Transformations in English Language Teaching: Criticality Towards Praxis

by

Peter Petrov

Bachelor of Arts, University of Alberta, 2006

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Supervisory Committee

Supervisor

Dr. James Nahachewsky, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Departmental Member

Dr. Jason Price, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Abstract

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Unlike other subjects, English as a foreign language (EFL) does not easily lend itself to radical pedagogic re-interpretations because it requires a certain degree of scaffolding, memorization and repetitive exercise. However, the often over-simplified methodological approach to language instruction that purports neutrality must be de-coupled from its colonial origins, still embodied in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms and curricula as they appear in English speaking societies. The distinction between these branches is significant and affects the notion of “criticality”, a notion, I argue, should be interpreted less radically and more pragmatically in the context of language instruction generally. Speaking from my personal experience as an English language instructor - in the non-governmental, non-profit, public and private sectors of the field - and through a close reading of the literature, in this project I posit a re-interpretation of the field through critical pedagogy and critical ontology to create a portable framework that decolonizes instructional materials and classroom spaces, while identifying neo-liberal and technologically driven transformations in language instruction. From a critical perspective geared towards pragmatism, the initial matrices of instruction, choice of material, projection of curriculum cycle and evaluation schema rest on the belief that the students
themselves have the intelligence and capacity to interpret their socio-linguistic world and choose how to empower themselves through acquiring English language fluency in what I have termed an organic emancipation model in language instruction.
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Dedication

This project and its general orientation are dedicated to all of my colleagues abroad. A special thanks to Alicia Rodriguez for supporting me through the turbulence of the school's re-organization and construction. I would like to thank Iian McCloud and Ian Crane for their endless diversions, as well as Matthew Gibson, Kelly Roots and Michael Harrel.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This project aims, through intensive research of the literature and presentation of an annotated lesson plan, to create a more durable and comprehensive framework around the concepts of criticality, critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis as related to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, Teaching English to Speakers of Foreign Languages (TESOL) and their counterpart branches of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as an Additional Language (EAL). EFL and TESOL are similar in that the enterprise of teaching English is usually conducted in a host country and for purposes and specifications much broader (like English for academic purposes or business English) than either ESL or EAL which focus primarily on teaching English language patterns, customs and associated cultural referents to student populations already located within predominantly English speaking societies.

The idea to explore the association between these theoretical approaches and professional practices emerges from my personal and professional experience with all four branches of English language instruction in South Korea, the Czech Republic and Canada. In this sense, my identity as a teacher is closely bound to all four. Indeed, an enquiry into these associations inextricably leads to an interrogation of epistemic traditions; ruptures and revisions of pedagogy as they relate to the formation of a particular pedagogical ontology. Such an interrogation “places identity and discourse at the heart of language teaching and learning” (Miller, 2009, p.172) and is substantiated through a review of the literature that is embedded in each subsequent chapter and section of this project.

Target questions guide my exploration and my changing understanding of these professional disciplines; how that understanding impacts the development of curriculum within
them and how to best reinterpret or situate them within critical pedagogy. These questions delve into: the historical transformations in the field; the impact of markets, technology and global (transnational?) capitalism (as a systemic and ideological deployment of economic mechanisms for the promulgation of capital) on the development of language instruction; and the relationships and identities that students and teachers come to have through their experiences of various forms of English language instruction. I hold as my main goal the persuasion of readers to consider, as I have come to understand, that contemporary trends inherent in language instruction - including the privatization of education, the rapid influx of technological and new educational media, and the metaphors which facet them together - are intertwined, and arguably collude to obscure the potential to re-envision English language instruction as a facilitator in the reclamation of social justice, human dignity and socio-political empowerment against the backdrop of growing global economic interdependency. While my review of qualitative and quantitative research literature, curriculum theory and critical literacy serves to broadly contextualize the understandings that I arrive at and the claims that I make throughout these chapters, the annotated English language lesson that I create and present further in this project illustrates a critically informed and achievable pedagogy or praxis on a personal and interpersonal level.

**Experience, Enquiry and Bias**

To return now to the distinction made earlier between the various streams found within English language instruction, I would like to reiterate a distinction between TESOL/EFL and ESL/EAL teaching, pointing out that the ESL professional context is rather limited in its scope and principally relegated to a practice within countries where mono-lingualism prevails out of habit (as in the USA) or legislation (as in England). Although there is a polemic about the value
of such differentiation within the discipline(s), I offer it to clarify my own argumentative position within this paper and to ground that argumentation around my personal experiences, which have been mostly in countries outside of the Anglophone world and which have included (more often than not) teaching EFL to student populations for whom English was not necessarily their second language. This appears to be the norm outside of Anglophone societies because, until as recently as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many regional supra-languages existed, as in the example of Russian within the Warsaw Pact and USSR, or prior to that, the dominance of French in international affairs throughout the 19th century.

Admittedly, prior to enrolling in the M. Ed. program, I felt somewhat dogmatically committed to deconstructing the entirety of my professional field in EFL teaching as an illegitimate and hegemonic implementation of neo-liberal policies and agendas bent on maintaining and sustaining Anglo-American (neo)-imperialism. A large part of my struggle to avoid such a unilateral and politically motivated vivisection of the global project of English undoubtedly had much to do with the ways in which I saw myself as an immigrant and pluri-lingual subject empowered by the English language to continue the colonial project that had formed my own socio-economic privilege as a Canadian. Often living with wages that are much higher than local nationals’ employed within the field of education in the host country is conducive to this negative and reactionary feeling. However, by embracing a process of enquiry that more deeply interrogates the simple notion that English language instruction should move away from sterile topics towards an embrace of the lived-situatedness of English language learners (Reagen and Osborne, 2002) has challenged my original convictions and has led me to question the very nature of criticality itself.

In this project, I challenge myself to engage with the matter of politicizing and de-
colonizing EFL instruction in a way which I feel speaks more honestly and genuinely to the theoretical analyses that have trickled into the field, and have as my final orientation, a commitment to pragmatism and praxis. By pragmatic, I offer this project’s recommendations as portable and applicable to specific cultural or educational contexts. By extension, whatever praxis may result from heeding to the warnings of these recommendations about the colonial aspects of language instruction, rigid, deterministic and pre-configured lesson plans and material selections have purposefully been left out. Thus, I feel comfortable writing in this introduction that I feel I have been both critical and generous to the matter at hand. In referring to Kincheloe’s work (2008), Oglivie (2013) states: “To be critical within the critical tradition is not to hide under the objectivity of scientific knowledge, but rather to challenge it from the subjective position of human compassion” (p. 121). More than anything else, the experiential value of writing this project has been tremendously helpful in fleshing out the internal struggles that I have as both colonizer and colonial subject, and between my professional duties as a language instructor and my personal commitment to international social justice.

**Re-imagining English Language Teaching**

In effect, while it would have been easier and more expedient to produce a more traditional critique of teacher and student identities and the systemic and embedded institutional mechanisms of control within EFL as supported by critical discourse analysis, I feel that my efforts here have impacted my growth as an individual and transformed the course of my maturation as an English language instructor in foreign and domestic classroom environments. I have also spurred curricular orientations steeped within the tradition of critical pedagogy that I feel require further development. From my professional perspective, the 2013 work of Wilgus *et al.* highlights the importance of integrating critical and counter discursive pedagogies within pre-
service teacher training in order to dispel the persistence of English language instruction as an inherently neutral undertaking.

