

# Applying Freire's Critical Pedagogy to Iranian EFL Bilingual and Monolingual Speaking Performance

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The purpose of the present pre-experimental study is to examine the extent to how Critical Pedagogy (CP) may function in EFL teaching in Iran. Compared with the growing but far from conclusive body of research, virtually few studies have been covered comparatively among monolinguals and bilinguals. Also, no studies have examined Freire's CP among monolinguals and bilinguals especially in Iran, which considered as two privileged and less privileged groups respectively. Therefore, this study was done among sixty Iranian monolingual and bilingual university sophomores to know if CP affects them differently. The study is done under two available classes in bilingual and two other classes in monolingual context. The first groups received problem-posing and the second groups were exposed to banking model. The scoring procedure of participants' performance was based on IELTS speaking band descriptors. Findings reveal that applying problem-posing model cause improvement in speaking performance of both monolingual and bilingual learners than banking model. More importantly, it is concluded that there is no significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in terms of problem-posing model, perhaps because the standards of educational justice have been partially observed among both communities. Finally, implications were drawn for EFL teachers and syllabus designers.

**Keywords:** critical pedagogy, Freire, monolingual, bilingual, speaking

## Introduction

CP has been discussed and used in education for decades, but there have not been many studies in English language teaching on implementing the basic principles of Brazilian theorist Paulo Freire's philosophy of education and critical pedagogy. Van Canh (2018) considered Pennycook's (1990a) perspective on CP as an approach that "seeks to understand and critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop pedagogical practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling, but also the wider society" (p.113).

The purpose and process of education are central aspects discussed by critical pedagogy. Principally, education illuminates the relation among knowledge, authority, and power (Giroux, 1994; as cited in Steven, 2002). The origin of critical pedagogy dates back to the Frankfurt School, yet, it is through the work of Freire (1970), which infuses critical pedagogy into present-day education. Freire, the pioneering figure of CP, mainly discussed two aspects of power and social injustice and put forward critical pedagogy as an approach to confront with these concepts (Baladi, 2007).

Freedom and justice in education are two central concepts which are sometimes overlooked by societies in general and teachers and policymakers in particular. This leads to creation of a bipolar and oppressed society, which as Ramos (2005) stated, includes two major groups of oppressors and oppressed. The first group owning the maximum power and authority and the second group with lack of enough autonomy cause an imbalance of democracy in society. The oppressed can neither help nor able to liberate themselves. Freire (1970) introduced his 'pedagogy of oppressed' especially for such societies. He stated that to resolve the oppressor-oppressed

contradiction, we need a critical intervention. His pedagogy grew to theorize this critical intervention. This intervention requires “liberated pedagogues, fully conscientized in such pedagogy” (Esteve, Stuchul, & Prakash, 2005, p. 14). This pedagogy was first considered suitable for the oppressed, “it would then become a pedagogy for all people in the process of permanent liberation, a pedagogy of humankind” (Esteve, Stuchul, & Prakash, 2005, p. 14). To apply liberation through critical intervention, the teacher should attempt to change the reality of the oppressed by teaching some necessary virtuous and political moralities as well as some specific instruments.

In describing the power relations embedded in society, Auerbach (1995) mentioned that power is unevenly and unfairly distributed in society and the dominant class exercises power through coercion and through consent. For these reasons, the oppressor and the oppressed will always exist. The dominant monolingual group (Persians who live in Tehran) possesses some privileges due to power and facility they own in the capital of Iran (Tehran) while the minority monolingual group (Azeris who live in Tabriz) lacks the fair power and privileges. Iran's population is estimated at 79,926,270 (2016 estimate, Vice Presidency Plan and Budget Organization, Statistical Center of Iran). It is divided equally between men and women. Campo (2009) reports that Persians (the majority monolingual group in the present study) make up 51 percent of the population. Azeris, the Turkic people, are the largest non-Persian minority and constitute 24 percent of the population (the minority bilingual group in this study). In Iran, minority groups have the right to use their language and respect ethnic languages, but the national language is still dominant. Minority groups are struggling to learn because they lack the power and influence of the majority language.

Tehran, the capital of Iran and Tehran province, is the most populous city in Iran with 8,737,510 populations (2016 estimate, Vice Presidency Plan and Budget Organization, Statistical Center of Iran). Persian is the native language and official language of people. Tabriz, the capital of East Azerbaijan province, is the sixth populous city of Iran with 1,773,033 populations (2016 estimate, Vice Presidency Plan and Budget Organization, Statistical Center of Iran). The native language spoken in Tabriz is Azerbaijani language which is a Turkic language and their official language is Persian.

