Professional Critical Awareness Development
in Preservice ELT Students in Spoken English Classes

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the effect of critical pedagogical content integration in an English language teacher training program based on a qualitative research design. The participants, first year students studying at an ELT undergraduate program, were observed throughout an intervention period of two academic semesters, and focus group and individual interviews were held to collect data on the effectiveness of the intervention. The intervention included a series of seminars held in the 6 months where the participants discussed critical pedagogy issues having read related articles or watched thought-provoking education-related videos assigned by the instructor prior to the discussions. The outcome of the study is that students' vision of their profession was more realistic having developed a deeper insight discussing multiple aspects of teaching English in contextualized tasks. It was observed that the participants developed an awareness of a more empowered teacher image especially sensitized to oppressed groups in educational settings.

Keywords: Critical pedagogical content, preservice teachers, critical thinking, professional vision.

With the emerging theories and studies in the field of sociology and psychology, the higher education that the teacher candidates receive has changed. Political and social issues have a significant role in the development of language education programs, as evidenced by recent modifications in Turkey's curricula for English language teacher education programs in 1997, 2005, 2012, and most recently in 2018. (Kırkgöz et al., 2017). Universities now have a standardized undergraduate program as a result of these changes. The emphasis switched away from literature and linguistics towards education, teaching, and pedagogy, as well as the addition of more elective courses. Courses taken by the freshman students, on the other hand, have generally remained unaffected by these changes, with a focus on language proficiency in speaking, reading, grammar, writing, and listening. The English Language Teaching (ELT) undergraduate program in Turkish universities lacks an introduction course that introduces teacher candidates to the realities and fundamental concepts of their profession in their first

year. English Language Teaching departments seem to represent an exception, as most of the other undergraduate programs in Turkish universities offer an introductory course to the teacher candidates on their profession. Beginning from their first year, however, teacher candidates should begin questioning their current perceptions on the critical issues regarding language teaching. They need a chance to apply academic concepts in practical settings. In first-year language proficiency courses, routine pedagogical implications from the personal experience of preservice teachers' educational institutions might be questioned. These experiences may be used to inform a broader understanding of key pedagogical content in language teacher training undergraduate programs, especially in speaking-oriented sections, through reflection discussions. This process of reflection is critical for the development of teacher candidates' professional identities, especially if it is intended to help them become more conscious of the historical and cultural aspects that shape their educational circumstances (Antonek et al., 1997). As a result, in the language proficiency-oriented courses provided at English Language Teaching departments, there is no defined or tangible strategy to help these students begin to gain insights on being a language teacher. The objectives of the proficiency courses, on the other hand, focus on language skills that lend themselves to discussions on teaching-related topics. The first year Spoken English classes, in particular, can include subjects such as second language acquisition and teaching methods and techniques, the inner workings of private or public institutions, individual variations in teaching, or the allocation of resources to language instruction, and so on. The purpose of this study is to look at how critical content integration is used in a Spoken English course for freshmen in an English language teacher education undergraduate program. Thus, it set out to explore the answer to the following research question:

What is the impact of critical consciousness-oriented discussion integration in the ELT Spoken English course on the professional vision of preservice teachers?

Preservice Teachers' Professional Vision

Professional vision is critical to become a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher. Pre-service teachers' assessments of their future selves reflect uncertainties and expectations, according to Beltman et al. (2015), and give a map for developing the dispositions necessary to be the teacher they desire to be. Preservice teachers' views on teaching shape their professional vision, which includes observing and interpreting classroom occurrences while taking into account the various factors that influence them (Sherin 2007; van Es & Sherin, 2002). Departments of teacher education strive to provide students with professional competence and teaching abilities. One group of the courses offered in teacher education curriculum is on theoretical pedagogical content knowledge. Higher order thinking abilities, such as interpretation and decision-making, are required in teacher training programs that seek to provide students with experience applying theoretical knowledge in practice (Blömeke et al., 2015). Goodwin considers these abilities to be professional vision development abilities (1994). Professional vision is defined by Goodwin (1994, p. 1) as "socially organized ways of seeing and understanding events that are answerable to the distinctive interests of a particular social group."

The ability to notice and interpret significant interactions in the classroom (Sherin et al., 2008, p. 28), identifying classroom situations and events from a professional perspective, and recognizing the components of effective teaching have all been defined as professional vision of preservice teachers (Stürmer et al., 2014). "Knowledge-based reasoning of critical events that takes place in the classroom" is required when interpreting educational activities (van Es & Sherin, 2002, p. 571). "The ability to take a reasoned approach to events noticed in the classroom provides insights into the quality of the preservice teachers' mental representations of knowledge and the application of those representations to instructional practice" (Borko 2004; Borko et al., 2008).

