

Bertolt Brecht's Theatrical Techniques' Connection with Critical Pedagogy and Their Usability in Learning Environments¹

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Abstract

This study examines Bertolt Brecht's theatrical techniques in terms of critical pedagogy and their potential application by critical educators to overcome neoliberalization, neoconservatization, and authoritarianization in learning environments.

Brecht creates his 'learning plays' in a peculiar form that can be called 'Brechtian dialectics'. Brecht aims to remove the distinction between audience and actors in learning plays and not to teach any doctrine, but to enable them to develop dialectical thinking. In these plays, Brecht deals with current issues, confronting thesis and antithesis, but purposely avoids reaching a final synthesis to maintain dialectical thinking process.

Through epic-dialectical theatre, Brecht points out that the illusionist aspect of Aristotelian theatre makes audience passive, therefore he attempts to involve audience in the play with an effective and critical perspective. Brecht realizes this through defamiliarization technique and the effects of historicization and gestus.

This study examines Brechtian dialectics as a way of developing dialectical thinking practice and asserts that the authoritarian relationship between teachers and students can be eliminated in a similar vein to the transformation of the relationship between audience and actors in learning plays. The study explores defamiliarization technique as a tool to move away from the existing hegemony, and historicization effect as a way of underlining that history is a process and can be changed by subjects. The study also presents the ways how the gestus effect can be used to create multicultural democratic schools and develop class consciousness. Additionally, the study points out the similarities between Brechtian theatrical techniques and Freireian pedagogical concepts.

Keywords: *Bertolt Brecht's theatrical techniques, critical pedagogy, Bertolt Brecht, Paulo Freire*

Introduction

Capitalism has entered into a process of restoration following the crisis in the 1970s. This process has directly affected the field of education as well as other public spheres. Education has been commodified and privatized, schools have been handed over to markets and companies, and conservative and non-scientific practices have increased within schools. Curricula have been reconstructed in accordance with the demands of markets or companies and neoconservatives. In education, neoconservative and neoliberal practices have come to the fore, and authoritarian personalities²(Adorno, 1950) have been reproduced through authorization. Inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity, and culture have increased. To promote for the continuity of (new) hegemony³, students and teachers have been encouraged to adapt to the

dominant culture and ideologies, and thus schools have turned into the centers of social control.

While, on the one hand, critical pedagogy makes an analysis of these processes, on the other hand, it offers suggestions and techniques that can be used by critical educators in order to overcome these processes. A considerable part of these techniques has been developed by Paulo Freire (1970/2014). The techniques that first come to mind related to Freire are process, historicity, combination of teacher-student/student-teacher, dialogue, limit-situations⁴, limit-acts, problem-posing concept of education, praxis, generative words, generative themes, thematic universe, investigation of thematics, and so on. Although Bertolt Brecht's field is the theatre, his learning plays⁵ and epic-dialectical theatre involve the techniques that can be used in critical pedagogy. These techniques provide significant opportunities to overcome neoliberal, neoconservative, authoritarian processes, to improve learning environments, and to liberate individuals. This transition from Brecht to critical pedagogy shows similarity with the transition from Freire to Augusto Boal's Theatre of The Oppressed - but in reverse. This study looks at the usability of Brecht's theatrical techniques in critical pedagogy.

Brecht (1990) tried to build a new pedagogy, which he defines as the new purpose of art, through his learning plays and his epic-dialectical theatre model. Today, Brechtian techniques are being used in theatrical activities and drama studies in the schools of Turkey and other parts of the world. However, this study aims to show that Brechtian techniques can also be used in learning environments for all lessons and teacher-student relations. Therefore, the study handles the similarities that can be drawn between Brecht's theatrical techniques and Freire's pedagogical techniques.

Bertolt Brecht, his learning plays, and critical pedagogy

Bertolt Brecht wrote his learning plays between the years 1926 and 1933. These plays written for pedagogical purpose are *The Measures Taken*, *Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent*, *Lindbergh's Flight* (Brecht then changed the title of the play as *Ocean Flight* since Lindbergh felt sympathy for National Socialism), *He Said Yes / He Said No*, *Horatians and Curiatians*, *The Exception and the Rule*, and *The Good Person of Szechwan*⁶.

The most significant feature of learning plays is the dissolution of the division between audience and actors; audience can intervene in the plays (Jameson, 1998) - a process which was more radically continued by Boal (Vittoria, 2019). In these plays, Brecht turned all participants into 'learners' for the development of a collective and critical consciousness. In the plays, the decisions related to all processes were taken together with 'learners' and the plays were rewritten in accordance with the suggestions coming from 'learners' (Brecht, 2009; 2013).

