1 *Critical pedagogies and language learning: An introduction*

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Advocates of critical approaches to second language teaching are interested in relationships between language learning and social change. From this perspective, language is not simply a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future. This collection assembles the work of a variety of scholars interested in critical perspectives on language education in globally diverse sites of practice. All are interested in investigating the ways that social relationships are lived out in language and how issues of power, while often obscured in language research and educational practice (Kubota, this volume), are centrally important in developing critical language education pedagogies. Indeed, as Morgan (this volume) suggests, "politically engaged critiques of power in everyday life, communities, and institutions" are precisely what are needed to develop critical pedagogies in language education. The chapters have varying foci, seeking to better understand the relationships between writers and readers, teachers and students, test makers and test takers, teacher–educators and student teachers, and researchers and researched.

The term *critical pedagogy* is often associated with the work of scholars such as Freire (1968/1970), Giroux (1992), Luke (1988), Luke and Gore (1992), McLaren (1989), and Simon (1992) in the field of education. Aware of myriad political and economic inequities in contemporary societies, advocates have explored the "social visions" that pedagogical practices support (Simon, 1992), and critiques of classroom practices in terms of their social visions have been common and longstanding in critical educational literature.[1] Feminist critiques have also considered classroom practice and have identified ways in which the relationships and activities of classrooms contribute to patriarchal, hierarchical, and dominating practices in wider societies (e.g., Davies, 1989; Ellsworth, 1989; Gaskell, 1992; Spender, 1982; Walkerdine, 1989). In second language education, critiques of classroom practices in terms of the social visions such practices support are relatively recent but are increasingly being published in major venues.[2]

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All the chapters in this volume share this aim – that is, to consider how, in diverse sites of language education, practices might be modified, changed, developed, or abandoned in efforts to support learners, learning, and social change. At the same time, most of the authors here remind us that critical pedagogy cannot be a unitary set of texts, beliefs, convictions, or assumptions. Like Pavlenko (this volume), these authors describe *local* situations, problems, and issues and see responsiveness to the particularities of the local as important in the equitable and democratic approaches they are trying to develop. In seeking to resist totalizing discourses about critical teaching, subjects, and strategies for progressive action, we have used the term *critical pedagogies* in the title of our book.

While each of the authors represented here uses critical lenses to reflect on the teaching and research practices in her or his community, there are important differences of focus across the chapters. We have therefore decided to divide the book into four sections, each with a slightly different emphasis. In doing so, however, we recognize that the distinctions between sections are not clear-cut and that many overlapping themes emerge. Such themes are discussed in greater detail later in this introduction.

Organization of the book and chapter summaries

Reconceptualizing second language education

The first section of the book brings perspectives from four scholars in diverse contexts who consider the critical in language learning and teaching with foci on race, gender, pedagogy, and assessment. The first chapter, by Allan Luke, considers what can be meant by the term *critical* in language education. Reminding us of its roots in liberation movements and the politically engaged scholarship of the Frankfurt School, Luke argues that critical pedagogical approaches "call up for scrutiny, whether through embodied action or discursive practice, the rules of exchange within a social field." These entail (as described by Freire in 1970) externalization, naming, and questioning the world, to accompany action that resists the psychological and physical violence and material disempowerment that many language students have experienced. Noting "there can be no more overtly normative challenges to educational systems, educators, and the state other than how they manage their cultural and linguistic Others," Luke sees critical pedagogies as necessary to engage with the experiences of these marginalized learners.

The issue of cultural and linguistic disempowerment also engages Ryuko Kubota in a chapter that invites us to rethink notions of multiculturalism. Drawing on her experience in the North American context, she makes the argument that while most teachers in the field of language

learning are sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity among their students, many have not adequately recognized the extent to which power operates to reinforce inequalities in both classrooms and communities. She contrasts notions of *liberal multiculturalism*, which she maintains is a color-blind, relatively superficial conception of multiculturalism, with *critical multiculturalism*, which addresses in greater depth such issues as race, gender, and class. Critical multiculturalism, she argues, has an "intellectual alliance" with critical pedagogy in that it aims to raise student consciousness about unjust social practices and helps them to become active agents for social change. Further, because of the inclusive and antiracist orientation of critical multiculturalism, she examines issues of whiteness in educational debates. While arguing that discussions of whiteness should avoid essentialism, Kubota makes the case that white privilege is not normally viewed as a racial identity for whites just as male privilege is generally not recognized by males as part of male identity. She concludes that multicultural education needs to go beyond color-blind arguments of equality and inclusion to include a focus on social justice and transformation.

