An Investigation of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature Teacher Candidates' Critical Reading Self-efficacy (The Case of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University)

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ABSTRACT

The basic purpose of native language teaching is ensuring that students develop their skills in four basic language skills at an adequate level. For this purpose, Turkish Language and Turkish language and literature teachers who work in different teaching levels, especially classroom teachers, have important duties. Reading, which is among basic language skills, is a comprehension ability for individuals to reach new information and improve themselves. The thing that is important in reading is combining new information with previous information, and making sense of new information through previously learned information. A good reader should be able to make evaluations about text in a critical manner, in other words, s/he should be able to read critically. Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teachers, who have the responsibility of giving students reading skills in formal education institutions, must have improved critical reading skills. In this study, the purpose was to determine the critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates through some variables. The study data were collected by using the "Critical Reading Self-Efficacy Scale". The SPSS 21.00 Program was used to analyze the data. From the analysis of the data, it was found that Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates have moderate critical self-efficacy levels. It was also observed that the critical reading self-efficacy perceptions of teacher candidates do not change according to gender; however, the reading self-efficacy perceptions of Turkish Language teacher candidates were found to be higher than that of the Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates. It was also concluded that the critical reading self-efficacy perceptions of the teacher candidates, who said that they had reading habits, were higher than the teacher candidates, who said that they did not have reading habits.

INTRODUCTION

Reading and its Importance

With the increasing importance of having knowledge, individuals are directed to seek new and accurate information, and for this reason, it is more preferable to reach original and innovative ideas. One of the easiest and definite ways to reach original and new information is reading, which is a comprehension skill that has contributed to the individual and to the social life, and is acquired as of the elementary education level.

Akay (2004) reported that reading is important for the individual to adapt to the society and cultural environment, and to realize the conditions that are set by the society. Tural (1992) emphasized that reading improves the comprehension and thinking aspects of humans, and increases the understanding, analysis and synthesis power, and interpretation and making new judgment capabilities.

Since reading skill is very important in terms of developing other language skills (listening, speaking and writing), and for access to information, it was reported in previous studies that the success level of a student who cannot read effectively or cannot understand what s/he reads would not be at the desired level, and reading is the first step of all the courses in the entire curriculum.

In terms of the importance of reading, Arıcı (2008: 1) argued that most of the knowledge of humanity is in books, and expressed that this knowledge can only be acquired through reading. Many definitions have been made in the literature about reading, which is important in reaching knowledge. Kavcar et al. (1997) explained reading as a process of seeing, perceiving and understanding a text together with its words, sentences, punctuation, and other elements. Kırkkılıç et al. (1999) stated that reading is a complex activity consisting of various movements of the eyes and voice organs and the effort of the mind to understand and comprehend what is

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written. Güneş (2009) defined reading as an active process in which the individual integrates the information in the text with his/her prior knowledge; and Akyol (2011) defined it as the process of establishing a dynamic meaning, which requires active interaction between the author and reader.

A reader's trust in the author in the process of establishing meaning, and accepting the information the author wants to give as accurate without questioning is defined as direct reading in the literature. This type of reading is adequate for an individual to reach new information. However, in this type of reading, the reader will not be able to develop his/her critical thinking skill as s/he accepts the information the author gives directly without making an inference and without criticizing. Today, critical thinking is an important top-level skill that is required in every field. Critical reading plays an important role in developing this skill.

Critical Reading

Several definitions are made on critical reading in the literature as one of the types of reading. Çiftçi (2006: 56-57) defined critical reading as the effort to find the better one, more beautiful one and more accurate one by filtering what is read through knowledge and accumulation filters; and as an activity to produce better, more beautiful and more accurate mental products with the new knowledge. Özdemir (2007: 87) described critical reading as receiving the message that author sends us; and according to Güneş (2007: 156), critical reading is reader's asking questions about the appropriateness or inconsistencies and contradictions in the ideas in the text, the reasons for writing, or the adequacy of the examples given in the text.

Based on the definitions on critical reading, it may be defined as a type of reading which necessitates that the reader can view the text in a critical manner, makes an evaluation, and uses the information on the subject actively in reading process.

Critical reading, which is as important as reading skills, is a crucial and top-level skill that must be acquired by readers. For this skill to be acquired, the reader must have some characteristics. A critical reader must know something about the subject s/he intends to read, and be able to use the mental tactics like the adequacy of knowledge, data collection, hypothesis formation when s/he reads the text (ascited in by Karabay, 2013: 11010). In addition, in this process, the reader must be able to determine his/her purpose, and give all his/her attention to the text (Çiftçi, 2006: 56-58). It is because the first and most important point for critical reading is attention.

