Assessing Iranian Elementary Language Arts Textbooks from a Critical Literacy Perspectives

Tayebeh Sohrabi, Memorial University, Canada

Abstract: This study investigated Iranian elementary language arts textbooks from a critical literacy perspective. A content analysis methodology was adopted to examine how and to what extent critical literacy is developed in Iranian elementary language arts textbooks. The content included words, pictures, and questions of all Iranian elementary language arts textbooks from grades one to six. In Iran, the same textbooks are taught at schools across the country. This study's criteria were developed according to the criteria identified by Klenner and Sandretto (2011) and Belet and Dala (2010). Analysis of the data followed Ball and Smith's (1992) content analysis phases. The analysis revealed that even though the Iranian textbooks meet the criteria, they do not seem to fully cover the essence of critical literacy. There might be several reasons for this, such as ignorance, unequal power relationships, and the profit of authorities.

Keywords: critical literacy, qualitative content analysis, Iranian elementary language arts textbooks

Introduction

A text more generally is defined as a vehicle through which people communicate with each other using the codes and conventions of society (Robinson & Robinson, 2003). In addition, texts can encourage readers to have a more active role in reading and developing their comprehension (Adlit & Adlit, 2022). As Luke (2012) mentioned, one of the functions of comprehensive texts is that they encourage critical literacy perspectives. Critical literacy is the ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life (Luke, 2012). Such an ability challenges readers to look beyond the literal message, question the text, observe present and missing information, and consider the influence of the author's context and structure on the reader (McLeod & Vasinda, 2008). Critical literacy guides readers in asking questions about the text, making predictions, and reading to accept or deny their predictions. It enables critical engagement with the question of "what is 'truth'?" How is it presented and represented, by whom, and in whose interests? Who should have access to which images, words, texts, and discourses and for what purposes (Luke, 2012)? Also, it encourages readers to use language to question the everyday world, question the relationship between language and power, analyze popular culture, understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and consider actions that can be taken regarding social justice (Lee, 2011). Critical literacy also guides readers in determining the purpose and reliability of the information, with attention being given to who is favoured and marginalized, exploring multiple perspectives, and taking action (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).

In the short term, critical literacy is vital for understanding a text when individuals are faced with a problem that needs to be solved, while in the long term it affects the whole life of an individual. According to Bloome et al. (2004), critical literacy helps students develop their understanding of the world around them and increase their awareness about the use of language.

While the term "literacy" traditionally referred to the reading and writing of text (Luke, 2012), critical literacy is part of literacy and can be taught through schooling and started from a young age (Janks, 2014). Assessments provide a way to determine to what extent students grasp such skills. One such assessment is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), a well-established international test that has attracted the attention of many countries and scholars. It shows where students stand in terms of their literacy skills. PIRLS uses a framework for assessing the reading achievement of 4th graders. The framework focuses on the two overarching purposes of reading: gaining literary experience and acquiring and using information. Moreover, the assessment "integrates four broad-based comprehension processes within each of the two purposes for reading: focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, make straightforward inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, and evaluate and critique content and textual elements" (Mullis et al., 2017, p. 13). The last process emphasizes critical literacy and students' ability to evaluate what they read; it is the highest point in Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain (Bloom, 1969).

The PIRLS 2016 international results in reading were recently released. They showed that Iranian students scored significantly lower than their counterparts (Mullis et al., 2017). Given such a low standing, it is critical to examine Iranian textbooks' content, as textbooks are one of the most effective practices that support critical literacy (Adlit & Adlit, 2022), to understand how it encourages critical reading. This paper attempts to provide such an assessment. In other words, the main aim of this paper is to assess the content of Iranian language arts textbooks from a critical literacy perspective. To achieve this, a critical content analysis methodology was adopted to examine Iranian language arts textbooks.

