ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL THROUGH A LITERATURE-BASED CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAM

*Recep Şahin ARSLAN   **Nazan YILDIZ

*Pamukkale University, School of Education, Department of English Language and Teaching, Denizli, Turkey, rsarslan@pau.edu.tr
**Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, Ankara, Turkey, nyildiz@hacettepe.edu.tr

ÖZET

Bu makale edebiyat tabanlı eleştirel düşünce programının uygulanmasının üniversite düzeyinde olan önemi ve uygulanan programın öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünce becerileri üzerindeki etkisini, öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin edebiyat öğretimi hakkındaki görüşleriyle beraber incelemektedir. Çalışmada 34 İngiliz dili ve edebiyatı son sınıf öğrencisi tek gruplu ön test-son test modeli çerçevesinde yedi hafta boyunca edebiyat tabanlı eleştirel düşünce programına tabi tutulmuştur. Var olan eleştirel düşünce ortamı ve uygulanan program sonrası oluşan değişimle ilgili veriler anket, mülakat, gözlem ve Cornell Eleştirel Düşünce Testi yoluyla toplanmıştır. T-test öğrencilerin ön ve son test eleştirel düşünce seviyeleri arasında anlamlı bir fark olduğunu göstermiştir. Bulgular sonucunda edebiyat tabanlı eleştirel düşünce programının öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünce seviyelerini geliştiren daha öğrenci merkezli ve yaratıcı edebiyat öğretimini mümkün kıldığı da belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bloom sınıflandırması; Eleştirel düşünce; Yaratıcı edebiyat öğretimi.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the significance of the application of a literature-based critical-thinking program at the tertiary level and its impact on both students' critical thinking skills and teachers' and students' beliefs about literature instruction. The study is based on one group pre-test–post-test design, a quasi-experimental design, in which a seven-week literature-based critical thinking program involving 34 seniors attending an English Language and Literature Department was implemented. Data regarding the present critical thinking situation and change process were collected through questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z. T-test results show a significant change between the students' pre-critical thinking and post-critical thinking levels. These findings indicate that a literature-based critical-thinking program leads to more student-centered classrooms and creative literature instruction that foster the development of students' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Bloom's taxonomy; Critical thinking; Creative literature instruction.

1. Introduction: The emerging need for the dissemination of critical thinking in education

In today's democratic world one of the most significant objectives of the educational system is to promote independent-thinking in students both with regard to academic subject matter and daily life (Ennis, 1989; Grinberg, 2004; Nelson, 2004). The necessity and significance of critical thinking in education might primarily lie in the fact that students are not passive participants in the learning process since they are no longer engaged in rote memorization of facts; rather, they need to graduate from educational institutions that engage them in learning that improves their thinking skills. Empirical research suggests that benefits accrue to students who possess the ability to think critically; hence, many institutions need to incorporate instruction oriented toward providing students with critical thinking skills (Tsui, 1999; Stupnisky et al, 2008) through programmed interventions that vary from the traditional instructional approach (Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga et al, 2009).

In critical thinking, producing knowledge – creativity – is of great importance since creative individuals are more likely to create original and unique ideas (Karakelle, 2009). In classrooms that promote critical thinking, the teacher's role is to provide students with relevant experience (Zohar, 2004), engaging them in induction, deduction, recognizing assumptions, supporting ideas and problem solving activities (Mcpeck, 1981; Boostroom, 1992; Fisher, 2006; Ennis, 2005) that require students to produce knowledge rather than just acquiring facts (Grinberg, 2004).

Critical thinking has been emphasized in language and literature studies worldwide through literature (Long & Pederson, 1992); theatre courses (Baker & Delmonico, 1999), and language skills (Combs, 1992; Dantas-Whithey, 2002; Carroll, 2007; Puthikanon, 2009). Particularly in Turkey literature has been deployed relatively recently for the promotion of critical thinking in classrooms (İrfaner, 2002; Üstünlüoğlu, 2004; Reinart, 2006; Özgür, 2007; Deniz, 2009; Tiryaki, 2011). Much more work is needed to establish a critical thinking pedagogy in schools throughout Turkey while universities carry the biggest responsibility to provide students with the appropriate critical thinking environment (İrfaner, 2002; Mirioğlu, 2002; Özüberk, 2002; Dayıoğlu, 2003; Şenkaya, 2005; Tarakçıoğlu, 2008; Yağcılar, 2010).