Still, the explosion of the ESL/EFL/TESOL markets in the era of post-Cold War globalization means that traditional approaches and materials need to be interrogated as inherently value-laden mechanisms that perpetuate and reproduce linguistic and cultural hierarchies that are dominated by Anglo-American norms and expectations for cultural performativity. However, I do not want to suggest that English language instruction be abandoned altogether or replaced by a re-invigorated international commitment to Esperanto, an international language developed in the 1880s which gained international prominence and endorsement after 1905. Ironically, many EFL language instructors feel that critical pedagogy and successive multiculturalisms, as visions of pluralistic governance, have little place in classrooms that are predominantly populated by local socio-economic elite groups. Their failure to see those elite groups’ participation in ESL classrooms as a means to further empower their classes, communities or ethnic groups on a global scale speaks to the reality that those local or regional privileges are not recognized as legitimate within the global economic order. This is why, despite my biases, I am unwilling to and am incapable of, condemning either EFL or ESL instruction as functioning in a decidedly uni-directional way to create colonial subjects whose sole purpose in acquiring English is to be rigidly confined within the process of globalization as immovable proletariat subjects. I cannot overlook the possibility that, for them, what I may cynically write off as subjugation may be experienced as participation. I cannot allow myself to determine the a priori weight of the agency of persons whose first language is not English.

Speaking as educators more generally (and not language instructors), we must remember that when it concerns our students “[w]hat is not permissible to be doing is to conceal truths,
deny information, impose principles, eviscerate the educands of their freedom, or punish them, no matter by what method, if, for various reasons, they fail to accept my discourse – reject my utopia” (Freire, 1994, p. 83). In order to trace and relate my journey as a curriculum maker and teacher, I think it sage to evoke my belief that language teaching and learning profoundly occupy themselves with issues of discourse, meta-narratives and identity politics. This echoes the *The Idea of Curriculum* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1998) which sees curriculum as constituted by “dynamic interactions among persons, things, and processes” (p. 7) Like with all disciplines or subjects, students’ educational experiences in English language instruction encompass social, political and personal dimensions (Miller, 1998, p. 146).

If education is re-imagined as the locale of counter discourse, then *instruction* is the means by which transformative thought can emerge. In this light, pedagogy is the *nexus* in which ontological liberation can grow and human *agency* can be reclaimed. By de-legitimating the primacy of the “dominant stories of school” which “are nested in a broader epistemological, social, cultural, and political context” (Huber & Clandinin, 2003, p. 347), we allow for a new space where new stories can be told. These re-imaginings relate to new ways of thinking about schools and classrooms, as well as student and teacher identities. Because critical ontology re-invents the primacy of human agency, it “is obsessed with new and better ways of being human, being with others, and the creation of environments where mutual growth of individuals is promoted and symbiotic learning relationships are cultivated” (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 54). In the EFL classroom, this can mean allowing students to scaffold each other’s learning in pair or group work without the dogmatic insistence on correcting every mistake in grammar or pronunciation.

I am not cautiously suggesting that there is a correct way to re-conceptualize and re-contextualize curriculum and pedagogy, but I do maintain that there are alternatives which are
more humane, more ethical and more progressive because I believe that democracy, tolerance, self-reflection and a societal commitment towards the eradication of systemic, economic and political violence are values worth striving for. An English textbook that promotes Western middle-class realities as mundane and universal precludes the possibility of creating empowering communication in the English language among people who do not have that origin. Publishing houses that reprint, for example, idyllic pictures of weekend picnics in parks with barbeques and ketchup, relish and mustard bottles are either oblivious to the possibility that Asian and African children do not eat hotdogs on a regular basis, or negligent to reproduce culturally appropriate images in order to maintain their profit margins. The absurdity of this simple example is reified by the fact “that the market itself does not constitute a social project. It is…the site where the inequalities that will persist through social existence are born: it is… the very site itself of the alienation that is opposed to the emancipative project of the school” (Fremaux, 2010, http://truth-out.org/archive/component/k2/item/88981:education-crisis-symptom-and-crucible-of-societal-malaise).

While it is true that the Internet and information technologies are rapidly transforming the publishing industry, simply promoting multi-media resources that are steeped in the marketability of technology and its “democratizing” appeal are unfounded and unwise. Numerous studies both domestically and internationally have been unable to identify positive pedagogic effects (Margaryan, Littlejojhn, & Vojt, 2001), boosted learning outcomes (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012), or increased democratization (Tyner, 2003) of technology laden English learning classes. I view the influx of these new digital media, in part, as an effort to privatize education and advancing the neo-liberal market agenda to the extent that wealthier schools and wealthier people will have access to more resources and higher quality resources than their
economically disadvantaged peers, although some have suggested otherwise (Reinhart, 2008; Thoermer & Williams, 2012). Moreover, what is often left out of social and political discussions regarding the technological influx into, and privatization of, language education is that “normative discourses that position private sector education as morally and educationally superior…underscore a profound disjuncture between market values and other values, such as respect and compassion” (Saltmarsh, 2007, p. 339). Yet, whatever values and narratives are ensnared in the service of global capital interests, opposition voices beckon to be heard from the periphery; as any colonial project is bound to have its dissidents.

**Frames of Resistance**

These opposing voices and counter messages can best be viewed as a series of curriculum communities and market stakeholders, bumping against one another, at times reinforcing each other and at others negating one another. Private EFL markets create a community of their own which is different from the community of the public schools or non-profit classrooms. From my experience, the former's classrooms create an environment and educational space that is qualitatively different than the latter in providing market specific language acquisition targets, like business English and English for academic purposes. The latter, meanwhile, maintain a less structured and porous curriculum in which language competencies are measured by student satisfaction and their purpose is not to provide professional or academic certificates of achievement. While all three can be seen as communities of empowerment, those who are already economically empowered by their class affiliations and aspirations (already a community in itself) are better poised to reap the benefits conferred upon them through English language acquisition. For them, their journey towards empowerment signifies a probable entry in to the community of global citizenship, while for those that are internally marginalized, English
proficiency may not necessarily present itself as a bridge between these communities. In all cases, I am aware of my instructional role as a gatekeeper: acting as referee on matters of correct English usage, spelling and grammar as well as an assessor and grader of the target competencies which the language students seek to ascertain.

But this is not always a bad thing. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can be both an empowering and emancipatory project of recognizing and (re)inscribing the critical vernacular as the locus of the student-centred (re)orientation of educational enterprise: as an activity geared towards social justice. Indeed, “encouraging students to locate new vocabularies and language to describe their experiences and situations sets the stage for them to” (Wilgus, 2013, p. 178) go beyond the conventional modalities of expression in traditional educational systems.

From our perspective as Western educators, the agency and power associated with naming and demarcating subaltern spaces (and enthusiastically promoting them) does not change the “issue of who is in charge of this identifying, appreciating and celebrating” (Wilgus, 2013, p.182). I refuse to be that kind of gatekeeper. I am not an Olympic deity. Thus, whatever counter-discursive, “counterscenario” is espoused by emancipatory multiculturalism domestically, or radical and critical pedagogies internationally, it cannot presume that we can “simply...decide to write 'new' stories,...because the decision to 'rewrite' them is not simply external to the language that unwittingly writes us”” (Felman in Miller, 1998, p. 149).

In this light, the function of the critical vernacular can be thought of as an expression of the lived-situatedness of the marginalized and disposed through their voices and their discourse, not as something apart from, but central to, their maturation as fully integrated members of a pluralistic society. If, indeed, the curricular landscape were to be “textured by a multiplicity of
lines moving from between to between...ever open, knowing no beginning and no end, resisting enframing” (Aoki, 1993, p. 261), then we would engender a moment and space where the creation of these texts requires no sanction; where their legitimacy cannot be excluded and where the only requirement for their authenticity is that they are self-generated. That is my commitment. But how to build it? And more problematically: how to promote this organic emancipation model in language instruction where, more often than not, features like grammar and spelling are either correct or incorrect?

