**Critical Traditions and Second Language Education**

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Critical theory is a very loosely defined field (Quantz, 1992) that refers to "a whole range of theories which take a critical view of society and the human sciences or which seek to explain the emergence of their objects of knowledge" (Macey, 2000; p. 74).

This “critical view” has often been described as being in opposition to, or at least qualitatively different from, mainstream educational discourse (Sedgwick & Edgar, 2002; McLaren, 2001). As part of this oppositional stance, educators using this approach have usually emphasized that their work is designed to benefit the people they teach and study (Densin & Lincoln, 2000).

Simon and Dippo make this desire central in their influential criteria for judging critical educational research, for example, by stating that it must occur "within a public sphere that allows it to become the starting point for the critique and transformation of the conditions of oppressive and inequitable moral and social regulation" (1986; p. 197). However, it is also true that educators and researchers of every stripe, including those that might be described as mainstream, often express the same desire to make a difference to those they teach and study.

So what makes “critical” work critical?

**The Roots of Critical Theory**

According to Macey, and Edgar & Sedgwick, critical theory developed critical theory primarily out of Marxist conceptualizations of ideology and secondarily, Freud's writings on illusion. As I outline below, quite a few theorists were responsible for this development. Of course, Marx and Freud have fallen out of favor in the academia of our era, tainted by the practical failures of the movements they inspired on the one hand, and a questioning of the scientific assumptions that informed their work on the other. As Foucault pointed out, however,  "Freud and Marx have opened the field up to something besides themselves" (1975; p. 612). In our time, it is impossible to escape their legacies and, I believe, foolish not to examine their ideas carefully.

In *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 1976a), originally published in 1846, they described ideology as being idealized sets of ideas, conceptions, theologies, or notions that separate real individuals from the material basis of their lives. In opposition to the systems developed by the German idealist philosophers, they posited materialistically based models of how social relations, consciousness, language, divisions of labor, and ideologies are constructed. This has important implications for the conceptualization of how history develops (Marx's concentration on and belief in historical progress was nothing if not modernist). Rather than Hegel's world spirit (Geist) determining the course of history, Marx and Engels emphasized how real people in concrete situations influenced the course of historic change.  As has been often quoted, Marx asserted in 1852 that people

make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted by the past.

                                                                  (Marx, 1976a; p. 398)

It is clear that classical Marxism, with its positivistic emphasis, focused on how people interact with external reality and was quite weak when it came to examinations of ontological and epistemological assumptions (Giddens, 1995).  Marx and Engels addressed these issues only peripherally, principally in passages in which they examined ideology. They argued that successive ruling classes develop the ideas that reflect its world outlook into a hegemony that appears to be the only legitimate representation of reality, a point pithily expressed in this quote from the Communist Manifesto of 1848: "The ruling ideas in each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx & Engels, 1976b; p. 125). At no time, however, did they deal in any detail with how these ruling ideas are adopted by oppressed peoples. Looking at ways oppression is reinforced through means other than the threat of physical violence became the task of later theorists and activists.

Lenin, the most famous of these, criticized many of the leading revolutionaries of his day for underestimating the importance of ideological struggle. In 1901, he stated that without a systematic program of agitation and propaganda on the part of revolutionary organizations, "the working-class movement is subordinated to bourgeois ideology" (Lenin, 1969; p. 49). Under his leadership, ideological work became the chief task of the Bolsheviks. Accordingly, Lenin stressed the importance of overcoming the worship of spontaneity in attacks he made on those who "stress the drab everyday struggle (economists) and by those who call for the most self-sacrificing struggle of individuals (terrorists)" (1901: 94). Both of these groups, Lenin bitterly contended, engaged in highly counterproductive activities because they discounted or oversimplified the power of ideology.

