CRITICAL LITERACY FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: A MISSION POSSIBLE!

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The **POLITICS** of English Teaching and Learning

Political?
✓ How language is perceived?
✓ How language is taught?
✓ What is taught and what is not?
✓ Who has the power and control over certain resources, practices & cultural values?

Classrooms as **REPRODUCTIONS** of certain sociopolitical relations
(Auerbach, 1995; Bourdieu, 1982/1991)
English as a Superior Language

(Pennycook, 1998)
1997 Medium of Instruction Policy

EMI secondary schools were cut down to 114
“Fine-tuning” the Language Policy 2010

- Remove the EMI & CMI labels
- Allow individual schools to adopt diversified arrangements based on certain criteria, e.g., T & S English abilities, support systems, etc.
English Language Curriculum - Rationale

- English is the language of global communication. It is not only a **powerful learning tool**, a medium by which people **gain access to knowledge** from around the world, but also a medium through **which they develop positive values and attitudes**, **establish and maintain meaningful relationships with people**, increase their **cultural understanding and expand their knowledge and world-views**.

- English is the language of **international business, trade** and professional communication. Traditionally much emphasis has been placed on English Language learning in school. Such a tradition must be continued, since proficiency in English is essential for helping Hong Kong maintain its current status and further strengthen its **competitiveness** as a leading finance, banking and business centre in the world.

- English plays a crucial role in empowering learners with the capabilities necessary for **lifelong learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and innovation** and for adapting to the rapid changes and demands of society.

- English opens up a world of **leisure and entertainment** for learners.

*(English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide, Secondary 4 – 6, 2007, p. 2)*
Branding of Star Tutors

天王 & 天后
=  
King & Queen of Heaven
Branding of English Language Tutors

English Language:
- Cultural, social & linguistic capital
- Consulted fashion stylists & photographers *(Kwok, 2001)* for specific symbolic image
  - formal style $\rightarrow$ signifies professionalism
  - casual trendy $\rightarrow$ pop fashion / close rapport with tutees
Critical Sociocultural Theory of Language Learning

- Not a purely psychological or developmental phenomenon (Street, 1984, 2012)
- 1\textsuperscript{st} or additional language learning $\rightarrow$ \textit{cultural practices}
  - socialized into reading “texts in certain ways (Gee, 2013)
  - All texts are value-laden
Critical Literacy and Pedagogy

- The ability to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

- Critical literacy (CL) engages students in reading and writing through a critical lens to expose and disrupt entrenched unequitable power relations and social prejudices in all kinds of texts, print or non-print (Janks, 2010; Lankshear, 1997; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Kincheloe, 2008).

- It aims to create pedagogical spaces for students’ agentive participation in literacy practices that enact and promote social justice (Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008; Luke & Freebody, 1997).
CL instructional model for L2 classrooms

Inspired by

Research Study 1:

Practicing Critical Literacy with ELLs: An Integrated Approach

- Greater Toronto Area
- Grade 7/8, 480 students, multicultural student population
- 78% students with L1 other than English; no teachers spoke Chinese
- ESL class: 12 participants, all Chinese; Stage 1 & 2 learners; ≥ 1 month to 3 years in Canada
- ESL teacher: 2nd year teaching ESL; open withdrawal model
Bridging Program- Basic Functional English

*Class blog:*  
- Posting works online  
- Commenting on each other’s works  
- Building a learning community – preparing for collaborative learning  
- Unlearn the traditional understanding of what learning means
Topics Meaningful to Students’ Lived Realities

Immigrant teenagers have to cope with three traumas simultaneously:
- The crisis of adolescence
- The culture shock
- The problem of identity and status

(Epstein & Kheimets, 2000)
Me and My Family

The Name Jar (Choi, 2003)
The Story of My Name: Sunny Man Chu Lau 劉敏珠

My name is Man Chu Lau. Chinese people usually have 3 characters for their name, the first being the family name or last name (姓) (Lau 劉) and the second and third being the first names. The practice is a little bit different from Canada where the family name is always put at the back. When I came to Canada, I had to put my family name to the last.

