

## Considering Critical Pedagogy in Constructing Models for EFL Materials Model Development

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### **Abstract:**

*Critical pedagogy is enforced in ELT programs intending to develop both teachers and learners in order to reveal significant cultural principles, ideologies and values in educational settings and society, and to morph them into agents in their society. However, in spite of the surge in the number of investigations in the field of critical L2 pedagogy, little ink has been spilled on materials development in critical pedagogy. Regarding materials as the basic repertoire in language-learning initiatives, the present paper endeavored to provide and develop a framework for ELT materials designers based on the main aspects of critical pedagogy. The tenets and principles of this model were structured based on the main factors which are involved in materials development, including learner, teacher, program, content, and pedagogical items. This model developed sensitivity to the local context particularities and to the learners' concerns and problems. It strategize and develop ways to aid the learners to bolster and sharpen their second language skills while developing a feeling of critical thinking and consciousness regarding social structures in their world. It could make contributions and be useful for local materials developers and language teachers in designing and developing critical evaluation in ELT materials. The model might assist students to be more critical thinker and consumers of information.*

*Keywords: Critical pedagogy; Cultural values; Ideology; Materials development.*

### **Introduction**

Taking a Look at education in terms of a political enterprise, critical pedagogy seeks to raise and advance learner's critical thinking and consciousness to enable them to know about their

sociopolitical issues surrounding them and to counter the status quo, with the intention of modification and transformation both in their classroom and in a larger society (Toohey, 2004). Albeit critical pedagogy primarily developed in the 1970s by Freire who was the most eminent critical pedagogue, it stepped into the second language arena from the late 1980s when second language teaching was dealt with by the communicative approaches and pragmatic attitudes (Canagarajah, 2005).

In an English language teaching, critical pedagogy does not regard the cultural/ political neutrality. It is argued that it is inevitable to discount the issues of power hegemony, and social inequities that are concealed by English language teaching (Sadeghi, 2009). As many researchers scrutinize such issues, many investigations have been conducted in terms of both theoretical and practical considerations to flesh out these issues. The probes are set up in different aspects of critical EFL/ESL including looking for critical classroom practices, developing teachers for improvement, critical evaluation, challenging learners' and adjusting materials for critical pedagogies (Toohey, 2004). This last point can be completely vital particularly for beginning teachers. Regarding this point, it is maintained that critical target language pedagogy can be bolstered in terms of practicality if further various sample materials putting operationalize language theories in critical L2 pedagogy classrooms in operation are given access to (Crookes, 2009).

Not many investigations have been conducted on materials development dealing with critical pedagogy and the whole area has remained virtually underdeveloped. Due to the lack of a comprehensive framework in order to design and develop materials regarding critical pedagogy, this probe aims at providing a framework on materials-design where the core pedagogic values and principles of critical pedagogy are considered, added and utilized. This model aimed to develop a teaching materials model with the objective of spearheading educational systems to develop to students to make contributions in transforming the society. With the mentioned objective in mind, this investigation endeavored to find answers to the following questions

1. Looking at the philosophies of critical pedagogy what are the principles which can be derived from these philosophies in developing materials?
2. How could these principles get applied to develop a model to design, write, modify or assess ELT materials?

Critical pedagogy discusses the educational objectives and the processes. Education in terms of critical considerations elucidates the links and relations among knowledge, perception, authority and power. Critical pedagogy came into existence in the 1960s and 1970s when doubts were cast on the prolonged educational societal power system. However, the term itself was not applied until almost two decades ago in 1983. Brazilian researcher Freire (1970), the leading figure in the movement, initially discussed the issues of power and social inequality in the launched literacy programs and proposed critical pedagogy as an important approach in dealing

with these issues (Baladi, 2007). With the influence of issues like feminist, postmodernism, anti-racist, and queer, critical pedagogy was expanded from social class to bring more categories such as , age, nationality, gender sexuality, race, ethnicity under the spotlight.

Freire (1970) questions the traditional framework of education and calls it a banking model in which students are regarded as empty vessels to be filled by their educator. The implementation this model results in subjugation and oppression. To get that right, Freire puts forward problem posing education which is transpired through dialogue in which educators and students take a critical look on their classmates and in such situations teachers challenge their students by asking but stimulating questions regarding students' problems (Sadeghi, 2009).

