

CRITICAL READING IN EFL IN TURKISH HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXT¹

Türkiye Lise Eğitimi Bağlamında Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Eğitiminde Eleştirel Okuma

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Abstract

This paper is based on the arguments of critical discourse analysis, critical literacies and critical language awareness, which argue that discourse is a social process and that it is inherently ideological. Unless challenged, discourses will be shaped by and shape social realities. Therefore, the social aspect of language should not be ignored in literacy education and in teaching a foreign/second language. Studies also show that raising critical language awareness is closely related to people's identities and belief systems; therefore, it is often met with resistance from the students. Sharing the principles of critical language awareness, this study seeks to find out the impact of a critical reading course in the Turkish high school context, looking closely at the students' approach to written texts and any resistance from the students as a result of the course.

This study was an action research project, in which data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and a repeated reading activity, which entailed asking the students to read the same text at the beginning and end of the course to see any changes in their approach to written texts. Findings show an increase in recognition of reading as a social process and the effect of the choice of lexicogrammatical structures in written texts. In addition, findings suggest an increase in students' motivation for the reading course, although, at the same time, student resistance to the critical reading course due to concerns over a centralised exam was observed.

Keywords: *Critical reading, critical discourse analysis, foreign language learning, motivation.*

Özet

Bu çalışma, söylemin sosyal bir süreç olduğunu ve doğası gereği ideolojik olduğunu ileri süren eleştirel söylem analizi, eleştirel okur yazarlık ve eleştirel dil farkındalığı alanlarında yapılan çalışmalarını temel alarak yapılmıştır. Sorgulanmadığı taktirde söylem sosyal gerçeklik tarafından şekillenecek ve sosyal gerçekliği şekillendirecektir. Bu nedenle, dilin sosyal boyutu okur yazarlık ve ikinci/ yabancı dil eğitiminde göz ardı edilmemelidir. Yapılmış olan çalışmalar eleştirel dil farkındalığı yaratmanın, kişilerin kimlikleri ve inanç sistemleri ile yakın bağlantısı olduğunu ve bu nedenle sıklıkla öğrenciler tarafından direnç ile karşılandığını göstermektedir. Eleştirel dil farkındalığının temel ilkelerini paylaşan bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de lise bağlamında, özellikle öğrencilerin yazılı metinlere yaklaşımı ve derse öğrencilerden gelecek olası bir direnç odağında, eleştirel okuma dersinin etkilerine bakılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada eylem araştırması kullanılmıştır. Anket, röportaj ve öğrencilerin eleştirel okuma dersleri başlamadan ve bittikten sonra aynı metni okumalarıyla yapılmış olan tekrarlanan okuma etkinliği ile veri toplanmıştır. Bulgular öğrencilerde okumanın sosyal bir süreç olduğuna ve yazılı metinlerdeki sözcük-dilbilgisi yapılarının seçimlerinin etkisine dair farkındalığın arttığını göstermektedir. Buna ek olarak bulgular öğrencilerin okuma dersleri için motivasyonlarında artış ve aynı zamanda eleştirel okuma dersine merkezi bir sınav nedeniyle direnç olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Eleştirel okuma, eleştirel söylem analizi, yabancı dil eğitimi, motivasyon.*

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Introduction

As modernity's claims of progress and centrality were contested by the local, fragmented nature of post-structuralism, the interrelationship between language and reality became a focal point of thought (see for example Peters & Lankshear, 1996; Torfing, 1999) and a more social approach to language, and language education, rather than a purely cognitive one is adopted.

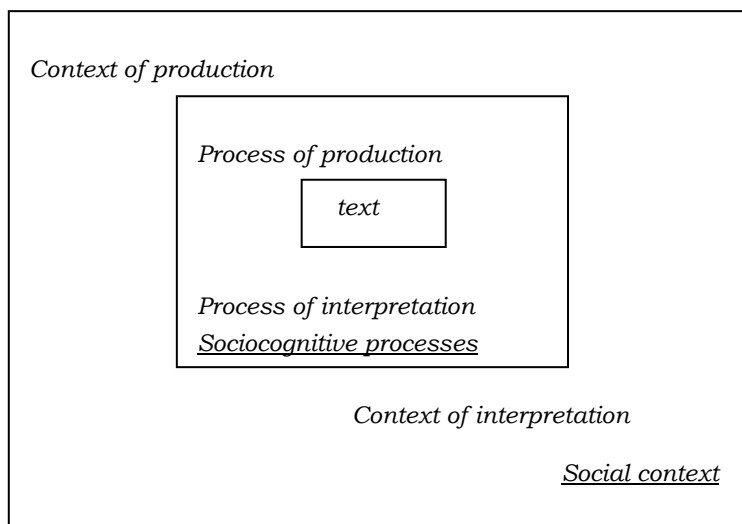
As social reality was seen as fragmented, perception of the nature of reality as a self-imposing, autonomous structure is also challenged. Thus, to understand social reality meant building an understanding of multiple realities, establishing the limits of these realities, and recognising their social situatedness (see for example Foucault, 1969). In the absence of a super-imposing structure, it is the humans, as agents, that construct these realities, through use of discourse.

Therefore, discourse and reality are seen as closely interrelated. Inevitably, the role of social practice and social situatedness of language in literacy education became under scrutiny too (for example Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Under the light of such understanding, literacy is not just a way of making sense of written symbols but a way of learning about the world (Cervetti, Pardales & Damico 2001). In other words, discourse is seen as both reflecting and reinforcing social reality. This suggests that unless they are challenged, written, and spoken, texts will reinforce and reproduce socially constructed reality as 'natural' and "commonsensical" (Fairclough, 1995, p.35).

This shift in social studies, linguistics, education and information technologies, led to different adaptations of literacies, among which are 'cultural literacy', 'critical literacy', 'technoliteracy', 'higher order literacies', 'multiliteracies' (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 10). Critical Literacies (CL) set out to explain and critique reproduction of social realities through discourse. CL have poststructuralism, critical theory and critical pedagogy at their basis and aim at transformation of these realities (Cervetti et al., 2001). To this end, CL principles include situated practice, where the learners' realities correspond to the texts that they read or write, adopting a critical perspective to written texts through analysis, and transformed practice (Lankshear, Gee, Knobel & Searle, 1997; The New London Group, 2000).