For some families, like mine, they like to have their kids having the same middle character (字), so in my family for instance, we have Man Ling (敏鈴) my elder sister) or Man Yee (敏兒 my brother). And "Man" (敏) in Chinese means quick, as in nimble (敏捷的), or quick-witted (機智的). "Chu" (珠) means "pearl" in Chinese, and there is an idiom (成語) which says you treasure (珍愛) something so much as if you were treasuring a "pearl" (如珠如寶). This is what my mom wanted to say about me when she chose the name for me. So in a way I always feel a bit special (特別的) among all the 4 sisters.

When I was small, my parents used to call me “Lui Lui” (女女) which means “girl, girl”. It is quite an affectionate (親切的) term. Or sometimes they will call me “Chu Lui” (珠女). When I was small, I was timid (膽小的), This nickname does suggest that. I’m the second last in my family, and my youngest sister is quite bossy (跋扈的). Though she is one year younger than me, she is taller, bigger and has a stronger personality (個性強硬) than I do.

[...]
I can do push-ups 40 times per minute.
I can play the race car games very fast.
I can read the books really loud.
I can use some words to make sentences.
I can speak Mandarin very well.
I can walk to school every day.
I can sing for a long time.

(By Baoh)
I can do my text very well when is open-book test.
I can make the house very clean.
I can finish my homework fast.
I can play a lot of instruments.
I can hand in my homework on time.
I can decorate my house very beautifully.
I can sing songs very loudly.

(by Terri)
Unit on Bullying

Marianthe’s Story (Brandenberg, 1998)

Part 1: Painted Words
  • Challenges Marianthe faces in school as a new immigrant (shared through her paintings).

Part 2: Spoken Memories
  • With her gradual progress in English, she explains her immigrant stories that she has drawn in paintings.
Anti-bullying campaign

1. Target
2. Bystander
3. Intervener
4. Perpetrator (bully)

(categories by B.C. Teachers’ Federation Program Against Racism)
Last year when I was grade 7. In my class had a black people. He always bullied at the ESL students. He always talk to his friend “ESL are stupid, why we have so many ESL in our class!!!” His friend never said anything but he never stop him also. I remember one time in French class he wanted to borrow my pencil, I let him borrow it. But after the French class, I told my friend to ask him to give me back the pencil. He break my pencil, give back to me and just go away.

X: Yo! Give me your pencil!!! I don’t have pencil for the french test.
Y: (Y scare by A and uncomfortable, give the pencil to X... X not said anything, just go back to her seat."

After the French class, Y try to ask X to give back the pencil.

Y: Can.. can.. can you give me back my pencil?
(X give the pencil to Y but the pencil is brock.
Y: excuse me, you broke my pencil!!!
X: So?
Y: I will tell the teacher.
STOP

why we should not bully others? Because if you always bully people, People would be hurt, they will hate you. you will be a bad person, you will lose friends. That is not a good thing. So stop Bullying. Bullying is a bad thing, don’t be a bully, it’s not cool.

Don’t Be Scared
There is always Help!

Office
Bulled
Other People.

Do not be scared, when someone bullied you.
You can choose go to tell your teacher someone was bullied you.
You can tell the bullies to stop. Example: cut it off. I do not want to hear that.

Can tell your friends they can bring you to

Can tell your friends they can bring you to
Spoken Memories

Spoken Memories of Yolanda

My Home Town

My home town is a beautiful city in China, named Hangzhou. Hangzhou is a famous city in China, because it has beautiful scenery, like the West Lake. Many people loves Chinese tea. They must know one of them: Longjing tea. Longjing tea is the best green tea in China, and it’s from my home town—Hangzhou.
Research Study 2

Translanguaging for Equity and Social Justice:
Critical Literacy through English-French Literature-Based Dialogues and Reading Response Writing

- English elementary school in Eastern Quebec
- Teachers: English Language Arts – Mrs. Smith; French L2 – Mme Desbiens
- Students: Multiage Gr 4-6, 47 participants
  - 12 francophone or bilingual families (at least one francophone parent)
  - 35 English-dominant, 13 of them had strong FSL proficiency

This research was supported by
The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
Language Interdependence

**The Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) Model of Bilingual Proficiency**

**The Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model of Bilingual Proficiency**

Cummins 2001
Dynamic Bilingualism -- Translanguaging

- an epistemologically different concept (Garcia & Lin, 2016)

