher is not a technician and trainee, but an ethically and politically informed educator

7- teacher is an active agent of social change who acts upon a political, cultural, social, economic site called "classroom"

8- teacher gives active voice to other learners (restoring their stolen voices)

9- teacher uses critical, affirming dialogue through problem-posing approach

10- teacher appeals to collaborative projects with his learners and colleagues, engages in negotiating the possibilities and constraints of institutional discourses that may lead to institutional change.

11- instead of relegating learners' knowledge or perspectives, teacher avoids imposing his by allowing the learners to take the ownership of learning situation.

Methodology

This study is a critical interpretive project, whereby human beings are co-constructors of reality and also the main source of data. It was conducted in some private language institutions in Bandar Abbas, the far southern part of Iran with a complicated context: native inhabitants are mainly kept in minority; gender discrimination, patriarchy pattern, ethnic conflicts are still quite vivid and sustained. This city has also a colonial history, and is currently flooded by more than 22000 people from dominant cultures every year. Six teachers, held their M.A in English Language Teaching, were involved in this project. All of them had more than four years experience of teaching both in the institutions and universities. They showed a great enthusiasm to participate in this one-year study. At first teachers were interviewed about their knowledge of critical pedagogy, sources of information, their orientations toward it and their ideas about its implementation. Most of them admitted that their knowledge of critical pedagogy was mainly based on articles on the net. Although trying occasionally to incorporate principles of critical pedagogy in their classrooms, they had never committed themselves to conduct a rigorous, full-scale project. However, throughout the study, teachers endeavored to boost their knowledge of critical pedagogy through extensive reading, online-forums, opinion-exchange and reflection. The classes were held three times a week,

each session lasting 100 minutes over a year. Three teachers managed Interchange courses (levels 11 and 12), while the rest had chat courses. Learners were from different educational backgrounds such as engineering, management, language and literature, as well as various cultural backgrounds: Shirazi, Bandari, and Tehrani... Learners were mostly between 17 to 31 years old. Their levels of language proficiency were upper-intermediate and advanced. At first, the practitioners gathered a variety of provoking topics which seemed to be relevant to the Iranian context and socio-political lives of learners, among them were: power asymmetry, gender inequality, ethnics conflict, segregated education, patriarchy pattern, polygamy, certain job prohibition for females; and so on. Later, they presented these themes to their learners to negotiate over them, select from among them, and eventually decide on how to work on them, individually, through peer-work or group-work. Many learners indicated in their journals that it was their first experience to have a say in what and how they were going to learn. This approach enhanced learners' motivation as well as their sense of involvement and responsibility. Teachers reported using different materials in the classroom, mainly text–based sources such as internet texts, posters, lyrics, magazine, and provocative quotations in chat class. The major classroom activities were collaborative dialogue, open discussion and group project. In addition to the listening, speaking and reading of sensitive materials, the learners were instructed to create a journal and exchange it between themselves and teacher. Practitioners were supposed to (a) give an equal chance to each learner to have his own voice (b) encourage learners to engage in a critical examination of their roles in society and (c) equip learners with appropriate knowledge and capacity to act upon injustices or inequalities in their socio-cultural contexts. Teachers were also interviewed after the study to document changes in their perceptions and practices. The whole project can be summarized in three major stages: currere, collaborative dialogue and reconstructing new perspectives as Transformative Intellectuals.

1. Currere: "Reflexive Narrative"

The notion of currere, an autobiographic method with an emphasis on subjectivity and narrative voice in teaching, was first introduced by William Pinar. Currere, on one hand, provides a framework for a critical reflection on problems inherent in educational system such as: lack of freedom, anti-intellectualism, standard-testing, political agenda, and the relationship among knowledge, everyday life experiences, and on the other hand, intellectual development in ways that might function self- transformatively" (Pinar 1995: 515). Through a collaborative dialogue, teachers would enter a four-stage reflexive narration to improve their teaching. The first stage is "regressive": teacher reflects on a past educational experience. The second stage is: "progressive", which focuses on obstacles that may impair teacher's future performance. The "analytical" stage is a multi-faceted, critical examination of past and present. The "synthetical" stage, as the final step, involves an integration of insights gained from the past, present and future to transform the perspective and the environment. One of the teachers described these stages as:

> I can clearly *remember* a discussion we had on "jobs". One of the students asked: why can't women be judges in Iran? My initial reaction was terrible: "Please don't ask questions that do not have any fruit and just take up class time, it is not our business. It is a political question and only wastes our time". Now, I am thinking: wasn't sex inequality worth enough to reflect on? Who are the main beneficiaries? What is the main rational behind all these does- and don'ts governing our lives that we simply take them for granted? Why should we accept an injustice in such a sheepish manner? Am I blindly adding another brick into this wall? Who sets these rules? Why I didn't consider a question that might equip my learners to gain critical knowledge and action? If they are not supposed to think in my class, where else are they supposed to do so? Teaching is not just giving information about pronunciation, grammar and dictation. What about a long-term investment for humanity that may improve a future world?