Lortie (1975) asserts in his seminal work, *Becoming a Teacher*, that students enrolled in education programs already have a history of education that affects their views on teaching and the role of instructors. Preservice teachers, on the other hand, have a limited perspective of classroom situations and narrate classroom events using naive and overgeneralized language (Berliner, 1986), whereas experienced teachers identify critical classroom situations, explain the effects of critical classroom situations based on their knowledge, and predict the consequences of relevant classroom situations for student learning (Seidel & Prenzel, 2008). In comparison to novice teachers, experienced teachers appear to have a unique professional vision (Berliner et al., 1988).

Interventions in preservice teacher training programs and professional vision development have both been the subject of research. Stürmer et al. (2014) investigated factors affecting preservice teachers' professional vision within university-based teacher education. In this study, 55 students answered a questionnaire on learning opportunities and assessed their professional vision using a video-based method. The study's findings highlight the value of courses given in university preservice training programs. Preservice teachers' degree of interest is another sign of their developing professional vision. As a result, successful completion of university courses and a passion for one's job stand out as the two most important elements influencing students' perceptions of teaching. In essence, early teacher education is important because preservice students' perceptions of teaching begin long before they enroll in education programs; it begins when they are students and are exposed to a variety of teachers, teaching styles, approaches, and techniques (Lortie, 1975). In most European nations, the early teacher education phase is linked to universities (Bauer & Prenzel, 2012). As a result, university programs are in charge of providing students with official and unofficial chances to build their professional vision (Grossman, 1990). According to Shulman (1987), teacher education programs should provide content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and general pedagogical content knowledge, and Goodwin (1994) claims that this teacher knowledge helps preservice teachers develop a professional vision. Many scholars in preservice teacher training programs advocate for early pedagogical content knowledge integration (Santagata & Guarino 2010; Star & Strickland 2008; Stürmer et al. 2014; Stürmer et al., 2013; Wiens et al., 2013).

A recent research that looked into the use of videos in teacher training to help preservice teachers build their professional vision emphasized the significance of reflection and peer feedback (Weber et al., 2018). Another research looks at how video recordings were used in a German early teacher education program for preservice secondary school teachers to focus on objective clarity and orientation, as well as instructor assistance and supervision. The research setting of the German initial teacher education program is a required course "that is seen as a curricular starting point and gives an overview of the general concepts and theories of learning and how teaching influences it" (Stürmer et al., 2014), which is very similar to the course in which the current research is conducted. This study concludes that "preservice teachers' professional vision is systematically related to the number of generic pedagogical courses in teaching and learning and their interest in this content area." (Stürmer et al., 2014, p. 14). The findings also suggest that preservice teachers' first professional vision is influenced by generic pedagogical knowledge and content-specific interest. Stürmer et al. (2014, p. 15) argue that "expertise is not just a matter of learning by doing, but also of learning on the informed basis of knowledge about and interest in the content area teaching and learning". To that aim, the current study will look at the influence of pedagogical content integration in an introductory course of a teacher education program on preservice teachers' professional vision.

Goodwin suggests 'discursive practices' regarding the profession with 'scrutiny' as one of the shaping factors of professional vision (Goodwin, 1994, p. 606). Questioning present practices

and adopting a critical mindset, he claims, will aid in visualizing one's professional vision in one's mind since the questioning conversations will aid in the molding process of one's professional vision. This discursive practice, according to Goodwin, would include the theories, artifacts, and bodies of knowledge that separate it from other professions, examination of community members' techniques, and the lifeworld, or direct experiences and actions. There are not many studies on building professional critical awareness in preservice teacher preparation programs in the literature. However, there is a paucity of research on ELT programs and the value of nonjudgmental conversations in developing critical awareness of the current condition of education, rules, and practices. Therefore, the current study is significant because its findings can enlighten the rationale of decision-making in ELT teacher education undergraduate programs. By focusing on promoting the adoption of a transformational approach to the teaching profession through critical awareness development on pedagogical practices, this study intends to contribute to the preservice language teacher training literature.

Methodology

This research study addressed the following research question: What is the impact of early critical awareness-oriented content integration in Spoken English courses in ELT programs on students' perceptions of their profession?

This study has a qualitative design to conduct an exploratory investigation. Since the critical approach does not support the isolation of constructs, the researcher used critical research methods without isolating a specific trait to assess with objective scales (Pennycook, 1994). Critical research methods "situate research in the social context to consider how knowledge is shaped by the values of human agents and communities" (Chapelle & Duff, 2003, p. 173). Deep content analysis in the context of the research is the best way to identify value changes in student interviews. Because it situates the data in the context of the research, and gives meaning to the findings in the research circumstances while taking into account the participants' and researcher's historical and cultural backgrounds, Critical Theory had a significant influence on the design of the current study (Morrow & Brown, 1994). Questions were posed during the intervention and interviews were conducted to analyze the significance of social life, criticizing the society, and to generate thoughts on new possibilities. In this sense, the methodology of the present study resembles that of an ethnographic study because it focuses on the changes in people's thoughts and encourages the participants to "examine the conditions of their existence" (Madison, 2005).