Although there is a general view that bilingualism has many benefits in learning, it can take a different perspective in terms of the concept of justice, especially educational justice. Justice is a necessary condition of development in any country, and equality refers to provide equal chances for every individual. The monolinguals living in Tehran seem to have more privileges than those in the non-capital cities because of many facilities. According to Shahraki-Sanavi, Nasser, Shahraki-Sanavi, and Salehiniya (2019), social justice in general and educational justice in specific can include equal input, equal process, and equal output. They described the results of some research in addressing educational challenges. Some challenges include:

Professors' fair expectations of students and their fair behavior with students, having access to good professors, ... university's disciplinary procedures, having access to culturally based learning resources, attaining appropriate language support, having access to programs and resources tailored to individual abilities, disabilities, interests, talents, special needs, access to technology and sports facilities and programs, participation in educational administration, policymaking, bulletin boards, and advisory bodies (Shahraki-Sanavi, Nasser, Shahraki-Sanavi, & Salehiniya, 2019, p. 2).

Due to the aforementioned facilities, the monolingual learners of the capital city in the present study seem to enjoy more advantages of educational justice than those bilinguals who live in a non-capital city and enjoy less educational justice. One of the tenets of CP is to establish justice among all learners and educators. As Haque (2007) argues, critical pedagogy tries to provide a framework in the manner that it sanctions inequalities and injustice. Also, some theorists in CP field such as Norton and Toohey (2004) took the sophisticated political and socio-historical aspects of language learning and teaching into account and regarded them as vital essence of language learning and teaching.

To operationalize the two poles of the contradiction, Freire (1970) introduced *banking education* as an instrument for oppression and *problem-posing* education as a symbol or tool for liberation. *Banking education* develops when teachers transfer the contents and knowledge to those of the students (Bartolome, 1994) and *problem-posing* occurs when education proceeds through meaningful and real-life dialogues between teacher and student with the aim of acting on the world to improve it and support students' political and personal

developments. In his later years, Freire (1997) wrote a book entitled 'pedagogy of freedom'. He further emphasized the two poles of contradiction and considered universal love for others as the universal ethic of the human being.

Perumal (2016) implied that one manifestation of critical pedagogy in disadvantaged societies is democracy. She added that in societies such as South Africa, "the materiality of democracy is limited to idealist slogans" (p. 762). She further adds that lack of democracy, political, social, and structural inequalities, poverty, and violence in communities proved that in societies where the necessary foundation to CP has not been provided, the implementation of CP will not be effective. In relation to having a free attitude and free expression of ideas in CP, Joseph Jeyaraj (2020) conducted a qualitative study using interviews with Malaysian students to explore their perceptions of critical pedagogy and social justice. Most of the students expressed that CP was neglected and teachers were the only source of authorized knowledge. They also believed that talking about critical issues could be problematic to them and perhaps endanger their safety. They stated that the imbalance of power in the relationship between teacher and learners and the fear of expressing their opinions freely caused most learners to be cautious in their critical behavior and unwilling to share their opinions and knowledge. Of course, despite some limitations, it seems that there is a good desire for CP in Malaysia.

Correa (2015) defined flipped foreign language classroom and compared it with critical pedagogy. She introduced the basic tenets and advantages of each. Then the fundamental principles of flipped foreign language classrooms were presented and compared to the basic tenets of critical pedagogy. She found that flipped language classes and critical pedagogies are almost identical and seem to be two sides of the same coin, especially when it comes to shifting responsibility of students, scaffolding and rejecting the banking model of education. Recently, Mitsikopoulou (2020) introduced the genre approach and combined Freire's critical pedagogy with Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. She sought to turn learners into critical text analysts by encouraging them to critically evaluate different texts, to understand different meanings in different social contexts, and to discover the relationship between text and context.