Based on the idea that critical thinking is a *sine qua non* in education and the universities are the institutions carrying the ultimate responsibility for promoting critical thinking in classrooms, this study aims to promote the critical thinking instructional practices of literature courses in the English Language and Literature Department at Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon. Accordingly, the study aims to answer the question 'How can critical thinking levels of the students be enhanced in literature courses through a literature-based critical thinking program?'

2. Method

2.1. Participants and sampling

The sample for the study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in a fourth-year Literary Criticism course in the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon. In the study, the purposive sampling method was used as the inclusion of all departmental literature courses was not feasible.

Literary Criticism course was found as the most suitable course for the implementation as the study aimed at encouraging critical thinking through literature by dealing with various literary works from novel to poetry and the course covered two terms which was required first to identify the current critical thinking situation and then to improve the existing situation . The total number of the students who participated in the study was 34 (31 females and 3 males) senior students attending literary criticism course.

3. Procedures

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods; namely, survey research and One-Group Pre-Test/Post-Test Design. The study was conducted in three stages: ***STEP1: Identifying Current Critical Thinking Situation*** through Observation, Pre-Instructor Interview, Pre-Student Questionnaire, and Cornell Critical Thinking Test (Pre-Test); ***STEP 2: Implementing Critical Thinking Activities;*** and ***STEP 3 : Identifying the Change after the Implementation*** through Instructor Interview, Student Questionnaire, and Cornell Critical Thinking Test (Post-Test).

3.1. Step 1. Identifying the critical thinking situation

Prior to the implementation of the study, a pre-student questionnaire was distributed and classroom observations were conducted in the Literary Criticism course in the fall term. Questionnaires were distributed in order to collect information about the classroom atmosphere (Mirioğlu, 2002; Üstünlüoğlu, 2004; Lee, 2006), the typical practice in the course with regard to critical thinking (Combs, 1992; Chaffe, 1999; Baker & Delmonico; 1999; Ruggerio, 2002; Dayıoğlu, 2003), and students' tendency for engaging in critical thinking (Mirioğlu, 2002; Üstünlüoğlu, 2004; Lee, 2006). The purpose of the observations was to gather information about the activities carried out in the lesson, classroom atmosphere, and the types of questions posed during the course of the lesson (Boostrom, 1992; Baker & Delmonico, 1999; Roland, 2001; Paul & Elder, 2001; Schmit, 2002; Nosich, 2005).

Moreover, as research indicates that teachers' beliefs and experiences are of great importance to educate students in critical thinking skills (Keys, 2007), the course instructor completed a pre-instructor interview to identify the critical thinking situation and after the implementation another instructor interview to identify the results of implementation.

Finally, the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z, one of the most widely used tests in similar studies (Ennis, 1989; Baker & Delmonico, 1999), was administered as a pre-test to the students attending the course in order to find out their present critical thinking levels (Ennis, Millman, & Tomko, 2005). The test as a part of an in-depth and continuing research study on critical thinking assesses such critical thinking skills as induction, deduction, observation, credibility and assumption.

3.2. Step 2. Quasi-Experimental Design: One-group pre-test/post-test design

One group pre-test/post-test design (Cohen & Manion, 1994) was employed in the study to find out whether there was a significant difference in the critical thinking levels

of the students after they were exposed to a literature-based critical thinking program. Critical thinking activities used in the study were divided into three groups. The first group of critical thinking activities included those of Bloom's taxonomy such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation (Combs, 1992; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Schmit, 2002; Brown; 2004), problem solving, real life, asking questions, and supporting ideas (Boostroom, 1992; Chaffe, 1999; Derry et al, 2000; Ruggerio, 2002; Halvorsen, 2005; Paul & Elder, 2006; Gillies & Khan, 2008).