Bertolt Brecht used dialectical method while writing and staging his plays (Jameson, 1998). In learning plays, Brecht seeks answers to the question of 'how it must be taught' rather than 'what must be taught'. In these plays, dialectical principles become visible both in the way of staging and in the texts themselves. In the plays, oppositions such as collectiveness-individuality and reason-emotion are handled and discussions are made about whether ends-means relations and technological developments are useful for humanity and whether the law serves the good of humanity. An emphasis is laid upon the common good that has not existed yet, contradictions are provoked, and events are discussed from different perspectives and also through the results of those perspectives. In the plays, in which the current issues are handled from a Marxist political-economy perspective through dialectical abstraction, the aim is

to demonstrate the temporariness of any kind of doctrine, of the values and traditions assumed as accurate (Kemalođlu, 2009). In learning plays, where theses and antitheses do not reach a final synthesis, rules, doctrines, traditions and the familiar are rejected during rehearsals and stagings. Positive identity is also negated with the negative (identity-difference), and the continuity of the negation of negation is provided. This technique can be termed as Brechtian dialectics. In Brechtian dialectics, Brecht uses Marxist dialectics in order to reject the doctrinaire practices and thus dissolves identification. He focuses on the idea of process and heads towards the common good which he would also then overcome. For instance, the learning play *Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent* ends with the call for an improvement that will never end. However, this improvement can realize through the rejection of the previous stage / consent:

The Leader of the Chorus: March on!

Chorus: Having improved the world, then,

 Improve the improved world

 Lay it aside.

The Leader of the Chorus: March on!

Chorus: If in improving the world you have fulfilled truth, then

 Fulfill this fulfilled truth

 Lay it aside!

The Leader of the Chorus: March on!

Chorus: In altering the world, alter yourselves!

 Lay yourselves aside!

The Leader of the Chorus: March on!

(Brecht, 1997, p. 43)

Improvement and change are continuous in learning plays. The past which does no good to human is rejected, and that situation is rethought in each new situation. This can also be seen at the end of the play *He Said Yes / He Said No*: “The Boy: What I need far more is a new Great Custom, which we should bring

in at once, the Custom of thinking things out a new in every situation” (Brecht, 2013, p. 99). *The Exeption and the Rule* begins with a call for negation made by the actors. The aim of the negation is to be able to start the play, in other words, to initiate the change and the action:

The Actors: We hereby report to you / The story of a journey, undertaken by / One who exploits and two who are exploited / Observe the conduct of these people closely: / Find it estranging even if not very strange / Hard to explain even if it is the custom / Hard to understand even if it is the rule / Observe the smallest action, seeming simple, / With mistrust / Inquire if a thing be necessary / Especially if it is common / We particularly ask you / When a thing continually occurs / Not on that account to find it natural / Let nothing be called natural / In an age of bloody confusion / Ordered disorder, planned caprice, / And dehumanized humanity, lest all things / Be held unalterable! (Brecht, 1930, p. 111).

In learning play practices, Brecht brought the function of media – of radio in that period – into question. For instance, in the 1929 Baden-Baden Music Festival, he tried to transform the radio which was a dissemination device during the performance of the play, *Ocean Flight (Lindbergh's Flight)* into a communication device. According to Mueller (2008), this practice became a model for critical media theories as well.

Mueller (2008) pointed out that these plays were staged through a dialectical method. Brecht included workers, students, communist worker choruses in the plays as ‘learners’ (Brecht, 2013), tried to enable them to interpret the world on a dialectical basis and to take action in order to transform the world. These attempts were revolutionary practices for the theatre of those days.

Learning plays are not didactic plays; the purpose of these plays is to provide an experience of dialectical thinking (Mueller, 2008; Vaßen, 2008). One of the

most remarkable features of these plays is question sentences/lines. With questions, themes are problematised and left with no final solution. It can be said that the questions in these plays have no single/fixed answer because the questions are also asked to the history and they have the function of raising collective awareness (Karacabey, 2006). According to Brecht, dialectics helps us ask the questions that will lead to effective political acts because only dialectics is revolutionary (Brecht, 1977).

Intervention, or ‘constant attempt’ in Brecht’s words, involves the continuity of intervening in a previously written, fixed text for the stage. What constitutes the variety of opportunities is these intervention attempts (Karacabey, 2009). These plays are staged with openness to such interventions, rewritten in accordance with the suggestions coming after staging the plays, and rebuilt in parallel with the current political processes. For instance, Brecht rewrote his play, *He Said Yes*, which was staged in a school in 1930, with a new title, *He Said Yes / He Said No* according to the suggestions coming from the students. Therefore, it is not possible to state that learning plays are complete. The idea of process is a structural feature of Brecht’s learning plays.