Children from immigrant families are the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population. In 2011, the immigrant population comprised 20.6% of Canada's population while the most recent federal government data show Canada welcomed 70,500 newcomers in the first three months of the year, compared to just over 69,000 in 2020 (Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center, 2021). By 2050, Canada's immigration rate is expected to have increased considerably. This is predicted to happen as the birth rate in Canada has decreased and the population of Canada is aging (Statistics Canada, 2019). A large population of immigrants to Canada are from Iran (Statistics Canada, 2019). Familiarity with the content of Iranian textbooks can help Canadian educators to gain an awareness about their students' background and knowledge.

Research Question

The central research question that guided this study was: How and to what extent do Iranian elementary language arts textbooks encourage critical literacy development?

Methodology

To answer the study's question, a content analysis methodology, one of the numerous research methods used to analyze text and qualitative data, was adopted. The qualitative content analysis focuses on language characteristics as a vehicle for communication with attention being given to the content or contextual meaning of the text and interpretation of the meaning of the content of text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The analysis of data in the current study followed Ball and Smith's (1992) content analysis phases. The content analysis includes five steps: defining the research question, deciding on the source of the data, identifying the categories or features that will be the focus of research, sampling documents from previously defined sources, and assessing the occurrence of the pre-established categories.

According to Ball and Smith's phases, after defining the research question, the source of the data should be defined. The sources of evidence in this study were all Iranian language arts textbooks from grade one to six. All Iranian schools across the country use specific textbooks for teaching. The content of Iranian elementary language arts textbooks (grades one to six), including their words, texts, pictures, and questions, were analyzed. Grades one to six are considered as elementary school in Iran. The elementary school textbooks were chosen for this study as early years of life are considered the most vulnerable period in children's lives, as this is the period of the most rapid development in all areas (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). This period's importance has also been demonstrated in cognitive and skills development (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Several studies suggest that children's early years development lays the foundation for the development of more advanced skills in later life (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Van Rhijn et al., 2019). In the next step, the researcher should identify the categories or features that will be the focus of the research. In other words, this phase is about "deciding what to give value to" (Klenner & Sandretto, 2011). In this study, the researcher developed a data sheet for assessment and looked for indicators of critical literacy development.

This study's criteria were selected from the criteria used by Klenner and Sandretto (2011) and Belet and Dala (2010). Klenner and Sandretto developed a list of questions that can provide a guideline for examining critical literacy tools (2011, p. 116). The criteria of this study were developed based on the core ideas of the questions used by Klenner and Sandretto (2011) and Belet and Dala (2010) for evaluating critical literacy content. These criteria were a) inclusion/exclusion, b) drawing on knowledge/experiences, c) constructing multiple meanings, d) power positions/relationships, e) shaping perspectives and thoughts or actions, and f) source evaluation.

In the next step, the researcher analyzed all Iranian language arts textbooks (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f). Sampling of each book was not required as the number of textbooks was limited to six; analyzing all of them was possible. Finally, an attempt was made to determine to what extent Iranian elementary textbooks, as critical literacy tools, were representative of the criteria mentioned earlier.

Findings

My analysis of Iranian elementary language arts textbooks from the critical literacy perspective provides a general viewpoint on how and to what extent these textbooks pay attention to critical literacy. Here, I share my subjective qualitative judgements on how effectively these textbooks address critical literacy, as there is no standard to my knowledge of how and to what extent textbooks should address critical literacy. This section presents some examples from Iranian elementary language arts textbooks that meet this study's criteria.

Criteria A: Inclusion/Exclusion

This criterion examined how and to what extent Iranian language arts textbooks represent the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. Some examples of this criterion are discussed below.

There are two pictures in the first-grade textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017c, p. 79 & 47) that show people from different ethnic groups wearing traditional clothes related to the region they are from. A lesson titled "Sympathetic Friends" is in the grade six language arts textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017d, pp. 43-47). This lesson is about a boy who immigrated to Iran's capital city, where the people speak the majority language of Iran, and the boy is not familiar with that language. He speaks another language that is one of the minority languages in Iran and widely spoken by people in the boy's region. During the first several months, he faces some challenges because of his language barriers, such as exclusion and loneliness. However, at the end of the story, the boy makes many new friends and learns a new language.