While Kubota's chapter addresses issues of race in language learning and teaching, Aneta Pavlenko turns her attention to questions of gender with a focus on both second and foreign language education. Her conception of gender, which extends beyond female–male divides, is understood to be a system of social relationships and discursive practices that may lead to systemic inequality among particular groups of learners, including women, minorities, elderly, and disabled. She argues, in essence, that to treat gender as an essentialized variable is to obscure other forms of oppression. We need to understand, for example, why it is that women who do not have access to educational resources are often immigrant women and that boys and girls who are silenced in the classroom are often working class. In developing this conception of gender, she draws on feminist poststructuralism and critical theory to understand the relationship between power and knowledge and to theorize the role of language in the production and reproduction of power. A central focus of the chapter is a discussion of gendered inequalities in regard to access to material and symbolic resources, the gendered nature of linguistic interaction, and discourses of gender and sexuality across cultures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the way issues of gender and sexuality can be incorporated in classroom practice.

Providing another take on the critical, Elana Shohamy offers a comprehensive analysis of the way in which democratic principles can be applied to assessment practices in multicultural societies. In many multicultural societies, Shohamy suggests, minority groups struggle for recognition and respect from majority groups. While dominant groups may pay lip service to principles of equality, the de facto situation, in many societies,

is that minority groups are expected to assimilate into the majority so-
ciety. Evidence to this effect is frequently demonstrated in the forms of
assessments that are used in education, where competing conceptions of
knowledge vie for prominence. Drawing largely on assessment practices
in Israel, Shohamy makes the case that tests (language tests in particular)
can serve as tools to maintain and perpetuate the dominant knowledge
of majority groups. In the interests of democratic assessment, Shohamy
outlines five principles for more inclusive language testing. She makes the
case that language testers need to (a) include the knowledge of diverse
groups on language tests, (b) construct tests in collaboration with those
tested, (c) recognize that tests are instruments of power that potentially
discriminate against minority groups, (d) protect the rights of test takers,
and (e) be accountable for the consequences of tests.

Challenging identities

The second section of the book focuses on the language learner and con-
siders ways in which the learning of language engages the identities of
language learners in diverse and complex ways. Pippa Stein's chapter on
representation, rights, and resources, which invites us into a language
and literacy classroom in postapartheid South Africa, draws on the in-
novative and increasingly influential work on multiliteracies associated
with a variety of scholars, including those in the New London Group
(2000). With reference to multiliteracies research as well as feminist the-
ories of the body, Stein reflects on her classroom teaching with English
language learners and develops a comprehensive blueprint for what she
calls *multimodal pedagogies*. Such a blueprint, she argues, arises from
the need to acknowledge the tensions between local forms of communi-
cation and the literacy demands of schooling as well as the recognition
that representation occurs through a variety of modes, including visual,
gestural, speech, writing, and sound. In outlining six assumptions that
are central to her conception of multimodal pedagogies, Stein focuses
on a conception of pedagogy as semiotic activity best understood in the
context of identity, culture, and power. She draws on stories of learners
to make the case that meaning making is bodily, that it is transformative,
and that it involves "interested action." Because there are texts that exist
predominantly in nonlinguistic modes, such as the visual and gestural,
Stein argues that multimodal pedagogies recognize that language, as a
linguistic system, cannot fully express the arc of human experience.