The second group of critical thinking activities was prepared in line with the course content. As part of the Literary Criticism course, learning about various literary approaches and applying these approaches to works, the students practiced the first four thinking levels of the Cognitive Level of Bloom's Taxonomy – knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis – all vitally important for students to be successful in the succeeding levels: synthesis and evaluation.

The third group of critical thinking activities was prepared in line with the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z based on induction, deduction, credibility and assumption. Moreover, class discussion and pair and group work activities were also highlighted in the study for the reason that engagement in classroom discussions enables students to create and evaluate different points of views to attempt to support their views (Combs, 1992; Paul & Elder, 2001; Halvorsen, 2005).

The critical thinking activities were carried out for a period of seven weeks - (13 sessions- 39 hours) - in the Literary Criticism course and were incorporated into the course syllabus. To implement the activities easily, to gather data for the study, and to have all the students do the given activities, activity handouts were prepared for each course.

3.3. Step 3. Identifying the change after the implementation

After the implementation of critical thinking activities for seven weeks, the Cornell Critical Thinking Test as a post-test was administered once more in order to determine if there was any improvement in students' critical thinking levels. Moreover, the student questionnaire after the implementation specifically aimed to gather information about students' interest in the critical thinking activities (Halvorsen, 2005), the activities students found most challenging, (Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1997; Tsui, 1999; Halvorsen, 2005), and how the activities contributed to students' understanding of literature, to their appreciation of literature, (Cobine, 1993), to their understanding of real life, (Combs, 1992; Üstünlüoğlu, 2004; Halvorsen, 2005), to activating their thinking (Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1997; Halvorsen, 2005), and to producing their original and creative ideas (Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1997; Ruggerio, 2002).

The instructor interview conducted after the implementation, on the other hand, included questions designed to gain insights into instructor's general reflections on the critical thinking activities as to whether these activities activated students' thinking, whether they made any changes in the classroom, and whether they made any contribution to students' understanding and appreciation of literature.

3.3.1. Data analysis procedure

   Data obtained from student questionnaires and classroom observations were analyzed through SPSS 10.0 statistical program with descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage and mean. In analyzing the mean ($\bar{x}$),
standard values that follow a five point scale were used; namely, '1.00-1.79' for 'Strongly Disagree'; '1.80-2.59' for 'Disagree'; '2.60-3.39' for 'Neither Agree nor Disagree'; '3.40-4.19' for 'Agree''; and '4.20-5.00' for 'Strongly Agree'. Content analysis was made to analyze the data gathered from the instructor interview, from the open-ended questions of the student questionnaire conducted after the implementation, and from the observation study. Data from the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z were also analyzed by descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation again via SPSS 10.0.

4. Findings
4.1. A promising context for reflective practice

   The Literary Criticism course was investigated, through pre-student questionnaire, in terms of classroom atmosphere, classroom activities, questions asked in the course, instructor's way of teaching, and students' tendency towards being critical thinkers. 34 students attending the Literary Criticism course filled out the pre-student questionnaire to identify the critical thinking situation in the literature course in question. Data findings indicate that the course fell significantly short of reflecting the features of critical thinking, while the direction and content of the Literary Criticism course renders it inherently suitable for the promotion of critical thinking since the highest value ($\bar{x}$ =4.26) belongs to students' listening to classmates when they have a different idea and the lowest value ($\bar{x}$ =3.02) concerns students' showing disagreement in the course. The students also agree that they respect each other ($\bar{x}$ = 4.10), they can voice their opinions freely ($\bar{x}$ = 3.88), and they feel comfortable in the course ($\bar{x}$ = 3.60), indicating all positive results for the idea of critical thinking in the program.

   Since there is a close link between critical thinking and higher-order questions, the type of questions asked in the classroom is considered to have a great role in determining the quality of education (Renaud & Murray, 2007). Accordingly, Literary Criticism course was observed for 39 class hours and with an aim to determine the instructor's critical thinking practice in the related course, instructor's questions were analysed in line with the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Combs, 1992; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Schmit, 2002; Brown; 2004). Data findings show that the course was mostly composed of knowledge transmission and lecture as the majority (73.7 %) of instructor's questions consisted of low-level lower-thinking questions (44.6 % knowledge + 29.1 % comprehension). Some of these questions (20.6 %) were analysis questions that fell into the mid-level range (12.6 % analysis; 8.0 % application) and very low percentage of the entire questions belonged to higher-order thinking questions (5.7 % evaluation). Such results were promising; however, there was an emerging need to increase the number of higher order thinking questions in the Literary Criticism course.