Öztürk and Otluoğlu (2005: 58) argued that critical reading must be dealt with the observations and background values of readers, and that critical reading occurs in four stages.
1. Knowing and naming words
2. Review and revise
3. Grasp the meaning with its real aspect
4. Evaluation.

According to Cüceloğlu (1999: 226), the individual must realize three important factors to take the critical thinking process to the desired target, which are:

- The individual must be aware of the thinking process. The control of thinking must be in the hands of the individual, and s/he must be conscious and active along this process, and must be able to direct his/her own thinking process.
- The individual must also be able to analyze the thinking process of others. The individual must be able to understand the thoughts of others, and compare these with his/her own thoughts.
- The individual must make the information s/he acquires become functional in daily life.

According to Özden (1997: 87), an individual must have the following skills to realize the critical thinking process in an effective way:
- S/he should be able to control prejudices and consistencies.
- S/he should be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources.
- S/he should be able to establish a causal relationship.
- S/he should be able to distinguish between assumptions, ideas and claims.
- S/he should be able to determine the inconsistent, incomplete aspects of arguments, and uncertainties in explanations.
- S/he should be able to analyze the accuracy of definitions and results.

Çiftçi (2006: 58) defined the importance of critical reading as acquiring the habit of systematic questioning, which is a situation expected from mother tongue education. A person, who does not question what s/he reads, experiences the "*mankurtization*" that Cengiz Aytmatov mentioned in his book in a mental way, and argued that wise people are not modern "*mankurts*" because they have the ability of critical thinking and critical reading.

Özdemir (2017) argued that it is necessary to understand the basic ideas and to explore ways to reproduce them for critical reading. If everything that is written can be improved around basic ideas, and if different ideas can be identified and reproduced, then critical reading can also be realized. To improve critical reading skills of readers, it is also important how the reader perceives himself/herself in this context, in other words, the critical reading and self-efficacy level of the reader is also very important. Because the self-efficacy perception of a reader may be an obstacle on the way leading to critical reading. When a reader perceives that his/her critical reading skill is inadequate, s/he will not have the desire to read critically or will read less. For this reason, it is necessary to determine the critical self-efficacy of a reader.

Self-efficacy

According to Bandura, who established one of the building blocks of Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is a characteristic that is effective in the formation of behaviors, and is defined as "the self-judgment of an individual on his/her capacity in organizing necessary activities to show a certain performance in a successful manner" (ascited in by Karabay, 2013;1109). According to Ipek and Bayraktar (2010) self-efficacy is a concept on whether a person can turn his/her potential into behavior. According to Senemoğlu (2009),

self-efficacy is the self-perception, belief and self-judgment of an individual in coping with different situations, ability to succeed in doing a certain activity, and about his/her capacity. Based on these definitions, self-efficacy may be defined as the attitude of an individual to be successful or unsuccessful in doing a behavior.

The self-efficacy belief on a certain subject is important in the life of an individual. Alabay (2006) explained that self-efficacy affects the behavior of the individual for doing right or wrong activities; however, it also indicates how much effort an individual will spend to resolve a problem when faced with it, and how persistent the individual will be.

As self-efficacy has a great effect on the life of each individual, the self-efficacy of teachers, who train future generations, is also of important. Because teachers must have the qualities that aim continuous learning, they must be able to overcome problems, adopt social learning as a rule, be multifaceted individuals, and see different solutions in different situations (Kuran, 2002). One of these qualities is that teachers have critical reading skills and adequate knowledge on it. If a teacher has low-level self-efficacy perception about critical reading, and if s/he does not have adequate equipment on how to acquire critical reading, it is not possible that s/he makes his/her students acquire this skill.

In the literature, a great number of studies have been conducted on reading and critical reading (Çiftçi, 2006; Altunsöz, 2006; Sadioğlu & Bilgin, 2008; Işık, 2010; Karasakaloğlu & Bulut, 2012; Ateş, 2013; Topçuoğlu Ünal & Sever, 2013; Emiroğlu, 2014; Akdan, 2016; Demir, 2017). However, self-efficacy level of readers was not dealt with in these studies. Self-efficacy perception of a reader affects the critical reading process at a great deal. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that studies on critical reading self-efficacy are limited. Some of these were conducted by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), Solheim (2011), Kucukoglu (2008), Karabay (2013) and Topcuoglu Unal and Sever (2013). In the study that was conducted by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) and Solheim (2011), it was determined that individuals who had high reading self-efficacy perceptions were more successful compared to those who had low reading self-efficacy in reading and struggling with difficult texts. This concrete data clearly show the effect of critical reading self-efficacy perception on critical reading.