In his notes related to learning plays, published under the title of *Theory of Pedagogies*, Brecht (2003; 2009) explained the concepts of the major and the minor pedagogy, and the theory of pedagogies. For Brecht (2009), the purpose of pedagogy is the comprehension of dialectical relations between substructure and superstructure. According to him, the function of major pedagogy is to dissolve the division between audience and actors by transforming all the actors into learners. “The Major Pedagogy completely changes the role of acting. It abrogates the system of actors and spectators. It only recognises actors who are simultaneously students” (Brecht, 2003, p. 88). Brecht states that the minor pedagogy functions to weaken the bourgeois ideology, to activate the audience,

and to defamiliarize the figures and the processes for the development of a critical awareness. The division between audience and actors continues in the minor pedagogy.

In principle, the division remains; however, the actors should as far as possible be amateurs (and the roles should be such that amateurs must remain amateurs); professional actors, together with the existing theatre apparatus, should be used in order to weaken bourgeois ideological positions in the bourgeois Theatre itself, and the audience should be activated (Brecht, 2003, p. 88).

With regard to the theory of pedagogies, Brecht indicates that “young people should be educated by play-acting, i.e., by turning them into people who are simultaneously active and contemplative, as is suggested in the rules and regulations for the pedagogies” (Brecht, 2003, p. 89). He also adds that only through this new pedagogic function of theatre, people can be freed from their horrors, ignorance, and antisocial tendencies. “This is the basis for the idea of using play-acting in pedagogies” (Brecht, 2003, p. 89).

Both the dialectical method which Bertolt Brecht uses in learning plays and his method of turning all participants into learners can be used by critical educators in learning environments. In this study, what is suggested is not directly the inclusion of dialectics in the curriculum but the reconstitution of learning environments by critical educators in accordance with dialectical forms. It is suggested that lesson activities may be carried out and the relationships between learners can be built by taking into consideration the dialectical methods used in learning plays, through dialogue and the experience of learning together. One of the most significant technical features of the plays is to reject consensus and to bring this consensus into discussion. At this point, the first steps to take in the learning environments and in the curricula can be rejecting the consensuses/agreements/theses with antitheses or with the negation of negation,

and can be discovering the contradictory elements in themes and the interactions among these elements together with students on a political-economy, dialectical materialist basis (abstraction). Theses and antitheses can be confronted, contradictions and oppositions can be provoked, and lessons can be completed with no final outcome for the continuity of thinking experience. Themes can be progressed through questions and rehandled from the various perspectives of learners, and the results of those perspectives can be brought into discussion. Students who learn through debates on the fields such as ecology, economy, and sociology can be encouraged to gain an interdisciplinary approach. They can be informed about the facts that when an issue is addressed from different perspectives, outcomes may change and that everything is a product of the interaction between certain conditions and outcomes are not infinite but always open to change or being changed.

Dialectics in learning plays and the idea of removing the distinction between audience and actors can be used in learning environments. Teacher can provide the creation of a learning environment where each person turns into a learner. The creation of such an environment makes it possible to eliminate the authoritarian / hierarchical relationship between teacher and students. On the other hand, teacher can refute the theses in the curriculum with antitheses and can pave the way for the start of a dialectical learning process. For instance, s/he can refuse the thesis that is explicitly included or is hidden in today's curricula determined through neoliberal, neoconservative policies, and that demands enterprising and competitive individuals. Teacher can initiate a discussion on how to be a good human. During that discussion, s/he can give voice to the students' different perspectives and can show the possible results of those perspectives. For instance, s/he can confront a world of enterprising and competitive individuals with another world of egalitarian, sharing, fair, and pro-peace individuals. The course subject can be handled along with the current

social and political-economic aspects, and teacher can provoke the contradictions in the course of the discussion. At this point, it is significant that teacher must direct the discussion towards the 'common good' in Brechtian context. At the end of all this process, teacher must be able to generate a new definition, an antithesis together with students related to how human must act for 'another world' in today's conditions. It is also important that students must discover that this new definition is peculiar to today's conditions and may change tomorrow. The techniques Brecht uses in learning plays have common characteristics with Freire's techniques. Brecht's idea of dissolving the division between audience and actors and his approach to all participants as a learner bear a similarity to Freire's teacher-student and student-teacher model. It can be suggested that in both approaches, the main purpose is to establish a dialogue, to develop a collective consciousness, to abolish the hierarchy among all participants, and to reveal different perspectives. Brecht's method of handling the issues as a part of social, political-economic fields through dialectical abstraction is similar to Freire's methods of thematic investigation and thematic universe. Learning plays which involve no final outcome for the continuity of the process of dialectical thinking are reminiscent of Freire's concepts of historicity and process. Brecht redefines the themes/issues together with learners, provokes questions, problematises those provoked questions and does not conclude them with a fixed/final solution. This technique reminds of Freire's techniques in his problem-posing education model: In order to overcome the 'culture of silence', Freire investigates the factors that build this culture, presents these factors as a 'problem', reveals the contradictions in the themes, and encourages students to ask questions about the issues depicted.