In exploring what he calls the *subversive identities* of language learn-
ers, Suresh Canagarajah addresses the intriguing question of how lan-
guage learners can maintain membership in their vernacular communi-
ties and cultures while still learning a second language or dialect. He
draws on his research with two very different groups – one in the United

States and the other in Sri Lanka – to argue that language learners are sometimes ambivalent about the learning of a second language or dialect and that they may resort to clandestine literacy practices to create what he calls *pedagogical safe houses* in the language classroom. His research in the United States draws on insights from African American students learning academic writing in English as a second dialect, while his research in Sri Lanka draws on insights from Tamil students learning English for general academic purposes. In both contexts, the clandestine literacy activities of the students are seen to be forms of resistance to unfavorable identities imposed on the learners. At the same time, however, these safe houses serve as sites of identity construction that allow students to negotiate the often contradictory tensions they encounter as members of diverse communities. Canagarajah makes the case that in adopting conformist identities for on-task activity while relegating critical learning to safe houses, students are developing *multivocal literacies*, which enable learners to cross discourse and community boundaries without getting penalized by the academy. A better understanding of such practices, Canagarajah concludes, will provide teachers with an enhanced estimation of the critical thinking and learning potential of students.

Sue Starfield, like Canagarajah, seeks innovative and empowering pedagogies that can expand the range of identities available to language learners. Her focus, however, is far from traditional as she draws on her experience with concordancing in academic writing at an Australian university. By way of introduction, she describes how computer technology has made possible the collection of huge electronic databases – or corpora – of spoken and written language. Concordancing programs can search through millions of words of text to find examples of a particular word in its immediate textual context. As a result, teachers have not only better grammars and dictionaries of actual language use, but a more rigorous basis for selecting which lexical items and grammatical structures to include in a language learning curriculum. Drawing on her teaching experience in an academic writing workshop, Starfield describes how she and her students used concordancing to examine the structure of academic writing and the ways in which authors use language to establish credibility and authority. One particularly successful exercise was designed with the specific purpose of better understanding how published authors report on the work of other researchers in their community. Over time, Starfield noted a marked improvement in the academic writing of her students. Her chapter thus provides a window into the possibilities that technology holds for helping students develop identities not only as accomplished writers, but as contributors to the larger academic community.

In a very different language learning–teaching context, Brian Morgan speaks as a teacher of adult newcomers in Toronto, Canada. He draws

on the unlikely topic of a grammar lesson to explore questions of identity and critical pedagogy in a community-based program with predominantly Chinese language learners. The context is the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty, which was taking place at the same time at which the learners' place of origin, Hong Kong, was undergoing momentous political change. Morgan's lesson seeks to achieve the goal of providing a practically oriented grammar lesson while simultaneously locating it in a broader sociocultural context. He achieves this by introducing a subset of grammar (i.e., modality) through which feelings of ambivalence, apprehension, and possibility regarding the future are expressed. As Morgan notes, the interweaving of the two historic events in the lives of these language learners encouraged students to explore the meaning potential available through the lexicogrammatical system. He also demonstrates how traditional language learning activities such as a grammar lesson can be organized in such a way as to explore larger questions of identity and possibility. In this regard, a grammar lesson can serve not only as a site of identity representation, but as a site of identity creation. Morgan concludes that the metalanguage associated with language learning provides exciting opportunities for linking the microstructures of text with the macrostructures of society.

Researching critical practices

In the third section of the book, focus shifts from questions of identity to a consideration of the ways in which innovative approaches to language education research can help to inform critical pedagogical practices in the language classroom. The four chapters included in this section offer different perspectives on second language research but are all centrally concerned with the ways in which classrooms and communities structure language learning possibilities for students of diverse histories and investments.

The first chapter, by Inês Brito, Ambrizeth Lima, and Elsa Auerbach, describes an innovative course in the Cape Verdean language, culture, and history, taught in a Boston, Massachusetts, high school. The collaboration, in which Brito was the teacher, was not framed as a formal research project but as action research and reflective inquiry in which goals and procedures emerged over time and analysis was formative rather than summative. The chapter provides a classic example of the way in which pedagogy can be enhanced through the collaboration of teachers-as-researchers and researchers-as-teachers. It also highlights the experiences of a little-researched community in the United States – that of Cape Verdean Creole (CVC) speakers – whose homeland off the west coast

of Africa was colonized by the Portuguese. Bilingual programs in the United States that cater to this community frequently provide instruction in Portuguese rather than CVC, which, according to the authors, does little to enhance bilingual language development for these learners. It was for this reason that the authors developed a language course that focused not only on CVC, but on the goals of participatory democracy. While they consider the project a work in progress, the authors note that the learning that took place in the course, in which students became active and engaged participants, cannot be measured with traditional assessment instruments alone. At the same time, however, they highlight the challenges associated with the teaching of a language that has little legitimacy in the larger society.