   To disseminate critical thinking in education, the instructor needed to present challenging activities to force students' thinking skills. An analysis of the classroom activities shows that *class discussions* received the highest value ($\bar{x}$ =4.02). However, in

the related course students were not sure about facing *challenging* ($\bar{x} =3.21$), *real life* ($\bar{x} =2.90$), and *problem solving* activities ($\bar{x} =3.21$) which would possibly encourage their creativity. Neither did they agree that they engaged in *debates* ($\bar{x} =2.10$), *pair work* ($\bar{x} =1.81$), or *group work* ($\bar{x} =1.76$). It can be mentioned that the instructor needed to offer more challenging activities and emphasize real life, problem solving activities, pair work, group work and debates in the Literary Criticism course to encourage students' critical thinking.

Further analysis of the main points in the instructor's way of teaching with regard to critical thinking shows that the highest value was $\bar{x} =4.12$ for both instructor's assistance that aimed at *helping students understand the given information* and for *giving students time to think*. However, the students were not sure whether the instructor provided them with the opportunity to *check ideas* ($\bar{x} =3.33$) or *stopped lectures to ask thoughtful questions* ($\bar{x} =3.17$). Neither did they agree that the instructor asked them to *make connection with the previously learned information* ($\bar{x} =2.38$), asked them to *use the knowledge acquired in the course outside the classroom* ($\bar{x} =2.55$), or called on them in the course without waiting for their *raising hands* with the lowest value ($\bar{x} =2.26$). These above-mentioned problematic areas needed to be addressed in order to promote critical thinking in the Literary Criticism course as well.

Pre-interview with the course instructor shows positively that the instructor was aware of the concept of critical thinking and its significance in education and he felt the need to identify ways to incorporate special critical thinking activities such as pair and group work, problem solving and real life activities encouraging the learners to produce original ideas and giving them more responsibility and time to think.

4.2. The effect of the reflective practice

To measure students' critical thinking levels before the treatment, Cornell Critical thinking Test Level Z was administered to 34 students in the experimental group. After the implementation of literature-based critical thinking activities, the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z was administered a second time to the group as the post-test for the purpose of identifying any change in their critical thinking scores. All 34 students who attended the Literary Criticism course and participated in the pre-test also participated in the post-test. The means of pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre/post-test Critical Thinking Scores of the Experimental Group

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			T- test			
	N	Mean	s.d	df	t	p
Pre-test	34	21.21	3.35	33	-3.44	0,002
Post-test	34	**21.74**	**3.84**			

Table 1 indicates that while the pre-test mean score of the group is 21.21 out of 52, the highest grade of the test, the post-test score mean is 21.74. The pre-test standard deviation is 3.35 and the post-test standard deviation is 3.84. The results show that there is a difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Literary Criticism group since the critical thinking score of the group increased to 21.74 from 21.21. The results show that there is a difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group but in order to see whether there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the group after the implementation of the critical thinking activities, T-test was employed and the test results show that the difference is statistically significant as t = -.344, p < 0.005. The difference comes from the fact that the post-test scores of the group ($\bar{x}$ = 21.74, s.d= 3.84) are higher than its pre-test scores ($\bar{x}$ = 21.21, s.d=3.35). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an improvement in the critical thinking score means of the experimental group after the implementation of critical thinking activities which can be taken as a noticeable difference for a seven weeks' treatment since critical thinking is a lifelong process.

In addition to the test, all the participants filled out the student questionnaire after the implementation through which the researchers aimed to find out students' reflections on the critical thinking activities applied throughout the spring semester. After identifying the critical thinking situation in the Literary Criticism course, it was recommended that more challenging activities should have been developed in order to promote critical thinking in the classroom.