Lenin's conception of ideology was relatively simple and straightforward. The working class was fooled by state institutions such as schools or churches into adopting the ideas of the ruling class. Lenin believed that working people would adopt an alternate set of beliefs if they were properly presented to them by a vanguard revolutionary organisation. These ideas had to be rooted in concrete working class experiences, reformulated to include larger contexts and then brought back to oppressed peoples in the form of propaganda. These basic ideas were emphasised and elaborated on by many subsequent Marxists. Some have argued that a major theoretical divide on ideology separates such communists as Trotsky and Mao Zedong, who stressed continuous or repeated revolutionary upheavals, from figures such as Stalin, who adopted bureaucratic strategies (Fields, 1988; Koestler, 1967). The former group emphasized the importance of ideology; the latter discounted it. It is worth noting that long-term success eluded revolutionaries on both sides of this supposed divide.

In light of the limited achievements, failures and outright disasters associated with various revolutionary movements, the role of ideology has become one of the most central points of debate within academic Marxist circles. Even as early as immediately following the creation of the Soviet Union, theorists grappled with a series of unexpected problems and questions. Why did the majority of workers in industrial countries refuse to rise in rebellion as Marx had predicted? Why were so many classes of people in open opposition to revolution when it seemed to be in their long-term interest?  Why were material incentives still more important than ideological ones, even among the majority of those who supported revolution?

Lukács (1971) addressed these questions through his examination of the power of false consciousness, reification and alienation. His most important work, History and Class Consciousness, was originally published in 1922 and is a much more varied, complex and subtle approach to ideology. The aspect of Lukács' thought that is important for my purposes here is his reemphasis of Marx's contention that people are alienated from each other in capitalist society through the process of commodity fetishism. Combined with a critique of bureaucratic power that Lukács derived from Weber, this process is one of reification, in which people interpret each other's importance only in terms of the material commodities that they represent. This process, in turn, develops into false consciousness, in which working people break the common ties they have at the point of the production of material goods and relate only at the level of consumption and exchange. This leads to identification with oppressive groups and an acceptance of subordinate status.

It is also important to note that Lukács also re-emphasized the Marxist notion of praxis when he referred to Marx's 1845 contention that "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx, 1976b). This famous citation, which opens Lukács' most important work, highlighted the Hegelian dialectic that exists between theory and practice. Both change and develop the other, a notion that often crops up in the critical research tradition.

Of the many other subsequent Marxist theorists that stand out as major influences in the critical research tradition, none has greater predominance in our era than Gramsci. In many ways, Gramsci critiqued the claims that Marx, Lenin, Lukács and others made for the scientific aspect of revolutionary socialism. Although there is some dispute as to how much of his legacy is due to misinterpretations of the terminology he employed in his censored 1935 notebooks (first published in English in 1971), there is little question that his emphasis on agency was a healthy contribution to the critical tradition. He questioned the inevitability of revolution, the seemingly automatic relationship between material forces (base) and social structures (superstructure) in society, and the claims made by many Marxists that they have an exclusive handle on objective truth.

In terms of my discussion here, however, the importance of Gramsci's legacy is chiefly through his development of the term hegemony, which differs from the concepts of ideology and false consciousness not simply because of its greater complexity.  Through a wide variety of institutions in civil society, the dominant class tailor-makes ideas in ways that make them acceptable to oppressed groups. Oppressed groups participate in this process by reinterpreting these ideas so that they are understandable in the context of their own experiences. This is a practical and down-to-earth process in the interests of survival. In this way, dominant classes are able to obtain a real degree of consent of those they oppress, an idea that Herman and Chomsky have elaborated on in their political writings (1988). Gramsci's concept of hegemony incorporates the idea that members of oppressed classes exercise agency and are not mere passive recipients of the ideas of others.

In evaluating Gramsci's contributions, it is important to note that much of his work was first translated and widely published only in the early 1970's and was largely unknown to many of the early theorists in the critical tradition. In order to explain how oppressed peoples adopted the ideas and values of oppressing groups, the Frankfurt School theorists turned to Freud.

