

# Exemplifying TESOL practices informed by critical pedagogy

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# Session Trajectory

- Introduction: Critical Pedagogy in ELT
- The role of community in CP
- The 'grassroots' of CP
- *Praxis*: Applying concepts to practice
- Gaps, problems, questions, lines of enquiry
- Four exemplars of practice
- Conclusions

# Introduction: Critical Pedagogy in ELT

- Freirean “problem posing education” (1970, p.65): dialogue between educators and students, stimulating reflection, as key pedagogical intervention of Critical Pedagogy (CP)
- The practice of ELT CP: “a grass-roots activity for the betterment of the community” (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012, p.28).
- Akbari (2008): “transformative potential” but ELT needs “attitude” (282)
- Wink (2000): it “makes us look at the world, and it makes us look at our individual role in the world, the community, the classroom” (p. 44).

# Introduction: Critical Pedagogy in ELT

## What is the “attitude”?

Socio-politicization: social justice, social change, critical inter-rogation

- Discrimination, marginalization → inclusion, re-presentation
- Legitimizes stories of practitioners and learners → empowerment
- Inter-rogates biases of educational systems: power, ideology, linguistic imperialism (Auerbach, 1995) → localized and community power
- No language is “innocent” or neutral; nor can ELT be (Pennycook, 2001) → spaces for cultural identities

# Introduction: Critical Pedagogy in ELT

Shor (1992) suggested we develop habits of thought, reading, speaking and being that:

“go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organisation, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse” (p.129).

# Introduction: Critical Pedagogy in ELT

- The crux of the critical in the discipline: “how people use texts and discourses to construct and negotiate identity, power, and capital” (Luke, 2004, p.21).
- This requires “autonomy and responsibility” (Freire, 1970, p.29): necessary for individuals to transcend internalized images of the oppressor and become presences in the world.

It is about (appropriate) critical inter-rogation of “trouble spots” – and



# ... social action





# The role of community in Critical Pedagogy

In ELT and TESOL, critical practice is concerned with “connecting the word with the world. It is about recognizing language as ideology, not just system. It is about extending the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use.”

(Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 70; citing Friere, 1973).

# The role of community in Critical Pedagogy

- **Classrooms:** communities where students are to varying extents apprentices to a situated expert discourse or 'ways of being', embodied in the teacher (Gee, 1996)
- **Within and beyond classrooms:** pairs/ groups for dialogic project or collaborative team work; critical friendships founded on mutual regard/ shared repertoire; communities of practice
- **Applied** critical pedagogy intersects with social constructivism, new literacy studies and experiential learning: empowering learners with pedagogic functions leads to authentic learning (Breunig, 2009), agency (Akbari, 2008) and 'learning for an unknown future' (Barnett, 2004)

# The role of community in Critical Pedagogy

- **Toohey & Waterstone (2004)**: “the knowledge-making and knowledge-representing practices in collaborative groups are crucially important in creating dialogic possibilities in them” (p.307).
- **Vo & Nguyen (2009)**: societal emphasis on “belonging” and “connectedness” (Phan, 2007, p.13), suggests “critical friends group technique” in Vietnamese contexts is a powerful basis for dialogism and community memberships by empowering fellow practitioners as observers of practice.

# The 'grassroots' of CP

Features of CP in ELT that contribute to building agency, community and hope:

- Emphasising lived experiences to represent the communities' beliefs and needs within curricula (Giroux, 2011)
- Posing thought-provoking questions from learners' lived experiences (Rashidi & Safari, 2011).
- Dealing with the daily problems of learners to encourage self-reflexive analysis of experience and build critical consciousness (Rashidi & Safari, 2011).
- Empowering students' voices through maximising opportunities for storytelling and dialogue (Freire, 1970).
- Foregrounding plights of minorities, the disempowered, the disenfranchised, the Other within materials to enter into dialogues on the nature of domination and subjugation (Pennycook, 2001).