Within the wider schema of CL, CLA shares the same principles and adopts a more focused approach based on Critical Discourse analysis (CDA). CLA is concerned with "how discourse practices shape social relations and how social relations shape discourse practices" (Males, 2000, p. 147) and suggests that discourse is shaped by ideologically dominant forces and that this relationship should be subject to critique for emancipatory purposes (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic & Martin-Jones, 1987). Therefore, discourses are no longer seen as a mere process of communication but a process where social practices are reproduced or transformed. That is, discourse is seen as both reproducing social practices and capable of changing them. To this end, CLA uses CDA as its "departure point" for critique (Wallace, 2003, p. 64) for developing critical reading and writing skills through textual analysis.

CDA suggests that discourse is a social practice and that it is sociohistorically situated. Thus, for CDA, "discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 7). CDA sees production and interpretation of discourse in interaction with the sociocognitive processes and social context:



(Fairclough, 1989, p. 25)

CDA commonly employs textual analysis of lexicogrammatical choices of writers and specifically looks into the use of markedness, generic terms, lexical gaps, transitivity, causality and agency, nominalisation, appraisals, modality, mood, polarity, among others in the analysis of texts. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is central in the textual analysis of CDA as SFG is meaning oriented and looks into the interrelationship between "language and other elements and aspects of social life" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 5). SFG also provides a framework for CDA analysis that offers the possibility of looking into the social context of a text through the three metafunctions of SFG, ideational (experiential), interpersonal, and textual (Wallace, 1992a).

Ideational metafunction looks into representation of what the text is about; interpersonal metafunction is about who is writing for whom and the nature of the relationship built with the reader; while textual metafunction helps explore how the text is organised, i.e. coherence and cohesion. Wallace suggests a framework for analysis based on SFG for a critical reading course where the readers are invited to analyse the text looking into these three metafunctions and the readers are asked to consider the "effect of the writer's choices" (1992a, p. 78).

CDA's approach to discourse as a social process suggests that learners and teachers, as well as writers and readers, have socially constructed identities and, hence, are sociohistorically situated (Wallace, 1992a; Fairclough, 1999; Males, 2000). Similarly, Wallace defines aim of a critical reading course as "gain[ing] some distance from one's own identities, experiences, and circumstances in light of greater understanding of those of others" (Wallace, 1999, p. 104).

However, challenging discourses, as well as people's identities as socially constructed, does not go without problems. Accepting one's experiences and identities as socially situated will position them at a point where "there is no vantage point from which a situation can be viewed impartially" (Males, 2000, p. 150) and will raise issues of limitations of one's own reality.

In fact, it is only in an openness to new experiences that an individual confronts the limitations of his historicity and can move beyond them, not to some absolute knowledge, but to new awareness to these limitations ...

(ibid.)

Therefore, many CLA practices used in critical reading courses resulted in student resistance. In some studies, student resistance was a result of challenging old certainties and identities (e.g. Janks, 1999; Granville, 2003; Kramer-Dahl, 2001) while in Zinkgraf's study it was a result of textual analysis seen as tedious by the students (2003). There are, on the other hand, more successful studies, where a critical reading course actually resulted in an increase in student motivation, and not in resistance (Leal, 1998).

Although there are some studies on critical thinking skills in Turkish context (e.g. Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2007; Seferoğlu & Akbıyık, 2006) or critical literacy (e.g. Kagıtcıbası, Goksen & Gulgoz, 2005), studies using CDA for developing critical reading skills in EFL classrooms in this context is scarce. Thus, in the light of the studies on CDA and critical reading in EFL, this research aimed to find out the impact of a critical reading course on both students' reading and their motivation in Turkish high school context.

Although studies on students' identities and the tension between one's realisation of social construction and challenging discourses are not great in number, fortunately research on motivation is. Motivation, being a complex human trait, has many different approaches, among which are reinforcement theory, integrative and instrumental motivation, social cognitive theory, achievement theory, attribution theory, and intrinsic motivation (Gardner, 1985; Stipek, 2002; Alderman, 1999; Ushioda, 1996).

Studies on CL and CLA suggest two main fundamental principles in relation to motivation. The first one is the use of authentic materials. Although authentic materials are also used in traditional reading classrooms, CL and CLA approach these authentic texts through problematising them in ways relating to the students' own realities. Secondly, CL and CLA practices typically give more control to the students in classroom practices. In other words, the students are expected to contribute with their own experiences, opinions, experiences, while in the context of this study, for example, in traditional EFL reading classes student contribution is limited to language practice.

Issue of control and use of authentic materials are raised by the studies in intrinsic motivation too. Intrinsic motivation, suggests that humans are active and in need of autonomy, thus have a tendency to learn (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1992; Ushioda, 1996). Thus, any extrinsic reward or control typically has negative effect on students' intrinsic motivation and can generate short-term effects. It also proposes that humans have a natural tendency to learn to develop competences they will need in their interactions with the world (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In language education, typically, the competence to be developed is communication in the target language. Authentic materials are valuable in raising awareness in the learners that the language they are learning extends beyond the often artificial setting of language classroom and helps communicate with real people in the real world. Therefore, this approach there is a need for an "optimal challenge/ arousal" (Deci & Ryan 1985, Deci & Ryan 1992, Stipek 2002). In other words, an element of novelty is required in learning. If the material to be studied is already too familiar, learning will not serve to develop a competence or a mastery, thus fail to be motivating. Stipek reports that intrinsic motivation is usually measured by "whether people voluntarily choose to engage or persist in an activity or by their ratings of their interest in or enjoyment of a particular activity" (2002, p. 134).

The study

Under the light of the studies on developing critical literacy in general and developing critical reading skills in particular, this research aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the impact of the critical reading course on students' reading?
- 2) What is the impact of the critical reading course on student motivation?

To answer the research questions above, an action research was designed, in which a 17-week-long-intervention was given. Action research offers "a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention" (Cohen & Manion as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.p. 226-227). While experimental design would require generalisability at the expense of the individuals, social contexts, and social realities, this study aimed to explore the impact of an intervention while recognising the sociohistorical situatedness of the research context. Thus action research was used as it accepts intervention in social contexts while accepting at the same time the principle that the social context bears significance in research in such a way that it should and cannot be controlled but taken into account at every level of the research; and that no social research can be stripped of its social context (Greenwood & Levin, 2000). Last but not least, driving from critical paradigm, action research aims to empower participants through giving them a voice, which is essentially what this study sought to do.