**The Link with Freud and the Frankfurt School**

Like that for Marx, Freud's legacy has long been controversial. The limitations of both have been well illuminated, particularly in terms of gender and sexism. For my purposes here, I concentrate on Freud's use of the term illusions, which I believe provides a deep understanding of how the hegemonic process works as wish fulfillment for individual people. One believes what one wants to believe because it resolves conflict, maintains hope, or alleviates alienation. Freud noted in 1931 that

Illusions need not necessarily be false, that is to say, unrealizable or contradiction to reality. For instance, a middle-class girl may have the illusion that a prince will come and marry her. This is possible; and a few such cases have occurred. That the Messiah will come and found a golden age is much less likely. Whether one classifies this belief as an illusion or as something analogous to a delusion will depend on one’s personal attitude. (1953; p. 31)

Politically, illusions have the power to mollify oppressed classes of people as this second from Freud quotation illustrates:

No doubt one is a wretched plebeian, harassed by debts and military service; but, to make up for it, one is a Roman citizen, one has one’s share in the task of ruling other nations and dictating their laws. This identification of the suppressed classes with the class who rules and exploits them is, however, only part of a larger whole. For, on the other hand, the suppressed classes can be emotionally attached to their

masters; in spite of their hostility to them they may see in them their ideals; unless such relations of a fundamentally satisfying kind subsisted, it would be impossible to understand how a number of civilizations have survived so long in spite of the justifiable hostility of large human masses. (1953; p. 13)

The work of the members of the Frankfurt School and those associated with it was quite varied and comprehensive. Adorno, for example, questioned the viability of a distinct working class in the face of the ideological onslaught of consumerist mass media (the culture industry) and bureaucracy. Horkheimer put into question the concept of objective truth by emphasizing the historic, social and cultural elements that go into the construction of such a notion. Habermas examined the underlying assumptions associated with meaningful communication and how these are related to action.

Marcuse's work has particular interest for me because he worked extensively and explicitly on combining the insights of Freud and Marx, the focus of his well-known work, *Eros and Civilization* (1955). He starts by critiquing Freud's contention that civilization is a product of repressed and sublimated human sexual desire, a process that provides the energy necessary for productive labor.  Marcuse contends that there is no inherent contradiction between work and pleasure, as Freud believed. Modern capitalist society, however, produces this contradiction by alienating, in Marx's sense, people from their basic selves, needs and labor.

Marcuse, in his later work, goes on to describe how Adorno's notion of the culture industry promotes two processes: repressive desublimination and repressive tolerance. The first of these, repressive desublimination, describes how people are conditioned to accept whatever is offered to them by capitalist society. Basic needs, even if they take the form of unrestrained sexuality, is transformed into forms that support and conform to capitalist materialism. The second of Marcuse's concepts, repressive tolerance, is a process wherein all values and beliefs are tolerated by power structures as long as they do not threaten basic capitalist relations. In what appears to be for democratic reasons, all criteria for judging the worth of beliefs are suspended. However, this extreme form of relativism also renders all beliefs and values meaningless, since no judgement can be made about them.

The members of the Frankfurt School were not by any means the only ones to grapple with the interrelationships between Freudian and Marxist theory. The project of melding Freud and Marx together has to come to terms with the question of what constitutes subjectivity, a concern that stands at the core of much of Freud's thought. Subjectivity has long been a topic of philosophical and sociological inquiry, as I've described in the first paper in this series. In psychiatry, theorists such as Lacan, Reich, Fromm and Kristeva have deal extensively with subjectivity from a critical perspective.  Historians, such as Hill, Thompson, Hobsbawm and Rowbotham have also grappled with it in their writings. This concern has even found itself in the works of philosophers of science, such as Popper and Feyerabend.

It is literary criticism, however, that stands as the most influential discipline in terms of questioning the nature of subjectivity. It is striking that many of the better-known critical theorists of society started out as literary critics (eg. Barthes, Benjamin, Bloom, Calvino, De Man, Eagleton, Fish, Jakobson, Jameson, Richards, Said, Spivak, Williams). This development is most likely due to the long-standing debates within the discipline about the relationship between the text in question, the author who produced it and the historical influences on its production. Literary criticism problematized such concepts as unified characters, cohesive textuality, cause and effect, narration, and point of view. These problems were extended beyond literary texts to the apprehension of 'real life'.