*(Hand-out)*

# Praxis: Applying concepts to practice

- The “union of theory and praxis” involves extending the “passion, skill and absolute grace” of classroom endeavour into community (hooks, 2004, p. x)
- For Pennycook (2004) on practicum, this is “that continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire and action” (p. 334)
- For Freire (1970), praxis involves “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p.33)
- “What happens in the classroom should end up making a difference outside the classroom” (Baynham 2006, p.28)

# Gaps, problems, questions, lines of enquiry

- “Most of the discussion on CP has been limited to its rationale and not much has been done to bring it down to the actual world of classroom practice, for which it was originally intended” (Akbari, 2008, p.276)
- Graham Crooks (2010) sought operable examples of critical ELT praxis, noting an absence of descriptions of critical practices, tasks and activities.
- Rashidi and Safari (2011) see a hole in research where critical pedagogies are applied to specific materials

Gaps, **problems**, questions, lines of enquiry

“The language we teach, the materials we use, the way we run our classrooms, the things students do and say, all these can be seen in social and cultural terms, and thus, from a critical perspective as social political and cultural political questions” (Pennycook, 2001, p.129).

# Gaps, **problems**, questions, lines of enquiry

- Angel Lin (2004): identifying sources of oppression is one thing, but being able to do something about them is another.
- Exposing students' subject positions as helpless may lead to dark places: "Getting students acquainted with critical issues is like opening a Pandora's box, having detrimental effects on students' lives" (Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012, p.477).



## Gaps, problems, **questions**, lines of enquiry

- How can we create “pedagogical safe houses” (Canagarajah, 2004, p.116) where students’ self-fashioned identities coexist with/ within powerful discourses?
- What kinds of praxical pedagogical innovations can promote agency, community and hope in EFL contexts?’

# Gaps, problems, questions, **lines of enquiry**

**Ramin Akbari** (2008): Call to attend to “the messy, unpleasant aspects of social life” (p.282)

- Transforming classes: Base your teaching on students' local culture
- Regard learners' L1 as a resource to be utilized
- Include more of students' real-life concerns
- Make your learners aware of issues faced by marginalized groups

# Gaps, problems, questions, lines of enquiry

Breunig (2009): “call to action”

- Study of praxis of 17 “self-identified “critical pedagogues” (p.248).
- Findings: Building a classroom community, creating opportunities for dialogue, using alternative methods of assessment and evaluation, involving students in experiential activities, community service learning and projects and critical analyses of media artifacts such as films.
- These practices are critical provided their social justice agenda is explicit and critiqued.

# Gaps, problems, questions, **lines of enquiry**

**Pishghadam & Meidani (2012):** Iranian university students' responses to the ideological freight of 'Philosophy of Education'.

- Study itemises destructive and constructive impacts.
- Conclusion: teaching relatively and critically from early years reduces the destructive effects that born of the ingrained absolutism of their culture.

# Gaps, problems, questions, **lines of enquiry**

**Nasser Rashidi & Faeze Safari (2011)**: a model for materials development for ELT programs informed by CP.

- Five factors: program, teacher, learner, content & pedagogical factors.
- Principles marry a critical or sociocultural outcome with a linguistic one.
- Principle 11: “In terms of evaluative activities, it was expected that students develop their critical consciousness in line with their language mastery” (p.257).

# Gaps, problems, questions, **lines of enquiry**

- **Practitioner research** occupies narrative space “between personal growth and understanding and public discourse about that understanding” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p.15).
- Self-reflection, observation and analysis are contributors to academic knowing as in **auto-ethnography** (Chang, 2008)
- This **subjective academic narrative**, fusing “the scholarly, the anecdotal ... and the autobiographical” (Arnold, 2011, p.66), draws on pedagogic contexts where goals were to promote hope, agency and community among adult English language learners.

# Exemplar of practice 1

## Action Research in the Masters of English Teaching in Vietnam

### Heavily policy-driven agenda

The goal of the government-ratified project “Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020”:

“To renovate thoroughly the tasks of teaching and learning foreign language within the national education system, to implement a new program on teaching and learning foreign language at every school level and training degree...”.

(The Government, Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg, 2008, cited in Nguyen, 2011, p.29)

**Tension:** “The issues of research as well as the values of research are not determined by the researcher but instead by the sponsor” (p.242).