Setting and Participants

The study's participants were students in the Spoken English I and II courses offered at a public university, in the Foreign Language Education Department during the academic year 2018-2019. The convenience sampling method was used to choose the sample participants (*n* = 22), who were 14 (63.6%) female, and 8 (36.4%) male first-year students. The sampling method used is also known as 'availability sampling', which is a non-probability sampling method that refers to collecting data from participants who are available, without filtering them with certain criteria, such as age, gender, or educational background (Creswell, 2013). There were 18 Turkish participants, one Russian, one South Korean, one Turkish American, and one Uzbek participant. 13 of the participants are Anatolian High School graduates, which are public high schools in Turkey that provide a more intensive English language instruction program than regular state schools. 6 of the participants are private school graduates. In total, as is the common case in most language programs, most of the participants have been learning English starting from middle school years; 19 of the 22 participants come from schools that offered more intensive English language instruction when compared to state schools.

Intervention

As for the intervention in the study, various formats of tasks were introduced for use throughout the academic year (approximately 6 months in total) that centered on the integration of critical awareness-focused content in Spoken English courses. According to Ennis (1989), there are three categorizable primary methods that have the ability to initiate the critical thinking development. The first is the general approach that has the teaching of critical thinking done separately. The second is the infused instruction, which involves the infusion of skills in the course's content. The final method is the immersion approach, which combines the previous two methods together. In the current study, due to Spoken English being a course based on skills development for students of the ELT program, neither the Foreign Language Education Department nor the Higher Education Council had indicated any predetermined or standardized content. The intent of developing students' critical awareness was not announced to the students when pondering over content material that revolves around the critical problems at educational settings. Due to this, throughout the academic year the research intervention continued with an infused approach.

The students actively dealt with critical thinking tasks that had pedagogical content incorporated into them. The majority of the tasks in Spoken English I and II courses revolved around students running workshops and conducting discussions on the topics of controversial education and other relevant language education problems, such as being nonnative versus native English teachers, gender and race discriminations in educational settings, such as the Turkish K12 schools from the students' personal observations and experiences, assessment and evaluation, K12 school administrators imposing methodology and content, and the like. While miniature presentations and role plays on the topics of researchers and significant concepts in ELT and educational thought leaders, as well as Turkey's own education system were covered, new scripts were also written by the students for education-related movies – which involved adding voice overs for students to choose and summarize the most influential scenes.

As an example, in one of the sessions students were assigned a role play task which required them to interview a foreign person with substantial authority and expertise about the second language acquisition management system in their country. The intent of the seminars was the effective integration of critical content in the course. The purpose of these cooperative and civilized discussions was not the refutation of a party serving as the opposition, but rather attempting to empathize and comprehend differing perspectives of classmates from all sorts of diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. This in turn would aid them in reaching a greater understanding of their differing point of views by placing said differences within their contexts. Before the seminars, thought-provoking videos on the topic of critical pedagogical content were given to the students, such as teachers' inspirational stories of success in areas of Turkey and the world that are less privileged, certain compelling TED talks, and articles concerning the educational system and the history behind it, especially in Turkey. Some of the videos of these teachers had teachers examine their transformative effort, concentrating on how they faced the need to learn their students' native language first to establish communication with them, how considerable effort was spent by them trying to change the understanding of the place of women in a society in a village to provide motivation for families to send their girls to school too, how they had to fight against the local culture to have mothers visit the schools of their children, how business world sponsors had to be found by them to fund field trips or the construction of a playground. The recurring theme was the challenges the teachers had to face in actual teaching settings which were not privileged, or the challenges of underprivileged students who the mainstream culture of that setting

discriminated against. For instance, one of the videos has the teacher narrating the story of her heroic fight against students being categorized as low achievers. Certain sessions had resource people as guests, hosted to introduce, discuss in detail, and go over problems on critical pedagogical content, including issues like ethnic minority colleagues and students, or special needs students active in language education and general education. Adapting to school systems, linguistic imperialism, 'other-ised' groups, cultural bias, defects of traditional education, and the idealistic teachers from Turkey and the rest of the world who were responsible for a transformational change under their circumstances are a number of the topics discussed during the seminars.

Data Collection

Oftentimes, qualitative research data is obtained by the researchers themselves at the research site - its natural setting. In the focus of exploration in the current study, statistical analysis and quantitative measurement are unfitting. A number of the interviews were conducted by seeing the students "within their context" (Creswell, 2013, p. 73) and talking to them directly, while video recordings were shot during the tasks. A number of the interviews were audiotaped and sent to the researcher or performed through phone calls for convenience reasons and time constraints due to the students' tight schedules throughout the academic year. The collection of data for the interviews conducted by the researcher was performed in a non-threatening, natural setting. A friendly, intimate, sincere, and non-threatening attitude was maintained by the researcher towards the participants.