Problem posing education explores the problematic situation as a real and holistic system in their engagement and interaction with other systems rather than a distinct situation and its own parts. In this system, learners look at the existing or emerging contradictions in the problems they have perceived and attempt to reveal the hidden issues to sort it out. Learning situations using problem posing education consolidates stimulating questions or thought-provoking questions. Such questions come from generative themes whose first stage in a critical literacy work is to identify such generative themes by exploring the learners' life realities. The themes are utilized in codification, de-codification as well as recodification stages (Crawford, 1978). Codification comes as a representative of generative themes pertaining to the learner's life situations in forms a sketch, photograph, film, a drawing, etc. (Heaney, 1995). De-codification comes as exploring learners' ideas and interpreting their ideas regarding cultural, traditional, and political aspects of themes to look at the interaction of a phenomenon with other phenomena (Crawford, 1978).

One of the features distinguishing critical pedagogy from other fields is dialogue in which the context and individuals in the classroom are seen as community members in a manner that all of them teach and all learn. In this regard, there would be mutual trust and acceptance between learners and the teacher. This approach of critical pedagogy goes against the anti-dialogical approach which believes in a hierarchical classroom structure of teacher over students (Crawford, 1978).

Looking at a critical curriculum, Freire and Macedo (1987) assert that an educational program needs to be much more than reading comprehension so that a critical curriculum sets the stage for reading the world which is helping the students to become aware of existing differences between nature made by natural forces which remains unchanged and culture made by humans that can be changed and the whole process takes place while reading the word (Sticht, 2006). When colonial language is taught to students it is always regarded as an activity which can be debated which overflow with political issues and in target language education an innocent stance is mainly adopted toward the work (Canagarajah, 2005). ELT used to be viewed as clean and safe exports involving a few ethical issues utilized to make communications (Baladi, 2007).

It is argued that the cause of such attitudes can be tracked in the structuralistic standpoints about language (Cangarjah, 2005). However, as Cangarajah puts it critical advocates maintain that such political principles are boosted by sociopolitical issues and he argues that after the cold war was over ELT took a shift to a significant activity and English was discussed as a more influential source to push ahead with hegemony. Pennycook (1990) also regards the dominating linguistic principles as a cover-up to conceal the controversial ideological objectives and materials in ELT classrooms in an attempt to define critical pedagogy in ELT. Critical learners and teachers are wanted and designated to get their actual life experiences and wants into the their classroom to bring into the light the implications of power in pedagogical activity and efforts to modify the tools and goals of learning in order to develop more educational, social and ethical environment. In this regard Akbari (2008) claims that the discourse of critical pedagogy is viewed as the discourse of hope and liberation.

Critical pedagogy experts in the field of second language teaching are mainly interested to look at the ways that social ties and relationship as well as issues of power are resolved in language (Toohey, 2004). In this vein language is not just as a vehicle to make communication rather it is an implementation of that structures, and is built around the ways language learners perceive themselves, their histories, social surroundings and their likelihoods for the future.

As the criticisms on English language teaching were given rise to, materials as the core of the educational setting also have faced critical assessment. Many applied linguists put a question mark over the content of mainstream materials in ELT world. For example, Crookes (2009) suggested that in order to bolster the practicality of critical L2 pedagogy with more accessibility and variety of fully figured out sample materials that teachers need to be familiarized with the in critical L2 pedagogy classrooms as well as a framework in which the main vital principles which need to be taken into account in developing and assessing materials could be useful for teachers and local materials developers. Since there is less research conducted to deal with materials development in critical pedagogy, as Crookes also holds the same belief, this inquiry attempted to develop and present a model in designing materials in line with the established philosophies of critical pedagogy.