Participants:

This study was conducted with 10th year Anatolian High School students in Turkey. The medium of education in the participant schools was English and the students who participated in this study had chosen to further their high school education in school programmes where English was studied intensively. In other words, they chose to further their studies in English, and were planning to study English at university, thus had high motivation for learning English.

Research Instruments

Semi-structured questionnaires were given at the beginning, half way through, and at the end of the course to find out about the students' reading habits, their approach to reading, and motivation for the critical reading course. The first questionnaire inquired about students' demographic information together with their reading habits, their reasons for studying English, their approach to traditional reading lessons and to classroom practices in these lessons; while the second and the third questionnaires heavily used open-ended questions to inquire about their approach to reading texts and to the critical reading course since open-ended questions "permit greater freedom of expression" (Wilson & McClean, 1994). As Cohen, Manion & Morrison remark, with a small number of respondents, semi-structured questionnaires offer the possibility of setting a structure and focus for data collection while providing the respondents with the opportunity to bring their own agendas to the research with its "open-ended format" (2007, p. 321). Although less structured questionnaires, as any self-reports, pose the risk of low reliability, open ended questions were valuable means to gather data about the students' approach to reading lessons, to reading and any frustrations that may have been caused by the critical reading course. Thus, students' self reports provide rich qualitative data on these issues in spite of its drawbacks.

In addition, two follow-up interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences regarding reading in general and the critical reading course in more detail. Semi-structured interviews were used with questions and topics determined prior to each

interview, based on the individual students' responses to the questionnaires. However, room was left for additional issues to emerge during the interviews.

Finally, students were given a repeated reading activity where they read a news piece about Turkey and answered the same set of questions at the beginning and end of the course to find whether or not there were any changes in the way they approached written texts.

Course

In order to answer research questions, a 17-week-long critical reading course was given to 31 students in two different schools. Authentic texts were selected from a variety of genres as it is important for learning to relate to students' lives for both critical reading and CLA practices. However, as students' having a voice and control in their learning is important for CLA practices, the students were invited and encouraged to bring authentic texts, indeed any written text, they would like to analyse in the classroom. Through the end of the course, both groups of students started to bring texts they would like to read and analyse in the classroom. We then collectively decided which text to read for the upcoming lessons.

The course was designed in two phases. The first phase aimed at raising students' awareness on the issues of context and sociocognitive processes of production and interpretation of written texts; while the second phase included introducing SFG and doing textual analysis.

The first phase started with a classroom practice following Wallace's suggestion of raising awareness on the issues of authorship, ideal readers, and students' own identities as readers, in which students were given a collection of written texts of various genres and were asked to discuss who produced these texts, for whom they were produced, why, and whether or not that type of text was of interest to them (1992a). Students were also given different contexts and role relationships and were asked to consider language use in each of these contexts with different participants to draw attention to the context-bound nature of discourses, an activity adapted from Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks & Yallop (2000). Other classroom practices adopted were "parallel discourses", where two different texts were read dealing with the same issue from different perspectives (Wallace, 1992b, p. 119). This activity aims to help students consider sociohistorical aspect of reading and text production, and readership and authorship as socially constructed.

Another classroom practice adapted from Wallace is challenging traditional discourses (1992b). This was combined with parallel discourses and students were asked to read the fairy tale *Rapunzel* together with another story where gender roles in *Rapunzel* are reversed. In addition, to consider sociohistorical aspect of context and processes of production and interpretation as sociohistorical practices, students were also asked to read a poem and answer the questions below:

1. What is this text about?
2. Who are mentioned?
3. How are they mentioned?
4. Who wrote this text?
5. For whom is it written?
6. Why is it written?
7. What other ways of writing about this topic are there?

(Wallace 1992a, p. 71)

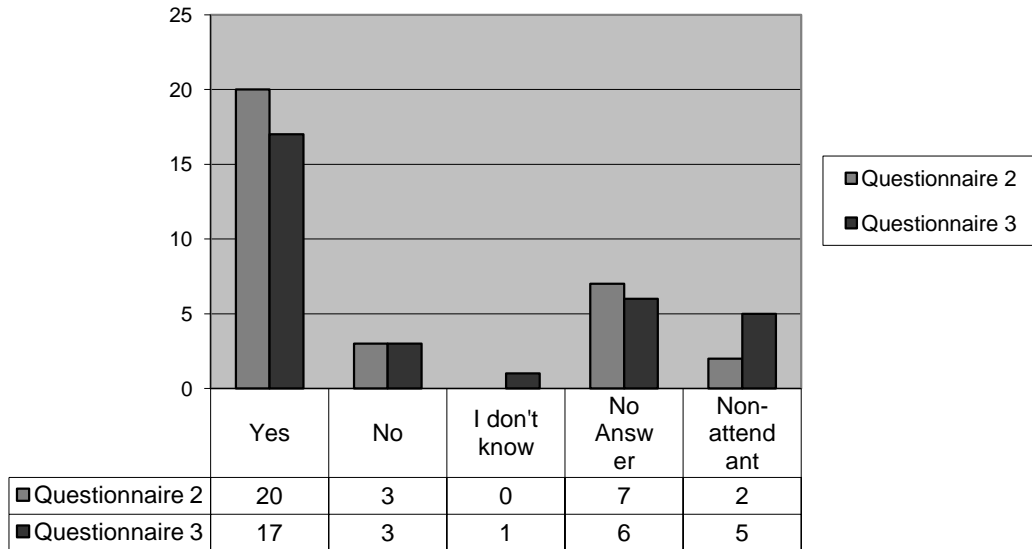
Throughout the course, students were asked to consider and answer these questions as part of pre-, while- and post- reading activities. Discussion of these questions before reading the texts gave the students a chance to voice their opinions and expectations from their current sociohistorical perspectives, which helped a) raise awareness of sociocognitive aspect of production and interpretation of texts, and b) create a classroom where it was important that their opinions and experiences were heard and considered essential in the interpretation of texts. This approach was important to develop an understanding that multiple interpretations are possible based on readers' sociohistorical positioning.

In the second half of the course, SFG was introduced to the students and analysis of individual texts was carried out. Between weeks seven and eleven, three metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, were introduced to the students and following each metafunction, we analysed a text using that metafunction. The seven questions above were also used to provide a framework for SFG analysis, which was carried out in the second part of the course. SFG analysis can be a challenging task. Therefore, the framework offered by Wallace (1992a), as reviewed above, was used to facilitate analysis of the texts using SFG and to facilitate group discussions that followed the analysis.