The variety of new activities incorporated into the course shows that those critical thinking activities were challenging as they were supposed to be. The most challenging activities were a*ssumption* (15,2 %) and *writing a poem* (14,1 %) followed by *problem solving* (8.1 %), *fact and opinion* (7.1 %), *deduction- induction* (6.1 %), *supporting ideas* (6.1 %), *finding suitable characters* (6.1 %), *writing a story* (5.1 %), *writing a diary entry* (4 %), *adding a character to works* (4 %), *class discussion* (4 %), *putting themselves in a character's place* (4 %), *writing a dialogue* (3 %), *designing a cover* (3 %), *writing new endings* (3 %), *pair work* (2 %), *group work* (1 %), *finding a new title* (2 %), *applying works in real life contexts* (1 %), and *generating discussion questions from works* (1 %).

Table 2 is related to the contribution of activities to students' *a) appreciation of literature, b) understanding of real life, c) thinking* and *d) creativity or producing original ideas*. Data findings in Table 2 indicate that critical thinking activities were likely to contribute to students' *appreciation of literature*. Except for *writing a diary entry*, the students believed that all of the activities helped them appreciate what they read in the Literary Criticism course: the highest mean belongs to *class discussion*, followed by *supporting ideas* and *writing a story*.

Table 2. Contribution of Activities

	Activities	a	b	c	d
		$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$
1.	Class discussion	4.50	4.38	4.62	4.53
2.	Supporting ideas	4.24	4.21	4.44	4.38
3.	Writing a story	4.24	3.97	4.35	4.47
4.	Relating works to real life	4.18	4.32	4.47	4.47
5.	Writing new endings	4.12	4.00	4.21	4.35
6.	Adding characters	4.09	3.97	4.26	4.35
7.	Writing a dialogue	4.06	3.68	4.21	4.29
8.	Induction-deduction	4.00	3.85	4.12	4.15
9.	Pair work	3.97	3.97	4.12	4.03
10.	Generating questions	3.94	4.09	4.24	4.00
11.	Group work	3.94	3.91	4.15	4.12
12.	Problem solving	3.91	3.85	4.29	4.41
13.	Assumption	3.91	3.38	4.18	4.09
14.	Finding a new title	3.88	3.97	4.29	4.38
15.	Designing a cover	3.79	3.65	4.18	4.26
16.	Writing a poem	3.62	2.97	3.79	3.71
17.	Fact and opinion	3.53	3.44	4.09	3.97
18.	Writing a diary entry	2.71	2.76	3.65	3.68

In analyzing the role of the critical thinking activities in helping students *understand real life*, Table 2 demonstrates that except for *writing a diary entry*, ($\bar{x}$ =2.76) *writing a poem* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.67), and *assumption* activities ($\bar{x}$ = 3.38) that did not directly aim to emphasize real life, the students reported that critical thinking activities contributed to their *understanding of real life*. The highest value belongs to *class discussion* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.38), which again proves that class discussions in Literary Criticism courses successfully formed a bridge between real life and literature. After the class discussions, the second-highest value belongs to *relating works to real-life* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.32) activities that directly aim to highlight real life through literature.

Data findings in Table 2 regarding whether the critical thinking activities contributed to *students' thinking* show such activities in the Literary Criticism course served to activate students' thinking. The arithmetic mean values for all the activities are high while the highest value belongs to *class discussion* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.62), which also indicates the usefulness of the discussions. Then comes the activity of *relating works to real life* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.47), which encourages students' thinking to find connections between literature and real life through various activities.

Table 2 also indicates that almost all of the critical thinking activities such as *class discussion* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.53), *supporting ideas* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.38), *writing a story* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.47), *relating works to real life* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.47), *writing new endings* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.35), and *adding characters* ($\bar{x}$ = 4.35) contributed to students' *producing original ideas*. Whereas the lowest value that belongs to *writing a diary entry* ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68) activity may indicate that personal diary

writing is not a favorable activity for many students. It can be stated that students should have been given more opportunities to participate in challenging tasks.