The Purpose of the Study

Since very few studies were conducted on self-efficacy perception, which is important for critical reading, and since studies in the literature are conducted on self-efficacy of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates, who are responsible for teaching these skills to their students, the purpose of the present study was to determine the critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates.

Based on this basic purpose, answers were sought to the following questions.

1. What are the critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates?
2. Do the critical reading self-efficacy perception levels of the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates differ according to the gender variable?
3. Do the critical reading self-efficacy perceptions of the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates differ according to the department variable?
4. Do the critical reading self-efficacy perceptions of the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates differ in terms of having reading habit?

METHOD

The Study Model

In this study, which aimed to determine the self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates in critical reading, the Descriptive Research Method was used. Descriptive studies "define a given situation as completely and carefully as possible" (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011: 21). Descriptive studies target to describe a current situation as it is. In addition to the Descriptive Study Method, the Causal Comparison Method, which is one of the Relational Research Models, was also used. The Relational Research Method aims to determine the presence and/or the degree of coexistence between two or more variables (Karasar, 2006: 81). In this method, the situation in which the independent variable has effects and the situation in which the independent variable does not have effects are compared (Islamoglu, 2009: 85).

The Universe and Sampling of the Study

The universe of the study consisted of the students of the Turkish Education Department, and the students from the Turkish Language and Literature Department, who continued their teaching formation programs in the spring semester of 2017-2018 Academic Year. The Appropriate Sampling Method was used in the study. In this method, the researcher creates a sampling by beginning with the most accessible respondent until s/he reaches the group size s/he needs (Büyüköztürk et al. 2011: 91). For this purpose, 180 teacher candidates, who were studying at the same university at the Turkish Teaching Department of the Faculty of Education at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, and who were studying at the same university at the Turkish Language and Literature Department were contacted. However, 165 teacher candidates, who returned the questionnaire forms, were included in the study.

The Data Collection Tool of the Study

In this study, the data were collected with a 5-point Likert-type Critical Reading Self-Efficacy Scale that had 41 items. The scale, which was developed by Karabay (2013), consists of III sub-dimensions (evaluation theme, research theme, and visual theme).

The Analysis of the Data

In the scale that was applied in the study, there are a total of 41 items in the III sub-dimensions of critical reading self-efficacy. The data that were obtained in the study were evaluated statistically by using the SPSS 21.00 Program and with the Independent Variables T-Test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

According to the findings of the studyas shown in Table 1, it was determined that the critical reading self-efficacy levels of the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates were at a moderate level with X=3.60 when the maximum (Max = 4.66) and minimum (Min = 1.98) values were considered.

In Table 2, the results of the T-Test that was used to determine whether the critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates differed significantly according to the gender variable are given. According to the results of the T-Test, it was observed that the critical reading self-efficacy scores of the teacher candidates did not differ at a significant

level in terms of the gender variable and the total scores of all dimensions of the scale [$t_{(163)}$=,828, p>.05]. However, when the critical reading self-efficacy perception scores of the male and female teacher candidates were taken into consideration, it was determined that male candidates (3.61) had higher levels of critical reading self-efficacy than female candidates (3.59).

When the evaluation theme, research theme and visual theme dimensions, which constitute the three sub-dimensions of the scale, were examined one by one, it was determined that the critical reading self-efficacy levels of teacher candidates did not differ at a significant level in terms of the gender variable. Although there were no statistically significant differences, it was determined that the critical reading self-efficacy perception scores of the female students were lower than those of male students in the "visual theme" and "research theme" dimensions of the scale; and in the "evaluation theme" dimension of the scale, the critical reading self-efficacy perception scores of the male candidates were higher than those of the female candidates.

In Table 3, the results of the T-Test that was conducted to determine critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates according to the department variable are given.