Findings

To find out the impact of a critical reading course on students' approach to reading, students were given questionnaires and interviews to inquire about any changes as well as a repeated reading activity to compare students' answers to both readings.

Students' self reports in questionnaires 2 and 3 and interviews, claim that there's a difference in their overall approach to reading: that is, they "question (the text) more", "read more consciously", that they consider the perspectives of context and processes of production more, acknowledging perspectives of authorship and readership and reading as a social process, and that they use SFG analysis more while reading. In addition to these, the students also claimed that they were more confident as readers and/ or they spent more effort. These answers will be presented in greater detail below.

Chart 1 Is there a change in the way you approach written texts?

Twenty students in Questionnaire 2 and 17 students in Questionnaire 3 reported that there was a change in their approach to written texts. The number of students who answered there was no change is the same in both questionnaires. Students were also asked to explain in what ways there was a change, if their answer was yes. Four major themes emerge from their answers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Is there a change in the way you approach written texts? If yes please explain in what ways.

Grouping student responses	Frequency Questionnaire 2	Frequency Questionnaire 3
Motivation and self-efficacy <i>I'm not struggling as much</i> <i>I spend more effort</i>	3	1
General approach <i>I question more</i> <i>I read more consciously</i> <i>I read more carefully</i> <i>I interpret more</i> <i>I analyse more</i> <i>In a more objective way</i> <i>I think more</i>	10	9
Perspectives of authorship and readership <i>I consider writer's stance</i> <i>I compare writer's perspective with mine</i> <i>I compare writer's and readers' perspectives</i> <i>I consider the writer's opinions and feelings</i> <i>I look from different perspectives</i> <i>I consider both writer's and reader's perspectives</i> <i>I pay attention to the nationality of the writer</i>	8	4

Social Context <i>(I ask) myself when, why the writer wrote it How much the writer knows, to whom he is addressing to, his identity</i>	2	-
Using SFG <i>(I can interpret more) with the new techniques I</i>	3	5

Ten students in Questionnaire 2 and nine in Questionnaire 3 report that they do 'more' while reading in English, i.e. they question, interpret, analyse, think more or they are more conscious, careful, objective. Questioning, analysing more are themes that are supported by students' answers to other items in the questionnaires. Similarly, reading in a more detailed way is among the findings of repeated reading activity, as will be discussed below.

The second most common answer to the question of 'in what ways their approach changed to reading' was that the students considered perspectives of authorship and readership while reading. Responses referring explicitly to readers' or authors' perspectives, or to both, are grouped in this category. These answers are important as they acknowledge the possibility of multiple meanings through recognising reading as a social process. It is also possible to see the impact of the questions posed at pre-, while- and post- reading activities in the responses to this question.

In these answers, there are direct references to SFG too. Answers including SFG metalanguage or SFG analysis itself are grouped in the category 'using SFG'. Some examples of these answers are: "I analysed the appraisals (in a text) and it was easier to see the meaning". Similarly, another response states, "I pay more attention to the way the writer presents things. For example, when I see something like 'the university graduate model' (in a newspaper), instead of finding this (statement) strange, I know that this is a technique", reflecting on the use of markedness in the presentation of participants in Turkish media discourse.

An unexpected finding was that the students expressed increased self-efficacy as foreign language readers. Answers that expressed extended time and/or effort spent on reading and increased confidence in their reading skills in English were grouped under 'motivation and self-efficacy' theme. This theme also came up in follow-up interviews and students' answers to other items in Questionnaires 2 and 3. Finally, two students mentioned that they consider sociohistorical context of text production, reporting consideration of who, why, when, or how the text was produced.

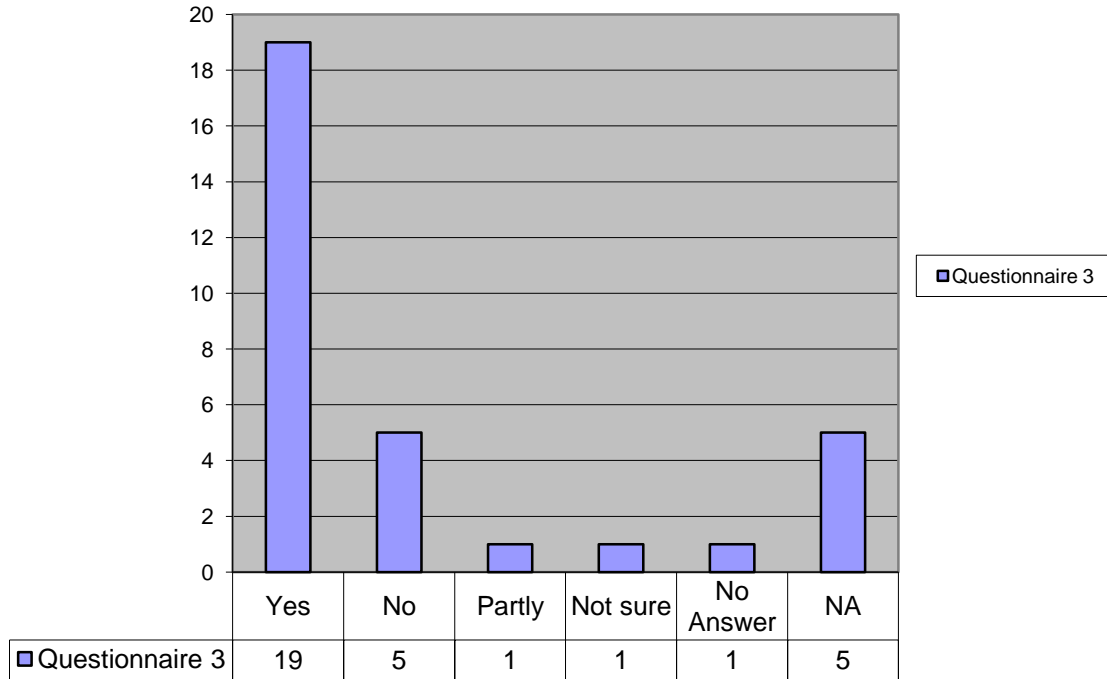
Chart 2 I feel/ don't feel more confident as a reader.