### **Method**

Since the aim of this probe was to elicit the philosophies' implications in critical pedagogy to design ELT materials, a general understanding of critical pedagogy was called for. The investigation made an effort to carry out by going through the philosophy and the history of critical pedagogy in the previous section. Moreover, it was also required to have a clearer definition of materials and the main contributors which are involved in designing ELT materials. To define materials, this inquiry adopted comprehensive definition provided by Tomlinson (1998) in which material refers to books, computer software, dictionaries and all sorts of visual and audio aids used by teachers and students facilitate learning. To deploy main contributors to design materials this investigation used Richards' (2001) proposal in which five factors are

specified by which in each situation all the questions needed to that situation are formulated. These factors are as follows

1. Factors involved in program: questions pertaining to issues of concerns in the program.
- . 2. Factors related to teachers: questions pertaining to teachers' concerns
3. Factors related to learner: questions pertaining to learners' concerns.
4. Factors related to content: questions related to the organization and content of the materials in the book.

5. Factors related to pedagogical issues: questions pertaining to principles underscoring the materials as well as the pedagogical design of the materials, namely alternatives in planning activities and exercises. The researchers utilized an adapted and supplemented a model developed by Richards' (2001) by breaking up factors into sub-groups, like what follows:

1. Factors related to program

- a. Purpose which are related to the ultimate purpose of the program
- b. Objectives which are related to the existing results of the program

.2. Factors related to content

- a. Definition of content which is related to the definition of the themes employed in materials
- b. Content source which is related to the source of selecting content
- c. Content arrangement which is related to the sequence of the content

.related to pedagogical issues 3. Factors

- a. The process of education which is related to the approaches of perceiving education in the materials
- b. The stance of source culture which is related to the local cultures positions in ELT materials

.4. Factors related to teachers

- a. Teachers' role which is related to the role that a material takes for the teacher
- b. Expectations of teachers which related to the expectations which presuppose teachers bring to the classroom in their use of materials.

.related to learners 5. Factors

- a. Learners' roles which are related to the roles that a material assume for the learner
- b. Expectations of learners which are related to the expectations which presuppose learners bring into the classroom in their use of materials.

### Results and Discussion

This part tries to find answers for the investigation questions by offering and outlining some principles and offering their obtained implications. The principles discussed here are structured in accordance with the five major factors and their sub-groups presented in the previous section. These principles are followed by a discussion to corroborate them.

Dealing with program factors and purposes as stated by principle number one that ELT materials need to stimulate learners' communicative abilities through the application of these abilities to raise and advance learners' critical consciousness on their world and their ability to act accordingly.

**Discussion:** The majority the ELT materials are to put together information and the related activities with the purpose of bolstering English communicative abilities without considering the social issues. Such materials have been constructed to deal with traditional banking education. But when it comes to critical pedagogy, language program materials should sharpen learners' language skills and broaden their awareness of the social structures at the same time to bring about efficacy in an English language program. In other words, as Crookes puts it in a critical L2 pedagogy, materials pursue a mutual objective and the general goal of practices in language is to assist learners to read with something or someone and also to read against someone or something. Critical literacy cannot not confined just to some texts interrogation but it also deals with the real world realities and the role that language in line with power and injustice plays. Therefore, the main mission to achieve in developing ELT materials should be to assist students to read their world when read their word.

Regarding objectives as stated by principle number two that if the materials seek to achieve a joint target, then ELT materials having a critical pedagogical approach are anticipated to bring two main findings: first, language skills and social development on the part of the learners.

**Discussion:** As maintained by Reagan (2002) critical L2 pedagogy as an interdisciplinary education enjoys two main goals that need to come to surface in ELT materials. As it was stated it was anticipated in critical pedagogy that students feel empowered through getting involved in the emancipatory praxis, which is a cycle of action followed by reflection so that the ultimate result is that students make new discovery in challenging the status quo and getting involved in the process of transforming actions to smooth away inequalities while they try to bolster their skills and the mastery of the second language. This joint finding is discussed by Freire (1987).