Some researchers (Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1999; 2001) stated that applying critical pedagogy is essential to English language teaching. It affects the general process and outcomes of English language learning and teaching. In another study, Brown (2013) carried out a collaborative action research to explore the perception of teachers implementing Freire's theory of problem solving pedagogy into middle school classroom. During the study, teachers compared and contrasted Freire's problem-posing pedagogy with the banking notion of education. The main findings grouped under opportunities and barriers towards applying problem-posing pedagogy. 'Increased depth of student learning' was one out of the three major opportunities towards using problem-posing pedagogy. In EFL context, especially with young learners, Moorhouse (2014) examined the effect of critical pedagogy with young EFL learners in Hong Kong primary school. The findings proved that although using CP may be challenging, it can be interesting and raise their awareness. It was further concluded that applying CP might empower students, especially those marginalized by society. In another EFL study, Benites (2012, as cited in Kamali Sarvestani & Yamini, 2016) examined the role of CP in teaching and learning ESL/EFL. It was concluded that applying CP in ESL and EFL settings led to better and successful bilingual learners. Hong and White (2012) investigated the impact of CP in Chinese EFL writing programs. According to the holistic approach, all language skills are interrelated, and the development of one skill may lead to the development of another. This is why the effect of CP on other skills than speaking is reported here. They concluded that critical pedagogy could empower students or writers and increase their awareness. Regarding the impact of critical pedagogy on foreign language education, especially the challenges and benefits of using this model, Yulianto (2020) conducted a study in Subang. The results showed that there were 23 activities necessary to use this type of education in schools and 4 main conditions had to be provided for the implementation of critical education. Finally, the challenges and benefits of using this pedagogy were expressed in the form of 3 challenges and 4 benefits, respectively. The three types of challenges were (1) students' limited English proficiency, (2) cultural problems, and (3) pre-determined curriculum and the four kinds of benefits were (1) new experience, (2) new knowledge acquisition, (3) increased language awareness, and (4) improved English proficiency. In another similar study conducted in Punjab, Pakistan, Kalsoom, Kalsoom, and Mallick (2020) addressed the problems of using critical pedagogy in Pakistan through a mixed-method study using interviews with students. The results showed that the four main reasons for using the banking model instead of the critical model were the large number of students in each class, lack of resources and trained staff, lengthy and fixed syllabi and finally lack of motivation and interest among students. The results also indicated that for

the application and formation of critical pedagogy in the country, the necessary knowledge about the benefits of critical pedagogy should be given to teachers and students and the necessary resources and facilities for better learning and education should be provided to both teachers and learners. In terms of examining the impact of CP on emotional and social dimensions, researchers in other disciplines have also studied the impact of this model. Manca, Gormley, Johnston, and Hart (2020) have also studied the impact of CP in medical sciences and have concluded that this model facilitates professional power and improves social accountability and socio-cultural responsibility of medical staff due to increasing awareness and critical consciousness of medical staff and ultimately leads to foster empathy and compassion among doctors and medical staff.

In this area, another study was conducted by Barjesteh, Alipour, and Vaseghi (2013) in Iranian context. They studied the impact of critical pedagogy strategies on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners. Findings revealed that critical pedagogy strategies had a significant effect on reading comprehension ability of EFL learners. Abdollahzadeh and Haddad Narafshan (2016) conducted another similar study to examine the effect of critical pedagogy on Iranian EFL learners' motivation. The findings, as previous study proved, revealed that applying critical pedagogy led to an increase in learners' motivation. In bilingual settings, Hones (2002) examined the impact of critical pedagogy, especially the value of a dialogical process, on the bilingual students in the USA. He concluded that dialogic pedagogy would benefit young bilingual students' academic and social aspects.

Despite research on critical pedagogy, few studies have been conducted in this area. In Iran, no comparative research has been conducted between monolinguals and bilinguals. In this regard, the present study has sought to compare the effectiveness of Freire's critical pedagogy among Iranian monolingual and bilingual EFL learners. Certainly one of the effects of critical education is the establishment of educational justice among all learners, regardless of linguistic, economic, and social discrimination. As one of the primary tasks of any researcher and teacher is responsibility for his/her audience, the researcher in the present study with many years of teaching experience in both bilingual and monolingual settings has come to this conclusion that education in such environments faces some problems. One of these problems is the lack of educational justice, especially in bilingual environments, which can be partially addressed by providing scientific and practical solutions and by introducing critical education so that EFL teachers can achieve better results in educational justice in the future.

Applying CP, especially Freire's critical pedagogy in both monolingual and bilingual settings, is very effective. This may lead to the conclusion that the minority group may favor this method much more than the other group and show much more progress in their career. It is worth mentioning that English is the foreign language for both monolingual and bilingual groups and Persian is the native language for the monolingual group and the second/official language for the bilingual group whose native language is Azeri (Turkish).

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the extent to how CP may function in EFL teaching and learning in Iran. The majority, high privileged and monolingual group who live in the Capital is compared with the minority, less privileged and bilingual group who live in a non-capital city. Using the critical pedagogy, the researcher aims to find which group reacts better to CP.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed and investigated in this study:

1. Is there any statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL monolingual speaking performance?
2. Is there any statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL bilingual speaking performance?
3. Is there any statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of banking education?
4. Is there any statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of problem-posing education?

## Method

### Participants' (Subject) Characteristics

The participants were all male and female Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) sophomores and their ages ranged from 20 to 24 (with mean age of 22). The number of participants was the same in both groups (thirty students in the bilingual group and thirty in the monolingual group). Sixty percent was female and the remaining forty percent was male. The students were at the same proficiency level in that they had been exposed to English Lab Course 1 (listening and speaking course 1) as prerequisite to English Lab Course 2 (listening and speaking course 2). They were all at the elementary level of English.