In the fifth-grade textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017b, pp. 63-67), a lesson tells the story of a bird that was not living in its hometown. The bird travelled a lot and saw many beautiful places, but it was not satisfied and always thought its hometown was better. At the end of the story, the bird comes back to its hometown. Overall, the story communicates the message that each person's hometown is the best place to live.

In the fifth-grade textbook (pp. 91-95), a lesson tells a story about a boy whose hair was white, and it made his appearance different from others. Because of his appearance, he was ignored by others. He was always alone during his childhood, and his only friend was a bird. The story continues by portraying his challenging childhood. As he grows older, however, he discovers a characteristic that makes him popular among others. Those who mistreated him, ignored him, or excluded him are sorry and apologize for what they did. Even though the man was sad about what happened to him during his childhood, he accepts their apology.

Criteria B: Drawing on Knowledge/Experiences

This criterion examines whether Iranian language arts textbooks encourage readers to think critically; connect the content to their understanding, comprehension, and knowledge; or only memorize information and express what they have learned from the book.

At the end of each lesson in all the grades' books, some questions ask students about their impressions of the lesson to evaluate how much students understand the text (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f). The questions get more complex at each grade level. There are also many "yes or no" and "true or false" questions that ask students to choose whether the statements are correct or not according to the text. These kinds of questions do not encourage students to describe their reasons for choosing the answer and may not require deep thought. For instance, on page 61 of the fifth-grade textbook, there is a question

that asks the student to choose the correct answer according to the text: "In the evening Aryubarzan guides his army to the highest point of the mountain". True or false?

Some lessons, however, have questions that require thinking and describing the reasons behind the answer given. For example, on page 22 of the grade two textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017f), a question asks: "Have you ever been to a mosque? Why?"

Also, on page 12 of the sixth-grade textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017d), there are some questions that ask students what they understand about a piece of poetry in the textbook, what its message is, and what the poet emphasizes and why.

Other questions encourage students to use their knowledge and experience. For instance, on page 62 of the fifth-grade textbook, there is a question that asks about the significance and history behind the name of an alley. In Iran, most alleys are named after famous people who did something significant for the country or world, such as scientists and martyrs.

Criteria C: Constructing Multiple Meanings

This criterion represents content that invites readers to think about the underlying meaning and message of the text. In the fourth-grade language arts textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017a, pp. 48-51), there is a story about a lion that lived in a cage and counted its steps inside the cage while walking, which was ten steps. As it was always in the cage, it thought the world was ten steps. Once, its guard forgot to close the cage door, and the lion came out of the cage, but it only took ten steps. When people noticed that the lion was not in its cage, they worried and thought it might escape the mountain. People looked for it everywhere. Finally, they found it sleeping behind the cage. The lion had the chance to escape, but it did not because the world it had made in its mind was no bigger than ten steps. After several years, the lion grew bigger and had several offspring. One of its cubs always tried to get out of the cage. If it had the chance to go outside the cage, it might not have repeated what its mother did. The students are asked some questions at the end of this story: Why do you think the lion came back to the cage? Do you believe there is a link between the eleventh step and recognizing the mountain and sky? What would you do if you were in the shoes of that lion?

Moreover, in the third-grade language arts textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017e, pp. 42- 43), there is a story about an ant that studied hard but its assessment score was not good. Once, it looked through glasses and found that the world was brighter and bigger with them. This story finishes without describing the reason for the ant's bad scores and asks the students to think about the reason behind the ant's bad scores, even though it studied hard and invites the students to describe why they think so.

Criteria D: Power Position/Relationship

This criterion represents content that indicates the power of a relationship. It looks to see whether the content encourages students to accept whatever those in power, such as older people, those in authority and teachers, dictate to them or encourages them to think critically.