A critical curriculum allows learners to gear up to be reading the world while they are reading the word. In this regard, ELT materials need to be developed in a manner that can aid learners to move beyond mere understanding the written words and to arrive at an understanding of the world realities and take measures to reform the world. Commercially speaking, ELT materials usually include a set of predetermined goals and findings before the learning situations take place. But on account of a critical pedagogy framework such transparent and precise findings remain unidentified because nothing more than the ultimate holistic finding which is taking social measures, can be predetermined. To back up these lines, Crawford (1978) maintains that in pedagogy developed by Freire, students should determine the content and the form of their creative actions through the identification of their own requirements for information and skills. What the materials should do, then, is to offer plenty of generative themes or as what Crawford's (1978) states the words and actions which invoke themes from the students' lives as a point to start learning. ELT material developers can design a number of activities to enable learners to accomplish effective results. The activities need to drive learners and teachers to partake into a dialogical implementation while they are going through different language skills and allow them to identify the linguistic content. Learners and teachers can look at traditions and cultural values, as well as beliefs both in their first language and second language and look into the similarities and dissimilarities between two cultures, contaminate about both language cultures and the existing interrelationship, and move toward structural inequities transformation. In this phase, Crawford (1978) utilizes a delicate term "reviewable conclusion" in order to bring attention to the issue that the conclusion made by the students is not final as a perception and conclusions themselves turn into a subject to perception which is to convey the cyclic fashion of praxis.

Dealing with factors related to content principle number three states that the topics and themes added into the ELT materials need to prompt considerable discussion and explorations analysis.

**Discussion:** As stated by Crawford (1978) roots of critical ELT programs are those themes which are generative. Such themes coming from students' existential situations later would be utilized processing praxis to be the goal contamination. The themes are to be employed within the already discussed stages that are termed codification, de-codification and recodification. The generative themes offered by the learners should define the structure of the ELT materials content. Such themes can center on some topics of the first language culture or the second language culture or the existing relationship between the two like the role played by the minority in the society, roles that males or females can play, dominance which prevails in some social classes, or the stance taken by English in non-English language countries, namely the position of non-English languages in English language countries. Moreover, some of the themes also could spread to inquire about other generative themes. For example, when it comes to looking into the implications that arise from the English internationalization it may result in the problems hovering around the economic hegemony and power in the world. The teacher, then, can develop

the topics suggested by designers into English and identify the needed vocabulary and structures that learners need to learn and offer resources for learning language.

As mentioned by Crawford (1978) the linguistic content may also bring about some cultural points which can be negotiated by the learners to ascertain the differences between their first and second language social events structures such as, insults, greetings, authority relationship and request and to look at their significant values.

Approaching content sources principle number four points out that source of the themes in developed materials need to be coming from the students' life situations, interests, wants and needs. To discuss it the critical pedagogy philosophies are fallen back on based on which individuals' life experiences need to be the starting point in getting onto education. Freire (1970) ensures motivation by linking the learners' existential situations to the content of materials and he the subject matter to fit the learner rather than the learners to the subject matter (Crawford, 1978).

The final and the most significant goal is related to effecting transformative measures in order for better conditions creation. It is regarded essential that learners hold a true perception of their lives and the extension of English as a global language to all regions and take action against the perceived imbalance. This perception could evolve by approaching students' actual realities and interests in ELT contexts. The criterion to single out the themes in critical pedagogy does not deal with the learners' current interests but the reality in the learners' lives which spurs and escalates problems that learners may not perceive them but when through dialogue they face and understand the themes as problems their interests would be kindled (Crawford, 1978).

Getting onto content arrangement and principle number five which states that ELT materials need to consider the intellectual progress the learners make in making arrangements for the content.

**Discussion:** Intellectuality is a main element in how to see the world and take action accordingly. Social- intellectual developments aid learners to stimulate their confidence in viewing and reading the world surrounding them. ELT materials can sharpen learners' intellectuality while the content sequence heads towards a greater complexity, and towards a less familiar and more abstract (Roberts, 2000).

#### 4.3.1. Educational Process

Dealing with educational process, principle number six states that it is vital to prompt students to reflect and act in the cycle by embracing dialogical problems which pose practices.

**Discussion:** The human vocation related to critical pedagogy is fully satisfied by taking measures to alter the world to bring about life conditions improvement. To attain this vocation, it is argued that people need to see and treat themselves as reflective humans (Crawford, 1978).