# Exemplar of practice 1

- Empowering teachers in ELT contexts by becoming action researchers and reflective practitioners is a key strategy in critical pedagogy (Wyatt, 2011) and in ELT (Burns, 2010).
- Evidence is emerging it is possible in Vietnam (Pham, 2006; Nguyen, 2011; Tran, 2009; Utsumi & Doan, 2010; Le, 2011).
- Utsumi & Doan (2010) demonstrate teachers *want* to meet learners' needs. They identify ways in which teachers can make a difference such as enhancing autonomy, using collaboration and project work and creating discussions stimulating "high order thinking" (p.14).
- Participatory action research "allows teachers to learn about their teaching at the same time that they improve their teaching." (Tran, 2009, p.105).



# Exemplar of practice 1

**Localisation:** Contextual analysis allows recognition of their place in a system of oppressive relations and establishment of a critical consciousness that contributes to Freirean 'liberatory praxis'.

**Le Van Canh (2011):** "Without adequate understanding of what shapes their teaching practices, any coercive intervention to change teachers, including formal training, would be of limited impact" (p.238).

**Transforming classes:** classroom practices involved include whole-class negotiations; dialogues; group work; co-construction of syllabus; experiential activities; CFG protocols (Vo & Nguyen, 2009); bilingual learning.

**Community beliefs:** desire for "social harmony" (Nguyen, 2011, p.26).

# Exemplar of practice 1

## Action research to implement change in a given context

- Action research contributes “through this practical knowledge to the increased well being—economic, political, psychological, spiritual—of human persons and communities” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.2)
- From this dialogic, community-based position, students design and propose an innovation that can be implemented ethically and manageably within their workplaces, and then evaluated.
- Students develop subjectivities as teacher researchers through a problem-solving process via micro-action research.
- They engage in a critically pedagogical cycle of problem identification, innovative action, reflection, evaluation and recommendation for further action.

# Exemplar of practice 2

## Volunteering in the community as critical praxis

- Freire (1970): life situation of learners determines curriculum
- Norton and Toohey (2004): critical pedagogies respond to *local* contexts and needs.
- Breunig's (2009) study of critical praxis emphasised Community service pedagogy
- Creating a bridge from the classroom to the real world - a central tenet of CP
- Pertinent in EAL contexts where classes comprise permanent residents and refugees but also accommodate international students who might not have an integrative investment in participation in real world learning (Andrew, 2011).

# Exemplar of practice 2

## Students as apprentice ethnographers

- 'Apprentices' observe lived literacy practices (Andrew, 2011) including Gee's (1996) "ways of being in the world" and "socially situated identities" (p.3)
- Learners report a variety of forms of learning from their practicums, notably opportunities to speak with greater confidence, building agency and hope
- Students realise how desire to fit in is an investment to perform linguistically and to participate as a community member.

# Exemplar of practice 2

## Benefits of practicum or service-learning

- Provides students with chances to engage in experiential activities that enable them to examine and rethink their attitudes toward identity, race, class and economic injustices.

## Andrew & Kearney (2007):

- students' investments in engaging with the indigenous and the oppressed
- Reflexivity impacts learning about their own humanity

# Exemplar of practice 2

Giroux (2011):

“It is crucial for educators not only to connect classrooms knowledge to the experiences, histories and resources that students bring to the classroom but also to link such knowledge to the goal of furthering their capacities to be critical agents”

(p.7).

# Exemplar of practice 3

## Using portfolios to develop agency in listening

- Few opportunities to listen to authentic and even semi-authentic local texts, complete with paralinguistic features
- Progress towards agency complex (Hunter & Cooke, 2007)
- Feelings of displacement and not belonging (Norton, 2000; Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012)
- Situated pedagogical approach to teaching and assessing listening for EAL using “an album of literacy performances” (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p.322).

# Exemplar of practice 3

- **Listening Portfolios incorporate:** real world two-way listening events; one-way text-based practice listening activities; regular reflective entries
- Reflections revealed students were becoming confident, agential and responsive to real world situations (Andrew, 2013).
- Students demonstrated technical autonomy (Benson, 1997), taking agential initiative in their learning in physical environments
- Apprentices demonstrate metacognitive awareness by describing their planning, monitoring, reflection and evaluation of their listening events.