The first lesson of grade five (pp. 10-11) invites students to ask questions about everything they see in the world, such as why something happened and why we have to do certain things. There is also a lesson on page 11 of the grade six textbook that invites readers to think about everything they see in the world, as thinking about everything leads to awareness.

Moreover, in the fourth-grade literacy textbook (pp. 42-46), there is a story about a bird who lived in a cage and was always sad about not having freedom, being away from his friends and being lonely. It liked to be with other birds and always thought about finding a way to end its oppression. One day, the idea to escape from the cage came to the bird's mind. When the owner opened the cage door to feed it, the bird pretended to be dead, which stirred the owner. Then, while the cage door was open, the bird escaped.

Criteria E: Shaping Perspectives and Thoughts or Actions

This criterion evaluates the content to see whether it encourages the shaping of perspectives and thoughts in students.

In the third elementary textbook (Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2017e, pp. 50-52), there is a story about two young persons who fight against injustice and protect their country. One of them was a girl who could not continue her education and chose to fight against injustice until she was martyred because of the war. The other was a young boy who fastened bombs around his waist and went under a tank to avoid enemies' progress in his country.

Criteria F: Source Evaluation

This criterion evaluates the content of language arts textbooks to see how and to what extent it introduces different sources of information and encourages gaining information from different sources. When children learn that there are various sources of information, they do not limit themselves in what they receive from a source and learn to evaluate different sources of information to develop their understanding.

Only one lesson in all the textbooks introduces sources of information, which is in the second-grade textbook (pp. 14-16) and titled "Library of Our Class." This lesson is about sources of information and knowledge such as the internet, books, magazines, and consulting with knowledgeable people in each area. In addition, this lesson emphasizes that all information on the internet or other sources might not be accurate and appropriate for children. At the end of the lesson, students are asked how they can have their library in the class.

Discussion

Inclusion and exclusion are discussed in the Iranian textbooks in a variety of ways, namely through pictures, stories about immigrants, and exclusion because of appearance. Still, the reaction to these issues was different. For instance, the boy who immigrated to a new place was accepted in a new society, and he was included in the new situation. This lesson provides awareness about the growing number of people in society who might feel marginalized in some ways. According to Blackledge (2000), one element of texts that encourages critical literacy development is that they pay attention to the marginalization of a growing number of immigrants who are not members of the dominant groups. However, some examples depict contradicting stories. For instance, there is the story about a bird that did not live in its hometown and was not happy about it, even though it lived in more beautiful places than its hometown. This may indicate that each person's hometown has privileges over others. Giving privileges to a place can lead to division and hierarchy, which goes against critical literacy's goals (Koski et al., 2015).

Moreover, having pictures that include all ethnic groups of a country is based on critical literacy perspectives, which implicitly indicates the importance of equality and friendship of all ethnic groups in a country. According to Janks (2014), literacy must attend to the intermingling of places and people to address issues of equity and sustainability.

Analyzing textbooks based on the second criterion, concerning drawing on students' knowledge, reveals many cases that only require memorizing information from the textbooks, while some limited cases encourage students to use their knowledge and experience in addition to information from the books to answer the questions. This is well-conceptualized by Lankshear and McLaren (1993), who explain that questions that encourage students to draw on their knowledge and experiences or "funds of knowledge" can be considered questions that encourage critical thinking. However, according to Evans and Stevenson (2010), texts that want to know what you memorized from a text, not so much from your knowledge, do not encourage critical thinking. These kinds of texts consider students as novices and keep them from having an active role in constructing their knowledge. When students discuss their reasons for why they give certain answer, they will have a more active role in their learning process (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993).

