



## *Sınrsız Eđitim ve Arařtırma Dergisi*



## *The Journal of Limitless Education and Research*

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**Dear Readers,**

Our journal has entered its tenth year of publication with the March 2025 issue. The aim of our journal, the Limitless Education and Research Association (SEAD), has continuously been published since 2016 is to contribute to the field of education and research with new scientific studies. To this end, theoretical and experimental original research, review articles, thesis summaries, and other scientific works are published for free and shared with readers at both nationwide and worldwide.

The Unlimited Education and Research Journal (SEAD) is published three times a year in both Turkish and English. As an international peer-reviewed journal, it is prepared with the scientific endeavors, contributions, and support of academics, scholars, researchers, educators, and teachers from different countries. Each issue including current and new studies is meticulously presented to the readers in the field, following thorough reviews.

Maintaining its academic and scientific quality for ten (10) years, the Limitless Education and Research Journal (SEAD) is indexed in the EBSCO, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson) Database Coverage List, which is recognized by the Council of Higher Education (ÜAK). It is also indexed in various national and international databases such as ASOS, DRJI, ESJI, OAJI, ROAD, SIS, SOBİAD, and Worldcat, and receives a significant number of citations. According to the SOBİAD impact factor, our journal ranks highly among scientific journals in our country. Efforts to have our journal indexed in more extensive national and international databases are ongoing.

In the March 2025 issue of our journal, seven (7) scientific research and review articles are featured. We would like to thank all the editors, authors, reviewers, and translators who contributed to the preparation and publication of this issue. With the hope that our journal will bring contributions to scientists, researchers, educators, teachers, and students in the field, we extend our best regards.

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### **Deđerli Okuyucular,**

Dergimiz, Mart 2025 sayısı ile yayın hayatında onuncu yılına girmiş bulunmaktadır. Sınrsız Eğitim ve Araştırma Derneđi (SEAD) tarafından 2016 yılından bu yana 10 yıldır kesintisiz olarak yayınlanan Dergimizin amacı, yeni bilimsel çalışmalarla eğitim ve araştırma alanına katkı sağlamaktır. Bu amaçla kuramsal ve deneysel özgün araştırmalar, derleme makaleler, tez özetleri ve diđer bilimsel çalışmalar ücretsiz yayınlanmakta, ulusal ve uluslararası düzeydeki okuyucularla paylaşılmaktadır.

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## **Determining the Levels of Deconstructive Critical Inquiry Among Pre-Service English Language Teachers**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to determine the deconstructive critical inquiry levels among pre-service English language teachers. The research is descriptive in nature. Given that the aim was to assess the critical inquiry levels of English language teacher candidates, a quantitative research technique was employed. To this end, Anuar and Sidhu's (2017) *The Critical Inquiry Scale* was administered to 92 pre-service English language teachers whose ages varied between 18 and 23. A t-test was conducted to explore the gender differences while an ANOVA test was applied to assess the class-related variables. The study determined that there were no significant differences based on gender or class, and the inquiry levels of the pre-service English language teachers was quite high.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, Deconstruction, Pre-service language teachers.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1931, Albert Einstein highlighted the significance of questioning and curiosity in his article "The Cosmic Religious Feeling," published in "Forum and Century." (<https://history.aip.org/exhibits/einstein/einstein.pdf>) He asserted that the most crucial pursuit is to never cease questioning. Curiosity, he argued, has its own reason for existence. When contemplating the mysteries of eternity, life, and the wondrous structure of reality, one cannot help but experience a profound sense of awe. It is sufficient for an individual to strive to grasp just a fragment of this mystery each day. The belief here is that this curiosity and inquiry are essential aspects of existence. Those who embrace questioning possess the unique ability to view the world through multiple lenses, thus enhancing their qualifications as individuals. In our contemporary era, the need for such questioning individuals is greater than ever.

In this rapidly shifting landscape of daily life, where products and events are swiftly consumed and continually reinvented, the absolute necessity to evaluate the quality and accuracy of each new piece of information and product underscores the great significance of deconstruction in our time. Finding a precise definition for this extensively explored concept can be challenging, yet, at its core, deconstruction corresponds to the act of 'taking apart.' This act involves dissecting any topic or concept and critically examining the underlying assumptions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of deconstruction cannot be overstated, since our era demands individuals equipped with strong problem-solving abilities and creative thinking skills. Consequently, it is vital for educators to cultivate these competencies in their students, and to embody them in their own practice, given their role in shaping future generations. The principal tenet of deconstruction is that reality cannot be reduced to a single truth; rather, each perspective crafts its own interpretation of reality. Thus, the effort to understand and interpret the world through diverse lenses forms the bedrock of existence and serves as a fundamental criterion for what it means to be a competent individual.