The data findings of the student questionnaire after the implementation reflect that, for the most part, the subjects found critical thinking activities challenging. Indeed, this was one of the goals of the study, for the reason that challenging activities activate students' thinking. Most of the students expressed an interest in the activities as the activities were original, useful and enjoyable. The students' motivation also increased since the activities were generally carried out through pair and group work. Furthermore, nearly all of the students agreed that the activities increased their understanding and appreciation of literature. Another point of agreement for many of the students was that the activities helped them to understand real life. The significance of these findings is in their support for the aims of critical thinking education, which seeks to promote the development of individuals who can solve their problems in real life through thinking critically and who can make use of literature for the purpose of helping them understand real life. The study seems to prove that critical-thinking instruction is effective, as almost all of the students expressed that the activities led them to think and produce original ideas.

4. 2.1. Thinking deeply

Students' responses to an open-ended question at the end of the student questionnaire conducted after the implementation strongly support the results of the rest of the questionnaire. To exemplify, one of the students reported that the activities very useful in understanding the literary works made them think deeply:

Activities, mostly, were enjoyable. They helped me elaborate on the works of many writers and I found many details about them… Thus while doing the activities, I had the chance of understanding them better which is a big advantage of the activities. I don't think there is a disadvantage of the activities because they were thought- provoking and helped us think critically over the issue. Also some activities like creating a new title and endings were very original. (S 1)

Creativity or producing original ideas is another point emphasized in students' responses, which highlights the efficiency of the implemented critical thinking activities.

4.2.2. Producing original ideas

Many students reflected that the activities were very creative and led them to think and produce original ideas that constitute the main elements of the critical thinking approach. One student view might summarize this fact:

These activities had lots of advantages. They improved our knowledge of language. While preparing a cover, I could activate my thinking and produced original ideas. Also I could understand literature better. I believed that these activities were very useful for us... (S 2)

The following students also expressed that through critical thinking activities they became more active in the classroom and that the activities forced their thinking and creativity:

The activities made us create original ideas and we became more active in class. Working in pairs and groups was useful because we shared our ideas and generated new ideas with the help of others. (S 3)

The activities helped us develop our understanding of literature and real life and also they activated our thinking and led us to produce new ideas. (S 4)

Likewise, the following two students found the activities difficult but beneficial since they led them to think in a critical way and create original ideas:

Some activities especially problem solving, assumption and induction activities were a bit difficult for me. Working in pair and group activities were very beneficial for me; I could create many ideas in these works. (S 5)

Although they seemed difficult, actually they were for our benefit. They enabled us to understand the works deeply. I think they improved our way of thinking and creativity. (S 6)

4.3. Student-centered atmosphere

After the implementation of the activities, the researchers prepared a semi-structured interview- an instructor interview- for the purpose of eliciting the reflections of the instructor on the literature-based critical thinking program. The course instructor reported that the activities created a student-centered atmosphere in which all of the students joined the class discussions:

The critical thinking activities I think increased students' attention to the subject. They increased their interest in the subject and more students started to participate in the discussion. They were encouraged to think more deeply about the questions. (Ins.)

The course instructor also held the view that the program was extremely successful and useful in helping students understand and appreciate literature in that they helped them to establish a bridge between literary works and real life. He also mentioned that the activities were challenging as the students were encouraged to think critically to answer the questions:

The activities were very useful because they were focusing on different aspects as we did not only focus on the knowledge; we went into the activities focusing on application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. I think the students were forced to think more deeply. (Ins.)

The instructor interview conducted after the implementation reflected that the critical-thinking activities were extremely successful in involving students in class discussion and transforming the classroom into a student-centered atmosphere. The instructor agreed that the activities were useful in helping students' understanding and appreciation of literature in that they helped them establish a bridge between literary works and real life. Moreover, he also found that the activities were challenging and led the students to think deeply.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the practice of critical thinking in the Literary Criticism course in order to design and implement a literature-based critical thinking program aiming for an educational change in the current situation. Being one of very few studies in the Turkish context (İrfaner, 2002; Üstünlüoğlu, 2004; Reinart, 2006; Deniz, 2009; Tiryaki, 2011), this study is quite significant as this particular study highlights the significance of incorporating critical thinking into the Turkish education system and makes teachers and students become aware of the vital role of critical thinking in literature education.

