The Role of Critical Language Pedagogy in Education

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ABSTRACT

The present study provides a sketchy overview of the current development in language teaching. It is delimited to critical language pedagogy which aims at cultivating democratic culture by creative learning in a collaborative learning situation. It focuses on dialogic interaction through problem posing interaction. This study is delimited to the origins of CP teaching and learning in CP, critical literacy and the corresponding role in learning situation through the lens of critical thinking. The finding has implication in language teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS:Critical Language Pedagogy; voice; Critical thinking; Critical literacy; Culture

INTRODUCTION

Although, learning English as a second or foreign language is prominent and advantageous in the present era, learning this process is so complicated. The appropriate situation and context is required in language learning. For achieving this purpose, standard and appropriate orientations, approaches, methods and techniques are necessary. During the history of language teaching and learning, a lot of shifts have been done in ELT. According to Akbari (2008), during the last two decades, the second language teaching profession has been involved a number of dramatic changes.

One of these orientations is critical pedagogy (CP). CP leads to cultivate a more democratic culture, encourage critical thinking and creative learning rather than memorizing materials, and incorporate cultural aspects of L2 into language instruction (Morgan, 2004). In addition, the basic goal of teacher education is to prepare learners for informed citizenship in a democratic society, and it is assumed that critical pedagogy is a good orientation for achieving this purpose Noroozisiam and Soozandehfar (2015) conducted a study to observe teaching English through critical pedagogy and specified the problems and perceptions of teachers. The study has been conducted in a small scale with about 10 language teachers from 3 popular institutes in Ardebil, Iran. The research was done through observation and semi-structured interview. We came up with positive attitudes but for some reasons most teachers tend not to apply the features of critical pedagogy.

The most fundamental purposes in education are to foster the academic success of students and prepare them to enhance their society; the purposes are achieved only if teachers train learners to become critical thinkers and have responsibility for their own learning as using critical pedagogy (CP). According to McLaren (2003), CP tends to foster teachers and learners' self-esteem to question the power relations in society and develop consciousness-raising and cooperative among learners. Although, most traditional approaches and methods to education provide a set of pre-determined tools, materials expect them to transmit knowledge to learners. Based on traditional approaches, knowledge is transmitted to learners by teachers and learners do not involve actively in the process of learning. This implies that the traditional approaches do not pay attention to the significant role that learners can play in learning. Critical pedagogy is viewed as a socio-political approach that helps teachers provide democratic situation in the classroom context (Norton &Toohey, 2004).

No one can ignore the significance of CP. According to Giroux (1997), CP attempts to provide opportunities for second language learners to be able to challenge, think, take risks, and make a change both in the classroom and in the society. In addition, Freire (1970) stated that in collaborative learning situation, critical pedagogy shows learners' active participation through learning process such as dialog (Freire, 1970). The dialogic form can be important in the process of critical and active language learning due to the nature of human beings and human development. Learners can solve their problems better in the dialogic contexts.

WHAT IS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY?

According to kincheloe critical pedagogy is an approach to language teaching and learning which is concerned with transforming relations of power that are oppressive and lead to the people's oppression. The main thinker of CP is

pauloFreire the Brazilian educator and activist who believes that students should act in the way that enable them to transform their societies and improve their life conditions and do necessary actions. CP makes relationship between students and teachers and concerns with changing the balance of its power and fostering awareness of students' social environment.(Crawford – Lange, 1981, p.257; Pennycook, 1999, p.332; Gore, 1992, p.54). Critical theory is concerned with the idea of a just society in which people have political, economic, and cultural control of their lives. Othersbelieve that CP is an educational response to inequalities and oppressive power relations which can be in educational institutions. According to Vandrick (1994), the main goal of CP is emancipating and educating all people without considering their gender, class, race, etc. Aghagolzadeh and Davari pointed out three main factors as the rational for using CP in ELT. These are "(a) socio-political and ideological factors, (b) the issue for culture, (c) local as well as global topics". It has been mentioned that that every citizen should have an education in which the teacher leads to understanding and schooling structure that do not allow education to ensue. Critical pedagogy highlights zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory represented by Vygotsky. According to this theory people learn things the help of others. Learners are provided with the learning process in which teacher and students notice whole the class procedure, material, and grading process. (Moreno-Lopez, 2005).