Brecht states that manipulated consciousness cannot comprehend the truth and therefore attempts to raise people's consciousness thanks to learning plays. In this regard, Brecht's concept of manipulated consciousness is parallel with

Freire's concept of submerged consciousness, and what's more, Brecht's method of making the unquestioned issues questionable is similar to Freire's method of breaking through limit-situations with limit-acts. Brecht's aim to reach the 'common good' and again, to constantly overcome this common good through an awareness process in learning plays is similar to Freire's approach of awareness and praxis. For Freire, the oppressed who liberate themselves liberate the oppressors as well. Brecht similarly thinks that the process of learning and awareness must not be completed in learning environments or in theatre; these processes must serve the function of changing the life through praxis, in other words, through the interpenetration of action and thought.

Bertolt Brecht, his epic-dialectical theatre theory, and critical pedagogy

When Brecht had to leave Germany, he took a break from writing his learning plays and focused on the theory of epic-dialectical theatre, did theoretical studies, wrote and staged plays in order to develop this theory till the end of his life. Epic-dialectical theatre theory and plays were created chronologically after learning plays. However, although epic-dialectical theatre was a more professional phase from the technical aspect in Brecht's theatre, it was in a step behind learning plays with regard to the relationship between audience and actors because Brecht aimed to dissolve the division between audience and actors in learning plays. He encouraged the audience to intervene and participate directly in the plays. He thus created a dramatic structure whereby audience and actors experience learning together. However, audience cannot directly intervene in the play in epic-dialectical theatre. They watch the plays and are expected to develop a critical awareness through defamiliarization. Thus, it can be asserted that learning plays may be evaluated under the title of major pedagogy and epic-dialectical theatre may be considered under the title of minor pedagogy (Demirdiř, 2019).

Epic-dialectical theatre distinguishes itself from the conventional theatre. It aims to raise the critical awareness of people, particularly of the working-class people, and prod them into action (Brecht, 2005). Brecht rejects catharsis, identification, and illusion as used in Aristotelian theatre, and interprets these techniques as the obstacles for the audience to take a critical perspective to the events on stage and to intervene in these. To Brecht, Aristotelian theatre makes the audience passive and prevents them from making comments about what is staged (Brecht, 2011).

While creating his epic-dialectical theatre, Brecht builds his plays on the basis of the 'narrative' to which Aristotle objects, and rejects catharsis that both prevents audience's active participation in the plays and leads to the emergence of a distinction between audience and actors. For Brecht, catharsis is an obstacle to audience's free and critical thinking (Brecht, 2003; 2011). Brecht evaluates catharsis and identification in the same way in terms of their functions. To him, identification turns out to be something that prevents the social function of the staging and performing arts. Therefore, identification must be rejected because the bourgeoisie employs this technique in its own art as well (Brecht, 2011). Hence, through the identification between themselves and the stage, audience can see the stage happenings to the extent that the character, with whom they identify themselves, sees. In these plays, social events are presented to audience as unchangeable, natural, eternal, endless, and unhistorical events from which the audience cannot produce any critical ideas (Brecht, 2011).

According to Brecht, epic-dialectical theatre must raise people's critical awareness. People in his period did not know as much thing about the laws dominating human life. People had twisted and fragmentary views of the world and therefore they could not have control over the world. They were not aware

of what kind of external forces surrounded them and therefore they were living without knowing how they could cope with manipulation.

Brecht aims to make the audience actively participate in the plays, strike an attitude to the stage happenings, and raise an objection to or criticize these stage happenings. For this reason, for Brecht, epic-dialectical theatre and arts of theatre must proceed to a phase in which they can contribute to the changing of the world rather than commenting on it (Brecht, 2003). Brecht states that the world must change, and theatre is a significant tool for this change (Brecht, 1990).

Defamiliarization (otherwise known as distancing, alienation, estrangement - *Verfremdung* in German) is a technique politicized by Brecht through the influences of some Soviet constructivists such as Tatlin, Meyerhold, and Tairov. Brecht employs this technique in order to eliminate illusion and identification that become apparent through the catharsis in Aristotelian theatre (Lunn, 1982). Defamiliarization is anti-illusionist and it dissolves identification. It is a general classification including historicization and *gestus*; it estranges audience and actors, laying the foundations to enable audience to enter into the process of critical thinking about the staged events, and to encourage audience to take decisions and also raise objections.