Questions of legitimacy are central to the research of Bonny Norton and Karen Vanderheyden, who make the case that some of the literacy practices of language learners that may not be validated by language teachers may nevertheless have positive consequences for language learning. Norton and Vanderheyden, drawing on research with second language learners in a Vancouver, Canada, elementary school, investigate the multiple ways in which language learners engage with Archie comics in both classrooms and communities. They found that while teachers showed ambivalence toward Archie comics by dismissing the pictures and dialogue as "not real reading," second language learners found the pictures and comic book format helpful in meaning making. Also significant was the finding that many of the language learners read comics in their mother tongue. Perhaps most important, their data suggest that Archie comic readers constitute informal and loosely connected reading communities that cross ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Canagarajah (this volume) might call these communities, in which Archie readers are critically engaged in discussion and debate, safe houses. Nevertheless, the second language learners in their study had accepted the dominant view that comic book reading is not real reading and has little educational value. Norton and Vanderheyden, drawing on the multiliteracies research that Stein finds inspiring, suggest that both teachers and parents may need to rethink notions of literacy in a changing technological and social world.

With Jane Sunderland's chapter, we move from a North American context to foreign language education in the United Kingdom with a focus, in particular, on gender dynamics in classroom interaction: who talks most, to whom, and who says what. Sunderland reports on a study in a German as a foreign language secondary school classroom in which she observed and analyzed teacher-to-student talk and student-to-teacher talk. What she found was that male dominance does not necessarily surface in the language classroom, and to the extent that it does, the implications for

language learning are not evident. Specifically, she found that although males dominated the classroom in terms of the amount of some types of teacher attention they received, girls dominated in terms of the academic nature of their specific contributions. The significance of this study, Sunderland argues, is that it identifies important subtleties in classroom interaction, helps researchers qualify their claims, and "rescues girls from a representational victimhood." At the same time, however, she notes that although boys' talk might be seen as disruptive and not necessarily equated with academic success, they may be developing confidence to speak publicly, seize the floor, and control topics of conversation. Studies of classroom interaction, Sunderland suggests, should be complemented by studies of a more ethnographic nature, which might help to identify the way gendered practices are structured both inside and outside the classroom.

The very complexity of ethnographic research, as advocated by Sunderland, is the topic of the chapter by Constant Leung, Roxy Harris, and Ben Rampton. Drawing on their research on task-based language learning in urban settings in the United Kingdom, they examine the inelegance of qualitative research and argue that the "epistemic turbulence" in second language acquisition qualitative research centers on the question of what constitutes or represents reality. In their study, naturally occurring data were collected with the use of video and audio recordings and were supplemented by field notes. An ongoing challenge was how to represent and account for data that did not fit neatly into the theoretical construct of task-based language use. In short, they found that student engagement and involvement with the tasks varied considerably and that there appeared a continuum of "on-taskness" – a situation that created a lack of fit between reality, theory, and data. To address this dilemma, the authors suggest that researchers interested in task-based learning need to seek a conceptual framework that acknowledges, rather than obscures, the messiness of data; further, these researchers might explore in greater depth – perhaps through innovative technology – the nontask-related interactions they observe in their research. Like Sunderland, they conclude that interaction is a multifaceted phenomenon in which institutional authority, friendship, social power, personal interest, and language all have a role to play.

Educating teachers for change

The final section of the book addresses the diverse means through which different educators working in Hong Kong, Canada, and Australia, respectively, seek to introduce innovation and social change in their teacher education practices. Their work is a reminder that innovations in teacher

education practices that are centrally concerned with social change require sober reflection, thoughtful analysis, and creative action.