Alsamadani (2010) emphasized the importance of the role of individuals' self-regulatory strategies which help them promote language learning. According to McLaren (2003), critical pedagogy (CP), as a postmodernist educational movement is to make easier education in such a way that it tries to make students aware of the inherent inequalities and oppressive system in the world. Others defined critical pedagogy as an approach to teaching that seeks to examine critically the conditions under which language is used and the social and cultural purposes of its use, rather than transmitting the dominant view of linguistic, cultural and other kinds of information. In the present study some principles like freedom in speaking, thinking critically, and initiating, participating in the language interaction and so on are considered as critical pedagogy.

The root of CP is critical theory. Paulo Freire as the Brazilian educationalists one of the main figures that contributed to critical pedagogy. Based on Freire's view (1970), CP is related to theoretical and practical development. One of the most important contributions of Freire's (1970) CP was a discussion about consciousness, a consciousness beyond comprehending which relates to action. McLaren defines critical pedagogy as 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). In the above definition, CP is viewed as a way of thinking. It derives its doctrine from different critical theories-including queer theory, post-colonialism, Barjesteh, Birjandi and Maftoom (20156) believe that the proponents of CLP believe that education is interwoven with social, cultural, political and economicconstruction in everyday life to be questioned and urged for progress in a society

The relationship between teaching and learning should be considered more than the relationship between teachers and pupils. This relationship should be based on the CP; it means that it should be based on compassion, reciprocal understanding and common purposes.

THE ORIGIN OF CP

Critical thinking as the first way of viewing reality before critical theory was developed and was exercised among intellectuals of various generations. The relevance and the acts of critical thinking were subjects for discussion among the Greek philosophers, among the renaissance scholars and among the intellectuals of the 19th and 20th century.

Critical theory, which is a source for critical pedagogy (CP), has its roots in Hegel's work, Kant's critical philosophy, which was introduced in his book Critique of Pure Reason in 1881, and Karl Marx's and Fredrik Engels Communist Manifest from 1848 and Capital Volume 1 from 1867 (McKernan, 2013). Emerging from within the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, the CP concept is often dealt with the work of researchers such as Freire (1970), McLaren (1989), Giroux (1988) in the field of education (cited in Alibakhshi&RezaeiMezajin, 2013, p. 2).According to Kincheloe (2005), CP is dealt with people oppression and oppressive power relations throughout the community and it originates from critical theory (p. 45). Kincheloe (2005) also argues that various types of theoretical schools have associated with CP and have asked for finding various oppression perspective as gender, class and race, cultural, sexual, religious, and ability-related concerns.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CP

According to Freire (1970), teaching is not only based on transferring knowledge; it also can be an effort to create a context conductive to the production or construction of knowledge (Freire, 1970).Giroux's (1988) states that CP is considered as an educational theory which is dealt with humanity to call out for reforms in school education; it fosters the empowerment process under a genuine humane concern to liberate those oppressed. Shor (1996) believes

that tutors assume the role of promoting intellect, knowledge and developing critical citizens in society; teachers do this by opening students' eyes to comprehend, reflect and transform injustices in the public arena in a way that also improves educational empowerment.

As Shor (1996) mentions that problem posing should be used by teachers with using students' social experience and relevant academic issues to provide two conditions in the classrooms: a) teaching learners; and make an interactive context in a liberating classroom environment. Giroux (1988) believes that teaching learners based on CP is not only to assist them learn CP capacity, but is also about comprehending the power of construction in society and then taking action to further resist injustice and hegemony. He states that it applies teacher and student to the tasks of problem-posing, interaction and dialogue; life experience, change and action all follow in the conceptual footsteps of CP. It is not only a matter of discussing or exchanging critical thoughts in the classroom, but applying critical thinking to real life as an acquired life habit (McLaren, 2003).The most important factor is to transform the intellectual teacher, as Giroux (1988) stated, to follow the critical pedagogical path. This is the most effective way of teaching the concepts of critical pedagogy, and ultimately, for constructing a liberating classroom.

CRITICAL LITERACY

Critical approaches to language and literacy education referred to the work of Freire (1970). He believes that any should encourage students to learn and read both the word and the world. Freire sees the literacy as a means for learners to interpret and decode their own cultural traditions and inequitable structure of their society. Following Freire, theories concerned with critical pedagogy have emphasized that critical literacy is going to develop students' knowledge of the self and the social world.

According to shor (1997), in a critical writing class the teacher help students to move into deepening interrogation of knowledge in its global context. The teacher becomes a critical educator by helping students develop critical thought and action on different subject matters. He becomes more informed of the needs, conditions, speech habits, and perceptions of the students, from which knowledge he designs for activities and into which he integrates his special expertise.