Education contributes to hegemony but is also a site of struggle for the development of a counter-hegemony (Apple, 1990). Arslan (2001), in his evaluation of Brecht's defamiliarization technique, asserts that this technique is functional in the development of a counter-hegemony in daily life. From this evaluation, it can be claimed that Bertolt Brecht's defamiliarization technique can be used by critical educators in order to get out of the hegemonic atmosphere of learning environments. Critical educators themselves can choose

or determine the ways whereby they will use this technique because each critical educator can develop his/her own distinctive method. These methods can undergo some changes or progresses and can be falsified in time according to both the content of the lessons, the level of the class, or the kind of the institution. However, it is possible to determine a starting point with reference to Brecht. As the starting point, critical educators can defamiliarize both themselves and their students from antidemocratic, authoritarian, and hegemonic values in order to prevent being manipulated by the ideologies and the existing system, and thus to be able to take a critical distance from the hegemony. This practice also corresponds to the application of Brecht's criticism of Aristotelian theatre to the learning environments. Here, instead of making the students participate in curricular practices according to the existing hegemonic values (based on religion, culture, class, gender, etcetera), the students can be encouraged to take a critical approach to these values and to intervene in them through defamiliarization technique.

Due to submerged/manipulated consciousness and religious, national, and political tendencies, the experiences in learning environments cannot be evaluated critically. For instance, the individuals who criticize or negate the inequalities in the field of education in Chile due to the privatization process may ignore or may not raise an objection to the similar inequalities in their own countries due to their religious, national, and political tendencies. However, this situation can be reversed thanks to the distance provided through the defamiliarization technique. For instance, teacher can use the examples from other countries and from other times while mentioning about the inequalities experienced in the field of education. Thus, students can experience defamiliarization and look at the issue from a critical distance. The issue can be brought into discussion through a dialectical materialist perspective and dialectical abstraction, independently of hegemonic class-based, religious,

ethnic, national, and gender-based discourses. During these discussions, the issue can be handled from different perspectives and through the facts or the conditions of another country and another time. Possible questions related to the issue can be provoked and the issue can be brought into the class-based discussions. For instance, students may defend wars with national feelings in the courses of history. In classrooms and school environments, they may show racist, religious reactions to the ethnic or cultural diversities, which appear in their countries after migrants' mobility, under the effect of the hegemony. In such cases, teacher may carry these issues to a different time and place, benefitting from the distancing function of the defamiliarization technique. Thus, s/he can enable students to take a critical distance from the issues. For example, teacher may explain how wars damage human life, and can point out the relationship between neoliberalism and wars by using the examples of the Iraq or Syria wars. S/he may start a discussion on the violence experienced by the migrants of another country. S/he may give positive examples from the areas where a multicultural democratic life has been built. What matters here is to carry the issues to a far / different place or time so that the students who are subjected to the prevalent hegemony can approach those issues from a critical distance. Another example can be given related to the defamiliarization practices. There are countries that become authoritarian, do not regard people's demands, and resort to violence against their people under the effect of the New Right's policies. Students may support such policies due to their families' political views, or due to ethnic, religious etcetera reasons. Defamiliarization technique can be used to overcome such obstacles. Students can be estranged from the problem of their own countries and can evaluate the issue from a critical distance if the problem is explained through the authoritarian policies of another country or the violence that monarchies or empires once committed against their people. Thus, the issues such as war, violence, dictatorship, migration, migrants, and multiculturalism can be handled from a critical

distance and through a dialectical debate. Brecht (2011) suggests that the process of critical thinking and intervening must not be completed at theatre; it must be carried to daily life. With reference to this argument, a theoretical basis can be provided to encourage students and teachers to demand public education as a fundamental right and to take action in daily life through the use of defamiliarization technique.

Historicization is one of the defamiliarization effects that Brecht uses in epic-dialectical theatre. With this effect, firstly, the stage happenings are carried to a distant, a different land, and thus audience is defamiliarized from what happens in their own land or country. History is presented as a process, as a dialectical process, and the role of human in this process, or the role of human in the changeability of history is emphasized. Through the historicization effect, it is underlined that everything in the world we live in occurs in a historical process, and the events, the forms of behaviour and the lines of thoughts are shaped in consequence of the dialectical interactions of historical processes. Actors who differ according to each historical period are presented as a sum of social, economic, and political conditions. Here, an emphasis is laid upon the temporariness of conditions / history (Brecht, 2011; Mumford, 2008). Brecht's purpose in carrying the issues to a distant, or a different land and period through historicization in order to provide defamiliarization is to enable audience to evaluate the stage happenings from a critical perspective, independently of national, ethnic, authoritarian, and dominant ideological values. To this end, Brecht carried the events in his play, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, which was staged in the period when the World War II was about to start, to the period of the Thirty Years' War. He made the criticism of Hitler's regime through some other figures from a different period and a land in his play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. He handled the relationships between property and labor in his play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle through the events taking place in*

Caucasus. In *The Good Person of Szechwan*, Brecht discussed goodness in the Chinese town of Szechwan. And, in *Antigone of Sophocles*, by carrying the events first to Hitler's Germany and then to Ancient Greece, he underlined that the tragedy of the oppressed and the poor does not change in a history shaped by the sovereigns. In these plays, Brecht handled the historical events on a dialectical materialist basis and made the audience discuss the issues from a political-economic perspective along with the class conflicts. At this point, he put forward the role of subjects in the changeability of history. Historicization effect indeed makes the dialectical historical materialism visible on the stage.