Chart 2 shows that 19 students report feeling confident as readers while five say they do not. Table 2 below shows students' reasons as to in what ways they feel more confident as readers.

Table 2 I feel/ don't feel more confident as a reader. Please state why.

Grouping student responses	Frequency
Motivation and self-efficacy <i>I have a better understanding on what I read</i> <i>I can see that I am improving</i> <i>I find myself more effective</i>	4
General approach <i>I question more</i> <i>I learned new techniques</i>	2
Perspectives of authorship and readership <i>I have learned how to look for the writer's perspective the text</i> <i>I have learned to look at the text from different perspectives</i> <i>With the techniques we have learned, I can understand what the writer means better</i>	6
Social Context	3

<i>It made me see aspects like why a text is written, how it is written I can see the time of writing and the writer's identity</i>	
Using SFG <i>The grammar we studied (for analysis) I can come up with solid examples while reading</i>	2

Similar to the responses in Table 1, the most common responses to this question make reference to different perspectives of authorship and readership. The answers referring to the social context reflect that the students make use of the post-reading questions while reading, again, in relation to the understanding of reading as a social process. And finally, two students make explicit reference to SFG. One of these students, M, says that she can come up with more solid examples in her follow-up interview:

Teacher: What do you think the aim of reading lessons should be?

M: It should be to teach techniques to understand texts. I mean, we were reading them (texts) before too, but we understand them better now. Polarity, modals, etc. Systemic Functional Grammar, these work better. I mean, to (have) these is more enjoyable if we need a more comprehensive reading course.

Teacher: You wrote that you found the course beneficial. In what way did you find it beneficial?

M: ... We are visiting a lot of web sites on the Internet, in Turkish or in English, it helps us to understand better, I think. For example, the use of pronouns... I did not use to look at them before myself, but now I pay attention to these (use of pronouns).

Teacher: You had written in your second questionnaire that you have always been critical while reading. Were there any differences in your critical approach?

M: Yes, there was a change. For example, before, I would just look, and um, see the, um, subject of the text. Like, 'this book is about this or that'. But now, writer's approach, the way he talks about it, or his examples... I can see them now.

Student answers to other questions also emphasise that students consider perspectives of authorship and readership, the role of social context and use SFG analysis in their readings. Please see Table 3 below.

Table 3 I think I have/ I haven't benefited from this course as a reader. If yes, please state in what ways you benefited.

Grouping student responses	Frequency
Motivation and self-efficacy <i>I can see that I am improving in reading I'm more sure of myself as a reader now</i>	5
Perspectives of authorship and readership <i>Yes, I can approach the text I am reading from different perspectives (in a more detailed way) I look for the writer's perspective</i>	5
Social Context <i>I see aspects like why a text is written,</i>	1

<i>how it is written</i>	
Using SFG <i>I try to use the analysing techniques while reading newspapers Grammar for analysis is boring but beneficial</i>	6

The questionnaires also inquired about students' motivation for the critical reading course. Students' answers to these questions most frequently focus on analysing and questioning the text more, followed by reading in more detail:

I analyse more now.

I question more.

I ask more questions.

...before I was just reading but now I think on it.

I try to understand and interpret the text.

I am exploring the texts in a more detailed way.

We look deeper into the meaning (of the texts).

This is more systematic.

It is more about interpreting the text. ... Our aim is to understand the text rather than giving the right answer.

Students' answers also report a change in consideration of perspectives of producers and ideal readers' of the texts, among many possible readings, on many occasions. Some examples of these responses are:

My perspective to texts and my interpretations have widened or I believe that they have.

I look at it (the text) from different perspectives.

The most important thing I learned is that I need to look at written texts from various perspectives.

Finally, use of SFG is also frequently referred to in students' self-reports to questions inquiring about students' motivation in the questionnaires:

I have learned to analyse using polarity, modality, etc.

We concentrate on the way the subject is presented and its methods.

(We question comment on the text) We even look at the personal pronouns.

Process, agency, mood, modality, polarity... in short, we learned the techniques to understand what we read.

Most important one was to find agent, process, goal...

Mood, participants, agency, appraisals, polarity...

To analyse the texts using SFG, (and to comment on the texts).

Appraisals; personal pronouns; textual meanings, theme and rheme...

... points to consider (process, agent, polarity).

Follow up interviews also showed that students valued SFG analysis as a systematic way of pulling their arguments together in pre- post-reading discussions. For example, one student says in her interview:

It provided rewards as a reader in both Turkish and in English. (In the traditional reading courses) We were reading and answering the questions in the text. But after this course (one) thinks on things like why the writer wrote that. There were verbs, mental, verbal... Analysing these, it is easier to find the answer. ... The thing that stuck to my mind most was the analysis, processes. ... And also the sheets you gave... the questions 'what other ways of writing'... It is easier to understand them thinking on these (questions)... (SFG) helped me to concentrate on it because it was more systematic.

Similarly, another student reflects on the course in the interview as follows:

Um... the aim of the reading lessons... at the moment, with the situation we are in, we always think it (should be to prepare for) the university exam. But... I mean in general... What did I learn from this course? Perspectives in a reading text... I mean not just to answer the monotonous three questions below the text, but how to approach a text, I learned that. I mean, the aim was not just to answer those three questions superficially, I mean it was very good. I mean, how it is written; how else it could have been written, they were very good. Or, we looked at who "we, they" are (in the text).

Students' responses to both questionnaires and interviews reported a change in their approach to reading in that they read in more detail, they considered reading as a social process and perspectives of authorship and readership, that they made use of SFG in analysing the texts and that they were more confident as readers and spent greater effort and time for reading.

Students were also given a repeated reading activity to inquire whether or not there were any changes in their readings of the same text at the beginning and at the end of the course. Overall, student responses to second reading at the end of the course showed a) decreased affect and increased awareness of the role of social context and reading as a sociohistorical process, and b) increased awareness of the effect of the writer's linguistic choices resulting from SFG analysis. These will be analysed in more detail below.

Repeated Reading Activity

For the repeated reading activity, students were given the same text at the beginning and end of the course with the same set of questions to answer. These questions were similar to those used throughout the term as pre-, while- and post-reading questions:

1. What is this text about?
2. Who is/are talked about?
3. How are they talked about?
4. What are the writer's attitudes towards the disagreement? How are they expressed?
5. Why is it written?
6. What other ways of writing about this topic are there?

