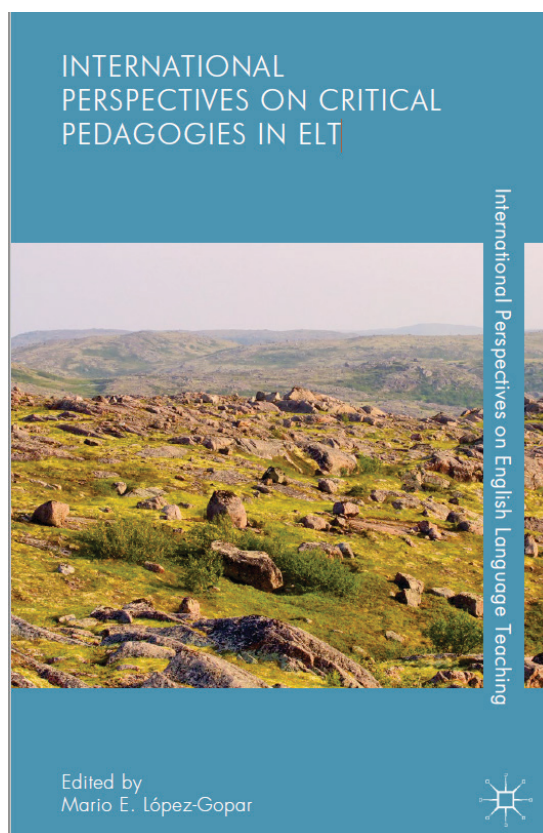


REVIEW / RESENHA / REVISIÓN



CRITICAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICES (AND PRAXIS) AROUND THE
WORLD

PRÁTICAS CRÍTICAS DE ENSINO DE LÍNGUA INGLESA (E PRAXIS) AO REDOR DO MUNDO

PRÁCTICAS CRÍTICAS (Y PRAXIS) EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS ALREDEDOR DEL MUNDO

LÓPEZ-GOPAR, M. *International Perspectives on Critical Pedagogies in ELT*. Ed. Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, Switzerland, 2019.

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The volume *International Perspectives on Critical Pedagogies in ELT*, published in 2019 by Palgrave, offers a collection of articles that present possibilities for Critical Language Pedagogy in intact classrooms, attempting to establish connections between critical educational theory and classroom practices. Edited by Mário E. López-Gopar, an experienced scholar and professor in the area of intercultural and multilingual education, the book is aimed at educators and researchers interested in Critical Language Pedagogies as it provides solid examples of critical classroom practices around the world. This is in fact the main contribution of the piece: it offers concrete ideas on how to go about researching and implementing critical pedagogy in English language classes in various contexts. That is not to say, however, that the book presents a method or a recipe for critical language researchers and teachers, since that would go against the very basic principle of critical pedagogy. Rather, the chapters analyze and discuss critical pedagogies (in its plurality) in local contexts and, by doing so, point out to the important relation between context and research/pedagogical practice.

Distributed along 13 chapters, the articles that compose this volume offer a myriad of qualitative methodological procedures to collect and analyze data within the field of critical pedagogy, being a must-read for researchers interested in investigations that combine language teaching and critical perspectives. The research methodologies adopted in the pieces demonstrate a commitment to social justice and also challenge positivist understandings of science – in this sense, students', teachers' and researchers' voices and subjectivities are foregrounded and understood as fundamental in the process of better understanding local practices. Moreover, the book is an insightful source for educators who are interested in researching their own practice, aiming at developing their critical reflexive praxis. Additionally, the discussions proposed in each chapter offer significant theoretical reviews, informing teachers and researchers who advocate for critical language teaching. The chapters in the volume also present recommended readings as well as questions for reflection regarding research and classroom practices, which may help researchers and practitioners move beyond the concepts discussed and reflect on their own contexts of investigation and/or pedagogical practice.

The first and the last chapter of the book provide, respectively, an introduction and a conclusion to the matters discussed in the volume. In chapter one, López-Gopar summarizes main aspects of each study, presenting the purposes of the piece and emphasizing that although the articles that compose the volume do not necessarily share one single understanding of what critical pedagogy is, they all have promoting social justice and transformation as common horizons, connecting "[...] micro-contexts (classrooms) with macro-contexts (e.g., world migration, politics, and social struggles)" (LÓPEZ-GOPAR, 2019, p. 2). The next eleven chapters are organized into three sections: (1) teaching beyond language, (2) dialoguing with teachers, and (3) questioning the critical. The authors of each article in section one (chapters 2-5) provide examples of critical pedagogy practices implemented in their own classrooms whereas the articles in section two (chapters 6-9) focus on understanding the reflexive experience of student-teachers who are learning how to implement critical language teaching. Furthermore, the articles in section three (chapters 10-12) explore the challenges and possibilities for critical pedagogies in specific contexts.

Similar to the other three studies that constitute section 1, the study described in chapter two looks at perceptions of language learners as they have the opportunity to learn about/reflect on language while learning about/reflecting upon other critical aspects that are relevant to their context. More specifically, Sterzuk and Hengen analyse the perceptions of learners of English as a second language in Canada during a teaching unit that discussed settler colonial discourses. The article presents an interesting discussion on the significance of critical approaches to second language teaching as well as on possible difficulties that come from implementing such approaches. In chapter three, Barnawi investigates the perceptions as well as task responses of learners of English as a foreign language in Saudi-Arabia, thus demonstrating possibilities for disrupting dominant discourses that may emerge from neoliberal contexts. What is compelling about this chapter is that the author discusses the process of critical reflection both the learners and the teacher engaged in while working on the proposed unit, presenting us with insightful examples of critical dialogue and praxis taking place in the classroom.