Table 1. The Results of the Critical Reading Self-efficacy Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature Teacher Candidates according to Grades

Dimension	N	X	Min.	Max.	SD	Level
Total	165	3,60	1,98	4,66	0,56	Moderate

Table 2. The Critical Reading Self-Efficacy T-Test Results of the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature Teacher Candidates According to Gender Variable

Dimension	Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t	p
Evaluation Theme	Male	122	3,7954	0,63929	163	-0,606	0,545
	Female	43	3,8596	0,45573			
Research Theme	Male	122	2,9599	0,70158	163	1,696	0,092
	Female	43	27519	0,66217			
Visual Theme	Male	122	3,7967	0,74523	163	1,070	0,286
	Female	43	3,6465	0,91218			
Total	Male	122	3,6122	0,58916	163	0,217	0,828
	Female	43	3,5905	0,47986			

Table 3. The T-Test Results of Critical Reading Self-Efficacy Scores of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature Teacher Candidates According to Departments

Dimension	Department	N	X	SS	df	t	P
Evaluation Theme	Turkish Language Teaching	87	3,9885	0,56820	163	4,213	0
	Turkish Language and Literature Teaching	78	3,6154	0,56770			
Research Theme	Turkish Language Teaching	87	3,0817	0,73731	163	3,552	0
	Turkish Language and Literature Teaching	78	2,7094	0,59100			
Visual Theme	Turkish Language Teaching	87	4,0644	0,66717	163	5,745	0
	Turkish Language and Literature Teaching	78	3,4154	0,78345			
Total	Turkish Language Teaching	87	3,7987	0,51704	163	4,969	0
	Turkish Language and Literature Teaching	78	3,3921	0,53327			

According to the results of the t-test, it was determined that critical reading self-efficacy scores of the teacher candidates showed a significant difference in terms of the department variable [$t_{(163)}$=4,969, p<.05]. According to the results of the analysis that was made to determine the group which the results were in favor of, it was determined that the critical reading self-efficacy levels of the Turkish Language teacher candidates were higher than those of Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates.

When the evaluation theme, research theme and visual theme dimensions were examined one by one, a meaningful result was determined in favor of the Turkish Language teacher candidates in every dimension of the scale. Based on these findings, it was determined that the critical self-efficacy levels of the Turkish Language teachers were higher than those of the Turkish Language and Literature teachers.

In Table 4, whether there is a significant difference in the critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Literature teacher candidates according to Reading Habit status variable is given. According to the results of the T-Test, it was determined that there is a significant difference in the total of all the dimensions of Reading Scale in terms of having the Reading Habit variable in the critical reading self-efficiency scores of teacher candidates [$t_{(163)}$=2,803 p<.05]. According to the results of the analysis that was made to determine the groups that had differences, it was concluded that the teacher candidates who stated that they had reading habits had higher self-efficacy. A significant difference was detected in favor of the teacher candidates who stated that they had reading habits in the "research theme" and "visual theme"; however, no significant difference was detected in the "evaluation theme" sub-dimension of the scale.

Based on these results, it may be argued that the critical reading self-efficacy scores of the teacher candidates who had reading habits were higher than the ones who had no reading habits.

Discussion

The following results were obtained in the present study by considering the data obtained.

It was determined that the critical reading self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates were at a moderate level with

X=3.60. From this finding, one can conclude that both Turkish language and Turkish language and literature teachers have not so low levels of critical reading self-efficacy.

These results were similar to the results reported by similar studies that were conducted by Işık (2010) and Demir (2017) with different student groups; however, our results differ from the results reported by Topçuğlu Ünal and Sever (2013) to determine the critical reading self-efficacy perceptions of Turkish Language Teaching Department, which showed that the Turkish Language Teaching Department students had higher critical reading self-efficacy perception levels. The results obtained from this study show that the critical reading self-efficacy levels of the teacher candidates are neither too bad nor very high. However, these efficacy levels of the teacher candidates who have critical reading self-efficacy must be increased to a higher level. In order for Turkish Language and Turkish and Language and Literature teachers, who are responsible for giving mother language education to their students, must have this ability firstly in themselves at a high level. For this reason, studies to improve the critical self-efficacy levels of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates should be emphasized during undergraduate education.

The critical reading self-efficacy levels of the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates who participated in the present study did not change according to the gender variable. This, in fact, provides evidence that gender is a not a type of variable that will lead to significant changes in critical reading self-efficacy. In the literature, similar results were reported in studies conducted by Topçuğlu Ünal and Sever (2013) and Emiroğlu (2014); however, in the studies that were conducted by Sadioğlu and Bilgiç (2008) and Akyol (2011) with primary school students, the results were significant in favor of female students. This shows that the difference in critical reading self-efficacy levels decreases as age and level of education increase according to the gender difference.