Currere opens up an opportunity for a paradigm shift in education through connecting academic content, teachers' and learners' subjective knowledge and the socio-cultural and historical contexts.

2. Collaborative Dialogue

In addition to personal journal writing and currere, teachers also held some meetings. During these joint sessions, they discussed their ideas about their positions and roles in existing society, their proletarization by the dominant power structure, their marginalization, their being kept in the periphery, their unequal share of power and interest, and eventually, how the classroom could act like a monitor, a control site, or a mind-like machine creator that served the interest of dominant ideology. Although teachers did not hold the same ideas about these matters, no one tried to impose their idea on others. Tolerating others perspectives, avoidance of dogma, having a critical, as well as open-mind on others views are among the building blocks of being transformative.

One of the teachers described her idea on a meeting:

> I got surprised that I used to have such oversimplistic idea about lack of motivation among Iranian teachers. Although I don't agree on some views, during this meeting we arrived on some coherent perspectives which seem to be very logical and convincing. For me, now, it is not only a financial or personal mater, but something that can be created and fortified by other social organizations or policy makers at higher levels. How I didn't come to know before?

Reconstructing New Perspective

Mezirow (1991: 167) called for a "Perspective transformation or the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings". Implementing critical pedagogy and committing once to be transformative intellectuals was the third step in the project. Before the classroom, teacher negotiated with their learners and asked them to choose the topics seemed to be interesting, challenging and relevant to them. Learners were also required to bring

their own materials into the classroom, talk about their own personal experiences, present their own ideas and gain their voice. Through a critical reflection of their every-day practice via log, audio/video taping and peer observing, teachers gained abysmal insights over their own performances. Much to their surprise, all of them were quite dissatisfied and shocked with their teaching, as soon as the hidden elements of their teaching were revealed. They confessed: "we were never aware about how we neglected, marginalized and silenced our learners in such a delicate way. How we oriented them to take our stances so creepily: shame on us!!!" Disequiliberation, shift in one's mind, taking a broader sociopolitical view can pave the ground for a Resurrection: the very time to move from transformative learner to Transformative Intellectual.

One of the teachers described how his perceptions changed about his career:

> I don't want just to teach, I don't want just to check assignments. I want to think, to talk and to act against those taken-for-granted oppressions that I have seen, felt and endorsed during my whole teaching. I have to find some sources: knowledge, communities, people and strategies… Anything that may help to change this status quo. I have to do something.

Emancipation Quest or Will-O-the-Wisp

A qualitative analysis of data, based on interviews with teachers, interpretative analysis of what happened in the classroom, transcription of video and audio taping and content analysis of materials/journals indicated that critical pedagogy may encounter with vast of difficulties, obstacles and ineffectiveness such as below, if it is to be implemented in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching/learning context.

Immunization

A potential criticism against critical pedagogy could be that it inoculates itself from sharp criticism by creating a discourse beyond the intelligibility of those who would critique it. By creating a highly sophisticated discourse, it assumes a particular community of readers, while at the same time excluding any outsiders. Since its discourse is highly difficult to decipher, it immunizes itself from any criticism. Of the six teachers required to participate in this

study, at least two did not get the essential nuts and bolts of critical pedagogy, though all of them read extensively on it. One teacher wrote:

> Is critical pedagogy only a matter of "giving critical information to others? If it is so, how is it different from the traditional transmission model that Freire rejected in his writing? Does it mean that teachers must inculcate in learners what they think as correct or appropriate? Is there any precise "method" to implement CP, or any particular "technique" to become transformative intellectual?

When interviewees were asked about their ideas toward utilization of Critical pedagogy in the classroom, most of them did not go beyond calling for respect for learners' differences.

Implementation

Theoretically speaking, critical pedagogy seems to be a solution for pedagogical problems emanating from traditional education, yet practically, it may encounter an abundance of hindrances. Some of the obstacles may be summarized as follows.

