

L2 Journal Special Issue Call for Papers

“Rethinking Critical Pedagogy in L2 learning and teaching”

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Deadline for submitting abstracts: May 1, 2019

Deadline for submitting manuscripts: November 18, 2019

Critical pedagogy as a distinct theoretical tradition of intellectual production and educational practice emerged in North America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Its central premise is that educational issues cannot be separated from political ones. Critical pedagogy questions the purported political neutrality of educational institutions that, supposedly, make them unbiased sites where students acquire knowledge and skills. It, further, challenges prevailing notions that schools are level playing fields and that education functions as the great equalizer, pointing to widespread inequalities and injustices that are produced and reproduced through schooling (Knopp, 2012; Freire & Shor, 1987). Theoretically, critical pedagogy was inspired by and founded on Paulo Freire’s seminal work, particularly *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005), and his notions of the historicity of knowledge, pedagogy as revolutionary praxis versus a banking model of education, the development of critical consciousness (*conscientização*) and problem-posing education, and students as historical subjects of the educational process.

Critical pedagogy’s intellectual history is far-reaching and diverse. It owes its “critical” name, in part, to critical theory produced in the Frankfurt School of Social Theory in the late 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s in Germany (Fromm, 1973, 1976; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947; Marcuse 1964). Other intellectual traditions embodied in critical pedagogy include Marxist and neo-Marxist theory, Antonio Gramsci’s political writings (1971), as well as John Dewey’s progressive education and the American Social Reconstruction theories (Kliebard, 1995, 2002; Grollios 2011). Critical pedagogy built initially on the Sociology of Education of the late 1970s and 1980s, as it critically capitalized on theories of social and cultural reproduction (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). By identifying the limitations of reproduction theories, and capitalizing on theoretical constructs from Marxist and neo-Marxist theory and progressive education, early critical pedagogy theorists set the ground for important discussions around what counts as knowledge and its social construction (Apple 1993, 2004; Aronowitz 2008; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Giroux, 2011); the role of culture as a lived experience and a main pedagogical force (Giroux 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2013); teacher autonomy and student agency (McLaren 1993, 1998; Giroux 1983); student resistance (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Apple, 2004); school ideologies (Apple, 1993, 2004; Giroux 1983); the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2004); and control exercised through forms of meaning (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1983).

This Special Issue of *L2* aspires to provide space for the development of intellectual work that bridges applied linguistics (specifically foreign, second and heritage language teaching and learning) with the sociology of education and knowledge. A gap in Critical Pedagogy literature is the absence of intellectual work that engages with the learning and teaching of foreign/heritage languages (HL), particularly when it comes to a clear theoretical framework FL and HL can draw from. The Special Issue seeks submissions that will attempt to re-invent a critical pedagogy as *critical foreign language pedagogy*. However, the aim is not to create a solid, monolithic, doctrinaire theoretical model, but rather to allow flexibility for different theoretical approaches that draw from Critical Pedagogy to co-exist and cross-fertilize.

The need for this special issue is based on *epistemological*, *sociopolitical* and *strategic* factors (Ricento 2001): In terms of *epistemology*, the paradigm of knowledge and research in the field has been radically shifting the last thirty years, and particularly the last ten years, to include much deeper and astute critical lenses in looking at issues of language learning and teaching; Lenses that move away from a narrow, reductionistic view of pedagogy as purely local and relegated to the classroom, to include historical and structural sociopolitical considerations. However, the ways FLP could use Critical Pedagogy as a pedagogical lens have not yet been fully explored. The *sociopolitical* factors have to do with the radical shift in politics, especially the last ten years, with capitalist crises across the globe, as well as the rise of authoritarianism and populism in the United States and elsewhere (recently in Brazil, but also in Europe). Capitalist crises have further widened the gap between the rich and the poor, as they have altered labor and respective qualifications. At the same time, the rise of populism has revived strong nativist sentiments. The massive movement of immigrants and refugees across the globe because of wars, political unrest, poverty and so forth, has fueled a new wave of xenophobia and racism. The ongoing “immigrant crisis,” for instance, compels researchers and educators to discuss how languages (cultures and identities) of subjugated and oppressed people can find space and legitimacy in the FL classroom. Or how identities and representations of otherness are embodied and enacted in language. Given that World Language curricula, for example, continue to be Eurocentric (see Glynn 2018) with a focus on French, German, Italian, and Spanish (see ACTFL), there is a space to discuss the asymmetry in symbolic and economic power at play. Scholars in the field of Foreign Language pedagogy should not shy away from taking up these issues as part of a critical foreign language curriculum.

Finally, the *strategic* factors have to do with the implicit and explicit rationale behind undertaking particular kinds of research in language teaching and learning. In the case of the Special Issue, one of the central considerations deals with the structural socioeconomic factors that affect and shape FL pedagogies.

This Special Issue invites contributions that engage in theoretical, conceptual and/or classroom-based discussions and analyses that involve Critical Pedagogy in language teaching and learning, language teacher education and attempt to address the following questions:

- What concepts/constructs can be drawn from the Critical Pedagogy theoretical framework of 1980s, 1990s and beyond for second language pedagogies? What are the limitations of this framework and how can they be addressed?
- How can we move beyond a reductionistic appropriation of critical pedagogy theory as simply a “critical approach” to language teaching or “critical language awareness” to a meaningful and transformative theoretical framework for language teaching? How can Critical Pedagogy inform FL pedagogy? What would it mean to use a Critical Pedagogy theoretical framework to understand teaching and learning language?
- How might a language pedagogy of Praxis as the dialogical relationship between critical reflection and action look like? How can we develop language teacher education approaches that would foster praxis?
- What would it mean to ground our language pedagogies, especially those for oppressed and marginalized groups, on the premise that pedagogy is disruptive and its goal is not simply social change but also sociopolitical transformation?
- If culture is understood as a site of struggle and a sphere for language pedagogy, what are the implications for language teaching?

- How can issues of teacher and student agency be addressed in the context of language learning as production of specific knowledge, values, identities, and desires?
- How can we theorize language teaching in a way that connects pedagogical practices with larger structural analyses of the society?
- What kinds of knowledges are legitimized in the foreign language classroom? What are some of the underlying ideologies shaping those pedagogies? How might inequalities be produced and reproduced? How can the Western-centered focus be challenged and ultimately, changed?
- How are *language* and *language teaching and learning* redefined in the current sociopolitical context in the United States and around the world? How might current politics have pushed linguists and language educators to rethink critical pedagogy in their methodologies, approaches, agendas and pedagogies? What spaces have opened up for new pedagogies?
- How could new settings of critical pedagogy be explored in the context of “public pedagogy”? Can the foreign language classroom become a site for social change where teachers and students can examine and challenge societal and cultural norms and practices?

Please send abstracts (300 words) and other queries to Panayota Gounari at panagiota.gounari@umb.edu.