I suggest that critical pedagogy and critical ontology posit less radical, but more meaningful transformations in our understanding of pedagogy and curriculum because they empower English language educators to re-locate their centrality within a pedagogical discourse where “perceived injustices can only be reconfigured when there are deliberate, sustained and simultaneous disruptions across individual, social, and cultural domains of activity” (Davis & Sumara, 2000, p. 833). This does not signify an abandonment of grammar or spelling, but it does require that we refrain from insisting that EFL students label red bottles as “ketchup” and yellow bottles as “mustard”. Moreover, critical pedagogy can embrace diverse pedagogies and knowledge systems which similarly work to abrogate the primacy of hegemonic constructs which either institutionally bind transformative re-conceptualizations of the educational discipline, or worse, eliminate any discursive opportunity to voice opposition and counter-discourse to modernist and neo-liberal dogmas which operate definitionally within it.
Chapter 2: The Historical Trajectories of EFL/TESOL and ESL/EAL

This chapter aptly comes as an embodiment of the critical pedagogies and critical discourse analysis I have undertaken throughout my Masters programme and serves to create a more durable and comprehensive framework around the concepts of criticality, critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis as related to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching or Teaching English to Speakers of Foreign Languages (TESOL).

In the case of ESL instruction, I would argue that the notion of treating English language and culture as necessary, and desirable, is much more central to the pedagogic dialogue framing the discipline itself. Cautiously, I do not wish to suggest that either the English language or that the culture of English speaking peoples is in any way monolithic, for even (and perhaps especially) in the United Kingdom, we see that the permutation of Englishes is widespread and that the dominance of the English language and of the English culture is not paramount, despite the successful colonization and unification of the island throughout the centuries. We can see from examples of this in predominantly English-speaking provinces, like British Colombia, where the Ministry of Education (2008) has proclaimed a dual mandate to offer acculturation and language scaffolding services to new-comers and Aboriginal populations (p. 3) with the ultimate goal of integrating them within a status quo society that is English speaking and enacting of English language media models of behaviour and thought. While this acculturation model has been criticized as being un-critical and effectively falling firmly within the colonial tradition of the British Empire, the pedagogical framework of EFL cannot always be deemed to have an imperialist agenda because it often lacks specific targets for culturally assimilating its students within Anglo-American normativity (as ESL does). Regardless, this is not to suggest that the reproduction of Anglo-American centrality and the marginalization of non-English speaking
peoples does not occur anyway through EFL and there is a constant and compelling “need to ask what meanings are borne by languages, [and] what cultural politics underlie the learning and use of different languages” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 111)

Thus, while addressing the practical distinction between the professional disciplines, engaging this matter more deeply is not the primary focus of this section. Despite this proviso, for evaluative purposes relating to the centrality of the linkages between critical discourse analysis, the activity of teaching EFL, and the identities of the EFL teacher and student, it is significant to acknowledge the ways in which the mono-cultural and monolingual approaches of ESL have affected the former.

The historical trajectory of the development of EFL and TESOL pedagogies is firmly grounded in the initial development of ESL teaching “in keeping with the behaviourist psycholinguistic theories prevalent in 1950s education that saw the L1 [mother tongues] as constituting old habits which would interfere with L2 [English] acquisition” (Ellis, 2013, p.449). To this end, it is no surprise that the emergent EFL and TESOL “profession still features English-only classrooms conducted by a teacher who is monolingual or is encouraged to behave as if she or he were monolingual” (p.449). This pervasive concept of language learning beyond that of the mother tongue is both linguistically and pedagogically unfounded as well as limiting in its static presentation of the English language as a static system “limited by its own prescriptivism” (Alim & Pennycook, 2007, p. 91). This direct instructional model is untenable because of its reification of antiquated colonial precepts of education and engenders the possibility of promoting Anglo-American thought through its promotion of language as a vehicle of cultural essentialization (Pennycook, 2007, p. 111). Entrapped by circumstance and propelled by professional expediency, I have often observed myself and colleagues speak authoritatively while making
sweeping generalizations about North America or Europe. Conscious efforts are to be made to avoid essentializing tones and identifications because they do not lend themselves to improving the quality of language instruction and replicate the colonial discourse which has led to the problem of inappropriate curricula for, and inadequate recognition of, the EFL context in the first place.

**Implications for Identity Markers**

Disturbingly, such a static notion of language teaching is persistent in today’s pre-service TESOL accreditation programs around the world and may explain the relatively unusual absence of critical discourse analysis within the field. Paradoxically, while the mechanisms of linguistic mono-culturalism can be traced, “the willingness to use the language of human rights on the global level to frame local linguistic demands vis-à-vis global English may merely be affirming the global vision projected by American liberal democracy” (Sonntag in Pennycook 2007, p. 112). An alternative and more critical perspective may see this process as an affirmation of neo-liberal market principles and offers a glimpse into possible reasons that EFL teachers may feel themselves performing the roles of “vendors”, “entertainers” and “acculturators” (Farrel, 2010, p. 57) as well as instructors and managers.

Identity markers that are linked more closely with critical pedagogy or which fall outside the meta-language of efficiency, like those of “teacher as inquirer” or “reflective practitioner”, do not factor in as readily as the former identity categories (Mok, 1994, p. 94). However, even when such studies do take into account the possibility that teacher identities do change over time and with experience, the results are often uninspiring: demonstrating time and again that EFL teachers’ attitudes towards a learner’s mother tongue and culture as well as their “expectations of learners’ attitude[s] towards [the] teacher” (p. 102) are at the bottom of issues that most concern
them. Consequently, as professionals working within a global context that is distinctly not their own, EFL teacher identities seem to be associated with delivering the English language as a product, and this aspect translates very concretely into a reality where “teaching practices always imply larger visions of society” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 179).

Surprisingly, this hidden, market-logic driven, neo-colonialism is not only a matter of concern for native EFL teachers who come from places like Australia or England, suggesting that the approach to the discipline, the identity of the professionals and the pedagogy with which they are themselves instructed form a continuum in which “critical criticism”, “critical intercultural competence” and “critical cultural awareness” do not play a key role. Interestingly, a three year longitudinal study over the course of such a program of 146 teachers in Hong Kong found that “[s]ixty-two percent of students believed that “[l]earning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words” (Peacock, 2001, p.179) and that “[s]ixty-four percent of students believed that “[l]earning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules” (p.179). Investigation of the beliefs and attitudes held by pre-service EFL teachers a decade before revealed that the coursework on a graduate level within the same program focused on “‘language as a system’ including grammar, error correction, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and [found] a remarkably high proportion [of] the justification for teaching behaviour referred to…retention in memory and recall from new material’” (p. 180). Because “teachers’ beliefs and attitudes are indispensable factors affecting their decision making and teaching practice” (William & Burden in Bedir, 2010, p.5208), the sclerotic institutional pace with which schools and universities are adapting to a new global reality which calls for a critical (re)vision of teacher education is noteworthy. Additionally, it harkens the age-old battle between structuralism and symbolic interactionism which has been endemic to contemporary
theorizations about pedagogy more generally.

