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## Critical Digital Pedagogy's Framework: Lecturer's Voices to Analysis the Incorporation of *Discord* Tool in Higher Education

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**Abstract.** Critical pedagogy can be reflected in the situation when the learners become social transformers of their community and world, and when they critically construct knowledge. The prior researchers only evaluated discrepancies in gender and age. Freire and Brown's framework also verified the feasibility and reliability of implementing CDP. However, general skills and unspecific digital tools drove the reader's bias and ambiguity. Consequently, the purposes of the study aim to connect previous topics in different contexts, addressing the gap and providing a critical analysis. Especially, English lectures in certain skills and specific digital tools would be needed to know critical pedagogy's intentional implementation or unintentional presence in the ELT realm. Three concerns were highlighted to guide the researchers to do the research; the essential aspect of pedagogy that has and has not been involved yet in online learning and the factors of age and gender that might influence the learning. The researchers used qualitative method, especially observation and questionnaire instruments to get the data of the incorporation of the *Discord* tool of critical pedagogy in the higher education domain. The findings reveals that the implementation a critical pedagogy of *Discord* tool and the discrepancies of age and gender that influence the online meeting.

**Keywords:** Critical Digital Pedagogy, lecturer's voices, and *Discord*.

### Introduction

Critical Pedagogy seeks to legitimize learning environments by enabling students and educators to promote mutual opportunities and healthy development of consciousness, dialogue, attitudes, and ideas. This foundation was originally

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formed to construct knowledge together, deliver the social discussion critically, and exist the dynamic traditional learning classroom (Akdeniz et al., 2020). As students transform into social activists, critically producing global knowledge critically, it will foster the diverse point of view, arises social and political awareness, and develop their moral practices that reflect the strong integrity (Forcelini, 2016; Yldz et al., 2022).

The recent outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic necessitated an immediate transition to digital education worldwide. Consequently, a paradigm shift occurred in the traditional teaching and learning procedure. This paradigm also changes the teaching of philosophies of practitioners in the educational realm. In connection with this issue, Critical Digital Pedagogy (CDP) can be implemented at larger levels, CDP is the digital representation of Critical Pedagogy (CP). It is a platform for establishing a community of diverse, collaborative students who contribute their own cultural and political experiences to the classroom. In the traditional learning setting, students serve as "depositories" and instructors as "depositors" of information. Critical pedagogy would be alive and run effectively, regarding the instructors, digital media that they used, and skill that they learned. The effectiveness and 'ideal' critical pedagogy in online learning activity can be influenced by some factors, such as gender and age.

It has high a correlation with the article entitled "The Implementation of Critical Pedagogy in Digital Second Language Acquisition in Higher Education: Age and Gender Differences", Pikhart, Al-Obayidi, and Tawafak (2022) evaluated the prevalence of critical pedagogy principles using Brown's (2001) framework and discovered that the major principles of critical pedagogy (CP) were present in their online learning settings. In that research, they highlighted the intentional implementation or unintentional presence of critical pedagogy aspects, instructors' age, and gender. This context also highlights a crucial issue that might be common for Indonesian instructors to overlook, as theory often receives more attention than practical skills. However, the unspecific digital tools and general language skills might drive the bias and ambiguity of the readers. Additionally, insufficient and ambiguous information led to numerous misinterpretations.

This current research aims to cover and discuss the significant gap in-depth. The researchers would bring this context in specific skill and novel gamification tool. Three concerns would be highlighted to guide the researchers to do the research; the essential aspects of pedagogy that have and have not been involved yet in online learning, and the factors of age and gender that might influence learning. In doing so, it will provide instructors who employ a critical pedagogy line with ideas and recommendations regarding technological best practices.