In addition to the stated aims, further benefits have accrued as a result of this study. At the first place, it proves that it is possible to increase critical thinking levels of the students by literature through various critical thinking activities. In general, literature is regarded as a passive activity in which the educators transfer the facts to their students. However, the study shows that literature can be turned into an active process by emphasizing critical thinking in literature courses.

Furthermore, having identified the obstacles to critical thinking in the current context such as the emphasis on memorization, limited and non-challenging classroom activities and rarely asked thoughtful questions, it can be supported that the study proves it possible to increase critical thinking levels of students through a specifically prepared program which is consistent with the results of several studies (Long & Pederson, 1992; Combs, 1992, Özçınar, 1996; Baker & Delmonico, 1999; Derry et al, 2000; Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga et al, 2009). Accordingly, T-test shows a significant difference between the pre and post critical thinking results, which can be attributed to the implementation of a critical thinking program. The critical-thinking activities made the students think critically and turned them into creative students as they required them to solve problems and produce original ideas away from rote memorization, helping them understand and appreciate literature and thereby real life, also underlined in several similar studies by Boomstroom, 1992; Chaffe, 1999; Derry et al, 2000; Ruggerio, 2002; Halvorsen, 2005; Paul & Elder, 2006; and Gillies & Khan, 2008.

As for the instructor, he expressed great satisfaction with the study that changed the classroom into a more student-centered atmosphere in which the students became active thinkers. The study contributed evidence that reflective practice is very significant to activate students' critical thinking skills (Şahinel, 2001; Carroll, 2007) while the role of the instructor is extremely vital in the process of enhancing critical thinking (Derry et al, 2000; Gillies & Khan, 2008). The study also contributed much to the instructor's professional development as well since the instructor realized that ideal instructors are expected to guide their students to use and produce information rather than just transferring information. In this active process, the instructor assisted the students to come up with new ideas, to find connections with the real life, and to search for truth on their own. Therefore we can suggest that the study produces fruitful results not only for the students but for the instructors as well.

Based on the results coming from the qualitative and quantitative data, it can be concluded that the study sets an important example in the Turkish context for any other literature course and may suggest that critical thinking practice can be disseminated effectively in the education system if the idea is to graduate students with critical thinking abilities.

Appendix: Examples from the Critical Thinking Activities Applied in the Study

Literary Work: Young Goodman Brown by Nathaniel Hawthorne.
Critical Thinking Activity: Bloom's Taxonomy.
Type of the activities: Class Discussion, Individual, Pair and Group work.
Purpose of the activity: To put Bloom's Taxonomy into practice by using a short story and make students think critically about the literary work.
PROCEDURE: Bloom's Taxonomy activities for all six levels are prepared according to the story. The class is divided into groups of four. For the group activities, four of them worked together and for the pair activities, each two of the group become pairs and carry out the activities. Two different activity papers are distributed to the groups. Each pair is given a different type of activity paper in the groups. The papers include different activities in comprehension analysis and synthesis levels in Bloom's Taxonomy. After the distribution of the papers, the instructor wants students to do the activities and when the students are ready they answer the questions. At least one person from the groups joins each activity and pairs and groups shared their answers with the class and discussion takes place.

Knowledge Level: What happened after Young Goodman Brown turned back his mysterious journey? (PairWork)**.** Make a list of the main events. (Pair Work)
Comprehension Level: Can you describe in your own words the road Young Goodman Brown followed when he started his mysterious journey? (Individual)**.** Describe Young Goodman Brown's companion in his journey. (Individual)**.**How the man Young Goodman Brown met in the forest helped the Brown family? (Individual) **Application Level:** Analyze Young Goodman Brown according to the traditional approaches (Individual). This activity is carried out before the other levels of the activity through a class discussion leading by the instructor. **Analysis Level:** Why do you think Young Goodman Brown and his companion look like each other so much? (Pair Work)**.** What are some of the motives behind the mysterious journey of Young Goodman Brown? (Pair Work) **Synthesis Level:** Write a different dialogue for Young Goodman Brown while he is leaving from Faith at the beginning of the story? (Pair Work). Add another character to the story. What kind of character is it? Which part will it play in the story? Why did you choose this character? (Pair Work)**.** Design a cover for the story. (Group work)**.**Write a new ending for the story (Pair Work) **.**Find a new title for the story and explain why you choose this title? (Individual)

Evaluation Level: (Supporting ideas)

- "Young Goodman Brown is a good man". Do you think this statement is correct? Does the information in the story support this claim?

a-   Yes, the information supports the claim because…………………….
b-   No, the information doesn't support the claim because……………..
c-   The information partially support the claim because………………..

