
Critical Pedagogy: A Review

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Since its emergence, there has been continuous and various trends in language and other pedagogy as per emerging changes in human life. As time goes and comes, different philosophy of education is emerging and dictating the educational theories and approaches. Accordingly, in a contemporary education, new trends and developments of teaching English language are emerging. Critical pedagogy which rooted from critical theory and critical educational philosophy is one of these new trends in the changing nature of education. The emergence of this educational trend has its own origin and rationale. The origin of critical pedagogy is traced back to the reactions to the neocolonialism, capitalist schools or feudalistic schools that were highly traditional and oppressive, in their purpose and process of teaching, to many other communities in 1960s and 1970s. The pioneering figure to this reaction was the Brazilian educator and social activist, Paulo Freire, who called the traditional education systems as 'the Banking Education.' This Concept of Education was known to consider students' mind as empty account to be filled by the teacher. It is essentially an act that hinders the intellectual growth of students by turning them into, comatose "receptors" and "collectors" of information.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Praxis, Emancipation and Banking Education.

Freire States

Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is not a re-creator. In this view the person is not a conscious being; he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty "mind" passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside. The rationale for emergence of critical pedagogy was that Schools were far from overly liberal, they asserted, and in reality, served the dominant social class by making thoughtless drones of those students privileged enough to even make it through and the schools left behind many disadvantaged students.

Moreover, these schools and their education systems prevailed to serve only the interests of the oppressors, not the need of the oppressed minorities. Thus, critical pedagogy came into the new trend to create learners that can transform the society from injustices and undemocratic nature; those who can resist the non-liberal, oppressive, hegemonic and authoritarian nature of the education system. To attain his ideas of empowering and democratizing education, Freire proposed two methodologies: the dialogic problem posing and complete abolishing of teacher-student dichotomy by promoting the roles of the participants in the classroom as the teacher-student (a teacher who learns) and the student-teacher (a learner who teaches. This review

discusses the meanings of critical pedagogy, features of critical pedagogy, its major concepts, teachers and students' roles in critical pedagogy, educational implication of critical pedagogy and critics on critical pedagogy.

Features of Critical Pedagogy

Since critical pedagogy derived its principles from critical theory, it is known for the view of a reality in change, progressive reality, transformative knowledge and learning. Reality is dynamic and knowledge is incomplete according to the ontological and epistemological view of the critical pedagogues. Critical pedagogy is characterized mainly by empowering students and helps them help themselves. It does this by developing the students' power of critical consciousness. If a learner is self-conscious, he/she can resist anything against his/her freedom of knowledge creation or making.

To raise their consciousness, students, in dialogue with their teachers, must study their own life conscious and critically aware of the social, political, and economic conditions and contradictions that affect a person's stories and the collective histories of their racial, ethnic, language, economic, and social groups. As empowering students, accounting for their culture and context and engaging them actively in problem-posing dialogues to achieve their critical consciousness and to become autonomous learners are fundamental principles of Freire's approach, its implications in the field of language teaching (English) proved to be promising (Freire, 1992). Another feature of critical pedagogy from other educational approach is that it aims at liberating students from oppression. Learners who are approached through critical pedagogy have already developed the way to resist dominations and hegemonies of different types.

This way according to Freire is "participatory development" and development more generally. His emphasis on what he describes as "emancipation" through interactive participation has been used as a rationale for the participatory focus of development, as it is held that 'participation' in any form can lead to empowerment of poor or marginalized groups. A further feature of critical pedagogy is being an anti-colonial education.

It urges always for the natives own educational system. Freire addressed this pedagogy to resist the education systems cut and pasted to the indigenous education without considering the local and indigenous knowledge and wisdoms. Critical pedagogy is also known for its feature of appreciating the role of indigenous knowledge.

According to this educational trend, when oppressed people learn about their own culture, history, medicinal practices, religion, heritage etc. can have a transformative effect on their lives and lead to their own empowerment. In this case it emphasizes the knowledge of subjugated and oppressed people. It is more appreciated also for its focus on the identification of sources of power. It calls the students for the analysis of the competing power interests between group and individuals within a society by identifying who gains and who loses in specific situation. Another characteristic of critical pedagogy is its political nature of education.