### **The Urgency of Critical Digital Pedagogy in English Higher Education**

The term Critical Pedagogy (CP) is a widely recognized for educational practitioners. However, the idea of critical digital pedagogy (CDP) is relatively new in the educational context (Morris & Stommel, 2018). Critical pedagogy can be understood as an essential teaching strategy that traditionally emphasizes collaboration between instructors and students to produce knowledge within a

dynamic learning environment. Indeed, CP encourages students to elicit constructive opinions in the discussion classroom critically. Some scholars and researchers, such as Riasati & Mollaei (2012) and McLaren (2016), have labeled this term as critical constructivist, participatory approach, critical work, emancipatory literacy, and transformative pedagogy. The recent rapid technology brings a real sense of the classroom digitally since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world of education by shifting from traditional teaching-learning to online learning settings. Students and teachers need a break in the initial phase to adjust to this shifting paradigm. Dreamson (2021) emphasizes the current reality, stating that scholars, academics, and policymakers are increasingly incorporating digital learning tools to enhance education at all levels and benefit entire communities. To strengthen this belief, Traxler (2021) elicits that technologies facilitate students and teachers to meet the challenges and opportunities of our complex, increasingly paralleled real world with a balance of culture and intersection between education, research, and technology. By implementing a critical pedagogy model of technological approach in the ELT area, educational stakeholders learn about new concepts about digital identity formation, obtain significant collaboration projects, get closer to history, culture, and real transformation of knowledge, a meta-analysis of technology integration frameworks, and methodology for authentic digital engagement (Dreamson, 2021; Lunevich, 2021b).

The approaching critical pedagogy is essential to engaging students in expressing their ideas critically and developing sensitivity about social, cultural, and political issues. In the ELT realm, critical pedagogy is becoming increasingly essential at higher educational levels. The significance of critical pedagogy focuses on how it affects learners' critical thinking abilities, language growth, and social justice. Educators can help students develop greater awareness of the role of language in shaping social and cultural identity, power relations, and inequality by engaging them in critical conversations. This can assist students in becoming more conscious of their own prejudices and preconceptions, as well as in developing the skills and information required to participate in more informed and critical conversations (Boronski, 2021). Furthermore, critical pedagogy can help students improve their language skills by giving them chances to participate in authentic and valuable language use. Students can be urged to critically evaluate the language used to communicate various views and opinions in genuine materials such as news stories, talks, or videos. Students can improve their language abilities in a more meaningful and authentic manner by engaging in critical discussions about language and society, and they can learn to use language in suitable and effective ways for various situations (Lunevich, 2021b; Tricia, 2021).

Moreover, Jeyaraj and Harland (2016) believe that critical pedagogy in ELT has a legitimate position in universities that encourages students to become social critics and consciences. Without this, ELT will be mastered only on the procedural aspect of knowledge rather than perceived as a skills-based discipline.

### **The frame of Brown**

The origin of CDP began in the 1970s. Paulo Freire presented CP in 1968, he was well-known as a literacy educator and curriculum expert.

Additionally, he used the new terms of "Critical Pedagogy" to describe educational strategy in all his work. Freire taught Critical Pedagogy (CP) in L1 and L2 reading the certain context critically. Freire's framework of language critical pedagogy principles, such as curriculum material, should be drawn from the learners' living circumstances as shown in their real-life themes, education aims to foster critical thinking, planning aims to organize by first generating concepts, then subject material related to those concepts, students design their instructional tools, the instructor participates in the learning process as a student, the students can also choose.

Then, Brown (2001) proposed and summarized the language critical pedagogy principles in-depth viewpoint; such as openness, encouragement, autonomy, and respect. The elaboration of explanation on Brown's principles, such as; allowing students to freely convey their ideas. Be aware of power dynamics and promote open, honest, and independent communication, genuinely value the views of learners, seek to comprehend the learners' perspective and important beliefs, as well as their traditions that are important in their lives, and promote both/many divergent points of view. Welcome to all honestly presented comments by accepting various points of view (Pishghadam, et al. 2021). In addition, as instructor of ELT, we need to consider to do not force students to think similarly since they need to grow up in homogenous perspective and ideas. Brown believed that the feasibility and reliability of critical pedagogy principles in the environment of online language instruction that was widely used in blended learning. It should be highlighted that the educational community largely agrees that implementing student-centered pedagogical strategies, such as those represented by critical pedagogy, is crucial to the success of online courses and curriculum (Al-Bahadli, 2020).



**Figure 1. Language Critical Pedagogy Principles (Brown, 2001)**

### The Critical Analysis

The Critical Analysis of Pikhart, Tawafak & Al-Obaydi (2022) towards the Intentional and Unintentional Presence of Digital Second Language for Higher Education Domain. The research proposed by Pikhart, Al-Obayidi, and Tawafak (2022) evaluated the prevalence of critical pedagogy principles in EFL

online courses using Brown's (2001) framework and discovered that the major principles of critical pedagogy were present in their online classes, even if not intentionally. The research also discovered that female instructors were more likely than male teachers to use critical pedagogy concepts in their online classes.