Another result that was obtained in the present study was that the critical reading self-efficacy scores of the Turkish Language teacher candidates were higher than the Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates. This is a finding the researcher has expected. It is because it is a well known fact that Turkish language teacher candidates have classes on reading skills while they are in pre-service teacher education

Table 4. The T-Test Results of the Critical Reading Self-efficacy of Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature Teacher Candidates According to Having Reading Habit

Dimension	Reading Habit	N	X	SD	df	t	p
Evaluation Theme	Yes	106	3,8609	0,62443	163	1,414	0,159
	No	59	3,7244	0,53594			
Research Theme	Yes	106	3,0514	0,64719	163	3,745	0,000
	No	59	2,6441	0,70809			
Visual Theme	Yes	106	3,9660	0,65754	163	4,831	0,000
	No	59	3,3831	0,87674			
Total	Yes	106	3,6960	0,55646	163	2,803	0,006
	No	59	3,4456	0,53815			

programs. Therefore, it is not something unexpected that Turkish language and literature teacher candidates do not hold high levels of critical reading self-efficacy since they do not have such reading classes as Turkish language teacher candidates do. These results are in parallel with the results of the study that was conducted by Topçuğlu Ünal and Sever (2013), which aimed to determine the self-efficacy perceptions of the students in the Turkish Language teaching department in critical reading. It may be argued that Turkish Language teacher candidates are generally interested in the development of language skills during their undergraduate education, and specifically, their proficiency levels in these courses increase because they receive field lessons that intend to develop reading comprehension skills. The results obtained show that it is necessary to include lessons that intend to develop the basic language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and upper-level skills (critical reading, critical thinking, creative writing, creative reading, etc.) are included in the department for teacher candidates in Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature departments as compulsory, or at least, as elective courses. It is not possible to think that a Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidate who does not take these courses can be useful in terms of improving the reading comprehension and critical reading self-efficacy of their students during the teaching of mother language.

The final point in reading activities in formal and non-formal educational institutions is to make individuals acquire reading habits. Reading habit is an ability that strengthens and enhances the knowledge, skills, and understandings that are acquired by individuals in their lives, and at the same time, enables them to adapt this knowledge and values to individual and social life (Yılmaz, 1992). Reading habit is the status of internalizing reading skill. An individual who has reading habit is closer to higher level mental skills like making analyses, syntheses and evaluation than an individual who does not have reading habit (Aksoy, 2017). Another sub-problem of the present study was to determine whether having reading habits affected critical reading self-efficacy levels. As a result of the study, it was determined that the critical reading self-efficacy scores of the teacher candidates who stated that they had reading habits were higher. Habit is a change in behavior gained in a given process. Moreover, the acquisition of reading habits for individuals depends on the activities that begin with the first reading and writing lessons given at the primary school level from an early age and will continue in the following processes. The positive contribution of reading habits cannot be attributed to the development of reading comprehension skill, which is one of the basic skills in mother tongue teaching. Therefore, critical reading self-efficacy was concluded in favor of those who gained habit of reading, proving that reading habit and critical reading self-efficacy level were in parallel.

Although these results overlap with the results of the studies conducted by Topçuoğlu Ünal and Sever (2013) and Akdan (2016) arguing that as the number of the books the students read increased, their critical reading self-efficacy scores also improved; the results of the present study show

differences with the results of the study that was conducted by Işık (2010) with high school students. The results that were determined in the present study clearly show the importance of having a reading habit in the development of critical reading self-efficacy. For this reason, Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates, and especially class teachers, must acquire reading habits in pre-service period. Teachers, who will teach mother tongue, and who do not acquire this habit, cannot be expected to teach this habit to their students when they start active duty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To reach the right information, critical reading skills that are more effective and long-lasting than any other reading methods in reaching accurate information must be given to Class Teachers and Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates who will teach the native language.
2. Lessons like critical reading and advanced reading must be included in the Turkish Language and Turkish Language and Literature Undergraduate Programs as elective courses for the development of reading skills of teacher candidates.
3. The Constructivist Teaching Programs, which target to raise qualified, questioning and investigating individuals, must be included in all education levels.
4. To improve the critical reading skills of teacher candidates, they must be given the habit of reading in the pre-service period.
5. Academic studies should be conducted to determine the critical reading and critical reading self-efficacy levels of teachers from different branches.
6. Students from each educational level must be made to love reading comprehension with activities.
7. Critical reading self-efficacy levels of prospective teachers in all branches, especially Turkish and Turkish Language and Literature, should be increased as much as possible. The activities to be carried out for this purpose should be given maximum weight.
8. It should never be neglected to give the students the habit of reading and reading, which is the most effective way to reach information from an early age.

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