Angel Lin, as a teacher-educator, provides a comprehensive and rigorous account of her attempts to introduce a critical pedagogical curriculum in the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language (MATESL) program at the City University of Hong Kong. The challenges she experienced include student teacher frustration with the academic language of critical pedagogical texts as well as feelings of pessimism and powerlessness. She makes the argument, as Toohey and Waterstone (this volume) do, that schoolteachers, unlike academics, are situated in contexts in which cultural capital is determined not by mastery over academic language, but by the ability to make learning meaningful for students. In this context, the inaccessibility of some critical texts serves simply to alienate the very teachers who seek insight from these texts. Such frustration is exacerbated by pessimism arising from a teaching context that is largely undemocratic and in which labor relations are unfavorable to teachers. Lin sought to address these challenges, in part, by developing course assignments that were designed for a wider educational audience. This opportunity was well received by the student teachers, and their assignments, which incorporated an array of critical work, were published in a local professional newsletter. Lin concludes the chapter with a candid discussion of tensions arising from the unequal relations of power between teacher-educators and student teachers noting, in particular, the challenges faced by education workers in Hong Kong who are both junior and female.

An assessment of diverse sites of expertise in the educational community is also central to arguments made by Kelleen Toohey and Bonnie Waterstone in their chapter, "Negotiating Expertise in an Action Research Community." Toohey and Waterstone describe a research collaboration between teachers and researchers in Vancouver, Canada, with the mutual goal of investigating what practices in classrooms would make a difference to the learning opportunities of minority-language children. While teachers were comfortable discussing and critiquing their educational practices, they expressed ambivalence about translating their practice into publishable academic papers. Like the student teachers in Lin's study, the teachers in the research group felt little ownership over the academic language characteristic of many published journals. "It doesn't come from my heart," said Donna, one of the teachers, while another teacher, Marcy, raised the concern that a paper that is "too journalized up" would no longer be appealing to teachers. Toohey and Waterstone draw on this experience to suggest that writing that respects both teachers' and researchers' ways of knowing might artfully blend narrative with analysis and tell dramatic stories of classroom incidents enriched

by a consideration of theoretical insights. The crucial question in col-
laborative research, Toohey and Waterstone conclude, is not, "Is power
equitably shared among participants?" but "What should participants
do with the diverse sources of power they have?" The acknowledgment
of different sites of expertise renders collaborative research a powerful
tool in teacher education.

Another powerful tool in teacher education, according to Tara Gold-
stein, is what she calls *performed ethnography*. In seeking to prepare
student teachers to work across linguistic, cultural, and racial differences
in multilingual schools, she has found that ethnographic playwriting and
performed ethnography offer a unique set of possibilities for addressing
learning and teaching challenges. To this end, Goldstein has written a
play called "Hong Kong, Canada," which addresses some of the tensions
that arise in multilingual–multicultural school contexts. Material for the
play was drawn from a four-year (1996–2000) critical ethnographic case
study of an English-speaking Canadian high school that had recently en-
rolled a large number of immigrant students from Hong Kong. Goldstein
draws on this play to help student teachers explore issues associated with
identity politics prior to confronting such issues in schools. The play also
addresses the complex interplay between speech and silence in multilin-
gual schools and offers the opportunity for student teachers to consider
alternative endings to the play. Goldstein cautions that teacher-educators
need to work actively and critically with student teacher responses to
performed ethnography and draw attention to the linguistic privileges of
target-language speakers. She concludes that ethnographic playwriting
and performed ethnography will help student teachers engage in conflict
resolution and antidiscriminatory education which will, in turn, help to
create safe and equitable learning environments for language learners in
multilingual schools.

The final chapter in the collection, by Alastair Pennycook, is a narra-
tive account of his reflections as a teacher-educator observing a Teaching
English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practicum in Sydney,
Australia. He reminds us that a great deal of language teaching does not
take place in well-funded institutes of education, but in community pro-
grams, places of worship, and immigrant centers where funds are limited
and time is at a premium. Of central interest in his chapter is a consider-
ation of the way in which teacher-educators can intervene in the process
of practicum observation to bring about educational and social change.
Pennycook's quest is for critical moments in the practicum – "a point
of significance, an instant when things change." After the class is over,
Pennycook and the student teacher, Kath, discuss three such moments
that arise from (a) the actions of a disruptive male student, (b) the use
of practice dialogues for calling technicians, and (c) the recognition of
nonstandard English in the classroom. Each of these critical moments,