Regarding the third criterion, constructing multiple meanings, some lessons in Iranian language arts textbooks do not explicitly mention the justification of the described stories but instead only give some clues and ask students what they think the reasons for why the events in the story took place might be. Students can provide their conjecture based on the clues. For example, in the story of the lion that did not escape despite having the opportunity, which gives the students the chance to engage in speculation. Such content sets the stage to elicit multiple viewpoints, as Molden (2007) and Serafini (2007) believe that for students to think critically, as readers they should learn by considering the issue from multiple perspectives. Also, explaining their assumptions is crucial for improving critical literacy skills (Behrman, 2006). Once students are encouraged to build their own way of thinking, they are able to strive to find their own voice and the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized (Serafini, 2007).

The criterion that examines power positions/relationships is exemplified by lessons that invite students to think about and question everything they see in the world, as thinking about everything leads to awareness. Freire and Macedo (1987) stress that questioning and thinking about normal assumptions allows children to participate in thought processes related to the world in which they live through self-experience. Thinking and questioning is the primary step toward speaking out for the marginalized and oppressed (Serafini, 2007). Also, the story about the bird that was sad about being held in a cage and finally finds a way to escape it is in line with the critical literacy perspective. Critical literacy is a tool for empowering the oppressed (Freire & Macedo, 1978). It can be used to position readers to find the truth and practice what can be done with legitimate oppression (Janks, 2010; Vasquez et al., 2019). Reading stories about oppressed who did not accept their oppression and tried to find a solution to terminate that situation can teach children that they should not accept the oppression in society and, if they try, they can find a solution (Janks, 2010). Besides that, these kinds of stories help develop critical thinking and critically evaluate the information they receive. For example, active readers think about the underlying message of a book, for whose profit that book is written, e.g., majority and oppressed or a specific group (Vasquez et al., 2019).

The fifth criterion discussed shaping perspectives and thoughts. Two stories in the Iranian textbooks showed support for patriotism. In the two stories, two young children (a boy and a girl) abandon their education to prevent enemies' progress and occupation of their country. These two lessons imply that protecting one's country is the priority of all people, and everyone should do anything for their country, even children. According to Boeriis (2011), one of the functions of literacy at elementary levels, in addition to enabling readers to read signs, is showing how these signs combine to make meaning and shape readers' perspectives. At the centre of critical literacy is an understanding of how power works through discourses and their manifestations in texts. Gee (1990) says discourses are ways of saying, doing, being, believing and valuing combinations, and what and how we use language and other information resources are inextricably bound to our beliefs and values.

Source evaluation was the criterion that was sparser than other criteria in the textbooks, and only one example for this criterion was found in six grades textbooks. The reason behind it might be unequal power relationships; those in power are the ones who generally choose what are considered truths for their own profit. Promoting access and awareness about sources of information is a step toward improving how people respond to texts (Janks, 2014), understand the world, and take a more active role in evaluating the ideas they encounter (Nash, 2021).

Conclusion

The examples presented in the findings as representations of critical literacy criteria are scattered throughout the six elementary language arts textbooks. Even though they meet the criteria, they are not strong cases for fully covering the essence of critical literacy. There might be some reasons for this. From an optimistic perspective, ignorance might justify not having strong cases for fully covering the essence of critical literacy. However, critical theorists argue that because of unequal power relationships, those in power are the ones who generally choose what are considered truths for their own profit, and these ideologies are supported through institutions, such as the educational system and government (Beck, 2005; White, 2001). Indeed, struggles over power are struggles over the control of information and interpretation (Luke, 2012). By controlling information, the education system is "an institution that maintains a status quo that gives power to the privileged" (White, 2001, p. 193). Hence, within schools, only certain knowledge is allowed to be taught. Therefore, the lack of content that strongly represents the examined criteria can be partially accounted for due to the position of the party in power. Comber (2015) argues that

the role of critical literacy is to question the politics of injustice and inequalities, which is something those in power aim to prevent (Comber, 2015).