# Exemplar of practice 3

Item No.	Source/Resource Used	Strategies Used	Effectiveness of Strategy (and Reasons)	Reflections for Improvement
1	<u>Listening to NZ</u> <i>Unit 1B</i> <i>Lecture</i>	1 Listen extensively to the lecture. Pay attention to the discourse markers, eg: <i>firstly, the second thing is, later, first of all, let's turn to</i> , etc. 2 Take notes. Do the exercises after listening.	1 Discourse markers help me grasp the key points/ sentences. 2 Note-taking is really helpful to record key points and main idea.	1 Re-examine logical meanings of discourse markers 2 Write down new words to remember. Use English – English dictionary. 3. Check with transcript
2	<u>Face to face Communication with NS</u> <i>Be interviewed with the manager of CAB for 15 minutes</i>	1 Prepare introducing myself, the answer to the relevant questions, and what questions I would like to ask. 2 Repeating to make sure what the interviewer exactly asked.	1 I was confident because I'd prepared well in advance. 2. I predicted the questions. 3 I've now had an NZ interview experience.	1 Listen carefully to key words (The manager was speaking very fast.) 2 Try to bear in mind what NS said about NZ common words expressions and idioms.
3	<u>Telephone – live</u> <i>Seeking information from IRD</i>	1 Predict content and vocabulary 2 Ask caller politely to repeat in case of not understanding, and repeat to check understanding of information	1 I felt confident on hearing target words 2 When the caller didn't understand me, I tried to restate or paraphrase	1 Concentrate and listen carefully because we can't use body language. 2 Practise phone manner with the book "Telephoning in English".
4	<u>Face to Face Communication</u> <i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>	1 Use as unexpected chance to practice clarification and paraphrasing skills	1 I was confident to ask for clarification about words and concepts, but they spoke too slowly. 2. I practised paraphrasing with "So you're saying ..."	1 Realise that I might need listening strategies and speaking gambits at any time. 2 Seek natural ways of using NS to practice listening.

# Exemplar of practice 3

“I take part in a Bible study group. While I am talking with them, I focus on their colloquial expressions such as ‘take pot luck’, ‘it’s my shout’. I also focus on some technical words such as ‘apostate’ and ‘apocalypse’ and know what ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’ and ‘Jezebel’ refer to. **I’ve learned a lot and am getting more confident” (Jean, China)**

# Exemplar of practice 4

## Ethnography of difference in English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Marianne Grey (2009) – project on race and diversity in an EAP program at an Australian university

### Nomadic, Deleuzian walking ethnography:

- EAL students go into the community to collect and photograph artifacts with which to record their multi-literate stories of diversity in the form of posters.
- Intervention made the students nomadic “ethnographers of difference” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).
- Innovation focused on the practices of a community of difference and engaged with their processes of “becoming” (p.121).

# Exemplars of practice 4

## Grey's Aims

- “To establish an ambience of trust, co-operation, risk-taking and the formation of new and different alliances” (p.127).
- To deconstruct the norms that categorize class members : “In EAP, if students are labeled according to their gender, race, culture, sexuality, nationality, culture, language, religion and so on, there is an assumption of overarching sameness within each category rather than that of difference” (p.126).
- To highlight critical moments “when things change ... where someone gets it” (Pennycook 2004, p.330).
- To be “innovative, resourceful, practical, and opportunistic” (p.127).

# Exemplars of practice 4

Giroux (1999)

“Teachers should construct curricula that draw upon the cultural resources that students bring with them to the school. This suggests not only taking the languages, histories, experiences, and voices of the students seriously, but also integrating what is taught in schools to the dynamics of everyday life”

(<http://www.perfectfit.org/CT/giroux4.html>)

# Conclusions

We are all capable of the attitude of CP:

Exemplars of praxis: the work of educators reflexively practicing what they preach with authentic humanist generosity (hooks, 2004)

You certainly have some too.

# Conclusions

- To achieve an attitude of CP requires examining the textual practices of privileged texts and the powerful discourse communities they belong to.
- Such actions allow students “pedagogical safe houses” (Canagarajah, 2004, p.116) - spaces of complex individual identity within and beyond the classroom.
- CP enables learners to rethink their identities as students, teacher practitioners, citizens and community members – to reconsider their places in the world (Wink, 2000) and their potential impacts.
- In nurturing empowered identities, there are opportunities for agency and for transformation (Akbari, 2008) and Freirean hope.

# Thank you for your attendance



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