The text used in repeated reading activity was a news piece about a dispute in NATO among member countries regarding sending missiles to Turkey for defence from a possible Iraqi attack. Some of the responses to the first question in students' first reading

place Turkey in the centre of the text and other countries that are mentioned in the text, positioned in relation to Turkey, e.g.:

It is about Turkey's being defended against Iraqi threat and I think also about Turkey's enemies and friends.

Other responses fail to provide accurate or detailed responses to this question. One student writes, "war between some countries" while another writes "war between USA and Iraq", which fail to realise that the text reports a disagreement in NATO and not a war; and gives a limited account of the participants involved. However, in the second reading, students' answers show less affect and more detail with more participants acknowledged. For example one student's answer "war between some countries" becomes "relationship and crisis among NATO countries." Similarly, another student's answer to the first reading shows increased affect. This decreases in the second reading:

Reading 1: Turkey wants to defend itself and wants weapons. Belgium, France, and Germany disagree, Netherlands agrees with Turkey.

Reading 2: Iraq crisis and France's, Germany's, Belgium's, and Netherlands's opinion about the crisis and Turkey's position.

In this example, as well as decreased affect, it is possible to see an increase in detail via acknowledgement of participants in the second answer: Iraqi crisis. Second reading also moves Turkey to rheme position, and Iraq crisis becomes the theme, as a result of decreased affect.

In their answers to the question "How are (the participants) talked about?" in both groups the majority of the students report the countries' stances as presented by the article, and three students state that the writer talks about them objectively.

The students are still sensitive about Turkey's situation and express affect, e.g. "Some (countries) don't want to send missiles"; "Turkish territory and airspace against any retaliatory Iraqi threat"; "Turkey-USA alliance"; "Turkey wants to defend its territory and airspace, wants weapons, Belgium, France and Germany are against this"; "Netherlands finally helps Turkey"; "Turkey will still be defended". Turkey is presented in the answers in relation to those who support its request for help and those who do not.

In the second activity, the students focus on two aspects: agency and polarity. Students' answers still show consideration of Turkey's position but this time not in relation to other countries but the responses this time focus Turkey's being presented as the goal in the text: One student writes "Turkey is used as a rheme and object. Other countries are active." In other words, these responses reflect how Turkey is positioned in the text rather than in their answers positioning it among the other countries as suggested by the text. Other examples are:

Turkey is just a subject, which is being talked about

Turkey is object.

They talk about what Turkey is supposed to do

Other students look at the use of modality, polarity and use of appraisal systems in the text:

They are talked in the events of which are probable. They are talked not in a certain way. Probabilities are more.

... Turkey will still be defended (pointing out the use of modality)

Opposition, force, but, consequences (are negative) protect (is positive)

Turkey is the problem country and the goal, France, Belgium, Germany are the negative countries and USA and Netherlands positive.

In response to the question “What are the writer’s attitudes towards the disagreement? How are they expressed?”; all students, except for five, recount the participant countries’ attitudes to the dispute as presented in the text. However, in the second reading there is explicit acknowledgement of the writer’s attitude. It is also possible to see that the students looked extensively at polarity, modality, and appraisals to answer this question in their second reading activity.

Student responses to the question “why was this text written?” is answered by “to inform” and “to give news” in the first reading activity by the majority of the students. It is possible to see increased affect in the first reading:

To let us see who is standing by Turkey and who is not.

Second reading activity, however, shows recognition of possible readings and the role of context of production and interpretation of discourses. The student who wrote the answer above, for example, writes in his second reading:

To show countries’ positions in relation to war.

Other answers include “to show countries’ attitudes/ opinions/ ideas/ policies about the crisis.”

Finally, responses to the question “what other ways of writing about the same topic are there?” include:

... from the eyes of NATO

Like a French or a Dutch

By someone, from those countries mentioned in the text

More certain

Less certain

With Turkey in the agent position.

While the first three responses are examples of recognition of reading as a sociocognitive process acknowledging possible perspectives, the last three responses refer to analysis of interpersonal and experiential meanings.

Critical Reading and Student Motivation

As stated above, it is not uncommon for critical reading courses to encounter resistance. Therefore, one of the aims of this research was to look into critical reading course and student motivation. The students participating in this study were highly motivated to study English. When asked why they chose to study English language, twenty five students out of thirty one reported that they are interested in the language. They expressed an interest in the language as well as clear and strong goals and high levels of self-efficacy. Some examples of the responses are as follows:

I like studying a foreign language. My aim is to be a good English teacher and I know English teachers will not be unemployed.

I always had an interest and talent for foreign languages since I was a child. And I chose (English) because I can be successful in it and it is enjoyable for me.

I always wanted to choose an occupation related to English because I knew that, and people who know me have been telling me that, I have the talent and interest for this.

Yet, interviews and questionnaire responses show that they have very low levels of motivation for reading lessons. Further inquiry show that such low motivation is due to:

- A lack of novelty and optimal arousal raised by the classroom practices;
- Lack of a relationship between classroom practices and students' immediate lives;
- High degree of external control on learning practice; and
- A lack of opportunity to practice oral communication skills.

As Ushioda (1996) remarks, school education bears the danger of alienating students if it fails to provide a bridge between school practices and students' interests, and immediate lives. Especially language learning, she suggests, bears this risk as it is likely to break a skill into its components. A group interview reflects the students' approaches towards their reading lessons. All students, except one, reported that they find reading lessons "monotonous" and "boring". Disappointment in not being able to contribute to the lessons was one part of the students' dissatisfaction: "I don't think we have real (proper) reading lessons actually. It is always the teacher talking. She asks the questions and then answers them. We don't do anything!"

Some students, however, appeared to have accepted that being a school subject, reading lessons were not expected to be engaging anyway. One student said, "At the end of the day it's a lesson... I mean, we don't need to like it but we still must do it. That's why we are here."

One issue that kept coming up in this interview was that all the students wanted to be more active, an aspect which the repetitive classroom procedures failed to promote. It is possible to see a lack of optimal arousal provided by the tasks students are exposed to in normal reading lessons. The reading practices and reading activities in particular, as reported by the students, do not create an environment for the students to relate to. Other responses from both groups include "dull comprehension questions", "multiple-choice nuisance", and reading practices being superficial. For example, Student O, responds to the question "What do you think the aim of the reading lessons should be?" as: "...I mean... not just to answer the monotonous three questions below the text but how to approach the text..."