- Multilinguals shuttle between and among languages and modalities which form a repertoire of dynamic and integrated resources for communication and meaning making (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Lin, 2016)

(García & Li, 2014)
Celebrating diversity
Research Wall

Research wall -- a strategy borrowed from Vasquez’s (2004) *audit trail* of students’ critical inquiry
Message Wall

- I wish I were a Butterfly
- Each person has a quality that makes them unique and special.
- Accept who you are
- People can change
- Les yeux noirs
- accepter ton trésor et transformer d'autres trésors
- rester positif dans son unique
- accept yourself
- In Jesse's Shoes
- Don't judge a book by its cover
- Grumpy Old Frog
- Beauty Video 25 countries
- Eternal beauty is different in certain countries

- What do fish have to do with anything?
- Don't make judgments based on one criteria
- Paid in different ways, & nature happens
- Make choices to show what you value
- Place a treasure where it exists
- Question value

- Daniel qui n'avait pas de maison

- Et existe beaucoup de préjugés et stéréotypes envers les sans-abris

- Transition: Outside of Classroom

- Au soleil
- Il est 3h10
- Le 11 Feb

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FINDINGS:

1. Co-constructing knowledge through distributed expertise

2. Language connections for deepened textual & social critique
Language Connections for Deepened Understanding

a. Word-level connections through cognates:
   - “abolir” (Fr) → “abolish” & “abolitionist”

b. Transferring reading & writing strategies:
   - Writing of reading responses

“Well, I know that since French is my second language, because we have practiced a lot in English, then when we do one [reading response] in French it becomes easier because we know how to do it and what different steps are.

(Jane, Gr. 5)
b. Transferring reading & writing strategies: Critical reading of illustrations

Nathan: Ben ça fait comme... il y a de light et il est comme tout .. noir ici et ... [inaudible] il n’est pas capable de sortir.

(Well ... it’s like there’s light and it’s like all black .. here and ... [inaudible] it is not able to get out.)
c. Making conceptual links between texts:

Avi, 1997

Marabotto, 1999
Janet:

[...]As we read the book it sort of made me sad how many people are beggars and or homeless. But the story open[e]d up my eyes, unlike a lot of people they [i]gnore this and pretend they never saw it. But often people don’t even pretend they really don’t re[a]lise because it’s so common. I wish it were not so common. It’s not fair. [...]
I think she [mother] should have answered his question because she was trying to hide it from him what the real world is like. [S]he was trying to give him a sadness free life. But I think a child needs to know because one day Willie will have to go into the world and make his own choices. And it is impossible to have a sadness free life because thing will always be bothering us but we have to move on or do something about it. [...]
Grandmother:
« Ben, pourquoi qu’ils vont pas travailler? »
(Well, why don’t they work?”).

Mother:
« Ben il y a des fois tu ne sais pas sur qui tu peux tomber, ça peut être une méchante personne. »
(“Well, you never know whom you’d get and he might be a bad person”)

Students:
- “I walked faster.”
- « j’ai vraiment peur » (“I am really afraid”).
What do fish have to do with anything?

Simplistic, one-dimensional conclusion:
• Don’t judge a book by its cover; don’t judge

Daniel qui n’avait pas de maison

More nuanced & measured understanding:
• « changer le point de vue » (change the point of view)
• « essayer de mieux comprendre » (try to understand better)
• « il faut qu’on en parle » (one must talk more about the topic).
Taking a critical and reflective stance:

“I think that when I hear a name that I haven’t heard before and that I find it a bit unusual, instead of saying it’s weird, I might say that it is unique.”

(Janet. Gr. 5)

“[I learnt] that just because someone is different doesn’t mean they are weird.”

(Marvel, Gr. 5)
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES CONFERENCE
Implications and Concluding Thoughts

- Anchor language learning in meaningful social topics and issues that relate to their lives → Why I’m learning it & what I can do with the language

- Value and mobilise students’ multiple linguistic and cultural resources and experiences for critical learning

- The focuses on meaning, language and use – depth of critical understanding

- Creating new possibilities/spaces for re-construction sociocultural identities -- language learners/users & social agents of change (Gutiérrez et al, 1999; Li Wei, 2011a; 2011b)
Concluding Thoughts

- **Wrong** question:
  “At which grade or language level can students be introduced to CL?”