The teacher for both groups were different but with identical demographic characteristics. They were both male bilingual teachers, got Ph. D. in TEFL, and aged 38-40. They had 17-19 years' experience in teaching EFL in university and had good command of English. More importantly, they had enough knowledge, interest, and familiarity with the subject under study.

### Instruments

#### Textbook

The researchers introduced Top Notch 1 by Saslow and Ascher (2015). It is a dynamic communicative course which covers eight top goals and achievement-based lessons. The textbook was designed to take beginner university students in English as a second/foreign language context. It builds confidence for successful oral expression through an expanded speaking pedagogy and prepares students for academic work through the development of critical thinking skills and reading and listening strategies. The point is that the textbooks were the same for both classes, but the teacher's teaching methods were different. In the first group, the teacher played a more active role and encouraged the students to participate more, which made the class more interesting for the students, but in the second class the teacher did not play a very active role and the students were not very interested in the participation. This made the class boring (for more information about the banking and problem-posing classes, see Table 1).

#### Learning Approaches (Banking Model vs. Problem-posing Pedagogy)

As it was discussed earlier, in banking education the teacher merely transfers the knowledge but in problem-posing education, real-life aspects are presented to the students through dialogues and their political and personal developments are supported. The characteristics of Freire's (1970) banking and problem-posing education are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of Freire's (1970) Banking and Problem-posing Education*

	Banking Education	Problem-posing Education
Aims	Depositmaking	Increasing critical consciousness
Role of Teacher	Lecturer, mere teacher, and problem solver Teacher is indifferent to the political and especially sociocultural climate/ context	Problem poser and coordinator of discussions and dialogues. Teacher is interested and sensitive to the political and especially sociocultural context
Role of students	Mere learner, they are passive	Teacher and students are learning together, they are active
Tasks and materials	They are boring and monotonous	They are motivating and engaging
Teacher education	Static Education as the exercise of domination Parrot like memorization Pattern of education is vertically established between teacher and students	Dynamic Education as the exercise of liberation and practice of freedom Deep and critical understanding Pattern of education is in the form of horizontal relationship between teacher and students (dialoguers)

### ***Pre-Test and Post-Test***

The sample was distributed into four groups. In all four classes, the students received one sample Cambridge IELTS 9 speaking test as pre-test and post-test. Each speaking test included three parts. In part 1, the examiners asked the participants some general questions about themselves and a range of familiar topics, such as home, family, work, studies and interests. This part lasted four or five minutes. In part 2, the participants were given a card which asked them to talk about a particular topic. They had one minute to prepare before speaking for up to two minutes. The examiners then asked one or two questions on the same topic. In part 3, they were asked some further questions about the topic in Part 2. The questions gave the participants the opportunity to discuss more abstract ideas and issues. This part of the test lasted four or five minutes.

The textbook used in the present study, as it is mentioned earlier, is suitable for beginner university students in English as a second/foreign language context. The sample tests as pre-test and post-test are taken from IELTS sample test. As it is clear, IELTS is an international (standardized) test of English language proficiency for non-native language speakers and it is one of the major English language tests in the world. This is the major reason for the researcher's use of IELTS sample test as pre-test and post-test. Table 2 compares IELTS scores with the European scale of English levels.

**Table 2**

*Comparison of IELTS Scores with the European Scale of English Levels*

Levels	IELTS scores
Proficiency	8.0 - 9.0
Advanced	7.0 - 7.5
Upper-Intermediate	6.0 - 6.5
Intermediate	5.0 - 5.5
Pre-Intermediate	4.0 - 4.5
Elementary	3.5 and below

### ***IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors (Public Version)***

The purpose of this speaking grading criterion was to assess and score students' oral ability. This checklist included four major criteria of *fluency and coherence*, *pronunciation*, *lexical resource*, and *grammatical range and accuracy*. Each of the major sections was divided into nine band scores, and the raters chose one that corresponded to their understanding of examinees' knowledge and improvement in oral ability. The nine band scores as mentioned, ranged between band score 0 (does not attend) to band score 9 (full competent and advanced). All four criteria were judged throughout a three-part speaking test. The mentioned nine band scores describe the speaking performance as follows: Band 0, did not attempt the test; Band 1, non-user; Band 2, intermittent user; Band 3, extremely limited user; Band 4, limited user; Band 5, modest user; Band 6, competent user; Band 7, good user; Band 8, very good user; Band 9, expert user. The inter-rater reliability of IELTS band scores is calculated and was equal to 0.75.