Therefore, aim of education should revolve around people's human vocation fulfillment by bringing the cycle of reflection and action in the process. This requires learners to partake in dialogical problems which pose practices. In the cycle of problem posing practice, the students should first enjoy decision-making opportunities on the content of their discussion like generative themes. Then, they attempt to link the problem or the question to their own lives, in other words, they personalize the problem. Then, the teacher raise a number of questions with the aim to critically challenge learners and moves them to initiate a discussion about the, political and cultural reasons causing the problem, as well as socioeconomic problems namely, de-codification. It is argued by Crawford (1978) that the traditional classroom discussions go against what are supposed to take place in discussion-oriented classes and are anti-dialogical so that that they are discussions in approaching a predefined idea. Such an idea already predefined may or may not bear striking similarities to the learners' perceptions and experiences but it is what they are to believe. In such a discussion, learners get their experiences together to define the topic and articulate what they think about them.

Dealing with the stance adaptation in approaching the source culture Principle number seven states that ELT materials hang their content on source culture. Discussion: As English spreading across the globe, the need for learners to integrate into Anglo-American culture has been eliminated. Including source culture, like students' own culture, in materials content is of high value since concentrating on local cultures help students to ruminate on their own positive and negative culture characteristics and consequently analyze and discover possibilities bring about changes in the society if is called for (Akbari, 2008). Moreover, regarding learners' culture as the starting point, empowering learners is added value to, by predisposing them to grow critically aware and displaying respect towards their own culture and stifle a sense of inferiority that may stem from an absolute reliance on the culture of the second language where only the notable and praiseworthy characteristics of the culture are highlighted.

Compatible with what was explored pertaining to this factor a brief example will follow to shed more light on the process of education in ELT materials. It is supposed that this example epitomizes Iranian ELT classrooms. The theme of the investigation is to trivialize villagers, minorities in Iranian films that was discussed in principle seven. This example seeks to get learners aware of the hidden ideologies in the movies. In such movies, the higher prestige characters like chairmen, doctors, engineers, generally speak with a standard-Persian accent whereas the lower prestige ones like workers, servants, speak with a villager accent or the accent picked up a minority group, for example, speaking with a Turkish accent. The chosen theme is a productive theme since it may initiate remarkable discussion once the learners perceive it as a problem as stated in principle.

In approaching codification stage, different sections of one or two movies are chosen. Then, in the stage of de-codification, teachers start ask questions and direct attention to the related issue, and students attempt to paint a picture of the situation to questions they are

addressed to, and include their own experiences, information, and questions while the teacher can help students develop their English language competence. When the learners get the handle on the problem, they can act against the situation causing problems so they become involved in the process of praxis which is principle six. For example, they will succeed in writing a letter or sending an email to someone who is in charge, or they will succeed in preparing a text thanks to their perception and get it published in a magazine. It should be mentioned that all of these communications come about in a discussion-like setting which is principle six while learners bolster their three skills namely listening, speaking and writing skills which is principle one and two.

It should be considered that involvement in such discussions-like settings usually calls for learners' proficiency in the second language. However, critical pedagogy allows lower proficient learners to make use of their first language logically. As stated by Akbari (2008) the judicious utilization of the learners' first language could be regarded as a springboard to spur transformation in the community. But it is anticipated that learners use their target language highly as their proficiency builds up increases.

Dealing with factors related to teachers and their role principle number eight maintains that ELT materials should consider the role of teacher as a co-learner and coordinator.

**Discussion:** as it was discussed in banking education, in the target language teacher's role has been regarded as an expert with authority who imparts information to the learners. In critical pedagogy framework, as stated by Crookes and Lehner (1998) on the other hand the class acts as a learning community and the teacher needs to be seen as a member of the community engaging in the praxis so that the teachers and their learners would negotiate their ideas, experiences and perceptions. As postulated by Degener (2001) ELT materials have the teachers as problem posers, who ask questions having the potential to develop learners to further ruminate on the facets of their lives which may look unchangeable.

As Crawford (1978) brings it to attention ELT materials cannot be in a fashion that encourage and fuel the teachers' traditional role in giving lecture, knowledge distribution and the situation management. Accordingly, the materials need to develop an atmosphere in which all contributors teach and all learn. This indicates that, each member in the community can be both a teacher and a learner at the same time. However, considerable significance should be attached to the teachers' linguistic knowledge. But their skills and knowledge should not be distributed, but contributed to and appraised by the study group.