Given the essential role of deconstructive critical thinking outlined above, we undertook a survey to assess the deconstructive critical thinking skills of pre-service English teacher candidates. This paper will first provide a detailed exploration of the concept of deconstruction. Afterwards, we will discuss the readiness levels of these pre-service English teachers for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, drawing insights from the survey results.



## 2. Deconstructive Critical Approach

The most recognized form of the deconstructive approach is often diminished to a mere slogan, stripping it of its rich historical and intellectual context. Many individuals reduce this approach to simplicity, neglecting its profound background and its influence on contemporary literary discourse. However, in Jacques Derrida's conceptualization of deconstruction, the emphasis lies on the significance of literature and art. This notion arises from literary and poetic texts, particularly illustrated by Mallarmé's idea of "dissemination" (spread, dissemination). In alignment with this, Derrida affirms the literary focus of his thought with the statement: "My interest was primarily focused on literature, the type of writing labeled as literary, even more so than philosophy, if that is possible" (1994, p. 443).

To facilitate a proper understanding of his approach, Derrida engaged in various studies. In his seminal work *Of Grammatology*, the French philosopher (1990) first introduced the concept of deconstruction, highlighting that the world is permeated with binary oppositions and that words can only be comprehended in relation to their counterparts. In other words, Derrida reveals how each component of any binary system is dependent on the other, illustrating how each can be employed to dismantle or disrupt the structure of the other.

From this foundational work, we can arrive at a fundamental understanding of what deconstruction typically entails. Derrida (1990) identifies three main features that make deconstruction possible. The natural desire to establish a center or focal point to structure understanding (logo-centrism); the reduction of meaning to the definitions inscribed in writing (the notion that there is nothing beyond the text); and the recognition that this reduction to writing captures the tensions within the very concept (différance).

Traditional approaches to literary texts tend to perceive them as 'closed systems.' This perspective suggests that there are clearly defined boundaries within the text, making it impossible to transcend these limits. For instance, consider a novel. The conventional boundaries of a novel include a framework defined by its characters, events, and themes. Within this structure, an author narrates their story, offering a specific experience to the reader while adhering to these established confines.

According to Derrida (1994), however, the perceived wholeness and homogeneity of literary texts are mere illusions that challenge traditional understandings of texts. His approach rejects the notion of a text as a closed structure, instead presenting it as a complex and

expansive concept. Derrida (1990) argues that a text exists as an open network of differences, influenced by external contexts and various traces. From this viewpoint, the repetition of a text in different contexts can lead to a dissolution of meaning, disrupting the consistency of signs.

### 2.1. History

Deconstruction is a theory and method of critical reading and understanding developed by Jacques Derrida in the latter half of the 20th century. Particularly in opposition to structuralism, deconstruction has, thanks to Derrida's work (1990; 2004), established itself in across diverse fields such as literature, philosophy, architecture, and sociology. A closer examination of the history of deconstruction, often referred to as post-structuralism, reveals that it shares certain commonalities with structuralism, it also fundamentally challenges it.

During a time when the belief in knowable, observable, and objective realities prevailed, the rational and inductive perspectives of thinkers like Descartes were widely popular. Following the influence of Descartes' school of thought, encapsulated in the phrase "I think, therefore I am," new intellectual thinkers emerged that examined the nature of knowability from alternative viewpoints. Thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche began to question the very foundations of reality and its objectivity. Unlike deconstruction, structuralism seeks to understand how systems operate by examining their components within the context of the system they belong to. As perceptions of the world and reality evolved, post-structuralists emerged, arguing that structuralism was inadequate (Derrida, 1990). Highlighting the necessity of Deconstruction and the shortcomings of structuralism, this group argued that structuralism analyzed texts in a rigid and unchangeable manner. Post-structuralists contended that texts should be examined dynamically, employing various perspectives and establishing connections between elements. In light of these views, deconstruction began to spread at the end of the 1960s, particularly during the 1970s, when it became a significant force, reaching wider audiences through the pivotal contributions and works of Jacques Derrida.