-       Do you think the old man is good or bad intentioned by his insistence on giving his staff to Young Goodman Brown? Why? Offer evidence to support your view. (Individual). Do you think Young Goodman Brown is right in his argument? What information would you use to support the following claim of Young Goodman Brown? (you can make use of the text and your real life observations and experiences) (Pair Work)

"There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

Literary Work: Various novels.
Critical Thinking Activities: Application of Traditional Approaches and Formalistic Approach. Bloom's Taxonomy, Real Life, Deduction, Induction, Credibility, Assumption.
Type of the activity: Class discussion, Individual Work.
Purpose of the activity: To practice various critical thinking activities through a novel.
PROCEDURE: At the end of the first semester, each student taking the course was given a novel to read and be ready for the second semester to discuss the novel. After the each lecture of the instructor for a specific literary approach, students' novels were discussed in line with the approach in question. To give an example, after learning about the traditional approaches, students prepared projects that analyze their novels in terms with Historical- Biographical and Moral- Philosophical approaches and then discussed their works in the class. Moreover for the novels, critical thinking activity papers were prepared including Bloom's Taxonomy, Real Life, Deduction, Induction, Credibility and Assumption activities. The papers were distributed to the students and students were asked to do the activities on the paper for the next course. They worked individually as they all read different novels. Next course, the activities were done through a class discussion that the instructor asked all of the students for their answers for the various novels.

Activity 1: Bloom's Taxonomy
Knowledge Level: Search about the author of the novel you read and write three new facts you learn about him/her. **Comprehension Level:** What are the main characters and their roles in the novel? Write the main events in the novel. Write one page summary of the novel. **Application Level:** Suppose that you are the main character in the novel and write a diary entry telling about the worst day of the character in the novel. Do you know any person who has the similar problems as the characters mentioned in the novel?**Analysis Level:** Give 3 examples from the facts and opinions in the novel. **Synthesis Level:** Write a new ending for the novel. Just by using the title of the novel, write one page story. Find two new titles for the novel and explain why they are appropriate for the novel. **Evaluation Level:** Would you want to be a character in this novel? Explain Why? Why not? Judge the actions of one character in the novel? Is she or he behaves in the right way? Or she /he should have acted in a different way. Support your view. Why? Why not? Write a letter to the author of the novel you read and tell him/her that what you like about his/her work and also include any questions you have in your mind about the novel.

Activity 2: Real Life Activity: Find an event in the novel and relate this event to an actual event.

Activity 3: Deduction and Deduction

Deduction Activity: Write 3 specific statements that you infer from the novel regarding real life. **Induction Activity:** Write one general statement that you infer from the novel regarding real life.

Activity 4: Credibility Activity: Suppose that the author of the novel you read claims that his/her novel includes information that can guide and help you in real life. What information would you look for and to whom you consult to believe the author. Explain your answer.

Activity 5: Assumption Activity: Find 3 assumptions the author made in the novel.

Example from the characters students added to *Young Goodman Brown* by Nathaniel Hawthorne: We want to add the character called *Loneliness* to the story. This character struggles on his own. It will take part in the story when Brown turns back from the journey. We chose this character because *Loneliness* can teach Brown how to be strong when he is alone.

Example from students' endings for *Everyday Use* by Alice Walker:

 After many years, Dee comes across a woman who claims that Dee is an orphan is not member of the Johnson family. Dee wants to learn the reality from the mother and Maggie. She is very nervous and at the end of the story she burns the quilt in front of the mother and Maggie.

Example from students' real life questions they generated from *Hamlet*: Do you think is it right to not to trust anyone and isolate yourself? Do you think that is the feeling of regret a subjective matter?

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