### **Procedure**

The present pre-experimental study is done under four groups. Two available classes in bilingual context, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz (17 and 18 respectively) and two other classes in monolingual context, Islamic Azad University, Tehran (19 and 19) are introduced as the research participants. In order to have equal number of students in all groups, those students who got the lowest score in the last term final exam English Lab Course 1 (listening and speaking course 1) were excluded. The research sample became 15 in each group.

In order to follow the principle of ethics, all participants, even those excluded from the research received the normal teaching/testing process. The researcher informed the students that they were participating in a study designed by the researcher and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Also, in order to observe the ethical principles of the research and in order for the banking group not to be deprived of the benefits of the problem-posing intervention, the banking group was taught the problem-posing intervention in the form of delayed interventions a few sessions after the research.

Fourteen sessions were devoted to conduct the present study and to administer the treatment. The first experimental groups in both monolingual and bilingual contexts received problem-posing model of teaching and the second groups were exposed to banking model.

Banking model is like the traditional autocratic methods. Following Freire's (1970) banking model, the teacher was more active and the processor of knowledge and the students were just passive recipients of knowledge. No emphasis was given on learners' capabilities, interest and needs. The teacher acted as depositors and students patiently received, memorized and repeated. The teacher dictated and selected the content and did the teacher correction process but the students did not have any role in selecting the content and evaluation process. Another key point in this model was that the teacher was the subject and the students were the objects of the education and learning process. In short, the students did not find any evidence of critical thinking from the surrounding context

In problem-posing group, the teacher initially assigned several sessions to work on the students' spiritual, emotional, and cultural dimensions, and provided the necessary context for the students to realize that good thinking requires better learning. The teacher also encouraged the students not to be afraid of asking questions. The teaching model was more of a humanistic model in which students could use social interactions to construct their own environment. To apply this model, a dialogic approach was used to increase the critical thinking power of learners. The teacher used the reflection-action cycle to change the learners' personal assumptions, actions, and the world around them. Instead of having the role of knowledge transmitter, he played the role of the problem poser. He encouraged the students to think by asking a series of critical questions. By challenging them, he tried to make the students understand the obvious reasons for those obvious issues. Also, to answer all the students' questions logically and correctly, he tried to be aware of all the social, political and cultural issues of the society and played the role of a learner. He even tried to learn new things by interacting with individual students. One of the necessary tools for critical pedagogy was the use of dialogue, and by making these dialogues even briefly, the teacher tried to create constructive student-student and student-teacher interactions. Brainstorming was used during dialogues in class. Needs analysis was also used to address the students' actual interests and needs so that they could be more motivated and interested in learning. Another tool used in the classroom was applying dynamic assessment, which is itself a teaching model. Also, the teacher used alternatives in assessment tools such as portfolio and dialogue journals. This method first helped to create a free and democratic atmosphere that both facilitated the learning process and created an atmosphere where students could think, ask questions, and do all the class work freely. Another important point was the use of self-assessment method. It was an empowering tool that helped the learners assess their learning and reflect on their own actions as a group.

The scoring procedure of participants' performance in pre-test and post-tests writing was based on IELTS speaking band descriptors. The participants' performance was recorded by two raters and scored during pre and post-test. The inter-rater reliability between the two raters was 75 percent. The results were finally analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23.

## Research Design

The present study is a pre-experimental study with one group pre-post design (no control group). The independent variable was different models of pedagogy (problem-posing as a model of CP and banking education as a dominant uncritical system of education) and dependent variable included speaking performance of EFL learners in monolingual and bilingual contexts.

In order to have equal number of students in all four groups, those students who got the lowest score in last term final exam were excluded. In order to analyze all independent groups with quantitative variables and to compare the effect of critical pedagogy on EFL speaking performance of monolingual and bilingual learners, an independent sample t-test was used.

## Data Analysis

The main concern of the present study was to examine the effect of Freire's critical pedagogy on Iranian EFL bilingual and monolinguals' speaking performance. This study attempted to find out if there was any difference

between Freire's problem-posing and banking education. Furthermore, this study aimed to explore the probable statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of problem-posing education.

### Descriptive Statistics for Hypotheses

In order to analyze the scores in all four groups, an independent t-test was utilized which was preceded by descriptive statistics to give a comprehensive manifestation of the results. The results of descriptive statistics for the participants' performance in all four groups are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics for all four Hypotheses*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Meas.
(POST-TEST) H1. statistical difference between problem- posing education and banking education in monolingual group	PmG	15	3.2000	.56061	.14475
	BmG	15	2.0667	.25820	.06667
(POST-TEST) H2. statistical difference between problem- posing education and banking education in bilingual group	PbG	15	3.3333	.61721	.15936
	BbG	15	2.1333	.51640	.13333
(POST-TEST) H3. statistical difference between monolingual and bilingual groups in terms of banking education	BmG	15	2.0667	.25820	.06667
	BbG	15	2.1333	.51640	.13333
(POST-TEST) H4. statistical difference between monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of problem-posing education	PmG	15	3.2000	.56061	.14475
	PbG	15	3.3333	.61721	.15936