It does not agree with the premise that says education and schools are free from politics; instead, it draws its premise from political agenda. Since all education is political, teacher and students

must be made aware of the politics that surround education. Freire's educational proposal is also known for its understanding of the politics of knowledge. It is known for its critical argument and resistance of relying on the western knowledge. He believes that the knowledge schools try their students to acquire can have political power. That is why many institutions use their power to keep the privileged on the top and the unprivileged on the bottom. Critical pedagogy incorporates justice and equality in education.

The social and educational vision of the two should be the basis of all education according to the principles of this educational trend. The inclusion of these concepts in education is believed to promote the emancipation and intellectual growth. In trying to end the banking system of education, critical pedagogy attains a feature of changing the relationship between students and teachers.

The teacher-student dichotomy disappears as a result of the concept of dialogic problem posing. A student may teach and the teacher may learn in the realm of critical pedagogy as the aim is mutual knowledge invention and re-invention.

Review on Meanings of Critical Pedagogy

“Critical” or “resistance” pedagogy is a relatively new set of ideas about the purpose and the process of teaching: the term itself doesn't appear within academic literature until about two decades ago. Researches confirm that there are many illusions among educational practitioners on the ‘one-perfect’ meaning of critical pedagogy.

This illusion hampered its implementation and uses in real classroom situations and resulted in perpetuation of the traditional oppressive practices instead of emancipatory and transformative intentions and aims of this trend in education. Given this reality, there exists some rationale for exploring various scholastic definitions of critical pedagogy as a means to examine the ways in which self identifies critical pedagogues engage in their school practice.

The broad definition of critical pedagogy is that it is a transformation-based approach to education. Critical pedagogy is defined in different names such as critical work, transformative pedagogy, participatory approach, emancipatory literacy, critical education, pedagogies of resistance, laboratory teaching, radical pedagogy, post-modern pedagogy, border pedagogy, and pedagogies of possibility.

Teaching under the Critical Pedagogy paradigm is always politically engaging, and not neutral as in critical thinking, because Critical Pedagogy aims to lead to social change. Ira Shor (1993) defines critical pedagogy as: “Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which 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, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse”.

This definition touches the issue of hidden curriculum in critical pedagogy. McLaren defines critical pedagogy as follows: Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structure of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider

community, society, and, nation state McLaren, 1998, p.45). Both specific definitions seem to signal that critical pedagogy is related to habit of thought and a way of thinking.

In McKernan (2013) we read

Critical pedagogy is a movement involving relationships of teaching and learning so that students gain a critical self-consciousness and social awareness and take appropriate action against oppressive forces. This idea is central to Freire's notion of "conscientization" or the coming to personal critical consciousness. According to Herbert Marcuse, a major figure in the Frankfurt school, that there could be no qualitative social change, no socialism, is possible without the emergence of a new rationality and sensibility in the individuals themselves: no radical social change without a radical change of the individual agents of change (Marcuse, 1972). Generally, critical pedagogy can be understood as a teaching approach outlined in reaction to pedagogy of the oppressed which attempts to help learners question and challenge domination, and belief and practices that dominate them and it is learning beyond the formal literacy exclusively focusing on how a learner takes part in ensuring justice and democracy to transform himself then his society.

Review Major Concepts in Critical Pedagogy

The major concepts to be discussed under critical pedagogy includes the problem posing pedagogy, dialogism, teacher and students' role in critical pedagogy, praxis as reflection on the world in critical pedagogy, educational implication of critical pedagogy and critics existing regarding critical pedagogy.

Dialogic Problem-Posing Approach (A Critical Pedagogy to Education)

To alleviate the "dehumanization" produced by the banking concept, Freire introduces what is deemed as "problem-posing education". In this approach the roles of students and teachers become less structured, and both engage in acts of dialogic enrichment to effectively ascertain knowledge from each other. Freire's (1970) problem-posing model of education endeavored for empowerment as a goal of education and he criticized the traditional education assumes learners as empty agents who receive knowledge from teachers.

Fundamental aspect of critical pedagogy is to overcome discouraging life situations by raising awareness of the power relations embedded in society. According to Freire, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (244). In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. Although the dialectical relations of women and men with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived (or whether or not they are perceived at all), it is also true that the form of action they adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceive themselves in the world.

Hence, the teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action (Freire, 1970). In problem posing approach learner address the context of their problem to be discussed on and solved by the class. The main principle of his approach is to present knowledge problematically in a problem-posing dialogue which offers more opportunities for students to participate actively and to reflect critically. To do this, Freire utilizes students' prior knowledge and daily life experiences to empower them to construct their own knowledge. This model of teaching would ensure students' active participation and would enable both teachers and students developing their critical attitude (Freire, 1974). Moreover, it stimulates students' creativity and triggers their curiosity which could be only triggered by an approach of questions, not of answers.