At the conclusion of the intervention, at end of the academic year, the 22 volunteer students were interviewed after their exposure to and engagement in a critical pedagogy-oriented curriculum in their Spoken English courses. All of the interviews were transcribed. Letters were assigned to the participants for the purpose of aiding in tracking change in their perception of the teaching as a profession on a personal level. Every classroom task practiced outside the class was videotaped, like the roleplay activities, and the performance tasks like the seminar sessions and presentations. The researcher watching these videos kept observation notes.

At the beginning of the first semester before the initialization of the intervention, the first interview was conducted. Focus group interviews were conducted towards the end of the second semester, while at the end of the second semester a different individual interview was conducted. Below is a flowchart which highlights the data collection procedure.
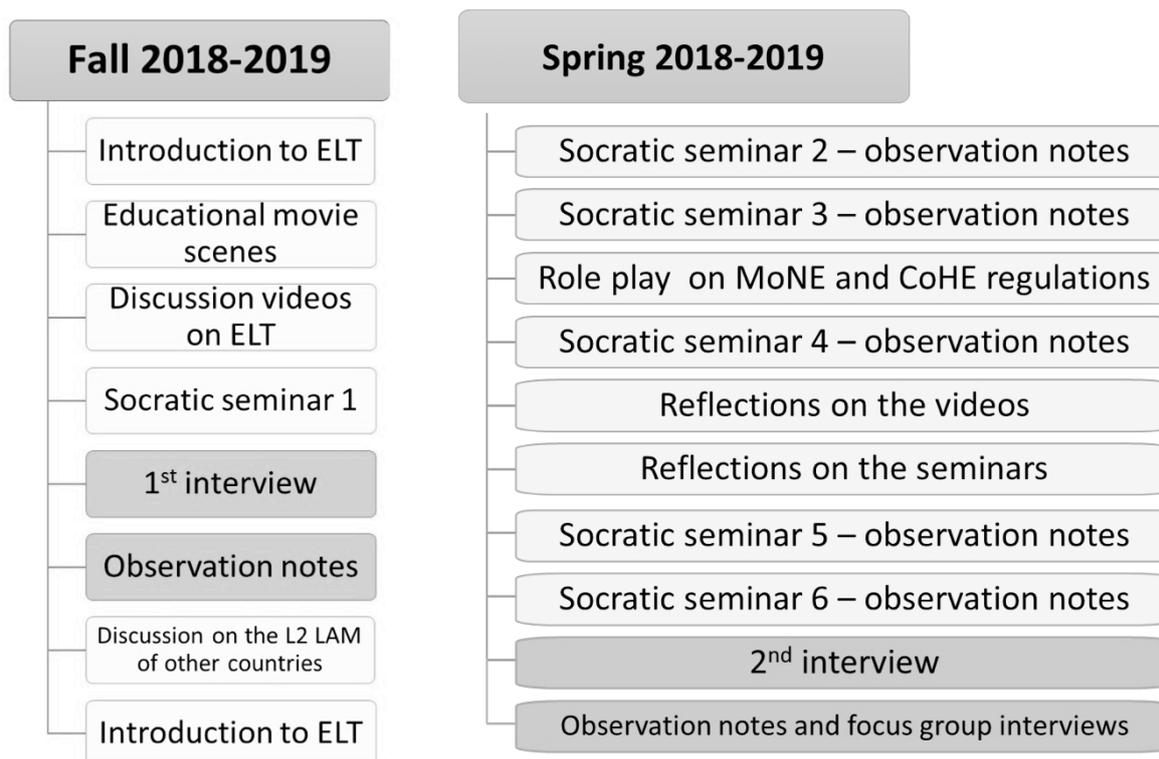
Fall 2018-2019
- Introduction to ELT
- Educational movie scenes
- Discussion videos on ELT
- Socratic seminar 1
- 1st interview
- Observation notes
- Discussion on the L2 LAM of other countries
- Introduction to ELT

Spring 2018-2019
- Socratic seminar 2 – observation notes
- Socratic seminar 3 – observation notes
- Role play on MoNE and CoHE regulations
- Socratic seminar 4 – observation notes
- Reflections on the videos
- Reflections on the seminars
- Socratic seminar 5 – observation notes
- Socratic seminar 6 – observation notes
- 2nd interview
- Observation notes and focus group interviews

Figure 1. Data collection tools

Data Analysis

Axial data analysis - data categorized into repeating patterns - was conducted. However, the categories remained open in order to allow them to be detailed into additional categories in case of selective coding having intersecting categories (Creswell, 2013). The complex, rich data were coded according to repeating content throughout thematic analysis of the data, after which the codes were systematically put into different themes and categories. Initially, a short list of categories was made, which Creswell (2013) calls lean coding. After that, by re-reviewing the data, the categories were expanded. Finally, through interpretations, the resultant findings were contextualized.