The issue of control has an important role in these criticisms as well. It is the teacher deciding not only on the texts and questions to be asked, but also the answers to be given. And, most importantly, on the classroom routines: "For example we were never asked before if we enjoy these lessons. I want to be able to talk!" one student stated.

The students were given a questionnaire inquiring about their approach to the reading lessons. The questionnaire asked the students to compare their approaches to traditional reading lessons and the critical reading course. Twenty-eight students from both groups responded to this question. The frequency distribution of these responses is shown in Table 1.

Table. 4 Is there any difference between critical reading lessons and traditional reading lessons?

Responses	Frequencies
Yes, there is a positive change	21
Yes, there is a change but it is still boring	1
Yes, there's a negative change	2
No, there's no change	2
I don't know	2
No answer	3
Total	31

The responses fall into the following categories: 1) Enjoyment, 2) Developing Competence, 3) Participation and Persistence, and 4) Materials Used in the Course. It should be noted that these categories are overlapping at times and the answers usually include more than one reason, hence a single student's answer may fall into more than one category.

Table 5. If there is a difference between critical reading lessons and traditional reading lessons, please explain the nature of the change.

Category	Frequency
Enjoyment	6
Developing Competence	23
Persistence and Participation (Control)	6
Materials	5

Responses on developing competence include "focusing, understanding, interpreting, discussing, looking deeper into, questioning, and analysing the text; looking at the text from different perspectives; looking at different structures, SFG, the relationship between the reader and the writer; and that critical reading lessons were more systematic, detailed, educational, and beneficial."

Some examples of student responses are as follows:

- *Now we don't read it superficially, but we question, comment on the text... Before we used to read and answer the comprehension questions. But this is (more) beneficial.*
- *We used to read the texts and interpret superficially. Now we are looking deeper.*
- *Now, in these lessons, understanding and interpreting is important. We discuss the text but before, we just used to read and move on...*

The responses on persistence and participation include “higher participation by the respondents”, “being involved in group and class discussions”, “not being limited by multiple choice questions”, and “being more active”. One answer claims “increased persistence in reading”. As reviewed earlier, intrinsic motivation results in increased participation and persistence in tasks (Ushioda 1996). As well as being a result, participation, or “communicative success” is among the causes of intrinsic motivation (Ushioda, 1996, p. 20; Stipek 2002).

The last group of answers are related to the materials used in the classroom, i.e. the texts. The role of materials were pointed out in the responses saying that the texts were up-to-date, that they were read the way the students normally read written texts, without comprehension questions, and that the texts were more interesting than their texts in traditional reading lessons.

These answers are important in two aspects. The first one is that, as Ushioda (1996) argues, the use of authentic materials in the classroom, perhaps especially for students with a high level of English proficiency as in the context of this study, instead of materials specifically manufactured for language education, will help the learners to connect/relate to the classroom practices more.

The second aspect is that, authentic materials will increase the students' self-efficacy, a point related to “communicative success” in the classroom (Ushioda, 1996). In fact, an increase in self-efficacy is expressed by students:

- *I approach reading texts with more confidence, I am less intimidated.*
- *... I was stressed out because of the university entrance exam. This course has increased my self-esteem. I realised that I can understand what I read.*
- *I realised that all texts can be read. Asking questions to a text makes it easier to read it.*
- *Before, when I looked at a text, if it was too long, I wouldn't feel like reading it, or I would get bored when I did read. But now because I know how to approach it, I enjoy (reading) it more. I try to get what it says. I try to analyse it ... and it becomes easier to read like that.*
- *In the previous reading lessons, they would ask us to buy a book and the teacher would read it and we would follow until the end of the term. Now it's different. We all participate, discuss the texts... It used to be monotonous, now it is more enjoyable.*

The students were asked in Questionnaires 2 and 3 whether or not there was a change in their approach to reading lessons and were asked to write whether the change was positive or negative, if there was one. Table 6 shows students' responses regarding whether or not there was a difference in their approach to reading lessons and the nature of this change.

Table 6. Students' approach to reading lessons

<i>Questionnaire 2</i>		<i>Questionnaire 3</i>	
<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Yes, there is a positive change	17	Yes, there is a positive change	18
Yes, there is a change but it is neither positive nor negative	2	Yes, there is a change but it is neither positive nor negative	1
No, there's no change	7	No, there's no change	3
I don't know	1	I don't know	--
No Answer	4	No Answer	10

It should be noted here that some students had already stopped attending school close to the end of academic year, starting their summer holidays earlier. Therefore, the number of students who took the final questionnaire is lower than the number of respondents in Questionnaire 2. Those responses that reported a positive change were categorised into three groups in both questionnaires as presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Categories of students' approach to reading lessons

<i>Questionnaire 2</i>		<i>Questionnaire 3</i>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Enjoyment	9	Enjoyment	7
Developing Competence	10	Developing Competence	8
Persistence and Participation (Control)	3	Persistence and Participation (Control)	4

Nine students in Questionnaire 2 and seven students in Questionnaire 3 responded to this question saying that they find the reading lessons more enjoyable, interesting, or that they like reading lessons more now. One student says that she used to find reading lessons monotonous but that she finds them more enjoyable with this course. Likewise, Merve, from class A says, "Yes, before, even though I enjoyed it, I used to see it as a multiple-choice nuisance but now it is more enjoyable".

Eight responses in Questionnaire 2 and ten responses in Questionnaire 3 point out developing competence as a reason for their positive approach to the reading lessons. These responses state that the students' perspectives to written texts, interpretation skills, and English have improved; that these students are more conscious and confident as readers, they do not find reading as difficult anymore; that they find the reading course more educational and not "unnecessary"; they learned to analyse, and to question.

It is also possible to see the role of developing competence in answers to other questions in the questionnaires. The students were asked whether or not there was a change in their approach to written texts. Their answers to these questions reveal that they “analyse, think about, consider, pay attention to, question, explore” the text and the writer’s perspective more. These answers also include increased participation as the students report spending more time and effort for reading texts.

Going back to students’ perception of traditional reading courses, it is possible to see that one of the criticisms was that the traditional reading activities provided neither novelty nor optimal arousal, hence failed to provoke curiosity or an understanding that those skills that the activities offer will be meaningful for the students in their interactions with their environment. Based on the responses above, it is possible to argue that the critical reading course provided novelty and/or optimal arousal not only in terms of reading as an intellectual activity but also reading as part of the language learning process, i.e. the students reported both increased competence in reading and increased proficiency in English.