The best way to maintain reflective and meaningful communication inside classrooms is problematizing knowledge. Problematization is a dialectic process characterized by true and equal engagement of all participants. However, mutual respect and understanding, confidence, willingness to take risks, cooperation are essential conditions for the communication act to be successful (Freire, 1972). The problem posing methodology comprises three interrelated stages: listening stage, 'codifying' and reflect critically stage, and acting 'decodifying' stage. In stage one 'generating themes', the teacher poses a problem derived from students' own context and encourages them to put forward their ideas freely.

This is a continuous stage of listening as new ideas may emerge during the discussion. As organization is a main feature of the dialogue, the issues emerged in stage one, are 'codified' in stage two ('codifying' and reflect critically stage). These 'codifications' represent familiar local situations and presented as challenges to be decoded by the group. Students are encouraged to reflect critically on these 'codes' depending on their prior experience and knowledge. Students' prior knowledge is used to enrich the discussion and as an instrument for acquiring new knowledge. Relating students' prior knowledge and experience with the new knowledge and experience is an essential technique in this stage. By critically reflect on their realities as presented in these codifications, students' critical awareness of problems existing in their context is enhanced.

This awareness will lead the group to a more critical consciousness. By collaborating with their teacher, students can discover the dangers existing in their context in the 'recodification' stage, the final stage. Then, all the possibilities of how these problems can be addressed will be put forward and the debate will be extended. The solutions proposed lead to more discussion and encouraged more criticism. (The more engaged with their context students are, the more increasing possibilities about achieving their critical consciousness they become). As they participate in all the stages (listening, 'codifying' and reflect critically, acting 'decodifying') of addressing their problems, students will feel empowered, and thus, become more responsible (Freire, 1974).

The Concept of Dialogism

Critical Pedagogy involves *reading the world* as well as *reading the word* (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Giroux (1997) maintains that with the help of a critical, oppositional, and theoretical

language, teachers can move toward a discourse by which they seek educational criticism. But there is a need for some sort of dialogue through which meaning, reality and experience is negotiated if the aim is a laboratory one. Freire's (1985) classification considers context of dialogue and context of fact, which he believes are necessary for learning to take place.

He also believes that by dialogue education becomes pedagogy of knowing because authentic dialogue engages teachers and students in a relationship where one knowing subject is encountered with another knowing subject. In a dialogic classroom, teachers are supposed to listen to their students and learn about their problems that are important within their communities and ask questions that raise students' understanding of these problems from a societal perspective and then finding ways to take political actions to solve them (Degener, 2001). In Shor's (1992) opinion, dialogue must balance teacher authority with student input. There should be an environment of equality for dialogue to be liberating.

In a true dialogical relation, there is equal opportunity for all members to speak, everyone respects another's right to speak and all ideas are tolerated (Robertson, 1994). Robertson goes on to say that via dialogue the teacher empowers students and gives them voice, which ends students' oppression, and enables them to decode the hidden codes and power relations and to reconstruct reality. There is a mutual acceptance and trust between the teacher and students (Heaney, 1995). It is through this dialogue, namely, reflecting on what one knows and what one does not know that one can take critical actions to transform and change reality (Kessing-Styles, 2003). This emphasis on dialogical relations as the center of any educational experience is also recognized in the fact that it is via communication that the meaning of human life is transferred (Kessing-Styles, 2003).

Teacher and Students Role in Critical Pedagogy

Teacher and students have balanced and parallel role in critical pedagogy unlike other instructional approaches. The critical pedagogy class assumes the student-teacher and teacher-student relationship in the classroom. Contrary to the traditional pedagogy, a teacher in critical pedagogy is both a learner and a teacher and he/she does not transmit or deposit knowledge to the learners but facilitate the invention and re-invention of knowledge in the classroom. In Freire's approach, the teacher is no longer an information giver, but a co-communicator actor with students in the dialogue. The teacher and students share the responsibility of managing and directing the learning process. The teacher should employ his/her authority to encourage students' participation, criticism and thinking, not to impose ideas upon them.