The critical analysis of the introduction chapter, the prior researchers did not clearly mention the gap. They only elaborate the importance of critical pedagogy aspect in ELT area. Each paragraph contains a lot of information, driving the reader to sense of ambiguity. Additionally, the researchers put research aim without giving information about the research questions. Since the researchers employed quantitative approach, they attached the hypothesis formula in the literature review. It is truly contrary with the study of Redman and Maples (2017), they claim that the introduction guides the reader from a broad subject area to a specific field of investigation. It provides the scope, context, and significance of the research being conducted by summarizing current understanding and background information on the topic, claiming the purpose of a research problem supported by a hypothesis or a set of questions, briefly explaining the methodological approach used to examine the research problem, highlighting the potential outcomes that your study can reveal, and outlining the remaining structure and organization. This guideline of building introduction part in academic writing also in line with Swales and Feak (2004b). However, there is no found implicitly or explicitly of methodology approach, gap to construct the aim, and scope of the study. This lack of information arises some ambiguous and unclear question. Additionally, Crammer and Howitt (2004) assert that variable information need to be attached clearly. It is addressed to avoid misinterpreting of the reader that happened in this study.

Pikhart et al. (2022) presented methodology part consisting of three subheadings; setting and participants, instruments, and data collection procedures. However, the examiner found misplace some information. For instance, the information of questionnaire and the administration procedures should attach in the instruments and data collection part. But the researchers put it in the setting and participants' information. Additionally, the lack of information about the number of participants, absence of information about the university, and lack of details on the research design render this research ineligible. Since that kind of information is truly basic in academic writing (Allen, 2017).

Regarding the researchers would be highlighted and involved the framework of Brown (2001) and Freire (1958), the findings should consist of twelve elements of critical pedagogy in the online setting. In contrast, the reader only found several elements in the findings. Consequently, difficult for readers to know the intentional and unintentional presence of critical pedagogy in this research. Furthermore, the researchers did not restate this finding in the conclusion paragraph.

### **Integrating *Discord* Tool in ELT Related to The Framework of Critical Pedagogy: Mini Research**

Having reflections on the study led by Pikhart, Tawafak & Al-Obaydi (2022), they raised the current issue of implementing critical pedagogy in higher education. The framework of Brown (2001) and Freire (1958) involved analysing

the presence aspect of the intentional implementation or unintentional of critical pedagogy in the online teaching setting. This beneficial concept could bring in other contexts since some gaps were found; general digital tools and unspecific skill language of learning.

To cover this gap from previous researchers, this current research would like to analyse the novel gamification tool of *Discord* since it is not yet extensively utilized in Indonesia's higher education institutions, as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Meet are more popular alternatives. This "fresh" phenomenon of using *Discord* is also found in the English Education major at UIN Malang, particularly in listening class. However, not all lecturers have embraced *Discord* as an educational aid. It shows the novelty of digging further analysis toward incorporating the *Discord* tool in this context area.

Consequently, the researchers need to dig further into implementing critical pedagogy at the higher education level in UIN Malang. Three concerns were designed by the researchers; the essential aspect of pedagogy that involves online learning and the factor of age and gender might influence the learning.

### **Research Methodology**

In this current research, the researchers used case study research to examine a phenomenon in its actual context. The purpose of this research is to dig further the unique phenomenon, comprehend the experiences, and perspectives of those involved.

Participants in this research were selected based on three main criteria: lecturer of higher education in English Language Teaching (ELT), implemented online setting as their primary method of instruction, and used *Discord* tool in the teaching. Based on interview in preliminary study, the research found that only two lecturers implemented blended learning structurally and used *Discord* as main tool in the teaching instruction. Consequently, listening lecturer of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, particularly in critical listening class of English Education major involved the research as participants. To avoid the bias and hinder the subjectivity, the researchers involved observation checklist to ensure the main data of lecturers.