Derrida, who coined the term "Deconstruction" and introduced this perspective at Yale, believed that the world is a construct in crisis. The crisis he referred to is the notion that there is nothing outside the text (Yanık, 2016). This idea fundamentally altered the traditional Western perception of reality (Dobie, 2015; Fang, 2017; Zima, 2002). Derrida has critiqued various ideas from dialectical logic to postmodernism, seeking to develop a new understanding through the concepts he introduced. His way of reading and understanding, known as deconstruction, has

since influenced various fields, including philosophy, communication, sociology, critical thinking, architecture, aesthetics, and literature (Feng, 2017; Yanık, 2016).

Deconstructive criticism started as a literary theory but had its reverberations all across various disciplines including education. As Biesta suggests (2009, p.97), deconstruction is not about the application of the theory to education but “how deconstruction occurs in education”. As 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills include critical questioning and deconstruction is based upon reversing the binary polarities and showcasing the subverted questioning styles, deconstruction seems to be an apt theory to pave the way for the teacher candidates and learners as well. Secondly, the contribution of deconstruction can be seen in the foundation of education. “The modern era has been dominated by what Leibniz called the principle of reason, which had several formulations. The two most important of these are, first, ‘nothing is without reason, no effect is without cause,’ and, second, for every true proposition, a reasoned account is possible” (Kelly, 2012, p.60). Derrida (2001, 2004) maintains that universities should be founded on reason and use this reasoning skill to probe the thinking process, which is dissected, explained, analyzed and subverted.

“Deconstruction is neither analysis nor critique. It is not a method and cannot be made into one” (Winter, 2007, p.62). It takes place everywhere (Derrida, 1988; 1990). It is hard to pinpoint its pervasiveness in education. “The very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy” (Caputo, 1997, p. 31). Derrida asks people to question, dissect, operate in legitimate ways, reveal some aspects that are hidden to the naked eye, and reflect the hidden things to give it justice. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the following research questions:

1. What is the deconstructive inquiry level of the pre-service English language teachers?
2. Is there a relationship between the pre-service English language teachers’ deconstructive inquiry levels and age and the year they study in?

## **2.2. Elements of Deconstruction**

Deconstructive criticism analyzes texts by exploring their semantic diversity and binary oppositions in a flexible manner, distancing itself from traditional perspectives and considering contextual differences. This approach asserts that the initial impressions and inferences a text provides to the reader are not fixed, emphasizing the necessity of evaluating various viewpoints.

In other words, deconstruction highlights the importance of examining both sides of the coin. From this perspective, deconstruction is innovative, flexible, and open-ended.

Emphasizing the multilayered nature of texts, deconstruction embraces and scrutinizes all aspects of a work; these examinations are characterized by their high degree of flexibility. The reader plays a crucial role in uncovering the underlying meanings of the text and discovering its polyphony. Unlike traditional readings, deconstruction employs alternative methods, allowing events, situations, and characters to be evaluated from diverse perspectives (Derrida, 2001, 2004; McQuillan, 2017).

Deconstruction emphasizes the significance of binary oppositions. For the concept of good to hold meaning, the presence of bad is also essential. However, deconstruction calls into question the certainty of these binaries. In this context, deconstructive criticism examines texts by recognizing that each element contains fragments of the other within every opposition. It asserts that a good element cannot be wholly good, nor can a bad element be entirely bad. By delving deeply into each binary, deconstruction analyzes the complexities beneath the surface, taking into account various perspectives to reveal the intricate interplay between opposing forces.

Texts involuntarily reflect the author's perspective, as the narrative is conveyed to the reader through the methods and choices made by the author. Deconstruction argues that this perspective can semantically guide the reader and undermine the plurality of meanings. Consequently, deconstructive criticism prioritizes the awareness that the author is not a reliable source; it emphasizes the consideration of different perspectives during critical examination and focuses on the text's multiplicity of meanings.

Deconstruction seeks to encompass all elements of a work, aiming to understand it by examining every aspect. Derrida's deconstructive approach disassembles the whole without destroying it; rather, it fragments the text to illuminate how the whole is constructed and to enable its reconstruction (Yanık, 2016).

By breaking down the entirety and analyzing each part from various angles, deconstructive criticism effectively manages this process through the use of diverse perspectives. The elements of the work are scrutinized both individually and in relation to one another. In deconstructive criticism, it is essential to maintain a concrete and objective stance.