As Freire (1970) put it, the teacher's authority in this process serves students' freedom, not against it. The role of the teacher in Freire's approach is important as it aims to make students autonomous learners. He should help students achieve their critical consciousness by engaging them in problem-posing dialogues. However, teachers should be aware that only dialogue that requires critical thinking is capable of generating critical thinking. To Freire (1985:89) 'concretization' is a basic dimension of reflective action which should "continue whenever and wherever the transformed reality assumes a new face". They should be aware also that the dialogue is not to invade, or to manipulate, but to exchange thoughts with students on equal rights of accepting, criticizing or rejecting all or some of these ideas.

Teachers in this approach are viewed as problem posers. As a pioneer to this approach Dewey (1963) believes that, learning through problem solving and practical application leads students to take a more active role in determining their experiences and positions within society. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) maintain that teacher must empower his or her students by raising their awareness of reproducing process of an inequitable status quo in schooling and offer societal institutions. So, teachers, in Giroux's terms, are *Transformative Intellectuals* who have the knowledge and skill to critique and transform existing inequalities in society (Sadeghi, 2008).

They also help students learn from each other and to theorize and understand how to question the authoritarian power of the classroom. According to Paulo Freire (1998), classroom experiences, with the help of the teachers, should become situations in which students are encouraged to act as active agents in their own education and to develop a critical consciousness that helps them evaluate the validity, fairness, and authority within their educational and living situations. He goes on to say that "teaching that does not emerge from the experience of learning cannot be learned by anyone" (p. 30). He suggests that a critical teacher should be able to elicit student opinions about program structure and curriculum, to set up a classroom that is involved in dialogic interaction, and to find a way when class discussions are obstructed.

Teachers have also a critically reflective role, that is to say, for producing an open and equal environment, they must engage in deep self-reflection about their position and the effects of their authority in the classroom. According to Crabtree and Sapp (2004), self-reflection is "the form of questioning one's motives, purpose, ideology, and pedagogy as informed by theory and habit" (P. 110). Self-reflection enables teachers to make their classes *student-centered* by accepting unsuccessful educational ideas and oppressive forms in their own educational practices (Higgins, 1996). Degener (2001), states that a critical educator helps students to understand the reasons behind the facts.

As Horton and Freire (1990) believe, a teacher in CP has to be an authority on her/his subject matter but at the same time should be open to relating what he knows through interaction with students. Teachers in CP communicate with students about the society and culture to help them reflect critically on various aspects of the culture they are studying about and preparing to enter into. This way, students through reflection can determine the necessary types of action that they should take in order to improve the life conditions of the oppressed groups (Ohara et al., 2000). Students and teachers should engage in questioning knowledge but it is the teacher who helps the students to identify how to move forward critically in their practice (Kessing-Styles, 2003).

Teachers should challenge the current structure by rejecting long standing cultural expectations and mores of their own and the system, additionally, they must give up much of the power which is given to them through their titles (Foley, 2007). Critical educators are concerned about emancipatory knowledge that helps students understand how relations of power and privilege distort and manipulate social relationships and help oppressed students by identifying with them. In critical pedagogy, learners are not recipients of knowledge rather they become creators. Freire also confirms that "no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught, men teach each other, mediated by the teacher" (p. 67).

Guthrie goes on to say that teachers are in a hierarchical position above the students with regard to the existing knowledge and institutional authority. However, Dheram (2007) suggests that

both students and teachers should act like awareness raising critiques who aim at identifying positive and negative aspects of education. He believes that by turning verbal and nonverbal means of education into effective instruments of self-affirmation, students and teachers will understand their roles as subjects of research and agents of change.

The Concept of Praxis as Reflection on the World in Critical Pedagogy

The purpose of the educator and the educated, the leader and the followers in a dialogue between equal partners is called praxis (Gur-Ze'ev, 1998). It is defined as the self-creative activity through which we make the world. The requirements of praxis are theory both relevant to the world and nurtured by actions in it, and an action component in its own theorizing process that grows out of practical and political grounding. In education praxis aims at bridging the gap between theory and transformational action. That is, praxis connects education which is laboratory with social transformation (Boyce, 1996).

Praxis for Freire is both reflection and action, both interpretation and change. As he puts it, "Critical consciousness is brought about not through intellectual effort alone but through praxis through the authentic union of action and reflection" (Freire, 1970). Boyce (1996) also asserts that learners equipped with praxis are well prepared to participate in collective actions. Praxis is critical reflection and action the purpose of which is to implement a range of educational practices and processes with the goal of creating not only a better learning environment but also a better world (Kessing-Styles, 2003). Admitting the importance and the effects of praxis Sadeghi (2008) maintains that only through dialogical process, the practice of praxis is likely to happen.