Many teachers in this study reported that learners were not prepared for this pedagogical method, because they were so accustomed to traditional methods of being instructed exactly what to do by others, that they did not know how to handle more involvement and responsibility. A teacher commented:

> It seems any attempt to involve the learners was doomed to failure, since they would not talk to me about anything but vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the like; I learnt that a critical teacher demystifies and illuminates, makes the invisible visible, but I began to realize then how I just made everything more hazy, mysterious, simply because they wanted to keep their eyes quite shut!

Removing traditional ways of thinking and behaving is not an easy task. The same is true about teachers themselves. Shifting an authoritarian, traditional classroom into a democratic public sphere is even scarier than changing personal assumptions. Openness to positive and constructive comments and accepting ones flaws are neither palatable nor an ordinary pattern in Iranian teaching/learning contexts.

An inextricable element of critical pedagogy is sharing authority with learners, which paves the way for a dialectical learning process in which learners and teacher negotiate the class procedures, structure, content, grading criteria as well as their own roles in relation to each other, but is it really possible in Iranian or other Asian cultures and context? What if the learners are unable to take the responsibility or choice? What is the point in offering the freedom of choice on those who can't take it at all? Or what if individuals are unwilling to exercise agency to act upon their own destiny and interrupt the transmission of an oppressive habitus?

A teacher delineated this problem as follow:

> On the first session, I distributed a course syllabus contained the content and assessment criteria among my learners. I asked them to review the syllabus and make any appropriate changes. They looked at me in such a way that am a crazy or an unprepared teacher who hasn't got any clue about how to teach, an opportunist who wants to pass the buck to the learners. The very fruit of giving choice!

Another teacher asked:

> What is learning community? Randomly throwing a small group of learners and ask them to work with each other? How could one guarantee a positive interdependence between learners, in which learners don't think about knowledge as a private possession - an individual accountability-, and are quite willing to share it: a social construction of knowledge?

One teacher even complained of the gradual loss of teacher authority in the classroom due to sharing power with learners, since many learners took the wrong side of it and did not pay a serious, rigorous attention to the classroom procedure
Although teachers had tried to instigate their learners to "relate" the material and course objective to their everyday lives, personal experiences, and use this knowledge to gain their own insights and voices, but to no avail. Determining what was relevant, was quite baffling. Knowing so little about learners' lives left no room for maneuver. Something that was irrelevant for one learner was essentially relevant for another one.

Taking in to account the administrative constraints teachers may encounter daily such as: large class sizes, rigid lesson plans, obligatory standard tests, limited class time, load of work and expectations, low payment and so on going beyond banking model of education, engendering critical awareness and becoming a transformative intellectual seem to be a will-o-the wisp. No matter how motivated and open a teacher is, definitely such structural constraints affect teacher performance negatively. Some teachers suggested that the institutions have to be re-organised to allow for more diversity, flexibility and openness towards other modes of teaching and learning.

Emotionally loaded topics can hamper the learners' ability to maximize their use of functional competence due to their strong affection (positive or negative) toward a topic (Bachman & Palmer 1996). Some of the respondents were reluctant to discuss topics such as religion, freedom of speech, job opportunity, because they consider them to be too private and personal matters. Some teachers avoided addressing these topics as they were afraid of the reaction of their students' parents. One of the teachers wrote:

> Have you ever witnessed the mess, hostility, intolerance and insult arouse due to engaging learners in red-topics? Talking about taboos without a hue-and-cry among learners was impossible. Even when I tried to intervene, they accuse me to be biased. Thus, there was always an air of distrust and insecurity in my class. Worse than this group, was another one who showed no interest in topic discussion. Then, can I ask for whom we tolled the bells? Did we offer freedom of speech to dumb? Giving these problems, should we open up Pandora Box, without knowing what comes out?

Although teachers were required to take an open-ended view, interview data indicated that they were obsessed with predefined outcomes. All of them expected their students to appreciate and reject social injustice and stereotypes that they considered to be important. Thus they were hardly able to accommodate diverse standpoints and different perspectives that didn't fit teachers' expectation. In addition to this, most of teachers vowed a voice of

hesitation and pessimists about the effectiveness, possibility and long-term influence of developing meaningful active participation in learners. It meant education failed to pave the grounds to praxis (conscious action after critical evaluation of social conditions).