First, by utilizing MAXQDA 2018, the researcher did a content analysis of the interviews and the inductive bottom-up identification of thematic patterns in the videotaped tasks and interviews. During the course of this process, the researcher alternated between the themes, and set up an agreed set of repeating themes in the interviews. By thinking deductively, the researcher also examined the themes against the themes anticipated at the start until the theme titles were finalized. Due to the research process in qualitative research being emergent, the final themes being determined at the beginning of the research was unlikely. Instead, as the data analysis proceeded, they emerged by constantly modifying the themes. As for the inter-rater concordance for codifications, the second rater evaluated the samples of interviews of the participants and examined the overlapping themes with the researcher until they came to agree on a consensus regarding the data categorization.

In order to situate the qualitative research in the context of the research, the social, cultural and political background related to the research and the participants, and the distinct context were reported as well when it was found necessary by the researcher throughout the data interpretation process, as the reflexivity of the researcher's presence in the accounts they present is undeniable in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

Findings

The number of repeating themes were considerably less in the first interviews compared to the data obtained at the conclusion of the intervention. This indicates that students developed critical awareness and deeper insight resulting from the integration of critical content through a questioning pedagogical approach. Table 1 displays the repeating themes, and their frequencies in the interview that happened before the intervention.

Table 1

Themes derived before the intervention

Themes	Number of participants who referred to the theme	Number of mentions
Lack of goal orientedness	5	9
Underdeveloped teacher identity	12	25
Limited conception of teacher agency	10	14
Total	22	48

Lack of goal orientedness. The willingness to teach is the working definition of goal orientedness, which in this study relates to students' ambition to become English language teachers. The willingness, motivation, and dedication of the participants to become an English language instructor is also covered under goal orientedness. While the majority of the students were happy for the opportunity to study at the Foreign Language Education Department, not all of them intended to become teachers after graduation. Many were on the verge of losing faith in the profession, believing that the demands of the system, with its restrictions and state-mandated curriculum, would make teaching a tough and demanding job that would not meet their own aspirations. When picturing herself as a teacher, one participant even used the word "desperate." "I had my doubts about the department I wanted to study at for the last two years, I wasn't clear about becoming a teacher or an instructor at university level" said another. One student stated that she attempted to put herself in her professors' position and empathize with them, particularly when there were issues.

On the other hand, a few participants were quite clear from the start of their undergraduate program that they wanted to become prominent instructors who "treated students as individuals, not as crowds, expecting them to challenge everything, especially public opinion." Some students stated that they chose the profession because they had previous teaching experience and found it to be rewarding. While the majority of the respondents envisioned themselves as future language instructors, their perception evolved over time from being or becoming merely a language teacher to teaching about the world, creating new perspectives, and anticipating a questioning mindset. "We won't only be teaching them English; we will also be teaching them culture, a culture that their family may not be able to expose them to," one student said.

Underdeveloped teacher identity. This topic presents the responses that relate to students' impressions of a teacher's identity, as well as the adjectives they used to define a teacher and their own picture of themselves as a teacher. Students did not depict a distinct teacher persona in the initial interviews. The interviews had taken place at the start of the academic year, so it was only natural that they had only hazy visions of themselves as

instructors in the future. While some said they were "warming to the image of themselves as teachers," it was common for participants to say they didn't see themselves as teachers. Many of the participants stated unequivocally that they lacked a strong identity picture of a teacher and that the teacher identity they imagined did not suit their personality features. They didn't see themselves as having the ability to educate well. One student mentioned satisfying the criteria of following a curriculum; this participant stated that he was unaware of how detailed school curricula are, and whether or not this pertained to teaching methods. The same student stated that he did not feel prepared to teach because he lacked the necessary skills. Another student indicated that she did not necessarily want to be a teacher, saying, "I am still not sure whether that would be my profession. I am only getting used to my new department."

Even at the start of the semester, other students were more optimistic. They described a match between their personality traits and being a teacher, though they did not go into detail. After looking through what this course in particular teaches about being a teacher, one student stated that she thought she might be of some service to mankind. She remained hesitant, and her tone lacked a resolute attitude toward meeting the goals that her own professors have set for her. She stated that she was constantly asking herself what type of teacher she wanted to be. While most students mentioned the difficulties of teaching content material, evaluating performance, and providing feedback, only a few students mentioned that course content is designed in accordance with the dominant ideology of the time and has been used to influence public opinion in an attempt to marginalize or "other-ize" those groups it opposes. Evidence for this may be seen in course materials that make misleading claims about minorities, as well as discriminatory teaching practices such as biased evaluation procedures that deter different viewpoints, effectively otherizing all dissident voices and silencing minority viewpoints.