There are some differences between critical literacy of Shor (1997) and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. The main ones are that critical literacy is an activity that reconstruct and develop all parties involved, pulling teacher forward as well as students. The second difference is that in critical literacy program, democratic relations in class and democratic actions out of class are involved. One key departure in a critical process is that all participants become redeveloped as democratic agents and social critics.

CRITICAL WRITING PEDAGOGY: SCHOOLS TO WRITING PEDAGOGY

There are different schools to writing pedagogy. Giroux (1983) categorizes the practice of writing into three different schools:

1 the technocratic school,
2 the mimetic school,
3 the romantic school.

A technocratic school is a kind of bottom up approach to writing which focuses more on grammatical rules. In this kind of school writing is a craft and cannot make connection between the student's inner worlds and outer worlds.

The mimetic school starts from the top rather than the bottom. This schools proponents believe that good writing appears when students read good writers. The romantic school of writing emphasizes the student's feelings at the expense of a systematic, local writing pedagogy. This school tries to make connection between the student's good feelings and their writing abilities. The proponents of this school believe that whenever the students feel good, the good writing itself emerges accordingly.

APPROACHES TO WRITING PEDAGOGY

PROCESS VS. PRODUCT APPROACH

The process approach focuses on the process of writing and consists of planning, drafting, revising, responding, evaluating, and post writing. In the product approach, the focus is on grammatical accuracy and the writing process itself. These approaches do not look at writing from a critical point of view, and do not help students write critically about a subject. They do not examine the when and the how one writes process. So there is no trace of critical pedagogy in these approaches and students' experiences and social environment are not considered in these approaches.

In response, according to Akbari (2008) and Morrel (2003), there are very basic principles of critical pedagogy that should and can best be integrated into the writing classes. These are centrality of "students' local culture," importance of learners' "L1 as a resource", "historicality and problem posing," or students' real life concerns.

There is another approach named "critical multiculturalism" as an alternative to the traditional approaches to present culture in the classroom. It aims for social transformation, raising students' critical consciousness in order for them to be agent of change. It can be integrated in the writing classroom or pedagogy and turn it into critical writing pedagogy.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND L1

Using L1in the classroom has been challenged by critical pedagogy because it can be as an obstacle to learn L2 and using the target language exclusively is a kind of "linguistic imperialism". There are different perspectives to use L1 in the classroom. One is to prevent using L1 in the classroom, and the other is to make "judicious use" (Akbari, 2008) of it. "An individual's L1 is part of his identity and a force which has played a crucial role in the formation of that identity" (Akbari, 2008, p.280). It is believed that using first language can be as a vehicle for cultural maintenance among different social classes and generations. Teaching English without reference to L1 is a sign of disempowerment. The challenge for using L1 in the classroom transferred to writing pedagogy. Ghahremani and Mirhosseini have used Dialogue Jurnal Writing (DJW) as a tool for students' empowerment. In DJW students were permitted to use L1 whenever they could not find a suitable English word. They were allowed to choose a topic according to their interest and write about it without paying too much attention to grammar, spelling, etc. They are allowed to express their ideas, so it has a major role in empowering them.

THE ROLE OF LEARNER'S EXPERIENCE

According to Morrel (2003), the critical writing classroom starts right from the students' daily experiences and daily problems. The teacher can takes part in the dialogue with his students on their problems and experiences through writing. Others believe that free composition can be a tool for writing personal experiences and problems. Ghahremani and Mirhosseini (2005) emphasize the importance of journals for doing that. Dialogue journal is a written conversation in which the teacher and learner communicate regularly with each other. It is a kind of interactive writing which help teachers and learners to participate in a written form of conversation and communication. For doing so learners choose from a wide range of topics and a variety of styles and genres to write. The teacher writes back to respond to questions and comments, asking questions, or introducing a new topic. Shor (1992) divides themes into generative, topical, and academic ones. The suitable use of these different kinds depends on the contexts of our classrooms, subject matter, grade level, and other institutional constrains. Different kinds of themes are generative, topical, and academic ones. Generative themes are most associated with Freirian pedagogy. They are suitable for discussion generation related to personal life of larger issues.

They are contextual, drawn from students' daily lives. Topical themes are not generated by students' discussion in the class. They are social questions of local, national, or global importance. The teacher has provides topical themes for the students. Then the students discuss the particular topic together. Academic themes are those which students use as they are exposed to in schools. The academic theme is a scholaristic, professional, or technical body of knowledge which the teacher wants to introduce or has to introduce as a requirement.