*Note:* PmG: Problem-posing (education) in monolingual Group; BmG: Banking (education) in monolingual Group; PbG: Problem-posing (education) in bilingual Group; BbG: Banking (education) in bilingual Group

Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics of four hypotheses. The mean score and standard deviation of both problem-posing and banking groups are given respectively for all four hypotheses. Based on the mean scores in problem-posing and banking education classes in all four groups, the researcher believes that problem-posing instruction results in higher score than banking education in both hypotheses 1 and 2 but it does not result in higher score in hypotheses 3 and 4.

### The Assumption of Normality of Scores

The purpose of using this statistical analysis is to determine whether the distribution of scores has normality. To this end, in each case, the significance value was determined and the results were shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normal Distribution of Scores in all Four Groups*

		Monolingual Group		Bilingual Group	
		Problem- Posing	Banking	Problem- Posing	Banking
N		15	15	15	15
Normal Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Mean	3.2000	2.0667	3.3333	2.1333
	Std. Deviation	.56061	.25820	.61721	.51640
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.211	.328	.241	.282
	Positive	.166	.323	.225	.244
	Negative	-.211	-.328	-.241	-.282
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.138	1.326	1.442	1.161
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.328	.203	.158	.301

<sup>a</sup> Test distribution is Normal.

According to the results which are shown in Table 4, the significance value in each case is greater than critical value ( $p > 0.05$ ) and z-scores are less than 1.96 which indicate the normality of the scores in all four groups prior to applying t-test.



**Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis 1.**

There is a statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL monolingual speaking performance. The researcher used a t-test to provide statistical evidence of whether the difference between the two groups' performance in post-test scores is significant. In other words, to see whether the difference between problem-posing and banking educations' means of post-test scores is statistically significant or not, an independent sample t-test is used.

As Table 5 shows, there is a significant difference between the post-test scores in both problem-posing and banking groups,  $t=7.112$ ,  $p = .008$  ( $*p < 0.05$ ), that is, there is a significant difference between two sets of means as the obtained p-value is less than critical value. Consequently, problem-posing education outperformed banking group in monolingual setting and it had significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance. In other words, the directional hypothesis of the study (There is a statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL monolingual speaking performance) is confirmed.

**Table 5**

*Independent Sample t-test for both Problem-posing and Banking Groups' Post-tests in Monolingual Setting*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
H1	Equal variances assumed	8.092	.008	7.112	28	.000	1.13333	.15936	.80689	1.45978
	Equal variances not assumed			7.112	19.684	.000	1.13333	.15936	.80056	1.46610

**Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis 2.**

There is a statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL bilingual speaking performance.

In order to provide statistical evidence of whether the difference between the two groups' performance in post-test scores is significant, another independent sample t-test is used. In other words, to check whether the difference between problem-posing and banking educations' means of post-test scores in Iranian bilingual setting is statistically significant or not, an independent sample t-test is used.

As Table 6 illustrates, there is a significant statistical difference between the post-test scores in both problem-posing and banking groups,  $t=5.775$ ,  $p = .045$  ( $*p < 0.05$ ), that is, there is a significant difference between two sets of means as the obtained p-value is less than critical value. Consequently, problem-posing education, as hypothesis one, outperformed banking group in bilingual setting and it had significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance. In other words, the second directional hypothesis of the study (some statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL bilingual speaking performance) is supported.

**Table 6**

*Independent Sample t-test for both Problem-posing and Banking Groups' Post-tests in Monolingual Setting*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
H2	Equal variances assumed	4.389	.045	5.775	28	.000	1.20000	.20778	.77437	1.62563
	Equal variances not assumed			5.775	27.154	.000	1.20000	.20778	.77377	1.62623

**Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis 3:**

There is a statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of banking education.

The third independent sample t-test is used to provide statistical evidence of whether the difference between the two groups' performance in post-test scores is significant. In other words, to see whether the difference between post-test scores of two banking groups in Iranian monolingual and bilingual settings is statistically significant or not, an independent sample t-test is applied.

Table 7 indicates that there is not any significant difference between the two different banking groups' post-tests in both monolingual and bilingual settings,  $t = -.447$ ,  $p = .344$  ( $p > 0.05$ ), that is, there is not any significant difference between two sets of means as the obtained p-value is more than critical value. Consequently, banking education in both bilingual and monolingual settings does not differ. In other words, the third directional hypothesis of the study (there is a statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of banking education) is rejected.