Limited conception of teacher agency. Social agent teachers are those who can create transformative change in their society. They are committed to sparking improvement in social equality. Most of the participants did not have a notion of changing the society they lived in if or when they are teachers. Even the expression sounded too ambitious or utopic to them. They did not think that a language teacher was someone who interfered in social betterment. They did not express any observation on the potentials of teachers. About the empowerment of the profession, they made hesitant comments, such as "I don't think I will be able to make a change through teaching." The disbelief in their potential was also expressed by one of the participants as follows: "I cannot do it. I cannot envision myself as a teacher clearly.", "I might not be an English language teacher. If I were to be a teacher, I don't know what I would be like, although I do attach a lot of importance to education. It may be difficult for me to adapt myself to the requirements of the profession".

After the Intervention. Towards the end of the spring semester, in the last seminars and the second interviews, the participants revealed an enthusiastic attitude toward their profession. In the seminars they brought up topics that they were not concerned with in the first seminars. This state is defined by Crehan (2016) as leaving the prison. When we leave the prison, we leave the common notions that had limited our senses. There were participants who stated that leaving the common notions, they felt like they left their comfort zones during the seminars. They thought of aspects of topics they had never considered before and developed wider horizons. An indicator for the participants to have developed a deeper insight is that they gave more detailed answers to the second interview questions, and they made more specific references to critical issues, critical educational contexts, teaching settings and anecdotes during the seminars. The number of mentions for themes increased in the second interviews. They made references to a teachers' being reflective and open-minded, but most of all being just. They referred to the obligation of teachers to avoid discriminatory practices.

The participants talked about other-ised groups in educational settings who were discriminated because of their ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion, gender, and culture. Table 2 shows the frequencies of the themes derived after the intervention.

Table 2

Theme	Number of participants who referred to the theme	Number of mentions
Being goal oriented	6	20
Expanded conception of teacher agency	12	70
Fledgling teacher identity	18	69
Total	36	159

Being goal oriented. In general, the participants expressed a more passionate attitude towards being a teacher. They revealed a more decisive attitude as well. There were some participants who had their doubts about being a teacher, but they stated that they changed their minds after exploring what a teacher has the potential to achieve, thanks to the the videos and the seminars. One of the participants claimed that the participant could start relating everything to the teaching profession because her perception of the profession has changed drastically. Another participant stated that she wanted to foster critical thinking in her classes for her students to be "different from the masses of people around, unique individuals." She said: "I would want them to question everything and especially to be critical about public opinion." S.'s interview is also worth quoting directly. When she was asked about her future profession, she exclaimed: "A definite yes! I didn't think so when I started studying at this department but I feel like I can not wait to start teaching now that I am more aware of what sort of changes I can cause as a teacher." Change in the perception of the teaching profession was also expressed by another participant. M. said that "a language teacher does not need to teach language only. Teaching an inclusive open-minded culture is also what a language teacher can do".

Expanded conception of teacher agency. A difference in their understanding of teacher identity was observed in every participant's report. As the course went on, they saw that their conception of a teacher transformed into something new. They also commented on which specific settings or contexts they would prefer to teach in. Some of them expressed that now they would like to teach at a tertiary level, whilst other participants said they were willing to teach in Turkey's secluded rural regions. There were not many mentions of wages or circumstances as primary reasons for choosing the profession, rather they reported that their choice would be rooted in their passion. There were some students who did not have a concrete conception of how their identity as a teacher would be. There was a participant who remarked positively that his goals pertaining to the setting he would like to teach in were not yet set, as he had now seen the sheer variety of teaching circumstances, after the Spoken English course's early critical content exposure. Quoting him directly, his statement was that: "At the beginning of the course, I had no idea how deep and complex this field could be, my perceptions have changed in a way that has broadened my horizon in the field of education."

In interviews with the participants, satisfaction, happiness and gratitude were the feelings now associated with teaching. A student expressed her new wish to become a teacher, saying: "I came to this department with a set plan to transfer out of it. Now, having discussed what it really means to be an educator, I am changing my mind." Without any reference to teaching

English specifically, it is observed that the student's conception of a teacher became a more complete and stronger idea of an "educator" extending to a multitude of goals not immediately thought of, including the goal to help others. This new conception in the student following the academic year was expanded on when she reported: "My perception of a teacher has not changed this year, but my perception of becoming a teacher has changed a lot seeing what it comes with. I want to be interactive, interested, alert, which are the traits of a good teacher."