In sum, critical pedagogy, starts from where students are at. It is related to students' present reality as a basic tool for further learning rather than being away from what they know and who they are. In this way, the student does not have a passive role in the learning process and the teacher is ready to teach and shares his experiences with others participating in the learning process (Freire, 1972). So the content and instruction of the classroom should be grounded in students' experiences and

CULTURE

There is a claim that students should write in order to meet native speaker norms through monolingualism and monoculturalism dimensions and they should not express their own cultural identities. Some researchers argued against this claim. They believe that students should write about their own culture and bring it into the classroom through different writing tasks. To do so, some researchers proposed an approach to present culture in the classroom. This approach is "critical multiculturalism" which aims for social transformation. Learners can improve their knowledge from their own culture instead the foreign culture. If the teachers have different cultures from those of their students, they can use dialogue as a tool to feel the gap between teachers and students.

CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is an ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, defend opinions, make comparisons, draw inferences, evaluate arguments and solve problems". In critical thinking the educational purpose is to promote critical thinking; and the skills and dispositions of critical thinking should infuse teaching and learning at all levels of schooling. Critical thinkers believe that specific reasoning skills give power to the curriculum as a whole. In critical thinking the critical person has not only the ability to seek reasons, truth and evidence but also he has the disposition to seek them. Ennis (1987, 1996) claims that a critical person should not only seek reasons and attempt to be well informed, he should have a tendency to do so. Robert Ennis is the one whose thought has effects on strengthening critical thinking movement in the early 1960. This movement is necessary to promote learners thought. The final goal of education is generalization which can be achieve through critical thinking and social interactions out of the classrooms (Johnson, 1991). Critical thinkers question and judge an idea or thought according to reliable evidence by making logical relationship among statements or data. The following aspects which students should recognize in a text, within the framework of critical thinking.

 1. The purpose of the text (its thesis);
 2. Some judgments about context;
 3. Kinds of reasoning the text employs;
 4. The evidence using in the text;
 5. The strength and weaknesses of an argument. The aspects of critical thinking should be reflected in good writing.

A writer should generate some content to put assumptions, evidence and arguments from which he can draw conclusions.

VOICE

What do you know about students' voice? Students' voice is any activity in which they communicate their emotions. Voice is like our fingerprint and it will help students how to learn from teachers. They can rapidly silence their voices. Giving students opportunity for saying ideas and, at the same time, displaying them how to respect other people's thoughts and feelings is a way of cultivating the culture of voice in students as appose to the culture of silence, which would delay students from making their voice heard both in classroom and in society.

The importance of developing voice in students lies in the fact that without daring to face and resist ideas, rules, and severe structures which might be imposed upon them, students develop a deep sense of obedience, silence, and submissiveness. These destructive feelings make them lower themselves and break the positive images they have of themselves until they learn to remain passive and silent, and this is what Freire (1972) refers to as the "culture of silence," which the above scenario demonstrates.

   A negative feedback can quiet a student for years in the class; in contrast, a democratic class can boost students' self-confidence and motivate them.

Through this open and heart-to-heart talk, students dare to express their ideas and little by little improve their own voices and identities.

    As the child's voice is encouraged in the classroom and in the broader goals of

Citizenship in a democratic society, the classroom is a scene for each child to contribute to their immediate community in a democratic civilization.

 This type of teacher-student interaction can encourage social and personal development in students that is a main objective in critical literacy programs.

    In critical literacy, "literacy" is considered to be the ability that creates in the improvement of voice and contributes to the well-being of oneself and society. However, in every social context, educational settings included, in order for individuals to find their voices, a democratic atmosphere, which paves the way for freedom of expression, is necessary. During this course, efforts were made to break the students' silence by inviting them to share their ideas with each other freely without being scared of being laughed at or ridiculed. Valuing students' personal viewpoints, the teacher encouraged students to listen to and respect others' points of view. Although at the very beginning of this course some students resisted communicating their ideas freely in the discussions, they step by step showed more desire for making their voices heard in the class as they found their classmates attentive to their opinions.

    Therefore, contrary to many communicative English classes where discussions tend to be mainly aimed at increasing student talking time (STT) in order to progress their linguistic abilities such as fluency, discussions conducted in critically oriented classes are meant to maximize the opportunity for students to critically analyze their life situations, co-construct their understandings of the world, find their voices and reconstruct their identities. Voice is not participating in a perspective critical thinking exercise.

Writing is a good strategy to listen to students' voice. Personal narrative should be emphasized to validate students' cultures and voices. As journal writing can aid encourage individuality and subjectivity, the teacher's notes were mainly meant to motivate the students to voice their personal opinions and analyze writers' ideas in a critical manner.