A determination that EFL teaching has simply missed the opportunity for scrutiny or critical analysis because its socio-historical development has been separated from other fields is overly simplistic. Rather, if we are to probe the matter holistically and with professional determination, we will see that linguistic ideologies and pedagogic orientations have made “possible a technocratic and individualistic orientation to teaching and learning as well as a tendency not to make the development of a teacher’s moral philosophy a central part of teacher education in ESL/EFL” (Crookes & Lehner, 1998, p.320). In many ways, the processes uncovered by such investigations into the apparent absence of critical discourse or critical pedagogy within the discipline of foreign language teaching exemplify Freire’s idea of the *submersion of consciousness* within the “banking model” of education, wherein “students [are] expected to absorb the prescribed content of the curriculum, based on the values and norms of dominant society, and then regurgitate it at the appropriate time to demonstrate their mastery” (Ogilvie, 2013, p. 119). Because the students in question are *both* the students of the educational system that provided them with the credentials to become EFL teachers and *their own* students of English, disrupting the falsity of the *beliefs* inherent within the practice of EFL teaching is difficult to do. If we are to understand, as Richardson (2003) suggests, that beliefs are “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (p. 2), then the task of critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis must also be seen to overturn such *truths* and involve itself in the forging of alternative conceptions of student and teacher *identities, curricula and practices*.

Yet, this task is not a simple matter of revising the pre-service EFL and TESOL curriculum, or further distancing these disciplines from their ESL progenitor’s colonial matrices
of power and exclusion through the politics of linguistic imperialism and mono-culturalism. It is a project much larger, indeed, which acknowledges how “critical theory of society has for its object humans as producers of their own historical way of life in its totality” (Horkheimer, 1976, p.222) and not exclusively and minimalistically within the economic realm of geo-strategic capitalism. On the other hand, this critique is not intended to suggest that EFL be infused with multicultural education that can simply move beyond the celebration of cultural difference (Ogilvie, 2013, p. 129), but calls for a more radical (re)application of power analysis within the discipline such that English communication should be taught with critical awareness that empowers students toward action (Crooks, 1999). Without such steps being, EFL runs the risk of rectifying the agenda and curricula of ESL instruction, a situation that is both ethically untenable and pedagogically futile.

**Politcising English as a Global Language**

According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), homogenization through the English language in particular as an outcome of globalization has acted as a “killing agent” (p. xi) of diversity. This is particularly true in the use of television programmes to aid in the development of fluent conversational English in many ESL classrooms around the world. Moreover, the preference for, and elevated status of, American English is problematic in these contexts. Recently, a multi-dimensional, mixed-methods analysis measuring authenticity in English speech as appearing on American television found that the “sitcom is closer to natural conversation than soap opera in the representations of [its] linguistic features” (Al-Surmi, 2012, p. 691). While the study aimed to demonstrate the benefits of using such shows as *Friends* and *The Young and the Restless* in ESL classrooms, in measuring dimensions of overt expression and persuasion it also discovered that soap operas have “more use of these positive features and hence more overt argumentative
or persuasive discourse” (p. 688).

Putting the merit of these linguistic elements for instructional purposes aside, argumentation and persuasion are not universally valued in all cultures. Educationally, this means that even in cases where conversational authenticity can be found in television, its non-linguistic content is also transferred. In other words, its cultural appropriateness cannot be inferred by its linguistic quality. In this vein, I would argue that such shows are, by their very nature, grossly exclusionary (even within North America), as Friends depicts a group of upwardly mobile, middle-class whites living in Manhattan, whereas The Young and the Restless generally relates the interpersonal dramas of affluent, upper-class professionals. What is apparent then, is that even when linguistically suitable materials are used, their cultural weight and intrinsic value systems cannot be de-coupled from their semantics and registers. Indeed, such studies illuminate that “language learning is intimately linked to the maintenance of social inequalities” (Freitas & Pessoa, 2012, p.755).

"[T]he problem is not so much one of defining a political “position”…but to imagine and bring into being new schemas of politicization”” (Foucault, 1977, p.190). This is made all the more salient by the potential to introduce an approach to pre-service training within EFL where “teachers are engaged in an effort to learn how language is used and can be used against us” (Alim & Pennycook, 2007, p.94). Again, such an approach would necessarily entail an understanding of English language learners’ lived-situadedness as a way of describing “the elements, agents and mechanisms that have conspired to keep students…on the lower rungs of the social and economic hierarchies” (Wilgus, 2013, p. 178) and have also propagated exclusionary linguistic practices. Thus, within the classroom, I would suggest that the cultural experience of the students should be a starting point for cultural practice (Alim & Pennycook,
A Korean private language academy, for example, may very well hold the promise of inculcating the necessary social capital, linguistic abilities and trans-cultural exposure that is required for full participation within both Korean and global economies or subsequently desired socio-cultural configurations. Conversely, it is possible to imagine a completely different situation in which English instruction is coupled with the study of Biblical scriptures and conducted under the auspices of Christian-conservative missionaries working in Nigeria. Because “[t]aken-for-granted categories such as man, woman, class, race, ethnicity, nation, identity, awareness, emancipation or power must be understood as contingent, shifting and produced in the particular, rather than having some prior ontological status” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 39), educators need to address marginalizing practices within their discipline and actively flesh out pedagogical routines that can limit the access or imagination of English language learners (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 431) and perpetuate their further sublimation within subordinate structures and systemic arrangements.
Chapter 3: Forging New Identities: Critical Ontology and Critical Pedagogy

The connections between identity and pragmatics, identity and sociolinguistics, and identity and discourse have been researched extensively (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 414) and uncover that language learning can create empowering identities among its students (p.415). The emancipatory agency that comes about with the acquisition of English (or any dominant language) is closely associated with the idea that language learning is not only about internalizing rules, vocabulary, and grammar of that language, but a fundamental struggle to use language in order to participate in specific speech communities (Bakhtin, 1986). It is precisely for this reason that we cannot make a heavy-handed gesture and condemn the entire enterprise of English as lingua franca and why we cannot categorically stigmatize prospective non-native learners and users of English as peripheral subjects who are further disempowered by unidirectional instructional practices by colonizing, privileged native EFL teachers. English has empowered me. Why should I not strive to bring the global matrices of power “within the reach of those affected by them so they at least have the possibility of altering them (Epstein & Oyler, 2008, p. 415)?

A sense of co-ordinated thematic commonality emerges which posits a need to re-conceptualize, re-evaluate and re-imagine curriculum and pedagogy. As my personal, professional and academic interests have propelled me to pursue an exploration of critical pedagogy as a way to re-envision the structural complexities that restrict and constrain curriculum and instruction, my aim here is show that the neo-liberal re-imagining of these has led to catastrophic consequences. This is all the more pertinent to my practice as I have worked mostly in the private and nongovernmental sectors. Thus, I have come to identify the role of critical pedagogy as one that can embrace diverse pedagogies and knowledge systems which can
oppose the aforementioned trends.

I feel the need to further explain the reason for choosing to write that critical pedagogies are *less* radical but *more* progressive re-imaginings of educational praxis and curriculum. Indeed, to further expand Peter McLaren’s (2003) perspective, he has noted, “[t]ransforming is of course about ‘remaking,’ but it does not logically follow that it is about remaking ‘anew’ or remaking everything” (p.106). Too often, as a young scholar, I am swayed by revolutionary metaphors that speak about a total reconstruction of the social and political order. However, as I grow older and my worldview is informed by my professional practice as a teacher, I am beginning to see that there is potential for restructuring existing institutions, discourses and structures. I believe that neo-liberal ideologies (which are rooted in modernism) are much more radical in their re-envisioning conceptualizations of humans, economies and societies because of their rupture with what Chet Bowers has termed, the *environmental, cultural and local* commons – “traditions that both include the language of moral reciprocity and sustain the memory of the civil institutions and practices that are safeguards against the forces of fascism and economic exploitation that are now again on the rise” (2007, p. 87).