The students' notion that they themselves had social agency was found to increase after the intervention. They now reported that they perceived the teacher to play a crucial part in social reform, creating an exponentially increasing impact, and that they could themselves play that role. Although some of the students reported to have decided on a different future now that they saw teaching as a "special responsibility", at the outset of the study, preservice teachers did not have sufficient confidence that they could make an impact within their teaching environment. Initial interviews show that they lacked both the esteem and the faith in their profession's capability of affecting the lives of others or the system as a whole. Following the intervention however, when the academic year was reaching its end, and after students had been exposed to many discussions about exemplary instances of educators succeeding in having an impact for the better, they were now more likely to perceive the teacher as having agency in societal change. The theme that had the most mentions among all the other ones were those relating to teaching, of which there were 70. There were also 11 students who made comments relating to the teacher's role as a social agent and 45 items in the researcher's field notes referencing a belief in the capability of change. In one of the interviews, a student expressed his belief that language teachers had both the ability and the duty to make a positive impact on the issue of discriminatory practices in education as the content of language courses is well suited for understanding groups of "other-ised" people. One of the students stated that if he wanted to make a change in the educational environment, he would strive to become an administrator as he now saw the administrative positions as having a bigger impact on educational institutions, rather than individual teachers. This comment demonstrates a plausible and aware insight. Rarely does a first-year student entertain the thought of reaching an administrative position in order to enact better educational practices. This student adds that he believed a back and forth communication between the teachers and the 'higher-ups' is an essential factor in the development of policies. There were a number of comments in favor of "mediation" as a possible solution to the problems they had with society at large, though they also expressed their doubts about it considering that the system might be "too strict to allow it".

The participants stated that it was in the power of any teacher to create and become a social agent by touching their students' lives and also by disseminating their influence through influencing other teachers. When the participants were asked to choose the most influential videos, they mostly named the Dilek Teacher video and the TED talks of teachers who survived or supported their students to survive in disadvantaged conditions. The next inspiring video according to the participants was 'The greatest teacher of my life' talk by Doron Almog, a former Major General in the Israeli Defense Forces. Almog founded a village for the disabled which provides residential, medical and social services to the handicapped of southern Israel. With reference to Almog's video, K. stated that: "I believe in myself to create change in my teaching setting and hence a small change in my society because I have the power to change my students' perceptions of the disadvantaged. I know, though, that I it is difficult to change the laws on education or national policies." The same student emphasized that his ideas on education changed towards a solution-oriented perspective. It is promising

that the preservice teacher in his first year at the teacher education program started contemplating on solutions to educational problems.

M. agrees that she can be a teacher who can make changes as a social agent, she expresses her thoughts self-confidently. She emphasizes that the least she can be sure of is that she would not be discriminating against minorities. She promises herself that she would pay special attention to avoid discriminatory practices. One of the major changes in her self-perception is that she considers herself to be an empowered person who has the power and the vision to create change in her future teaching setting. She stated that: "I try to meet with people from different backgrounds, cultures, people who speak different languages, and people with different ideologies. It is because this process helps me empathize with and therefore respect minorities. What helped me reach this conclusion was our class discussions and the videos we discussed. I believe that it is teachers who can change the suppression of creativity at schools. In one of the videos we discussed in class a Yale professor talked about how he used to wash dishes at a restaurant when he was a young child, but one of his teachers changed his life when he was at primary school. This is proof that even one teacher can change the life of a person. It shows the importance of teachers in our lives. …. In another video, there was a teacher who could not be appointed because there were too many applications for the state school teaching positions. Apparently, there will not be a satisfying state support all the time, but we should still do our best with or without the state support … I now know the importance of my profession, at first, when I stated studying at this department, I was not sure about being a teacher, but now I think that even as a language teacher, I can be influential."

One of the other participants also stated that she wanted to be active in a change process initiated by teachers. She said: "If the change that a teacher creates is a small scale one, it still matters. Because even if it is small, it is a step forward in the transformation of the society at large. Unfortunately, we become very familiar with the drawbacks of the education system at a very young age. But in fact, it can be an advantage because many people develop a critical eye later in life. We are lucky in that we stated questioning the education system and the importance of teachers in it especially this year, still at an early point in our profession."

To summarize the above findings, it was observed that the intervention worked as a motivation triggering factor in students' belief in making a contribution to changing the society. The overarching theme in the participants' responses was that teachers are able change the way people think, the way people approach the challenges of life. The seemingly minor changes spark bigger changes in perspectives of society and that is why they are still important. In general, the attitude was to accept the resistance to change as normal, but not to deny the responsibility of teachers in the transformation of the society. For instance, one of the participants said that her mission in life was to promote education for girls. She also added that she would like to work towards changing the attitude of the society on the education of girls. Feeling heroic and having a passion to be social agents of change are prerequisites of being a teacher, she added. The participants also made references to reaching out to the distant villages in Turkey as teachers in addition to emphasizing the importance of education for girls. Another requirement the participants kept referring to was promoting critical thinking. When promoting critical thinking the participants pointed out the methodology of teaching as a major factor. They emphasized that the methodology should support a questioning conformity. The role of a teacher is to break the stereotypes in students' minds. Being inspirational also came up frequently as tone of the main characteristics of the social agent teacher.

A critical attitude is possible to develop in students, said the participants. With a critical attitude when the preservice teachers become decision makers, they can help expand the changes created by teachers. Below are the particular areas of change the participants brought up recurrently.