Ivonic and Camps did a study on six graduate students and argue that developing critical awareness of the power of discourses is an important language skill that should be learned. Shen (1989) compared the difficulty in writing in English to his native Chinese and believes that how to write in English involves the process of creating new identity.

The most discussed discursive features associated with voice are the use of the first person. The first person can be divided in to six different identities relating on its use in a sentence. In a test done by them they found that the first person could be classified into six specifications: representative, guide, architect, recounter of research process, opinion holder, and originator.

So these studies shows that voice is critically important and this is good for learners who are more worry about identity than ideas. Cooperative learning in students leads to dialogue in small groups and it helps them in learning and socialization. Participatory student voice may aid them to articulate their learning style.

Most of educators associate voice with empowerment; it means we should give them input into any decision affecting them.

The use of L1 in writing can also be interpreted as having one's voice in writing.

This is what one of the contributors the study revealed: "when I write in my own language, I feel great because I can express my writing as part of my world. It's like painting. It materializes on a piece of paper, and other people can share what I feel ". Writing may not lead to social transformation immediately, but when it breaks "the culture of silence" (Ghahremani & Mirhosseini, 2005), it is a step towards empowerment and transformation. Through integrating writing with CP students and teachers all over the world can challenge the traditional atmosphere of the classroom and empower themselves so as to create a voice of their own.

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Why empower students? As a neo conservative teacher it means giving students skills to make them competitive. The libertarian instructor believes we should give choices to student on how to spend their time and energy, and the connectionist says pupils are responsible about their community and the environment they live. It means giving opportunity to show competencies. These factors give students voice and make them to believe they are qualified.

Are empowerment and voice are synonymous?

Every child voice is for him, regardless of what instructors do. It is a chance for them to expresses their voice. Recognizing voice is a key element in empowerment and promoting that voice in learning is the focus of this inquiry (Goodman, 1992). Prabhu (1990) argues that the most frequent answer for why there is no best method is "because it all depends" (p.162). There is no best method, means there is no single method for any one and it depends to teaching context.

Prabhu recommends that" what we need is to rethink what best might mean or that the notion of good and bad needs to be retested and explained. He clarifies the best method is the method that yields the best outcomes in learning time. The object of all teaching is getting learning quickly as possible, and teaching methods should be judged by the amount of learning they are involve in a proper time. The best method is different from one teacher to another.

Prabhu points out to several kinds related to social situation (language environment, cultural attitudes, economic factors, etc.), educational organization (administrative efficiency, class size), teacher related factors (skill, autonomy...), and learner related factors (age, attitudes to learning, etc.)

Kumaravadivelu (1994) propose post method in response to the method. He proposes 10 macro strategies which can converts classroom specialists in to strategic teachers. They spend time

(1) Reflecting on the specific needs, situations.
(2) Extending their skill to stay involved
(3) Extending macro strategies to change contexts of teaching.
(4) Planning suitable micro strategies to boost learning
(5) Controlling their capability

These are 10 macro strategies:
a) Improve learner autonomy (learn how to learn)
b) Ensure social relevance

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c) Raise cultural consciousness like in native speakers

d) Minimize perceptual mismatches

e) Linguistic input should be contextualized

f) Providing enough textual data so that the learner can infer grammatical rules.

g) Foster language awareness

h) Teaching as a process of making learning chances

i) Integrate language skills (listening, reading, writing…)

j)Facilitate negotiated interaction (learner—learner ,learner---teacher) interaction.

Kumaravadivelu believes that this framework can reshape teacher education and classroom research. It facilitates teacher with skills, autonomy, to method. According to Higgins (1996), critical pedagogy shows a direction with its emphasis on pupils' experiences as a foundation of knowledge.   Agreeing that a major goal of teacher education is to prepare individuals for informed citizenship in a democratic society, do standards lead toward social change promoting active citizenship of both teacher and student? We approach this question from two perspectives: one is a cultural approach grounded in critical pedagogy and the other is a policy approach based on the use of standards in teaching. We focus on a critical pedagogy in teacher education because of the goal of preparing citizens for participation in a democratic society.

CONCLUSION

The present study Highlights three tenets of CP, namely; (a) Reflection upon the individual's culture or lived experience, (b) Development of voice through a critical look at one's world and society, and (c) Transforming the society toward equality for all citizens through active participation in democratic imperatives. CLP is aimed to return to marginalized groups their lost voices and identities to think about their situation and find out why things are the way they are. The goal of CP is, therefore, to prepare students for their education; this political phenomenon, as Giroux has said by giving them voice and identity and turning them into political subjects, hence empowering them.

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