Thus, I see the neo-liberal lens of re-conceptualization to constitute not only “throwing out the baby with the bath water but discarding the tub, the bathroom fixtures and the plumbing as well” (Kinichelo, 2003, p.61). Temporal violence is done through such a lens, too, for neo-liberalism cannot imagine a future which is not a linear re-iteration of the present, and therefore the “future is collapsed into the present” (Mbembe, 2003, p.37). In this landscape of *necropolitics*, as Mbembe has identified it, human agency cannot exist beyond the limited perimeter of the market and the “autopoeisis, the self-making [that] allows humans to perpetually reshape themselves in their new relationships and resulting new patterns of perception and
behaviour” (Kincheloe, 2003, p.61) is stifled. It is here that there is a need for critical ontology to abrogate the depravity and impoverished imagination of the neo-liberal order.

Interrogating the dynamics between the configurations of power and between identities subsumed within a larger order of legitimate and illegitimate speakers (Bourdieu, 1977; 1991), or language users, can also occur in student-to-student communication in class. Allowing, as opposed to tolerating, the use of the mother tongue to scaffold learning exercises through group work is an effective way to dispel the behaviouralist pitfalls discussed earlier which see the persistence of the primary language as an obstacle to target language acquisition. This critical (re)orientation to perceive difference as integral to the lived-situadedness of the students rather than as a deficiency (Alim & Pennycook, 2007, p. 98), is both respectful and practical. Moreover, such “[m]ethods for examining [foreign language] learning and identity thus need to pay close attention to how individuals are placed by common social practices, but also how they place themselves by engaging in societal practices in innovative ways” (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 428). Allowing students to engage among themselves in a facilitative and co-constructive environment engenders a sense of self-directedness which serves to interpret the context of the instructional setting and this autonomy augments students’ socio-institutional competence (Mondada & Doehler, 2005).

Social factors need to be taken into consideration, too. “While the destabilization of knowledge and meaning can be liberating, the challenge is to determine a principled basis for action. Here the issue of ethics and values, [ought to be] of great interest to an increasing number of language education scholars” (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 436). It is also possible to imagine countless scenarios where critical pedagogy and dialogic instruction is thwarted by the absence of administrative support or by the expectations of locally dominant political, social, economic
and/or religious class structures which do not tolerate the promotion of any multiplicity of
disenfranchised voices (Crooks, 1999, p. 282). Or, the absence of consensus or coordination
between schools, parents and teachers may result from “a conservative climate intent on
maintaining the status quo and a competitive climate dominated by student testing” (Cormbleth,
2001, p. 4). In such an environment, as in the hypothetical middle class Korean private language
academy mentioned earlier similar to one where I worked at in 2009, there exists a doubtless
probability that the students, parents and educators are deeply inculcated within a static
interpretation of the goals of EFL instruction and see the deliverance of formal language
objectives and the prestige of the financial burden incurred by attending a private academy as the
primary goals of the educational experience as a whole.

Still, in assessing the chances we have as educators to distill our own identities as fluid
and lucid ones which will serve the critical aspects of our critical pedagogy, we need to be aware
that de-colonizing all spaces is unlikely, even if we are compelled to see such sites as the ones
most in need of re-examination.
Chapter 4: Neoliberalism and Technology: Wrong Directions

Because much of the pedagogic discourse surrounding the direction of EFL and ESL instruction originates in America, and because my formal training and certification in the fields has come from North American programs, I am compelled to trace the effect of that American element on the current popularization of information technology within language instruction, and to further explain how I come to perceive its influence (compounded with neo-liberal management metaphors) as constituting the wrong direction in the conceptual, curricular and pragmatic re-envisioning of English language instruction. Having already explained the crucial role that identity politics play in the process of English language acquisition for students for whom English is not their first language, and how the pedagogic approach to teaching English influences the development of their appreciation of the language and their relationship to it as a mechanism for participation in the project of globalization, I opine how these relationships and pedagogies are negatively impacted by the confluence of these new contemporary forces.

Historically, where the Dominant perspective in curriculum “attempted to turn it into a science…with efficient business management” (Reid, 1998, p. 289) strategies as guidelines to its implementation, Reconceptualist perspectives tried to put the person back into the curriculum and “celebrate individualism and represented knowledge as relativistic” (p. 292-293). I believe that both schools of thought have been inculcated into the neo-liberal paradigm which, while celebrating the virtues of individual choice, simultaneously espouses the static confinement of the individual to the scientific and modernist realm of pre-deterministic drives to attain material wealth. In this paradigm, values which cannot be quantifiably measured escape the language of its informing narratives. In this narrow perspective, the richness and potential of human agency in “activities such as ‘instruction,’ ‘teaching,’ ‘pedagogy,’ and ‘implementation’ become
derivatives in the shadow curriculum-as-plan” (p.259). Moreover, “[r]elegated to a static state of being, teachers in this technicist paradigm are conceived as a unit of production of an assembly line—historically abstracted selves located outside of a wider social context” (Kincheloe, 2003, p.52). In the case of EFL teaching, as we have already seen, this leads to language instructors assuming the identities of vendors pedalling textbooks prioritizing abstract grammar exercises amidst illustrated vignettes of hotdog loving nuclear families.

Paradoxically, when “pedagogy is oriented by the assumption that the individual is the locus of learning” (Davis & Simmt, 2003, p.151) and the teacher the progenitor of knowledge, both students and teachers are blamed for failing to achieve the institutionally mandated evaluation schema of the state, academy or curricula. For students who fail to achieve the requisite grades mandated by passing tests, their failure is personalized and their education-gap pathologized. For teachers who fail to impart the requisite knowledge to their students, their practice is deemed an improper “enaction of the mechanistic, linear, and hierarchical metaphors” (Thom, 2012, p.67) that inform their instruction. In such instances, we can see that the healthy and emancipatory agency afforded to students by learning English is absent and that the self-reflective component of the teacher's enterprise is dismantled.

The next few paragraphs will attempt to demonstrate the intersection of these influences on the creation of an information-technology focused curriculum and present the findings of several studies which address how the meta-language of digital media requires an additional and prior acquisition of digital literacy; how the introduction of technology at the behest of modernity and market principles entrenches class divisions within society; and how there have yet to be conclusive demonstrations of its efficacy in promoting foreign language literacies.

A small study of five grade three classrooms in 2009, sought to expand work done by
Clay in 1979 on concepts of print and to see if Luke and Freebody’s (2002) reading process involving coding, semantic, pragmatic and critical practice can be applied to digital literacies encountered by students in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) at school. In that study, the authors recognized differences between web and CD-ROM based literature and traditional print media to include “image, movement, graphics, animation, sound and music” (Walsh, Asha & Spraigner, 2007, p.40). In borrowing from Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), their study investigated the peculiarities of visual grammar in recognition that students’ information “processing may be influenced by the synchronous effects of images, colour, line, angle, position or the arrangement of these with movement, animation or sound effects” (p. 41). The key argument put forth by the authors was that educators need to theorize about, identify and develop recognition skills and comprehension strategies to aid students in digital reading. Working from there, the researchers “thought that drawing students’ attention to the visual devices used by the creators of digital texts would better equip them to meet the reading/viewing challenges of digital texts” (p. 42). However, in lending legitimacy to digital literacies needed to decode digital content, are they not also suggesting that much needed time devoted to the development of traditional literacy may not factor so prominently in the curriculum cycle? And what can be said of the effect of prioritizing an emergent literacy over traditional literacy so essential to communication outside of the digital realm?