**Table 7**

*Independent Sample t-test for two Different Banking Groups' Post-tests in both Monolingual and Bilingual Settings*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper
H2	Equal variances assumed	.928	.344	-.447	28	.658	-.06667	.14907	-.37203 .23869
	Equal variances not assumed			-.447	20.588	.659	-.06667	.14907	-.37706 .24372

**Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis 4.**

There is a statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of problem-posing education.

In order to provide statistical evidence of whether the difference between the two groups' performance in post-test scores is significant, another independent sample t-test is used. In other words, to check to see whether the difference between two problem-posing groups' means of post-test scores in Iranian monolingual and bilingual settings is statistically significant or not, an independent sample t-test is used.

Table 8 illustrates that there is not any significant difference between the two different problem-posing groups' post-tests in both monolingual and bilingual settings  $t = -.619$ ,  $p = .358$  ( $p > 0.05$ ), that is, there is not any significant difference between two sets of means as the obtained p-value is more than critical value. Consequently, problem-posing education in both bilingual and monolingual settings does not differ. In other words, the fourth directional hypothesis of the study (there is a statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of problem-posing education) is rejected.

**Table 8**

*Independent Sample t-test for two Different Problem-posing Groups' Post-tests in both Monolingual and Bilingual Settings*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper
H2	Equal variances assumed	.873	.358	-.619	28	.541	-.13333	.21529	-.57433 .30767
	Equal variances not assumed			-.619	27.745	.541	-.13333	.21529	-.57451 .30785

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the application of Freire's critical pedagogy in Iranian EFL bilingual and monolingual speaking performance. To address the objective of the research, a pre-experimental study was set out. The findings indicated that there is no significant difference between Freire's problem-posing and banking education in Iranian monolingual and bilingual settings.

Pennycook (1990b) stated that CP is informed by critical social theory. It is aimed to critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and is directed to change the wider society in general and the nature of schooling in particular. Lack of enough freedom and justice in education in some societies may lead to creation of a bipolar and oppressed society, which as Ramos (2005) stated, includes two major groups of oppressor and oppressed. In order to overcome the problem of injustice, especially educational injustice, Freire (1970) introduced the problem-solving method as an alternative to the banking education for undemocratic societies. As mentioned earlier, in the banking model the teacher tries to transfer mere knowledge to the students but in the problem-posing education the teacher tries to transfer knowledge through real-life and meaningful situations on the one hand and to support the personal and political development of the students on the other. In Iranian context, as similar to other bilingual and multilingual societies, it is sometimes stated by some that the dominant monolingual group possesses some privileges due to power and facility they own in the capital while the minority bilingual group lacks the fair power and privileges. However, controversies over the effectiveness of Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy especially on monolingual and bilingual contexts urged the researcher to scrutinize two different models of critical pedagogy, banking and problem-posing, among Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual EFL learners' speaking ability. To solve the oppressor and oppressed positions, an experimental study was done among monolinguals and bilinguals to know if they react to CP differently.

Regarding the first research hypothesis, that is, the statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL monolingual speaking performance, the results of an independent sample t-test showed that problem-posing education outperformed banking group in monolingual setting and it had significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance.

Concerning the second research hypothesis, that is, the statistical difference between problem-posing education and banking education of Iranian EFL bilingual speaking performance, the results of another independent sample t-test indicated that problem-posing education outperformed banking group in bilingual setting and it had significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance.

Regarding the third research hypothesis, that is, the statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of banking education, the results of another independent sample t-test demonstrated that banking education in both bilingual and monolingual settings does not differ.

The fourth research hypothesis proposed a statistical difference between Iranian EFL monolingual and bilingual speaking performance in terms of problem-posing education. To achieve this goal, a final independent sample t-test was used and demonstrated that problem-posing education in both bilingual and monolingual settings does not significantly differ.

The aim of the present study, as it is mentioned earlier, was to investigate the effect of Freire's critical pedagogy on Iranian EFL bilingual and monolingual speaking performance. Of course, the reason for comparing these two groups is not because of their language types, but as previously explained in the introduction, it is related to the concepts of monolingualism and bilingualism, the existence of different social and educational advantages of the city in which these two groups lived and it also seems to be related to the different expectations that society has of these two groups. In order to be more specific, Freire's problem-posing and banking models were compared in different monolingual and bilingual contexts. The analysis of data revealed that applying problem-posing model caused improvement in speaking performance of both monolingual and bilingual learners. That is, problem-posing education outperformed banking group in both monolingual and bilingual settings and it had significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance. The finding of this study is in line with different empirical studies which have done to investigate the effect of critical pedagogy, especially problem-posing model, on EFL learners' skill performances. For example, the finding of