The questionnaire was addressed to English listening lecturer of UIN Malang, male and female instructors. The form questionnaire comprised introduction from researchers, identity table, and 35 important statements. The statements be rated on a 5-points Likert scale with the following responses: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. Additionally, observation checklist and note were employed to ensure lecturer's behaviours in depth. Questionnaire was eligible to be distributed since Cornbrash's Alpha factor was measured to test the reliability and validity was gained by Al-obaydi and Tawafak (2022). The main sources of instruments were adapted from Brown (1990) and Freire (1958).

### **Findings and Discussion**

Based on this questionnaire, the researchers might separate the findings, the intentional implementation, or the unintentional presence of critical pedagogy aspects in the online English language teaching environment. The intentional presence of critical pedagogy can be found in several items; autonomy aspects

proposed by Brown (2001), including items 1, 26, and 28 which reveals that both lecturers always engage students to reveal their idea, build positive environments where students are convenient to participate actively, do not only as receivers of knowledge but transmitter the knowledge to other. It is strengthened by the observation report that students have full authority to express themselves without any pressure to follow the lecturer's perspective. It also aligns with the openness aspect in items 3, 6, and 25.

The questionnaire and observation showed that lecturers give students the power to convey their critical and unique idea openly since lecturers agreed that the goal is conveying various ideas. The critical thinking aspects proposed by Freire (1958) have been administered in items 2 and 22. The observation report elicited that lecturers delivered students authentic materials and original experience to recall their critical thinking. Comparing and contrasting the point of view in different sources of topic could give many exposures to getting different ideas to know real-world situations closely. In designing the materials, lecturers followed the curriculum contents and planned the topic of contents, which interlaced with Freire's (1958) work of critical pedagogy (4, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 21, 24). Observation and questionnaire reports showed that lecturers always have congruence between materials, goals, curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plans. In a room in the *Discord* tool, lecturers attached the syllabus and lesson plan for 16 meetings to ensure students followed the learning goals. In the critical listening course, it is common to see the diversity of ideas, perspectives, and beliefs.

Not only accepting others' ideas but also challenging them through argumentative knowledge, it is indirectly practicing students to respect various points of view genuinely. It is involved Brown (2001) about encouragement and respected items, including items 5, 7, 15, and 19. Making the decision in item 14 and the teacher's roles 8 and 9 were also practiced well by the lecturers. They delivered her experiences and stimulated students to respond critically. However, based on the observation, the item of student materials proposed by Freire (1958) was not implemented by lecturers since students have no authority to create their educational materials.

To recapitulate those data, the researchers can conclude that all the critical pedagogy elements proposed by Freire (1958) and Brown (2001) have been implemented by lecturers in the online meeting, such as; openness, encouragement, respect, autonomy, curriculum content, make a decision, teacher's role, critical thinking, planning contents and topic content.

### **Discloses The Intentional Implementation or Unintentional Presence of Critical Pedagogy Aspects**

The researchers evaluate the presence aspects of critical pedagogy that are claimed by Brown and Freire's framework the statistical survey attached shows the presence of critical pedagogy in online learning classroom. According to the result, there is no significant differences between male and lecturers in higher educational level. The results reported that both lecturers are 36 and 35 years old, the youth lecturers aged level indicates that they are effectively implement critical pedagogy in the setting of online English instruction, although unintentionally. Regarding gender, both lecturers have divergent roles, communication styles, and personal experiences. Gender discrepancies might

shape their understanding, point of view, and learning approach in the online setting. Precisely, in communicating with their learners, a male lecturer may be more likely to use assertive language and a straightforward approach, while a female lecturer tends to use collaborative language to foster positive bonds with learners. Additionally, various academics and prior researchers reported similar findings that male teachers have more likely than female teachers to perceive multimedia technology as beneficial for educational purposes and to intend to utilize it. Moreover, males are more likely than females to be engaged in utilizing computers and technologies (Ahuja & Thatcher, 2005; Lima & Gouveia, 2020; Park et al., 2019). However, those diversity of gender and age do not affect the implementation of critical pedagogy in ELT classroom. Both lecturers genuinely support learners, regardless of gender and age factor.