**New Technologies, Changing Literacies**

Answers to these questions are coming out through the woodwork of research conducted around similar parameters of investigation. In that same study, for example, the overall results suggested that there “was no evidence found of critical practice or the use of any metalanguage related to visual grammar or an awareness of how the visuals were constructing meaning”
(Walsh, Asha & Spraigner, 2007, p. 44). Yet, when the students were prompted, “they could apply their knowledge of visual grammar to the page they were viewing but the use of metalanguage was more artificial at this stage of their learning” (p. 49). However, researchers did find that decoding digital texts “involved the integration of ICT skills with the decoding of words, images and graphics” (p.45) and that “semantic practice was evoked not just by text, but also by images, text, hyperlinks and other digital features” (p. 46). Because the researchers concluded their investigation by wondering whether explicit instruction in visual literacy and grammar needed to be taught to students in order to develop their ability to critique, discern and evaluate digital media, their results can be seen to illustrate a fundamental tension between competing literacies in the coming years.

Wanting to break away from referring to the new age as one characterized by increasing technological proliferation within the classroom and in society at large, other authors have invented a way of talking about all the changes inherent in such a transformative age as the Reading Workshop 2.0 and identify technologies like Kindles, Nooks, iPads and cell phones to be the definitive technologies available in such an environment. Serafini (2010) in particular has found this new environment to break from traditional print-based texts by embracing “multimodal and digitally based texts [which] require readers to attend to visual images, design elements, and hypertextual elements in addition to written language” (Serafini & Young, 2013, p. 401). A subsequent, but unaddressed, question may ask whether such technologies can become widely affordable outside the context of the developed world and whether the ownership of these technologies confers class privileges in the educational environment at ever younger ages.

From the perspective of the investigators, teachers moving towards the Reading Workshop 2.0 must orient their practice around three questions. First, “[h]ow will the role of
children’s literature be affected by [this] shift” (Serafini & Young, 2013, p. 401). Secondly, “[w]hat new abilities and skills will readers need to navigate and comprehend multimodal and digitally based texts and resources?” (p. 401) and finally, “[h]ow do teachers incorporate multimodal and digitally based resources into an already crowded reading curriculum?” (p. 401).

In examining the first question, the authors suggest that e-readers allow greater access to literature containing digital dictionaries to facilitate comprehension as well as links to information and resources related to the reading. The largest break with the traditional print form that new technologies afford is the acknowledgement that while “in the past reading was predominantly an individual experience, it has become a more social event” (Serafini & Young, 2013, p. 402) now and children can explore literature outside of the physical classroom with other users around the world. To answer the second question, Serafini (2012) proposes that students in the Reading Workshop 2.0 will “learn to navigate new text structures, for example, nonlinear narratives, hypertext, and multiple storylines, and understand how visual images and design features add to the meaning potential of these complex texts” (p. 402). The final question is explored through referencing a variety of websites, like Wordle.net, which uses software to generate multimodal associational representations of content (in this case by creating word clouds based on frequency). While advocates of digital media and emergent digital literacies would suggest that literacy learning is becoming more accessible and that the opportunity to develop literacy is unrestricted by the physicality of the traditional classroom, they seem unaware of the economic restrictions that may inhibit disadvantaged social groups from participating in such a technological evolution.

Because I believe that it is morally mandated for educators, students, bureaucrats and all citizens of the ever-growing global polity alike to recognize “the unwarranted privileging of the
techno-scientific curriculum…[and] a deprivileging [of it] such that a clearing can be opened up to allow humanly embodied narratives to dwell contrapuntally with metanarratives” (Aoki, 1993, p. 263), such advocacy through research appears latent with neo-liberal perspectives and its purposeful omission of questions relating to economic accessibility and its effects on democracy engenders an uncritical promotion of hypothetical merits in conjectural futures.

Yet, even as researchers in this field make the observation that technology is exponentially growing in availability, they caution that “purchasing patterns indicate a widening education-based gap in access, a gap that also exists when purchasing patterns are disaggregated by income level” (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012, p.142). This trend directly correlates with the reality that wealthier parents are also more likely to facilitate the integration of this technology into productive and educational user-patterns among their children, while those unfamiliar with it and unable to purchase it will be unable to support their children in learning to use it for things other than socializing and gaming. Going beyond the family and tying in schools, the point is that “[s]tudents need more than access to technology; they need to learn how to apply it strategically to advance their literacy skills” (p. 142). Moreover, tools for assessing literacy, like CAT, or computer-adaptive testing, (p. 147) and Common Core State Standards (p.148) may soon become standard in the U.S.A. Again, we see that the primacy of the American context is prominent in the investigation and promulgation of new technologies and that Dominant and Reconceptualist ideological battles endemic to the re-conceptualization of education as whole in that country factor heavily in the ascension of new pedagogic media elsewhere.

Still, in admitting that research “on matching students to technologies is still in an early stage” (Biancarosa & Griffits, 2012, p. 146), the authors warn against “trying to retrofit a one-size-fits-all curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners” (p. 146). Instead, they advance the
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to “design e-reading technology that attempts to meet the needs of individual learners by assuming and taking into account their diverse needs” (p. 146). I feel this aspect of their advocacy for structural and administrative action is not fully developed in the overview of their research and potentiates a dangerous precedent towards universalism and cultural homogeneity through the promotion of electronic learning media as advanced by transnational corporate capitalism.

Yet even in America, despite all of the advocacy and reported coordination between states, high schools, colleges and academics meeting at national conventions, the authors find that “only two large-scale studies of e-reading technology tools have been conducted as of early 2012” (Serafini & Young, 2013, p. 148) and that both “provide no evidence that large-scale implementation of e-reading technology improves educational outcomes” (p.148). Despite this conclusion, they posit that to “realize fully the potential of the technology’s promise, schools will need to buttress infrastructural supports, including professional development for teachers, systems upgrading and maintaining technology, and efficient and secure data systems” (p. 149). While such ground-work may be viable in developed economies, like the United States and South Korea, countries seeking entry into the international dialogue may find themselves at a decided disadvantage when it comes to the initial investment required to instigate such technologically driven reforms. Moreover, because such initial efforts, themselves, seem to be tenuous in articulating their advantage when it comes to literacy, their commitment to proverbially “go with the flow” may not even accelerate the promotion of English language proficiency domestically.
Ethical Considerations

Obviating the metaphors that inform this concept of transformation in education, this agenda “emphasizes expanding efficiency at the expense of equity, prioritizes testing over critical pedagogical practices, accentuates competition...over cooperation...and endorses individual rights over support for the collective good” (Giroux, 2010, p. 351). In wanting to expand the potential for educators to become key figures in “a new army of critical and passionate winged messengers alert to the need for progressive social solidarities, social agency, collective action, and a refusal to stare hopelessly at the rotting corpses” (Giroux, 2011, p. 599) of atomized, disconnected, hyper-individuals, I cannot endorse my advocacy for such radical, intense and disruptive re-configurations of curricula in countries where EFL teaching has itself resulted in pedagogic overhauls as recently as 1989. Societies like the Czech Republic, which have experienced dramatic economic re-structuring, democratization, and social integration into the European Union in the last decade, may find the implementation of neo-liberally informed technologically-centered pedagogical transformations socio-politically untenable and exhaustive.