the present study is in line with the findings of (Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1999; 2001). They stated that applying critical pedagogy affects the general process and outcomes of English language learning and teaching. Also, the findings are in line with Joseph Jeyaraj (2020). He conducted a qualitative study using interviews with Malaysian students to explore their perceptions of critical pedagogy and social justice. He concluded that despite some limitations, it seems that there is a good desire for this model in this country. Furthermore, the finding of the present study is in line with the findings of Brown (2013) who concluded that increased depth of student learning was one out of the three major opportunities towards using problem-posing pedagogy. The finding of the present study also supports the findings of Hong and White (2012) who concluded that critical pedagogy could empower student writers and increases their awareness. Finally, the findings are in line with Manca et al. (2020) who came to the conclusion that CP facilitates social power, critical consciousness, and fosters empathy and compassion among medical staff.

Hypotheses three and four deal with the probable differences between Iranian monolingual and bilingual EFL learners in terms of banking and problem-posing models. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference between monolingual and bilingual EFL learners neither in terms of banking nor problem-posing models. The findings of this part of research are not in line with Hones (2002). He examined the impact of critical pedagogy, especially the value of a dialogical process on the bilingual students in the USA. He concluded that dialogic pedagogy would benefit young bilingual students' academic and social aspects. The findings of the present study also reject Moorhouse (2014). He examined the effect of critical pedagogy with young EFL learners in Hong Kong primary school and came to this conclusion that applying CP may empower students, especially those marginalized by society (bilingual or multilingual learners).

Finally, the findings of the present study, specially hypotheses three and four, do not support the findings of Benites (2012, as cited in Kamali Sarvestani & Yamini, 2016) who concluded that applying CP in ESL and EFL settings leads to better and successful bilingual learners.

### **Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications**

Speaking is probably one of the most significant skills in the world of information where people feel a growing need for international and intercultural communication. This makes learners enthusiastically attend language classes to improve their speaking ability. Freire's critical pedagogy is an approach which might help learners overcome the challenges that learners face in EFL context.

There are two explanations regarding the practical applications of CP in Iranian context. The first is concerned with priority of the problem-posing model of CP over the banking model in Iranian bilingual and monolingual contexts. The second refers to the different impact of the problem-posing model of CP in Iranian bilingual and monolingual contexts. Since this method is primarily aimed at addressing educational, cultural, and environmental injustices, it has been mistakenly assumed that bilingual environments in Iran are more affected by this method and respond better to it because of some shortcomings, especially in terms of educational and environmental opportunities. But the findings of the third and fourth hypotheses indicated that neither the banking nor the problem-posing were significantly different in Iranian monolingual and bilingual settings. Therefore, it is recommended to apply problem-posing model of CP in both Iranian bilingual and monolingual contexts. As the main concept of critical pedagogy suggests that the application of this pedagogy will cause users to change their attitudes toward free and critical thinking, the results of this research are likely to lead Iranian students think and act democratically, critically, and actively.

Last but not least, the findings should be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, the small sample size decreased the generalizability of the present study. Another limitation is the availability of sample which did not allow random selection of participants. Finally, the participants of the study were chosen from only EFL university students. Therefore, further studies can be done using random sampling techniques and with a larger number of participants. Also, other researches can be done with the participation of students from other disciplines.

Findings of the present study can have pedagogical implications for EFL teachers and syllabus designers.

The teachers should know how to apply critical pedagogy and distinguish between banking and problem-posing models. They should propose problem-posing as an alternative to the banking model. This alternative model, as Freire (1970) stated, uncovers reality and leads to critical consciousness. This consciousness lets students take the required actions to improve their life conditions and motivate students to have the right to ask questions. Also, in order to resolve the oppressor-oppressed contradiction, the teacher should introduce critical pedagogy as an alternative critical intervention. In short, freedom and justice which are sometimes overlooked by societies are motivated by introducing CP in general and problem- posing education in specific.

Teachers and students expect the curriculum to help them teach, learn, and communicate freely. This type of curriculum should provide a democratic context in which teachers feel relaxed to take changes and do risk taking activities. Also, syllabus designers should provide adequate resources which motivate problem-posing model in particular and critical pedagogy in general.

One of the main goals of education is to bring all people together and provide the necessary ground for access to human knowledge, which is one of the main goals of CP in both theory and practice. One solution that can be suggested to those involved in education and policy makers is to provide online learning, of course, if the tools and facilities of this technology are easily available to everyone. Souranta (2020) believes that this type of learning is in fact a new stage of Freire's critical model and can be considered "a globally distributed pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation" (1129). In this type of learning, everyone can learn, participate, be creative, and evaluate each other's learning process.

Finally, critical pedagogy should improve both teachers and learners' points of view and enable them to develop their speaking performance by exposing them to authentic materials and highlighting the real life problems and situations.

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