The implementation of *Discord* platform between both lecturers allows students the freedom to express themselves, supported by questionnaire and observation reports. In critical listening class, lecturers design the online environment classroom to open various of ideas and critical thinking that related in the case of materials. Collaboration of pair and small group discussions are beneficial aspects of learning activity, since it allows students to exposure and dig in depth into the materials. In addition, a question-and-answer part can be helpful for encouraging students to get involved actively in the online classroom and building critical thinking. This is in accordance with the findings of research studies conducted by Setyarini et al. (2018) and Subhkan (2020), which indicate that allowing students to express their ideas improves their professionalism and learning outcomes. In addition, as highlighted by the research of Anis and Anwar (2020) and Bundick et al., students benefit greatly from increased participation in academic activities. (2014). The reflection can draw the conclusion that the principle of critical pedagogy by Freire's (1958) and Brown (2001) related to the openness and critical thinking are well-implemented in online learning classroom.

Another point of critical pedagogy might be found are encouragement, respect, and autonomy. The point of respect proposed by Brown (2001) is well-reflected in learners' interactions. The critical listening course provides a chance and authoritative space for students to express argumentative ideas. This section indirectly teaches students to be genuinely respectful of others' points of view. By delivering authentic topics, cultural experiences, ideological issues, and history, the course could stimulate learners' critical thinking (Bali, 2020; Yulianto et al., 2015).

Additionally, the researchers found the autonomy aspect of Brown (2001) about critical pedagogy in the implementation of *Discord* platform, the variety of ideas, voices, and beliefs are truly common in this class. Consequently, the lecturers always open and never force students to follow the principles and beliefs of the lecturers. This kind of treatment might convince students to express their truly voices since they have already known that lecturers will never judge them voices. It is congruence with Freire's (1958) principle of critical pedagogy that students are indirectly practiced to make a decision, Freire (1958) asserted that students are not passive absorbing the information, but they need to be an active participant in the teaching and learning process. Lecturer need to remind



students about their equal right to make a decision and the power of to do something.

Engaging students through authentic cases, lecturer's experiences, and ideas related to the unit of materials are important role of lecturer. It plays crucial because of students are more likely to engage with similar information, promote deeper learning, recall their innovative solution, and build a sense of connection with learners. The role of lecturer element is proposed by Freire's (1989) principle, he added that recalling learners' engagement by offering teacher's perspectives could build positive learning environment also. Consequently, urgent to design the learning materials that are congruence with curriculum content and planning concepts. Critical pedagogy principles from Freire's work are involved state that the content of the curriculum should be formed by the real-life experiences of learners. Wandell and Clariza (2018) successfully related the materials to learners' personal cultural experiences and identity.

### **Suggestion for the Instructor**

Effective online teaching and learning needs a student-focused approach that takes into account learners' materials and requirements. To achieve this, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive needs analysis to determine the learning requirements and preferences of learners. Based on the findings, instructors should develop instructional materials that are interactive, engaging, and relevant to the lives of learners. Freire (1958) emphasized the significance of creating student-centered rather than teacher-centered materials. This implies that materials should be designed with the requirements and interests of the student in mind. Consider developing interactive, engaging, and personally pertinent materials for students. Another successful technique for engaging students is to use technology. Gamification, interactive games, and virtual reality encounters can all be used to create fascinating and immersive learning experiences. Instructor could provide examples of successful implementation and use real-world evidence to reinforce the efficacy.

### **Conclusion**

The study conducted by Tawafak and Al-Obaydi (2022) entitled *"The Implementation of Critical Pedagogy in Digital Second Language Acquisition in Higher Education: Age and Gender Differences"*. They revealed the intentional implementation or unintentional presence of critical pedagogy in the online English language teaching context. Freire and Brown's framework also verified the feasibility and reliability of implementing digital critical pedagogy. Tawafak and Al-Obaydi elicited the discrepancies between gender and age instructors. Critical pedagogy implementation could raise several concerns that need to be implemented and focused, such as; openness, respected, encouragement, and autonomy (Brown, 2001). Additionally, Freire's principle (1958) may assist lecturers in designing effective teaching and learning, including curriculum content, critical thinking, planning and organizing the generation of concepts, the role of teachers, students' material, and decision-making. In relation to this research, the researchers found that the aspect of students' material needs to give them the authority to create their educational materials based on their

needs. In this case, the researchers suggests that lecturers conduct a needs analysis to ensure the materials that students highly need.

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