The historicization effect involves practices that can be used by critical educators. The functions of the historicization effect (defamiliarization, the changeability of history, the role of subjects in the changeability of history, and the presentation of history as a dialectical process) can be used together or separately. Through the historicization effect, issues can be handled along with the changes they undergo in the historical process. This may corroborate students' idea that there is always change and will continue to be. Thus, an emphasis can be laid upon the role of subjects / people in the progress of history. For instance, in a lesson on the Lydians and the invention of money, the existence of money in the world can be handled within the 'once, now and after' context. In that lesson focusing on the history of money, firstly, an epoch when there was no money can be mentioned. Then, today's conditions and the negative results of money relations can be mentioned. Finally, it can be inferred that in the future, there may also be another epoch when there will be no money. The discussion can be directed towards that point. In another lesson on the living creatures, evolution theory can be handled in terms of the changes that the creatures experience in the course of history, without any need to mention openly Darwin's theory⁷. While handling the issues along with all the transformations, or the evolutions they undergo within the historical process, as

Ross (2015) indicates, the collectivist and combative roles of the subjects in evolution can be brought to the fore. The historicization effect can be used for almost all issues. For instance, family and society institutions in a sociology lesson, literary periods and movements in a literature lesson, the issue of population in a geography lesson, the life of any creature in a life sciences lesson, or a system of thought in a philosophy lesson can be explained / taught through the historicization effect. Addressing such issues along with the changes they undergo within the historical process may promote the idea that history is a process and always open to changes. It may also start some discussions about such issues. For instance, a discussion may be initiated about the existing institution of family, and through the ongoing changing of social structures and thought systems, it can be underlined that the existing social structures, or the existing systems of thought may go through changes. Associating the issues with the socio-economic structure they exist in also makes it possible to address those issues through dialectical method. In addition, underlining the historical role of the subjects in such issues may help to realize the importance of the subjects' role in history. Historicization is also a defamiliarization effect. Through this effect, - as exemplified before in the 'defamiliarization' section – an event can be handled in a distant date. It can be underlined that the event / events taking place in a distant historical period will not go through changes without the intervention of people / subjects. In this study, another defamiliarization effect that has been evaluated within the context of critical pedagogy is *gestus*. In the most general sense, *gestus* is behavioural practices including language, discourse, decor, costume, stage, gesture, and mimics (Brecht, 1990; 2005; 2011). *Gestus* is a social, class-based category, and appears in human relations; it illuminates social relationships, social reality (Goldsmith, 2005). In Brecht's plays, *gestus* reveals the cause of the social / class-based behaviour and the ideological or class-based background of the texts. *Gestus* exists in social life and it is either the appearance of our

social / class-based identities at the behavioural level, or the behavioural reflection of our manipulated consciousness (Brecht, 1990; 2005). In this context, apart from petit bourgeois gestus and class-unconscious people's gestus, we can also consider about proleterian, peasant, and bourgeois gestus. When we carry forward the thinking practice related to gestus with reference to Brecht, we can mention about the states', neoliberals', neoconservatives' and authoritarians' gestus because all these have gestus that appears in their human relationships and has a social and class-based background. In this regard, while Brecht's gestus involves Poulantzas's 'practices'⁸, it also has a content that can be extended to Bourdieu's 'habitus'⁹. For this reason, gestus may extend from the class-based practices to the social, cultural, gender-based etcetera behavioural practices.

In schools, dominant values are taught and dictated as the true-normal behavioural patterns. According to Apple (1990), through the behavioural practices taught in schools, various behavioural patterns intrinsic to different social classes are eliminated and certain behavioural forms defined by the dominant ideology as normal and appropriate are promoted. At this point, schools turn into the centers of social-control and the sites of the reproduction of hegemony.

Brecht states that gestus must be specifically shown on the stage. In a similar vein, gestus can be used in learning environments since it may help to create multicultural, democratic schools and to develop class consciousness. When gestus is considered along with the class-based, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and gender-based differences of students, making gestus visible can serve to strengthen the experience of living together in schools and can contribute to the creation of a peaceful atmosphere with mutual cultural understanding.