Finally, the following question remains: Even though Iranian textbooks include some of the examined criteria, though minimally, why do students score so low on PIRLS? The answer might be pertinent to the nature of critical literacy. Several factors may contribute to such a low result. For example, although the criteria discussed earlier reflect critical literacy, they might not all be aspects that contribute to critical literacy. In fact, textbooks are not the sole factor that can improve critical literacy skills. As Mullis et al. (2017) reported, other factors play a role. They include but are not limited to principals' preparation, the experience of teachers, having an early start in literacy, the learning environment, school safety, and not being tired or hungry in a school setting. Considering this limitation of the current study, investigating other aspects that contribute to critical literacy development in future studies can increase awareness about the current situation and develop a more appropriate curriculum for children.

REFERENCES

Adlit, M. F., & Adlit, M. F. (2022). Frameworks of school learning continuity plan in the new normal towards diversity and inclusiveness. *Puissant*, *3*, 442-464. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-78593-7

Ball, M. S., & Smith, G. W. (1992). *Qualitative research methods: Analyzing visual data*. Sage.

Beck, A. S. (2005). A place for critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *48*(5), 392-400. https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.48.5.3

Behrman, E. H. (2006). Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom practices that support critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *49*(6), 490-498. https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.6.4

Belet, S. D., & Dala, S. (2010). The use of storytelling to develop the primary school students' critical reading skill: The primary education pre-service teachers' opinions. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *9*, 1830-1834.

Blackledge, A. (2000). *Literacy, power and social justice*. Trentham Books.

Bloom, B. S. (1969). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals.* Longman.

Bloome, D., Carter, S., Christian, B., Otto, S., & Shuart-Faris, N. (2004). *Discourse analysis and the study of classroom language and literary events: A microethnographic perspective*. Routledge.

Boeriis, M. (2011). Gunther Kress. Multimodality. A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication. *Journal of Literary Semantics, 40*(1), 99.

Broekhuizen, M. L., Mokrovra, I. L., Burchinal, M. R., & Garrett-Peters, P. T. (2016). Classroom quality at pre-kindergarten and kindergarten and children's social skills and behavior problems. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 36*(3), 212–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.01.005

Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center. (2021). *Canada welcomes 22,500 immigrants in March as it strives for ambitious 2021 Total.* Retrieved from: Canada Welcomes 22,500 Immigrants In March As It Strives For Ambitious 2021 Total - Canada Immigration and Visa Information. Canadian Immigration Services and Free Online Evaluation.

Comber, B. (2015). Critical literacy and social justice. *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 58* (5), 362-367. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.370

Evans, C., & Stevenson, K. (2010). The learning experiences of international doctoral students with particular reference to nursing students: A literature review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47*(2), 239-250.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Continuum.

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). *Reading the word and the world*. Bergin & Garvey.

Gee, J. P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies (1st ed.)*. Fulmer.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research, 15*(9), 1277-1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and power.* Routledge

Janks, H. (2014). Critical literacy's ongoing importance to education. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *57*(5), 349-356. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.260

Klenner, S., & Sandretto, S. (2011). *Planting seeds: Embedding critical literacy into your classroom programme.* NZCER.

Koski, J. E., Xie, H., & Olson, I. R. (2015). Understanding social hierarchies: The neural and psychological foundations of status perception. *Social Neuroscience, 10*(5), 527-550.

Lankshear, C., & McLaren, P. (1993). *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis, and the postmodern*. SUNY Press.

Lee, C. J. (2011). Myths about critical literacy: what teachers need to unlearn. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, *7*(1), 95-102.

Luke, A. (2012). Critical literacy: Foundational notes. *Theory into Practice, 51*, 4-11. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2012.636324

McLaughlin, M., & DeVoogd, G. (2004). Critical literacy as comprehension: Expanding reader response. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 48*(1), 52-62. https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.48.1.5

McLeod, J., & Vasinda, S. (2008). Critical literacy and Web 2.0: Exercising and negotiating power. *Computers in the Schools, 25*(3/4), 259-274. https://doi.org/10.1080/07380560802394815

Molden, K. (2007). Critical literacy, the right answer for the reading classroom: Strategies to move beyond comprehension for reading improvement. *Reading Improvement, 44*(1), 50–56.

Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Hooper, M. (2017). *PIRLS 2016 International Results in Reading*. Retrieved from: http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2016/international-results/

Nash, B. L. (2021). Constructing meaning online: Teaching critical reading in a post   *-truth era. Reading Teacher,*
74(6), 713-722. https://doi-org.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/10.1002/trtr.1980

Organization for Educational Research and Planning. (2017a). *Language arts: Grade four.* Iranian Ministry of
Education.

Organization for Educational Research and Planning. (2017b). *Language arts: Grade five.* Iranian Ministry of
Education.

Organization for Educational Research and Planning. (2017c). *Language arts: Grade one.* Iranian Ministry of
Education.

Organization for Educational Research and Planning. (2017d). *Language arts: Grade six.* Iranian Ministry of
Education.

Organization for Educational Research and Planning. (2017e). *Language arts: Grade three.* Iranian Ministry of
Education.

Organization for Educational Research and Planning. (2017f). *Language arts: Grade two.* Iranian Ministry of
Education.

Robinson, E., & Robinson, S. (2003). *What does it mean? Discourse, text, culture: An Introduction.* McGraw-Hill

Serafini, F. (2007). Pigs, cinderella, and social issues. *The New England Reading Association Journal, 43*(2), 23-29.

Statistics Canada. (2019, September17). *Growth of the Canadian population from 2018 to 2068.* Retrieved from:
Section 2 – Results at the Canada level, 2018 to 2068 (statcan.gc.ca)

Van Rhijn, T., Osborne, C., Ranby, S., Maich, K., Hall, C., Rzepecki, L., & Hemmerich, A.
(2019). Peer play in inclusive child care settings: Assessing the impact of stay, play, and talk, a peer-mediated
social skills program. *Child Care in Practice, 27*(3), 224-238. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2019.1588707

Vasquez, V. M., Janks, H., & Comber, B. (2019). Critical literacy as a way of being and doing. *Language Arts*,
96(5), 300-311.

White, C. L. (2001). Examining poverty and literacy in our schools: Janice's story. In S. Boran & B. Coomber
(Eds.), *Critiquing whole language and classroom inquiry* (pp. 169-199). Urbana: National Council of Teachers
of English.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tayebeh Sohrabi: Tayebeh Sohrabi is currently a Ph.D. of Education Candidate at Memorial University in St.
John's, NL. She did her second master's degree at Memorial. Previously, she was a vice principal and teacher in Iran
where she conducted her first master's thesis on students' social skills development. Her research interests include
inclusion in elementary curriculum, literacy, and social skills development in newcomer bilingual children.

Appendix A

Questions by Klenner and Sandretto (2011), for evaluating critical literacy content:

- Does this tool encourage students to consider issues of inclusion, exclusion and/or representation?
- Does this tool encourage students to draw on their knowledge and experiences, or "funds of knowledge"?
- Does this tool support students to construct multiple meanings of the text?
- Does this tool encourage students to consider how their analysis of the text has affected their thoughts and/or actions?
- How does this tool position students and the teacher (expert, novice, deficit, etc.)?

Reference

Klenner, S., & Sandretto, S. (2011). *Planting seeds: Embedding critical literacy into your classroom programme.* Wellington*,* New Zealand: NZCER.

Appendix B

Questions by Belet and Dala (2010) for evaluating critical literacy content:

- How does our personal experience and background knowledge shape our understanding of a text?
- How do words reveal and shape perspectives?
- How can we evaluate information sources?

Reference

Belet, S. D., & Dala, S. (2010). The use of storytelling to develop the primary school students' critical reading skill: The primary education pre-service teachers' opinions. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *9*, 1830-1834.