- **Right** question:
  Are we providing *classroom conditions* and *social structures* as well as *modelling practices* that foster student learning that is geared towards helping them to gradually become a critical language user?”
SIMPLE WAYS TO INTEGRATE CL IN ENGLISH LESSONS
Critical Literacy

1. **Problem posing** –
   - What POV is represented in the text?
   - Whose POV is missing?
   - What is marginalized?
   - What does the author want you to think?

2. **Alternative or resistant texts** –
   - Switches – gender, setting, language
   - Alternative ending or character

3. **Question generation**
   - Questions related to content/story (textual dimension)
   - Questions related to self (personal dimension)
   - Questions related to world (critical dimension)
Understanding how texts are positioned and positioning (Janks, 2010, p. 61)

I love my neighborhood.
I pick up.
Signs in Hong Kong

- 欢迎莅临本泳滩 請保持地方清洁
  - WELCOME TO THIS BEACH PLEASE KEEP CLEAN

- 請將垃圾带走
  - Please Bring Your Litter Home

- 香港公園
  - HONG KONG PARK
  - OPENING HOURS:
    - 6:00 AM - 11:00 PM

- 請勿攜犬入內
  - NO DOGS ALLOWED

- 請勿玩滑板
  - NO SKATEBOARDING

- 請勿踏滑板車
  - NO SKATE-BIKING

- 請勿餵飼雀鳥
  - NO BIRD FEEDING

- 不准踏單車
  - NO CYCLING

- 請勿破壞花木
  - NO DAMAGE OF PLANTS

- 請勿把魚/龜放進大湖內
  - NO RELEASING OF FISH AND TERRAPIN INTO THE LAKE
What are the target markets for these two coca cola drinks? And why do you think so?
“I’m riskin’ it” vs. “I’m lovin’ it”

Step 1: Ask teacher participants to respond to these questions:

1. What do you think the designer of this advertisement is selling?

2. How are they selling this product/concept/idea?

3. How do they arrange/organize and/or include visual elements within the advertisement that make this ad effective or not effective?

Step 2: Teachers produce a counter-ad

## Alternative Cinderella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disney Version</th>
<th>Korean Version</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Setting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Characters</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Story/ Plot</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Theme</td>
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Common messages: ____________________________________________________________
Red Riding Hood: A Politically Correct Version

There was once a young person named Red Riding Hood who lived with her mother on the edge of a large wood. One day her mother asked her to take a basket of fresh fruit and mineral water to her grandmother’s house- not because this was women’s work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community. Furthermore, her grandmother was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health and was fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult. So Red Riding Hood set off with her basket through the woods. Many people believed that the forest was a foreboding and dangerous place and never set foot in it. Red Riding Hood, however was confident enough in her own budding sexuality that such obvious Freudian imagery did not intimidate her.

(Task : Ask students to write the ending)
Most of the knowledge that matters to us --- the knowledge that constitutes our conception of the world, of other people and of ourselves --- is not developed in a passive way. We come to know through processes of active interpretation and integration. We ask questions ...”

Question Generation (Lau 2006)

**Literal dimension**: Promote comprehension of the text

| Setting:                          | Where and when does the story take place?  
|                                 | How does the setting help you understand what the characters are feeling? |
| Narration:                       | From whose point of view is the story written? (voice)  
|                                 | Why does the writer choose the 1st/3rd person narration? |
| Plot:                            | What is the story about? |
| Characters                       | How would you describe the main character as a person?  
|                                 | What happened to the main character?  
|                                 | How did he resolve the conflicts? Why did he do that? |
| Theme:                           | What does the writer want to say? |
| Style:                           | What do you have to say about the writer’s style? |
| Illustrations:                   | What is shown in the book cover?  
<p>|                                 | What are the tones and moods set by the illustrations? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Generation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Dimension:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• How would you feel if someone called you names, like what happened to the main character?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do you think it is easy to accept an outsider?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How would you compare yourself to the main character?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• If you were telling this story, how might you end it? Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Dimension:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• What can we do to stop this kind of injustice in our society?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do you see similar kinds of judging among people in the real world?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How might others (e.g. women, adults) interpret the text?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>