### 3. Method

In its most fundamental definition, a research is an endeavor to systematically and logically address specific questions or problems. The researcher strives to explore a particular topic of interest, define it, and ultimately draw conclusions (Yıldırım, 1999, p. 112). The application of quantitative methods in research encompasses a range of techniques aimed at investigating social phenomena through statistical or numerical data (Watson, 2015). Quantitative research can measure tangible elements as well as abstract concepts such as critical thinking, which are more challenging to observe. Hence, this research is a descriptive study aimed at assessing the critical inquiry levels among prospective English teachers, employing quantitative research techniques.

To this end, *The Critical Inquiry Scale* developed by Anuar and Sidhu (2017) has been utilized. A t-test was conducted to examine differences between genders, while an ANOVA test was employed to analyze variations across different class levels.

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants consist of 92 undergraduate students pursuing a degree at the Department of English Language Education, all of whom provided their signed consent forms. These participants were 25 freshmen, 25 sophomores, 25 junior, and 17 senior students whose ages ranged between 18-23. 26 of them were males and 56 were females. These students constituted convenience sampling and took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the study group based on gender and year they study at.

Table 1.

*Study group*

		1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Class		25	25	25	17
Gender	F	16	12	14	14
	M	9	13	11	3

The purpose of choosing such a study group is to observe the different perspectives among the teacher candidates in terms of age and gender as they were at the different levels of the program they studied in. The number of 4<sup>th</sup>-year students in the research group is less than other classes. The reason for this situation is that the senior students could not participate in the research due to their busy schedules. The survey study lasted for 15-20 minutes. The survey study was conducted during the break time in order not to disturb the pre-service teachers in their classes.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

*The Critical Inquiry Scale* developed by Anuar and Sidhu (2017) consisting of 39 items has been employed in this study. Table 2 demonstrates the reliability scores of the subcategories, which were based on Bloom's taxonomy. The subcategories have reliability coefficients ranging from 0.90 to 0.94.

Table 2.

*Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for lower-order thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills*

Thinking skills	Reliability coefficient
Knowledge	0.93
Understanding	0.94
Application	0.90
Analysis	0.93
Synthesis	0.91
Evaluation	0.91

### 3.3. Findings

The study employs two research questions: to determine the deconstructive inquiry level of the pre-service English language teachers and to see whether the inquiry levels change depending on gender and the year of the study.

As to results of *The Critical Inquiry Scale*, when the results of the 5-item Lickert scale applied to English teacher candidates were examined, the mean of 39 questions on a scale of 1 point (strongly disagree) and 5 points (strongly agree) was found to be 4.01 out of 5. The high scores given by English teacher candidates on certain items suggest that they already possess strong skills in text analysis and information management. In particular, high scores were obtained in items such as "I can quickly scan long and complex texts to find relevant details." (Item 6), "I can break down an idea into its components." (Item 23), "I can evaluate the weaknesses of an idea in a text." (Item 33), "Before reading a text, I first evaluate possible answers." (Item 36), "I can recognize and interpret the opinions, attitudes, and intentions of the authors in a text." (Item 37) and "I can evaluate the sources of a text and determine the reliability of the sources." (Item 39). These results indicate that English teacher candidates already have critical reading skills and can carefully manage the reading process. This skill is especially valuable today, at a time when access to information has accelerated and therefore information pollution has increased considerably, and the ability to understand and analyze information effectively is of great importance.

On the other hand, in the items with the lowest scores, it is seen that English teacher candidates have some difficulties in basic text comprehension and analysis skills. In particular, low scores were obtained in items such as "I can recall information in a text" (Item 1), "I can determine the main ideas in a text" (Item 3), "I can identify the main ideas in a text" (Item 7) and "I can adapt the idea in the text to other contexts" (Item 19). This situation indicates that the participants have difficulty in understanding the texts and remembering their content and that they need to develop basic text analysis skills. It is of great importance for the candidates to have these basic skills due to both their personal development and their roles in raising the future generation of the critical thinking individuals ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Table 3.  
*Inquiry levels in terms of gender*

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p
Females	56	157.19	14.37	0.74
Males	36	159.28	14.67	

The t-test was used to determine whether the difference between the means of two groups was statistically significant or not in terms of gender. As seen in Table 3, although the mean of the inquiry levels of the male English teacher candidates is higher than those of the females, the t-test shows that there is no significant difference between the two groups (.74).

When it comes to the class difference, first the normality was conducted and when the results showed that the sample data had been drawn from a normally distributed population (The Kolmogorov Smirnov test score was computed as .20 and that of the Shapiro Wilk was .82), the ANOVA test was employed.