Educational Implication of Critical Pedagogy

Education in Critical Pedagogy tries to have transformational effects on learners. This approach aims at changing the point of view of people through which they are used to look at different social problems. This approach can enable EFL learners to develop their speaking skills by focusing on their real-life problems and at the same time to understand and diagnose their own problems. This way, they can be motivated to speak more and more since they are living with their problems and talking about authentic issues gives students insights to the nature, origin, and possible solutions to their problems. The application of this approach can make teaching sessions more enjoyable by focusing on what the students really need to talk about, letting them discuss their issues of interest, helping students to move forward critically and consequently enabling students to change the structure of their society.

One of Freire's major contributions was a discussion about critical consciousness, a consciousness beyond understanding which leads to action (Freire, 1970). Freire worked to transform teaching and learning from the limited concept of transmitting information to engaging in the project of completing one's identity and meaning in a world that needs to be made more equitable, humane, and just. According to Freire, pre-service preparation should involve future teachers in dialogues. Critical theories and pedagogy, in turn, provide a useful framework for uncovering power relationships between standard forms and many other forms that are used by individuals, families, schools, and work places, in order to examine the combined form and function and its impact on interaction and learning.

Critics on Critical Pedagogy

One of the major criticisms is that it is mainly focusing on a macro level system critic than engaging in an action at a micro level in a classroom reality (McArthur, 2010). Another point considered as a weakness, is that it is more engaged in critic than creating a “substantive vision” (Giroux, 2005). The critic extends even further, that critical pedagogy more than criticizing the existing system, for not “Having model towards which schools aspire”. It is also criticized for being “...excessively abstract and too far removed from everyday life of school” (Giroux, 2005, p.110).

Obviously, Gore (1992) is concerned about the realities for teachers and the tendency of some critical pedagogues to construct abstracted theories that lack applicability. The purpose of this same criticism is the notions of empowerment, a central concept in critical pedagogy. These too have been characterized by abstract theories which impose a requirement on teachers to do the work of empowering, to be the agents of empowerment, without providing much in the way of concrete guidance for that work. Implementing Freire’s balanced approach in education seems interesting and practical. However, the difficulty of integrating freedom and authority on honest ethical standards is still problematic. For example, the extent of limitation to be practiced on freedom is still not clear. Others might argue that once freedom is limited, it becomes meaningless.

Another issue is the tendency of those in power obtained from their authority to dominate others. Such a tendency might lead students, if given the authority, to violate school regulations which are necessary for organization and discipline as a practice of freedom. Teachers also may not accept handing over the authority they used to enjoy easily. Despite the belief in the practicality of Freire’s approach for teaching and learning, clear understanding of the concept of ‘democratic education’ needs to be conceptualized by all involved in the learning process to ensure correct and effective implementation of this approach.

Conceptions of freedom and authority need to be clearly understood in terms of their relation with learner’s autonomy. As our schools can be either places for humanizing or dehumanizing students, places for either liberating or dominating students, let us all work together to make schools places for democracy, freedom and authority. Let us all seek an educational approach which generates active, critical and responsible citizens who believe in their capacities to consciously participate in introducing changes into their societies and in learning independently.

Conclusion

After reviewing major concepts about critical pedagogy, the following conclusions were drawn. Critical pedagogy had its basis from critical theory and founded by Paulo Freire in reaction to the traditional knowledge transmission approach: the banking concept which was a vehicle for the oppressing pedagogies. The dialogic problem posing pedagogy can have a significant implication in education to reduce marginalized learners if incorporated into any type of teaching methods although it could be difficult to implement fully all the assertions of the critical pedagogy in the unjust and undemocratic society.

Critical pedagogy views reality as continuously changing and in progress and knowledge uncompleted thus education be an ongoing and transcending activity which is constantly remade in praxis. The attempt of critical pedagogy to substantiate indigenous knowledge (free from western colonies) can enhance the development of organic intellectuals who can transform the society that can ensure democracy and justice.

With regard to ELT proponents of critical approaches to second language teaching are interested in relationship between language learning and social change. From this standpoint, language is not simply a means to express or communicate; instead, it is a product that is constructed by the way's language learners recognize themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their potentialities for the future. In actual fact as Morgan represents, "politically engaged critiques of power in everyday life, communities, and institutions" are exactly what are needed to develop critical pedagogies in language education.

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