Tyner’s (2003) exploration of emerging information, computer technologies and related literacies, for example, identifies the epistemological fissure between constructivist and traditionalist pedagogies as the foundation for social reticence in adopting technological learning environments and multiliteracy. She identifies multiliteracies to include “computer literacy media literacy, visual literacy, intermediality, and digital literacy to name the most prominent” (p. 374). Moreover, her work seeks to “shift the discussion about digital information access from the quantity of available data packets to the quality of contemporary literacy experiences” (p. 374). “Entrenched gaps in information access” grossly relating to socio-economic factors in the USA “are a pointed reminder that millions of people neither participate in nor benefit from the
encroaching digital culture” (p. 373). Arguing from a critical pedagogical perspective, Tyner sees
digital practices and the harnessing of related multiliteracies underscoring a disjunction between
“meaning creation techniques… [and] fact retention and retrieval schemes” (p. 375) within
pedagogical schools. This tension explains the slow pace of the educational system to adopt
empowering pedagogical approaches to multiple literacies to developing mastery in information
technology. The point here, from the perspective of EFL educators, is quite simply that teaching
a foreign language is difficult enough in a foreign setting and that logistical matters, institutional
configurations and economic access to emerging technologies may needlessly complicate the
work they are doing on a daily basis with their students.

Furthermore, the fact that “students seldom use the tools that would help them create
their own knowledge products even when they are available” (Tyner, 2003, p. 376) suggests that
simply widening access to emerging technology among disadvantaged socio-economic
populations does not guarantee their operationalization as modicums for individual or collective
empowerment. Not surprisingly, Tyner sees the debate concerning the adoption of technological
media for educational purposes as emblematic of a larger problem: “that applied, directed, and
delivered pedagogies dominate the curriculum, leaving little breathing room for reflective,
enquiry-based, student-driven, and experimental processes that are the central operating
principles for critical literacy practices” (p. 380). And it is precisely these qualities, operating on
principles that need not be driven by the technological revolution, that can inspire the confidence
that students have to speak from de-colonized spaces in colonial languages as global participants
in something other than its further capitalization. For many, merely being disadvantaged by their
marginal locations as non-English speakers presents a sufficient barrier to overcome and their
newly acquired literacy in a foreign language need not be an adjunct feature of their further
disempowerment from information technology. In very real terms, the concept of multiple digital literacies requires the acquisition of digital literacy before the media content afforded by the technology can be understood from the vantage of traditional linguistic competencies.

It is here, I believe, that my enquiry and the research over-viewed in the previous paragraphs, has successfully and convincingly re-located both teacher and student in education, de-coupling them from the crippling exigencies of market logic, and re-imaging them in the poignant struggle for justice which “grows out of a hermeneutic cosmology…which emphasizes narration and dialogue as key vehicles in [the] interpretation” (Doll, 1993, p. 180) of curriculum and pedagogy. Indeed, such a progressive re-conceptualization, (as I have labelled it from the outset of this project), re-emphasizes the centrality of critical pedagogy in informing my enquiry and co-opts divergent and counter-discursive pedagogies in positing that agency, and by extension, identity, are not “a pre-existing presence…we can re-present by careful scrutiny and copy” (Aoki, 1993, p. 260). We cannot cut-and-paste ourselves into the pseudo-democratic digital world. As Giroux has noted, what happens when we allow and actively seek out “corporate values as the master metaphors for educational change” is that we become blind to the fact that in corporate pedagogy there is “no language for addressing problems, values, issues, and goods that cannot be measured and quantified, or are not subject to the profit-making dictates of neoliberalism” (2010, p. 357). In conflating the effects of neo-liberalism and technological progress, the entire enterprise of education is removed from its ethical commitment to the public good and decoupled from its intrinsically social identity.
Chapter 5: Moving Forward: Praxis

So what is to be done? How can we move forward with equity, justice and generosity while simultaneously maintaining a vigilant, reflective, and critical interrogation of our positions as language teachers? What about our students and their embedded identities within a partially plural-lingual model which dangles English at the top? Well, acknowledging that “[e]xercises in grammatical structures that fragment language at the word or sentence level and neglect the discourse level are not effective” (English Language Learning Standards, 2001, p. 13) is a good starting point. Understanding how “‘subjectivity’ reminds us that an individual can be simultaneously the subject OF a set of relationships (e.g. in a position of power) or subject TO a set of relationships (e.g. in a position of reduced power)” (Weedon, 1987/1997, p.28) within a larger linguistic dimension is also illuminating. Finally, and perhaps most personally encouraging in light of my struggle to coalesce these various theoretical and philosophical orientations into a meaningful product of praxis that articulates the critical value of such (re)imaginings of the fields of TESOL and EFL, “materials and activities, as well as powerful societal discourses, [which] often constrain students’ possibilities for claiming desirable identities” (Weedon, p. 419) must be abandoned and discredited. Rather, I suggest that English language educators turn to an organic emancipation model in language instruction.

Building on Pierre Bourdieu’s philosophy that education can “do anything other than reproduce and legitimate culture as it stands and produces agents capable of manipulating it legitimately” (Bourdieu & Passeron as cited in Gale and Mills, 2007, p. 435) and Paulo Freire’s idea that educators “must develop radical pedagogical structures that provide students with the opportunity to use their own reality as a basis for literacy” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 151), this following annotated lesson plan aims to de-substantiate the value-laden nature of school
curricula in general (and ESL curricula in particular), and to re-politicize them with an acknowledgement that language is a non-neutral social practice.

One concrete example relating to the area of ESL is Lee’s (2011) grounded study of textbook curricula in South Korean high schools showing that “the selectively included contents [do not] nurture the balanced views toward the multicultural world” (p. 55). Instead, the emergent themes of his research demonstrate contrarily, that “in the textbooks under scrutiny, people in Western countries are described as being capable and law-abiding, and they enjoy gender equality and a quality education…[while] people in Asian and African countries tend to be scofflaws, and suffer from gender inequality and low-quality education” (p. 55). This conclusion is difficult to overturn because the availability of teaching resources and materials which replicate conversational English for teaching purposes both re-inscribe and reproduce the dominant discourses which operate hegemonically within our Western societies.
In recalling the previous example given earlier concerning the use of television programs like *Friends*, we may infer that it has positive features in its accurate representation of current American English and negative aspects related to its promotion of American mores, sexual attitudes and the economic affluence of its characters. The use of such a program in an EFL classroom does not need to be left unscrutinized. After viewing an episode, basic assumptions can be challenged: “Why does everyone live in such a luxury apartments while nobody seems to be working?” or “While the cohabitation of siblings in adulthood is not as common as it appears to be in the show, it is a way to cut costs, but is not culturally mandated. How is your experience different in a multi-generational setting?”

Still, constructing a practicable and portable framework that is sensitive to the demands of a critical curriculum necessitates a closer examination of teacher-student interaction, student-to-student interaction and associated socio-cultural factors is possible. Even when we examine pedagogical strategies that have been revised and distanced from direct instructional models, like scaffolded Initiation Response Evaluation (IRE) and Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) cycles, we see that their *a priori* construction as triadic exchanges limits their utility in generating varied, let alone, liberatory possibilities for dialogue in classrooms (Thoms, 2012, p. 512-513). With such a finding in mind, it is easy to stipulate the addition of probing questions which will expound the IRE/IRF models to generate more meaningful exchanges between teachers and foreign language learners. Simply demanding the repetition of a triadic exchange (as in the diagram below) of every student in the classroom, may not lead them to develop the conversational confidence or aptitude to engage other students in dialogue or foreigners on the
street.

Figure 5.2. The Bronfenbrenner classification (1977) represents the interdependency of multidimensional interactions affecting the EFL classroom.