Table 4.  
*Inquiry levels by year*

	Sum of Squares	Mean	F	Sig.
Between-groups	76.95	76.95	0.36	0.54
In-groups	15320.9	209.87		
Total	15397.9			

As seen in Table 4, there is no difference between the English teacher candidates in terms of classes. This proves that future English teachers are individuals who are ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century embodying high critical inquiry skills.

#### 4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The research of determining the deconstructive critical inquiry levels of prospective English language teachers was conducted to determine the critical inquiry levels of English Language Teaching students studying at the Faculty of Education of a state university located in



the west of Turkey. The research attempted to determine whether the critical inquiry levels of the students differed depending on the variables of gender and year.

When the inquiry rates of the students participating in the study were examined in terms of gender, although the average of male English teacher candidates was higher, the t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups. This result shows that there is no difference between male and female English teacher candidates in terms of critical inquiry levels; gender is not a determinant parameter in the level of critical inquiry. This situation is also supported by other studies conducted on teacher candidates from various departments in the literature. In the critical inquiry level research conducted by Sarıgöz (2014) on different departments, it was found that gender was not a significant factor in English teacher candidates. This finding was also seen in studies conducted on music teacher candidates (Küçük & Uzun, 2013) and on science and classroom teacher candidates (Can & Kaymakçı, 2015).

While examining the critical inquiry levels of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students participating in the study, it was thought that the “Critical Reading and Writing” course, which was given as a compulsory course in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of the English curriculum, could be effective. As a result of the answers given by the students from different grade levels to the applied survey, no difference was found between the English teacher candidates in terms of grade. It is concluded that the grade level and the “Critical Reading and Writing” course do not have an effect on the critical inquiry levels. Similar studies have also concluded that the grade level does not create a significant difference in the critical inquiry levels of teacher candidates. Again, Sarıgöz (2014) concluded in his study on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher candidates that the grade level did not create a significant difference and that the two classes tended to behave similarly to each other. Aybek and Aslan (2015) also concluded in their study on 633 teacher candidates (94 English language teaching students) that the grade level did not create a significant difference.

When the results of the 5-item Lickert scale applied to English teacher candidates are examined, the mean of 39 questions on a scale of 1 point (strongly disagree) and 5 points (strongly agree) was found to be 4.01. This result shows that English teacher candidates have high levels of critical inquiry. As indicated by the findings obtained in the research conducted by Küçüköğlü (2008) with 227 subjects, English teacher candidates find themselves efficient in terms of critical inquiry skills and successfully utilize critical reading techniques.

Teacher candidates can use critical inquiry techniques effectively. Therefore, they do not need external critical inquiry training or program. However, environments can be created to allow students to assess and use this high level of performance more efficiently. Especially considering that they will be teaching the new generation, it is of great importance for English teacher candidates to have 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. These skills are stated as collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. The fact that English teacher candidates have high critical thinking skills, which is one of the 4 important and necessary skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is a factor that shows that they are ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this context, providing training that will enable students to comprehend and apply 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in a more detailed and systematic manner could be an important step. In addition to programs such as TUBITAK 2237 training, it may be appropriate to add an elective course that requires them to plan their lessons by associating English teaching skills to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills throughout the four years so as to let them respond to today's educational needs and soft skills needed for the teachers.

In addition, workshops and projects should be organized to help students develop skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, digital literacy, and collaboration. For example, teacher candidates can be involved in projects aimed at solving real-world problems, and projects can be designed to work in areas such as technology and innovation in education with the support of faculty advisors from their departments. Such projects will provide students with the opportunity to put their theoretical knowledge into practice and play a major role in the development of collaborative and creative thinking skills.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

#### **RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION ETHICS STATEMENT**

The authors declare that research and publication ethics are followed in this study.

The necessary permission to conduct the study was obtained from Human Research Educational Sciences Ethics Committee of Dokuz Eylül University (02/04/2024-21).

**AUTHOR LIABILITY STATEMENT**

The authors declare that the “Conceptual Framework, Research, Post Draft, Review and Editing, Visualization” part of this study were done by Lecturer Dilay Turalı, “Conceptual Framework, Research, Post Draft, Review and Editing, Visualization” part of this study were done by Ece Naz EBE and “Conceptual Framework, Method Design, Post Draft, Review and Editing” part of this work was done by Prof. Dr. Feryal ÇUBUKÇU.

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