Dealing with expectations of teachers, principle nine states that in ELT materials, it is anticipated that teachers would not only impart language knowledge but also they raise their learners' awareness of the implications effected by the internationalization of English.

**Discussions:** Teachers viewed as transformative intellectuals are anticipated to know the political and socioeconomic issues involved in English teaching. Asserted by Pennycook (1995) the English teachers need to be sensitized to the implications brought by the spread of English so that the production and reproduction of global inequalities is given rise. It means that teachers have the responsibilities to scrutinize ELT initiatives to develop learners' critical awareness in language use and their sensitivity to the language ideological facets aspects. To make these effective outcomes attainable, apart from having helpful critical materials, the English teachers' knowledge on the merits and demerits of social structures and the English as an international language is called for.

When it comes to the factors in engaging learners and learners' role principle 10 states that ELT materials need to take account of their learners' role in decision-making and subject of the act.

**Discussion:** ELT materials need to discourage the passivized role learners may play in which learners are passive recipients. The materials developers should put their trust in learners' ability to carry the learning process forward, and learners should act but not be acted on. (Crawford, 1978).

To see how learners fulfill expectation and principle 11, it was anticipated that students increase their critical consciousness as they develop their language mastery.

**Discussion:** A students' evaluation is a vital part in critical language initiatives (Freire, 1998). Activities to evaluate learners' performance, however, need to approach the, maturity and the way the learners are empowered. In this regard evaluation turns into real expressions learners' unique perception and language learning use. For example, an evaluative activity can be a text or a picture insinuating a problem going unperceived when people commonly see it as a social norm but not as a problem. Then activity can ask learners to express their perceptions on the text or picture. ELT materials, can also offer some activities to size up accumulated linguistic competence. Crawford (1978) considers two positive facets of such activities. First of all, these activities are able to show the students the extent and quality of the cognitive development as well as their improved ability to make use of language they also can specify the credibility of the critical language pedagogy so that ELT materials need to move beyond designating typical homework assignment and assigning some tasks and requiring learners to compile, choose, ready topics and learning sources (Crawford, 1978).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This investigation set about developing a model for ELT materials which dovetails with the main principles of critical language pedagogy. As a result, this investigation has propounded eleven principles sensitized to the students' real lives. It has attempted to raise students' critical awareness and prompt them to act against the imbalance of their surrounding world. One of the criticisms levelled against critical pedagogy deals with its critical educational theory rather than

a critical pedagogy. According to Baladi (2007) this denotes that critical pedagogy revolves around a theory and goes without usability and falls through in practice. The same goes for the ELT materials model discussed and developed in this probe. But according to Kanpol (1998) this claim can be excused because every reality and situation and differs and consequently one fail to provide the ten steps for a critical pedagogy although, the starting point in critical pedagogy centers on such situations and realities. However, critical pedagogy conversely, works against any formulaic enterprise so that all prescribed and neatly organized procedures have been offered for all different realms.

This developed model is dynamics and shows how critical pedagogy materials should be constructed. This model can be utilized to guide teachers and local materials developers to lead them to the right direction but it is the learners' immediate needs that determine the topics, content, as well as the organization of the materials. The issue of globalizing English makes it vital to effect the critical pedagogy tenets in the developed ELT initiatives and materials. However, the curriculum designers have to abide by some mandates that some peddle and contradict the social justice goals social justice. To smooth away this problem Reagan put forward a solution by which teachers employ curricular nullification to strategize instructional planning. Curricular nullification acknowledges that teachers may confirm, support, manipulate any part of the curriculum as soon as they close the door to the classroom they lead (Graney, 2003).

To round off the conclusion, it is worth bringing up that when all the curriculum, materials, and teachers accord with critical pedagogy, one must not expect learners to immediately get into their new role characterized by critical pedagogy. It takes time to enforce this transition and as argued by Crawford (1978) the teacher can expedite such transition and adaption from a passive role to this active one through sufficient time allocation so that the transition materializes and by refraining from decisions which the students should make and teachers recognize, accept and approve of the outcomes of the learners' actions as valuable.

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