Fledgling teacher identity. The fledgling teacher identity refers to the content in the preservice teacher interviews that was about how they were warming to a teacher identity. "I had a negative attitude towards being a teacher at first, but now I am seriously thinking about being a language teacher" B. said, which represents most other participant comments. The comments about the process they had undergone after the intervention were more specific and most reflected a developed critical awareness. For instance, one of the participants said (S.) "I do not have to follow and agree with a curriculum imposed on me from the top, but I will be creative when I am in that situation." This comment reveals a more realistic expectation of their future teaching circumstances than a hypothetical utopic teaching setting.

The participants revealed a change in how determined they sounded. "I had never thought of myself as a teacher, but I envision myself teaching at university level" is a statement that represents similar comments. T. said that he was not aware of the wide range of options to work at as a teacher. "At first I didn't know how deep and complex this profession was, but now, my horizon has broadened." T. continued. "My ideas about becoming a teacher have changed since I started this academic year." B said. The words quoted below are also remarkable: "Rather than whether I want to be a teacher, I ask myself what sort of a teacher I want to be".

The enthusiasm that the participants referred to when they envisioned themselves as teachers was a common point in most of the interviews. "I started studying at this department with a firm decision to change my major as soon as possible. However, now that we have discussed what exactly it means to be an educator, I think, I have changed my mind." M. also mentioned that he has developed more enthusiasm to teach in the future since teaching is a complex transformation process that requires a lot of effort put into it. In M's words, he said: "My perception of a teacher has not changed, but my perception of becoming one has changed this year." Another participant reported: "This class and you, as a teacher, are changing my mind, for sure. I want to be a teacher like you, interactive, interested, and vivacious; these are not so common traits of teachers." The teacher identity that students aim for and they identify with is that of an active and interactive teacher who presents possibilities: "Although it is not very easy to be an active teacher who promotes both critical thinking and creativity, I will always try to be one such teacher". In fact, the roles of promoting critical thinking and fostering creativity when defining their profession were the most frequently mentioned.

Discussion

The aim of the intervention in this study was to change the teacher vision of the preservice teachers from a passive technician to a transformative individual. An important study that informed this study was undertaken by Crookes and Lehner (1998). They found that ESL or EFL teachers were not actively contributing to the welfare of society in general, teachers had difficulty addressing some socio-political issues, and that teacher training programs should have the responsibility of training transformative teachers. The present study also reaches the conclusion that transformative teachers can be trained through a critical awareness developing training program.

Although the literature is not laden with research on critical awareness and teacher identity development, there are some studies whose results are comparable to the present study. To start with, Black (2005) reached the conclusion that education should include themes related to discrimination to raise awareness on how schools perpetuate ideologies. Students should be given courses in which they study content "as to avoid biased, distorted, partial and uninformed rhetoric", which is parallel to the conclusion of this study. Another example the present study is parallel to is the transformative teacher education program study in a rural area in the United States which focused on diversity, culture and equity by having the teacher candidates participate in field trips. The similarity of the US rural area study with the present

one is that both engage the preservice teachers in sharing culturally responsive teaching experiences through students' own stories of prejudiced treatment they observed in educational settings. Similarly, Sevier (2005) also focused on the effect of sharing personal stories to develop a notion of the complex social, cultural and political structure that the educational setting is in. In his study he invited disadvantaged students to make their voices heard by the teacher candidates. In this study, students heard of others' experiences of being treated as disadvantaged. Another study also reported findings that are similar to the present one. This study was conducted in Iran with EFL teacher candidates, and it focused on teacher identity development. Abednia (2012) stated that the participants' perspectives of the language teacher have changed from a means to earn a living to being transformative intellectuals. Gender associated power relations are also reported as sensitive issues in teacher education. A study on developing critical awareness on assigned gender roles with preservice teachers was carried out by Esen (2013). The results of the study reveal that the perceptions of the preservice teachers changed in that they reported to have taken transformative action in their daily routines and worked on challenging assigned gender roles in their teaching practice as well. These results confirm that the potential roles of a teacher vary, and teachers can break the transmission of gender patriarchal stereotypes. In the present study too, gender discrimination was not an exception in the social justice related critical awareness development in preservice teachers.

Conclusion

In this study, in the freshman Spoken English course for preservice English language teachers, the participants were engaged in discussions on education-related challenges, and possible solutions to local problems. They were exposed to certain real-life challenges and teachers who overcame them through videos, and they were actively engaged in seminars to discuss their own experiences. They adhered meaning to the experiences they shared in the seminars, and reflected on their values, which contributed to the development of critical awareness on the teaching profession and helped them form their own professional vision.

Through noticing effective components of teaching and knowledge-based reasoning, preservice teachers were observed to goal clarity and orientation to the teaching profession. Hence, it is vital that teacher candidates develop a critical perspective to socially organized and imposed ways of perceiving events. This study indicates that effort spent on the social constructivist approach through promoting inclusivity, motivating preservice teachers to be social change agents, and developing a critical perspective on mainstream stereotyping contributed to their developing a more hopeful, empathetic, passionate, realistic, and open-minded professional vision.

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