Moreover, the students who realize their class-based gestus can be expected to

discover their class-based consciousness and to put forward their own class-based *gestus* against the *gestus* of the states, the curricula, and the learning environments together with their friends from the same social class. Similarly, teachers and students may arrange their learning environments with the objects such as paintings, photos, news clippings, and poems that reflect their own *gestus* against the oppressors'. In this regard, the 'poetry at school' activities, which were held by students at the schools of Turkey after the Gezi Park protests, and continued for a while, can be given as an example. During these activities, students wrote dissenting poem lines, which were written on street walls during the Gezi Park protests, on school walls, corridors, and classroom desks in opposition to the racist, sexist, religious texts and visuals that are usually hanged on school walls. Students also added the hashtag #poetryatschool to those poem lines.

Gestus involves the language and the discourse as well as the physical behaviours. For instance, teachers may prefer using a political, critical language while giving examples during their lessons. For instance, in grammar lessons, instead of giving the examples of some sentences and words that are not included in students' 'thematic universe', teachers may prefer the examples included in students' 'thematic universe' and the words / sentences underlining anti-war and anti-racism tendencies, hope, and struggle. Teachers may allow and encourage students to express their cultural, class-based, ethnic, and gender-based identities. This encouragement may provide the removal of the 'culture of silence' mentioned by Freire. An experience that occurred in a school of Turkey sets a significant example for this situation. In a secondary school in Ankara, Turkey, a critical educator noticed her Gypsy students' skills in music and dance, and founded a music and dance group in which these students actively take part. In an interview, the teacher stated that this experience

provided the overcoming of the negative biases towards Gypsy students in the school (Demirdiř, 2019).

In Brecht's plays, gestus belongs to subjects and their gestus determines the course of history. For instance, in the play *Mother Courage and Her Children*, although Mother Courage loses her three children in war, she continues selling military supplies and sometimes speaks in favour of the war. In this play, Brecht gives the message that as long as Mother Courage does not change her gestus and does not reach her own class-based gestus, the war will continue. In this context, making the students realize their own gestus in learning environments provides significant opportunities to give the message that history proceeds with subjects and thus it can be changed. Within these contexts, gestus is so extensive that it may involve both the class struggles and the struggles evaluated today as social movements.

As in the play *Mother Courage and Her Children*, teacher may enable his/her students to discover their gestus because gestus is something that causes the continuation of wars and experiences of racism, exploitation, and oppression. In this regard, students' behavioural and discursive gestus can be discussed in learning environments. Teacher may give information about how we play role in the destruction of the nature, in all the forms of exploitation just because we do not use the 'right' gestus, and this may pave the way for students to change their gestus. Some suggestions for the use of gestus can be counted as follows:

- a) Learning environments can be deconstructed through the gestus of the oppressed in opposition to the gestus of the oppressors. For instance, the visuals or the texts in support of the oppressed can be exhibited on school walls.
- b) The examples given by teachers can be the example sentences involving democratic demands. In addition, these examples can be such statements that highlight students' experiences of oppression in order to raise students' consciousness.
- c)

Teachers may give students the opportunity to express their cultural, class-based, ethnic, and gender-based identities, and thus teachers can break the 'culture of silence'. d) The visibility of students' class-based identities and the discussions, or the clashes of ideas on this matter are also important. Teachers can ensure this in learning environments. e) By drawing a connection between the existing *gestus* and the world, teachers can enable students to change their *gestus* and reject the dominant *gestus*.

There are similarities between Brecht's techniques and effects in his epic-dialectical theatre and Freire's approaches regarding awakening critical consciousness. First, Brecht's approach of critical consciousness which he aims to develop through defamiliarization technique and Freire's approach of critical consciousness have similar purposes. For Brecht, people must become conscious of class struggle, and similarly for Freire, the oppressed must become conscious to struggle, to get rid of passivity, to liberate themselves, and to get free from submerged consciousness (Freire, 1970/2014). Brecht's historicization effect and Freire's historicity and process concepts have similar characteristics. Both approaches underline that history can be changed by people; they emphasize the relationship between humans and the world, and evaluate history as a process rather than a field with an end. For Freire, the oppressed who liberate themselves liberate the oppressors as well, and similarly for Brecht, the proletariat must change the world. While handling the issues, Brecht builds his plays in accordance with Marx's 'totality' approach; he moves from the whole to the internal relations in each of the whole's parts. He examines the interactions among the parts and then again reaches the general. This approach has similar characteristics with Freire's practice of 'moving from the general to the particular' and 'concentric circles' (Freire, 1970/2014, p. 103). This approach of Brecht also provides data about how totality can be used in studies. Freire's idea about the creation of a learning environment where

different ethnic and cultural communities can express themselves in Latin America, where colonialism prevails, can be considered in parallel to Brecht's call for the visibility of gestus. In addition, the emphasis Freire lays upon the body shows a similarity with Brechtian gestus: "I don't think with my mind, with my head. We think with the whole body. My body is also conscious, not only my mind" (Freire; qtd. in Freire, Ana Maria Araújo, 2007, p. 103).