Another result of competence on a task, as well as feelings of enjoyment and changes in self-efficacy, is the degree of participation and persistence, which is visible in some of the student response: Three answers in Questionnaire 2 and four responses in Questionnaire 3 say that they explore the texts in a detailed way, they think on the texts now, they pay attention to the texts, that they try to participate in discussions as well as trying to understand and interpret the text, thinking on the text, and spending more time on the text now. Similarly, answering a question inquiring about their approach to reading, 22 out of 27 students reported that they found the critical reading lessons beneficial. Thirteen of the answers report that the students saw analysing the texts as a new and valuable technique, which they can and/or do use in their own lives.

To sum up, it is possible to argue that compared with the traditional reading courses, the critical reading course provided the students with novelty and optimal arousal, as well as more control over the lesson, which resulted in:

- An increase in feeling of pleasure for the reading tasks;
- Developing competence in reading and English;
- Higher persistence and/or participation.

Based on these responses, it is safe to claim that there was an increase in students’ intrinsic motivation for reading texts during this course. However, one student draw my attention in Questionnaire 2 that although he found critical reading course more enjoyable and beneficial, he still would prefer a traditional reading course to practice for the university exam. Upon realising that this was an issue, I inquired with all the participants if they agreed. Twenty six students out of 31 expressed that they would prefer a traditional reading course to prepare for the university exam. It should be noted here that university exam is highly competitive in Turkey and has an overwhelming backwash effect. This is to the extent that attendance in final year high school drops dramatically and those students who do attend practice for the multiple choice exam rather than following the lessons.

Although I was aware of possible resistance having read the literature, (Kramer-Dahl, 2001; Granville, 2003; Janks, 1999; Males, 2000) and inquired in the second questionnaire about the students’ feelings and opinions about the course, activities and texts, I was still surprised to see this particular student’s answers and the large number of students who stated that they would prefer a traditional reading course to prepare for

the university exam because students repeatedly reported that they felt more confident reading in English, i.e. they reported higher self-efficacy:

I approach reading texts with more confidence, I am less intimidated

... I was stressed out because of YDS (the university exam). This course has increased my self-esteem. I realised that I can understand what I read

[There is a positive change in my approach to reading lessons.] I realised that all texts can be read. Asking questions to a text makes it easier to read it.

Before, when I looked at a text, if it was too long, I wouldn't feel like reading it, or I would get bored when I did read. But now because I know how to approach it, I enjoy (reading) it more. I try to get what it says. I try to apply the analysis we did. I try them on the text and it becomes easier to read like that.

In the third questionnaire I asked the students the same question. However, this time there was a change in the numbers of those who said that they would prefer a YDS oriented reading course. Out of 27 students who answered this question, 15 expressed that they would prefer a university exam oriented lesson while nine said they would prefer critical reading lessons. Four students responded they were not sure. Out of these 15 students, two revised their answers by the time we had follow-up interviews and said they would actually prefer a critical reading course. Follow-up interviews with the students who answered they would prefer to practice for the university exam revealed that they found the critical reading course more beneficial in improving their reading skills but that the university exam was imposing the need to practice extensively through answering multiple choice questions, the same kind of questions that they reported to be causing low motivation for traditional reading lessons in the first place. They expressed that if they could change the university exam, they would and then they would prefer a critical reading course.

To sum up, at the end of the critical reading course in this study, students' self reports and repeated reading activity indicate that the students' approach to reading changed. They analysed, questioned the text more and recognised reading as a social process rather than a purely cognitive, linear one. They acknowledged multiple perspectives of production and interpretation and used SGF analysis in their readings. In addition, repeated reading activity showed decreased affect. The course also increased student motivation and participation. However, it also encountered resistance from the educational system, through the students, unlike other examples where the resistance came on the individual student's level.

Discussions and Implications

This study aims to contribute to the body of research on developing critical reading skills. The results show that the methodology offered by Wallace (1992a, 1992b, 1999) to develop critical reading skills can be adopted in a Turkish High School context. the framework she provides for analysis, as well as the questions to be posed to assist the SFG analysis, together with other pedagogical applications such as 'parallel discourses, unconventional discourses, prove to be a valuable scaffold to develop a critical reading course for the teacher and, therefore, to develop a critical reading approach for the students.

Besides, the pre-, while-, post- reading activities suggested by Wallace (1992a) provided the means not only to develop an understanding of language as a formal system in the

students involved in this study but also to increase their intrinsic motivation, which was a very welcome outcome in the context of this study.

This study shows that based on the studies of Wallace the students involved in this study adopted a critical approach to reading using the methods and techniques offered to them by the course. Based on these methodologies and techniques, their critical approach manifested itself, in terms of acknowledgement of different perspectives through recognition of the social context and sociocognitive processes and SFG analysis, all of which are complementary and are necessary conditions of CLA. Thus, the data from the students' self-reports and from the repeated reading activity show that these three main categories were blended into each other and were visible in different combinations, also resulting in a change in the degree of affect involved in reading, which is another indication of students' distancing themselves from the status of 'ideal reader' (Wallace 1992a, 1999).

This study also shows that the critical reading course can help to increase or develop intrinsic motivation in an EFL context with high English proficiency levels through relating to the students' own realities and the classroom practices. Indeed the students who participated in this study expressed that they found the critical reading course in this study enjoyable as it presented a new way of looking at reading, i.e. developing competence. The critical approach that this course offers also serves as an optimal arousal for the students with high English proficiency, for whom traditional reading classes fail to arouse curiosity or surprise.

It is also found out that increased student communication in the classroom and decreased external control lead to a higher degree of persistence for reading from the students since it helps students to practice their language skills in the classroom as well as giving them more control over the classroom procedures, enabling them to bring their own realities to the classroom, which reportedly lead to increased persistence in this study. Yet, the course also encountered resistance from the students due to a strong backwash effect of the university entrance exam. An overwhelming majority of the participants expressed that they would prefer a traditional reading lesson to practice for this exam, but through the end of the term, the majority of the students revised their positions. Considering that the students had expressed alienation from their traditional reading lessons, as discussed above, there is a need to negotiate aims, goals and objectives of school education and the university exam. Thus, there is a need for further research to mitigate this alienation.

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