In providing for the real possibility that English language classrooms represent, in themselves, a kind of imagined community of English language interaction that offers both the motivation and personal investment for language acquisition (Norton, 2000) among our students, exercises that illicit a rigid and mechanistic replication of grammatical structures in English deny the very emancipatory potential of that environment as a co-constructed one. This is consistent with the revelations arising from conversational analysis in applied linguistics that see human interaction as an emergent and collectively organized event (Thoms, 2012). Thus, a genuine effort should be made to expand semiotic awareness and cognitive abilities in the active utilization of the target language, and not simply its sterile reproduction.
Figure 5.3. A typical representation of Western normativity assumed in EFL activity books for learners of all ages. The brain-storming on the right orients us away from teaching from the material and re-focuses and re-contextualizes the lesson to illicit student initiated associations.
Moving away from speaking exercises and focusing on writing, for example, we can apply the same critical perspective and evoke some of the lived-situatedness of our students in a way that is amenable not only to their socio-political identities as foreign language learners seeking to empower themselves, but as learners who employ diverse and multiple personal strategies for internalizing the functional aspects of acquiring that target language. From this perspective, “[t]he task of teachers, then, is not to prescribe a generalized writing process but to help students develop their own writing processes for various writing situations by providing strategies for developing, organizing, and expressing ideas and by creating opportunities for writing” (Racelis & Matsuda, 2013, p. 386). Another way of (de)centering the local or situational disparity between teacher and student roles can be as simple as explaining to students that their target audience does not necessarily have to be the teacher, thereby expanding the potential to empower students to enter into discourse communities that are not fixed by the logistics or arrangements of the classroom environment itself. In this way, the students enter into an organically, co-constructed and shared emancipatory model of language instruction.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

It was early in 2009 at the beginning of my EFL career that I had a conversation with an American colleague in Gwangju, South Korea, about our roles as educators in a private English academy which attracted numerous students from middle and upper class backgrounds because of its English kindergarten program. I remember having a lively debate with my colleague that morning in the staff room as he mentioned that he was not too concerned about the content of his lessons because he was “just teaching English.” This blasé attitude towards ESL instruction, as I then came to realize, characterized the opinions held by many new teachers coming to our school as it expanded and opened three additional campuses. Implicit in his statement was the Anglo-American notion, borne of dominance and privilege, that teaching English was not as important as teaching other disciplines and that one should not over-analyze their position as a teacher in a foreign society because the EFL curriculum, in being both neutral and given a-priori, was somehow impossible to get wrong or negatively impact our students.

As an immigrant whose third language is English, I knew intuitively that English, like all languages, carries with it a world view and a value system that can elevate people to positions of privilege and power within their societies locally and globally. Now, since the end of the Cold War, with the unique position of the United States as a sole superpower and the emergence of English as a lingua franca, the power of the English language has become global and a person’s command of it can elevate them both within their own societies and empower them as global citizens.

In this project, I have argued that teachers need to be aware of the intersection of socio-political forces that have shaped the globalization of English and critically challenged the dominant discourses implicit in the EFL and TESOL curricula while counter-referencing the
development of these strands of language instruction with their roots in ESL and EAL. “Because language, culture and identity are integrally related, language teachers are in a key position to address educational inequality” (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p.3). While prescriptive methodologies for teaching grammar lessons and specific selections of materials for such lessons is lacking in this paper, these absences are the direct result of my attempts to create portable solutions to a multitude of educational contexts which don not rely on environmental or systemic constraints like budgeting, internal administration, or issues of legality and governmentality. By deploying concepts similar to those outlined in the previous chapter, curriculum makers and instructors can avoid the re-colonization and marginalization of people and cultures seeking greater participation in a multi-centred, multicultural world community. The issue of operationalization of various components of curricula are ultimately subject to the discretion of the instructors, the availability of resources and institutional support, and the amenability of pedagogies to student populations. Thus, although the origins of critical pedagogy have been commonly associated with the work Paulo Freire (Kinchole, 2007, 2008; McLaren, 2007), in this work, critical pedagogy is understood more loosely understood as “a set of critical and educational principles that can guide and support teachers’ critical engagement with the forces determining the reality of classroom life” (Darder, as cited in Lee, 2008, p. 13).

While much of the literature reviewed throughout the chapters of this project has revealed troubling trends in EFL education, for myself and educators seeking to critically engage in counter-discursive practices which co-opt critical pedagogy and ontology, the lived curriculum and localized/regional knowledge systems can combat the dehumanizing and mechanistic practices of corporate pedagogies advocated by the ministers of neoliberal reforms. In this sense, the creation of new pedagogies, the addition of new resources, and the resequencing or omission
of old materials and approaches constitute the heterogeneous and necessary hermeneutics of language instruction. Together, these are signs and markers of pedagogical hope, as evidenced in the organic praxis that I have outlined in the final section.

And while the bulk of the paper has delved into re-configurations and re-structuring attempts within the public and private sectors of foreign language education, we cannot overlook the effects of neo-liberalism in non-governmental and non-profit sectors which have traditionally escaped these radical re-conceptualizations. Recent investigations into places where public education is unavailable and private education unaffordable, local development non-governmental organizations’ (LDNGOs) efforts to supplant the gap with their own initiatives and resources have been moderately successful because the language of the market has penetrated their area of activity as well. As Crisovao and Loureiro (2010) conclude in their ethnographic study of adult education in northern Portugal, “it would seem that the greater the financial dependency of such LDNGOs and their adult education staff, the greater will be the tendency for them to resort to a mechanistic use of specialized knowledge systems…as a means of gaining and maintaining access to funding” (p.434). In that study and others like it, we can clearly see that market logic engenders linear client relations among all actors, usurping their potential agency in ways which discriminates and discourages its use outside of the economic sphere. The reality is that many NGOs are clients of their funders and operate under direct mandate from respective federal governments and supranational organizations: their staff are clients of theirs, and their students-clients in need of education to supplant the supposed gap not provided by public and corporate means. Here it is important to restate that evaluation matrices that conform to these ends will inevitably reproduce the inadequacies of corporate valuations; affecting in their turn curriculum makers, policy brokers, instructors and students. Again, local configurations are
so numerous, unpredictable and heterogeneous that the preclude any specific recommendations from being made within this project. As we have seen, even the far-reaching promises of technology and new literacies (as they refer directly to the manipulation of virtual media) are complicated by internal and external factors relating chiefly to their economic feasibility, their exigencies for support and infrastructure and the ultimate purpose of their usage; whether educational or otherwise. More attention needs to be paid to this growing trend and more research needs to be done within various English language learning contexts to substantiate claims that remain largely theoretical because of the nascent nature of these transformations.

Across the board, whether in public, private or non-profit and non-governmental sectors, “it is possible to carry out activities that do not reproduce the orientations provided by state entities” (Crisovao & Loureiro, 2010, p.433) or their financial benefactors. Observations abound in all contexts including foreign language instruction that teachers can and often do re-contextualize the dominant discourse through their partial use and/or pedagogical re-sequencing and modification of curriculum materials. In this sense, resistance to hegemonic meta-narratives that inform curriculum and pedagogy need not be dramatic departures from them, but can be careful, inventive and improvisational re-appropriations.

Although schools are social institutions that disseminate standardized and valued knowledge to students so that they may integrate and succeed in a world informed by and structured according to, dominant hierarchies, they need not entrench those hierarchies. Language schools and academies are no different. As Bartlett (2005) contends, scholars “have questioned how knowledge is produced and how politics influence the determination of what counts as official or legitimate knowledge” (p. 362). Thus, while there is increasing sensitivity and recognition of multiple cultures, knowledges, literacies and identities within school
environments, there is a poignant need on behalf of educators to perform vigorous self-analysis to eliminate personal bias and stance to ensure that difference is not stifled in the classroom. By extension, our roles as educators, particularly in foreign language instruction, should be to “help [students] know better what they already know and, on the other hand, teach them what they don’t know yet” (Freire, 1998, p.78).
References


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