Although Freire and Brecht are studied in different fields, theatre and pedagogy, their purposes can be considered similar. No doubt, more similarities can be drawn between their approaches in terms of critical pedagogy. However, in this study, the relationship between Brecht's and Freire's approaches has been limited to Brechtian dialectics in 'learning plays', to the change in the participants' positions, to the defamiliarization technique in epic-dialectical theatre, and to the effects of gestus and historicization. The study has also asserted that Brechtian techniques pioneer some certain techniques suggested to be used in critical pedagogy.

Conclusion

Bertolt Brecht's dialectical method and his idea of dissolving the division between audience and actors which he developed in learning plays, the defamiliarization technique he used in his epic-dialectical plays, and his effects of historicization and gestus can be used by critical educators in order to overcome the neoliberal, neoconservative, and authoritarian processes in learning environments. Through the dialectics in learning plays, students can develop critical consciousness and dialectical thinking practices. Through the removal of the distinction between audience and actors, the authoritarian relationship between teacher and student can be eliminated. Students can be estranged from the existing hegemony through the use of defamiliarization technique, and they can comprehend the changeability of history through the use of historicization effect. In addition, it can be underlined that history is a

process and the subjects play an important role in the changing of history. Issues can also be handled on a dialectical basis. Through the gestus effect, schools can be pushed to be transformed into multicultural, democratic institutions, and thus different identities can be made visible within schools.

There is a strong relationship between Brechtian techniques and Freire's concepts. Brecht ascribed a pedagogical function to theatre, approached it as a tool to transform the world, and aimed at achieving this objective. In a similar vein, Freire aimed at the transformation of the world through the pedagogy of the oppressed. Brecht thought that people must become conscious for a classless and exploitationless world, and called all the exploited, particularly the working class, to struggle. Freire's call for the oppressed is also similar to Brecht's call. The pedagogical function Brecht ascribed to theatre and the techniques he developed to raise people's consciousness and prod them into action provide an important opportunity to use his theatrical techniques in the field of critical pedagogy. In this respect, this article has examined the five techniques (Brechtian dialectics in learning plays, the removal of the division between audience and actors; defamiliarization technique and defamiliarization techniques such as historicity and gestus in epic-dialectical theatre) that can be carried from Brecht's theatre to learning environments and can be used by critical educators. These techniques have not been directly taken from Brecht's theatre; they have been reinterpreted so as to be used in learning environments.

These techniques are also significant as Brecht gives information about how they can be used and applied through plays; his plays have become sample models at this point. However, there are no completely ready recipes in Brecht's dialectics; the process never ends and it continues uninterruptedly. In this process, the unsurpassable is surpassed and the surpassed is then surpassed again and again. All these techniques can be employed by critical educators in

different ways. They can be adapted to different periods, different curricula and different lands. They can be changed and improved through some other techniques because for Brecht, only dialectics is revolutionary and as Heiner Müller also indicates, “To use Brecht without criticizing him is to betray him” (Müller, 1986, p. 31).

Notes

¹ This study was presented in International Conference of Critical Education (ICCE), Naples, Italy on 3-6 July 2019. The paper has been reviewed by the authors for publication.

² It is a concept developed by Adorno. The most important characteristics of authoritarian personalities are strict obedience to authority and submission.

³ In this text, (new) hegemony refers to the concept ‘New Right’ including the processes of authoritarization, neoconservatization, and neoliberalization.

⁴ Limit-situations and limit-acts are the concepts that Freire took over from Alvaro Vieira Pinto and developed. “Men and women respond to the challenge with actions which Vieira Pinto calls ‘limit acts’: those directed at negating and overcoming, rather than passively accepting the given” (Freire, 1970/ 2014, p. 99).

⁵ ‘Learning plays’ is termed as ‘Lehrstücke’ in German.

⁶ Brecht, who had to leave Germany and took a break from writing his learning plays, began writing *The Good Person of Szechwan* in Denmark in 1938 and completed it in 1940.

⁷ In 2017, Darwin’s theory of evolution was removed from the curricula in Turkey.

⁸ Poulantzas mentions about bourgeois, proletarian, and petit bourgeois practices.

⁹ Habitus involves the behaviour and tendencies that are determined by a series of social factors and appear in the body, the pleasures, and the lines of thought. “Habitus is a socialized subjectivity” (Bourdieu and Jacquant, 1992, p. 126).

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