Irrationality

Critical pedagogy suggests that the teacher, as the social agent of change or transformative intellectual, takes political action. First, most teachers are uninterested in politics. It is something taboo that may jeopardize their job positions, personal and professional lives. It doesn't mean that teachers be politically-ignorant or retrieve themselves from political projects. But, we have to consider the stakes for teachers in such an effort. What risks are we asking teachers to take? What sacrifices are we asking them to make? When critical theorists do not theorize about their own participation in such projects, and when they do not address the stakes for others in taking up their challenges, they risk disempowering teachers through posing a limited and limiting expert/ teacher or theorist/practitioner hierarchy and school schedules of contemporary college students

Mission Impossible

Consider the roles a teacher has to assume as learner, action researcher, partner, reflective practitioner, negotiator, syllabus designer, material developer, and the last but not the least, agent of social change. In the discourses of critical pedagogy, all this work is only a minor aspect of the "transformative project." In a romantic poet, the teacher could be described as a highly-motivated intellect equipped with all capacities to set people free! Instead of positioning the transformative intellectual as one who "reforms" students, the faculty, the institution,indeed all of society, by uniformly opposing all institutional constraints, we might more profitably rethink the variety of subject positions available to teachers, students and administrators working both within and against institutional constraints and possibilities (Gallagher 2008). You can't simply "give them fishing rods, and let them go fishing themselves".

Conclusion

A major theme of critical pedagogy is the role of the educator in the critique of educational issues. "Transformative intellectuals" (Giroux 1993) refers to educators who, by taking a critical inquiry toward their own theory and practice, become active in shaping the school policy and curriculum, which leads to social change. This study has sought to set an accord between standards and expectations in language teaching and one major goal of critical pedagogy, transformative intellectuals. Although these two may seem to be incongruent at first sight, there is an inevitable intersection between them, which is quite essential in achieving the purpose of democratic society. Transformation begins in the classroom or public sphere, when the teacher consciously interrogate manipulative or subjugative process, and gradually affects students live outside of classroom (Giroux & McLaren 1996). In Iran, typical coursework in language may pursue any goal but helping students critically investigate their own impetus, feelings, thinking about issues of class inequality, social injustice, racism and sexism. Part of this negligence can be attributed to the overarching policy makers, and the rest could be ascribed to the teachers. In this project, six teachers were required to assume the role of Transformative Intellectuals. First they reflected upon overt/covert inequalities and injustice, and their roles in society. Through Currere they gained an abysmal insight into how they subconsciously contributed to the reproduction and replication of higher-order hierarchy of power and access. At the second stage, through dialogue with their colleagues, they gained a critical voice for their roles in the society. Eventually, they tried to implement critical pedagogy in the classroom and enact their roles as Transformative Intellectuals. Instead of rigid guidelines as to content and structure, they followed an explorative and interpretive approach. Although qualitative analysis of data exposed several problems, obstacles and frustration, we should avoid jumping to this preemptive conclusion: critical pedagogy and transformative intellectuals are merely conceptual notions, devoid of any applicability. Instead we have to explore solutions to overcome these problems. As the epilogue, let's narrate a teacher's opinion

that was quite reluctant and skeptical to call his activity as political at the beginning of study, but shifted his view toward a Transformative Intellectual later.

> Although I encountered with lots of difficulties in this course, I think we should avoid abandoning critical pedagogy, just based on a few evidence of ineffectiveness and failure, in such a harsh and quick manner. If transformation is a process to establish a just society, we have to engage in it for a whole life-time practice, not a two-month course. Even if our level of involvement in political process is not that much elevated, at least we are not as blind as before to say: teaching is apolitical.

Another teacher indicated how she found herself as a Transformative Intellectual during the course:

> We had a discussion about "security precaution measures in airport". I asked my learners to reflect upon the matter and see if these precautions are needed or not. Many of them believed that they are necessary, while the rest complained about time-consumption. Suddenly, one of my learners raised his hand and asked a very penetrating question: "As an Iranian, you enter another country and they want your eyes and finger print. This precaution is for you, just you. Not for Irish, England, Indian or even Arabs. Would you yield?" I can't explain how deeply it affected me. Suddenly, I saw myself not as that previous person with a firm and vivid identity, but as one who is dragging between her human dignity, patrioticity and another country's concern for its security. I started reading relevant books. With colleagues' help, we created an online group against Discrimination and with my learners help we conducted a leaflet. Something has changed: started to change. No matter how little one day these little changes would bring a revolution into my society and make it a better place to live in.

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