In chapter four, Barba and Crookes also pay attention to both learners and teacher's critical reflections and individual/collective transformations. The study, set in Hawaii, looks at the interactions and task responses in a Philipino as a foreign language class. By doing so, the study highlights the important role of translanguaging – understood in the study as a flexible use of one's different and multiple linguistic resources in the communication process - in creating a safe space for critical reflection towards emancipation and social transformation. Finally, in chapter five, Chun investigates an English as a foreign language class in Hong Kong, focusing on possible intersections (not necessarily causal) between critical reflections that happened in class and protests made by some of

the learners later on. The author offers an appealing debate on the use of critical pedagogy in Asian countries reflecting on non-western perspectives to Critical Pedagogy while also discussing the relevance of public pedagogy.

As aforementioned, section 2, also composed of four chapters, presents studies that focus on student-teachers' experiences and reflections on the role of critical language teaching. In chapter six, Jimenéz *et al.* explore implications of a critical approach to English language teaching in Oxaca, Mexico, focusing on narratives and practices of student-teachers teaching in marginalized communities. The study brings up acute considerations on the implications of critical pedagogy both for the community involved and for the "[...] construction, reconstruction, or otherwise formation of teachers' and teacher educators' identities" (JIMENÉZ *et al.*, 2019, p. 102). Following an equally sagacious direction, the study described in chapter seven also focuses on experiences of student-teachers of English, only this time in South Africa. The goal of Govender's study was to engage student-teachers in processes of negotiating gender and sexual diversity using a critical approach for educational materials design. The article makes relevant considerations for the promotion of critical literacy development in a language classroom, showing that hegemonic and heteronormative understandings of gender and sexuality are commonly perpetuated by language practices and highlighting the need to address these issues in the classroom.

Chapter 8, authored by Dantas-Whitney, discusses how educational policies affect language teaching practices and problematizes the ways in which language policies in the U.S. have favored monolingualism over bilingualism or multilingualism. In order to question such policies, ELT teachers who were part of this study engaged in autoethnography and wrote narratives which allowed them to reflect on: their role as teachers, students' needs, and the relation between the classroom and social change. In Chapter 9, Clavijo-Olarte and Sharkey present community-based pedagogies as another alternative of getting to know students' lived realities. In their study, conducted in the context of Colombia, teachers were also learners and co-investigators who tried to better understand the students' contexts - in their classes, instead of focusing on topics brought up by textbooks, they discussed violence, difficulties the students faced in their daily lives, and so on. The authors argue that critical pedagogy is a developmental process that should have students' realities as a point of departure and which requires teachers to exercise their agency and investigatory profile.

Section 3, which is entitled *Questioning the Critical*, is composed of three chapters that discuss critical language pedagogy in diverse contexts. In Chapter 10, for instance, Hélot, Yoshimura, and Young argue that teacher education in France and Japan should better engage teachers in reflecting on the hegemonic role English plays in the world. Thus, in their study they proposed a course for teachers using a dialogical and problem-based approach, which demonstrated possibilities for challenging hegemonic understandings and top-down policies for English language teaching and learning. In Chapter 11, Swan turns our attention to the teaching of English for academic purposes in Australia. The author interviewed three directors of local language centers as well as two postgraduate students, who seemed to present in their discourses a critical understanding of academic language teaching (thus challenging the common-sensical understanding of it that is aligned with the capitalist market). The chapter highlights, therefore, the importance of local voices in the promotion of counter-hegemonic discourses on academic language teaching. Chapter 12, in turn, presents the dilemma of adopting a critical pedagogy perspective in the Arabian context. By showing the accounts of several teachers who feared addressing socio-political issues in the classroom or who even felt censored in Arabia, Hudson discusses the power relations involved in the hiring of native speakers in Islamic contexts. The author highlights that a true critical pedagogue should neither avoid political issues nor impose his/her values on the students: instead, it is necessary to deeply understand students' realities and point of views and then, bearing in mind their subjectivities, promote dialogic exchange in a non-hierarchical fashion.

In the concluding chapter, Sughrua makes a case for what he calls politicized qualitative research methodology, which - as the different articles in the book demonstrate - offers possibilities for engaging with research that has a focus on social justice. Even though the different studies in the book present different types of methodological procedures that are congruent with a critical pedagogy perspective and which challenge positivist understandings of research and knowledge production, the author calls attention to the fact that the chapters still follow a traditional research paper layout.

Even though López-Gopar's book encompasses studies conducted in varied international settings, it is noteworthy that it does not feature any article on critical language pedagogy in the Brazilian context. Considering that Critical Pedagogy has Paulo Freire as its main precursor, it would be important to include studies that present how his postulations have influenced current critical perspectives for language teaching in the country. This is especially relevant if we consider the contemporary socio-political scenario

in Brazil, in which critical educators (and Freire and his work) have been falsely accused of indoctrination. Nevertheless, the book may still offer insight for Brazilian researchers and educators interested in getting acquainted with critical pedagogy practices (and praxis) around the world.



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