Literary criticism's influence has been chiefly felt through the work of post-structuralists such as Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard. As I described in the first paper in this series, post-structuralism can be summarized as the rejection of foundationalism, the belief in the existence of unproblematic representations of factual knowledge. The touchstone for much of post-structuralist theory is Nietzsche, who maintained that there was no such thing as factual knowledge, just interpretations.

Similarly, subjectivity, as Foucault put it, must be understood as in view of the fact that people are culturally and discursively constructed as symbolic beings occupying culturally based sites of meaning. Each of these sites evokes a different orientation of the self. Individuals are 'subjects' who originate socially and take their self-image from the identity groups to which they belong to or, more significantly, identify with. Post-structuralism is anti-humanist, in the sense that it rejects the humanist and romantic notion that individuals are isolated and immaterial beings who can be thought of abstractly. In this viewpoint, individual people view reality as having a specific history that is influenced by culture, language and the body.

Language is key to subjectivity because it is marked by its ability to organize knowledge into discourse, a thematic field of meaning in which words and symbols exchange meaning and represent power. This lends much more subtlety to the concepts of hegemony or ideology. We can only, in fact, conceive of what we can symbolize through language. All meaning is textual, in Derrida's sense, because every piece of knowledge adheres to rules of discourse and stands in relation to others. These rules of discourse are organized and distributed, as Foucault pointed out, in ways that are multiple, discontinuous and related to power.

Ideology, on the other hand, was a troublesome term for Foucault (1980), at least as I understand him in translation. He took the term to mean that it denoted falsity, was in reference to the concept of a unified subject, or was subordinated to economic structures. He had little use for it. In my opinion, however, Foucault's criticism of the term ideology is an apprehension based on the simplistic definition that predates the process of re-conceptualization initiated by Lukács. The term still has great value and power if it is augmented with the kinds of nuances and subtleties (including Foucault's) that I've described above.

One final figure is important to note at this point in my argument. Louis Althussar has often been cited by theorists in Cultural Studies as their link to continental or western Marxism. As I describe below, Cultural Studies, as represented by the University of Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, strongly influenced the development of critical research in education. Althussar is best known for his rigorous evaluation of Marx's basic tenets, a project that sought to rehabilitate Marx in much the same way that Lacan hoped to do in his reevaluation of Freud. Althussar stressed the scientific method and economic basis of Marx's mature work and downplayed the humanism inherent in his earlier writings. As such, he elaborated on Marx's notion of modes of production, emphasized the need for theory to remain internally consistent and downplayed the agency that individuals play in history. As can be seen, much of Althussar's work is economically deterministic and runs counter to many of the insights worked out by Gramsci (and other theorists) I have cited above.

However, Cultural Studies theorists found two concepts in Althussar's writings that were valuable: interpellation and the ideological state apparatus. These concepts elaborate on how ideology functions in society and parallels some of Gramsci other insights, especially those related to the internalization of dominant ideology.

Interpellation plays on the French words signifying 'to call on' and 'interrogation'. As a term employed by Althussar, interpellation is a description of how individuals are created as subjects by ideological structures like the mass media. Individuals recognize themselves as the subjects being addressed by these ideological structures and thus internalize the messages and self-images they promote. The ideological state apparatus is Althussar's term for institutions such as the education system, family, and mass media that reproduce bourgeoisie ideology and help individuals internalize it.

In addition, Althussar reworked the economic basis of Marxist theory, stressing that capitalist society is a network of structures. In his view, although economic determinacy is ultimately paramount, these strictures enjoy relative autonomy. Althussar thus introduced a subtler conception of state structures that explained how institutions such as the media functioned, both as autonomous entities and as institutions that reproduce dominant ideology.

As is well known, Althussar led a very troubled and contradictory life in the midst of the upheavals of the French 'New Left' of the 1960's. Much of the theoretical debates I have outlined in this paper worked themselves out in Althussar's life experience. It is interesting to note, for instance, that Foucault was one of his students.

**Cultural Studies, Freire and Critical Pedagogy**

Cultural Studies originated at the University of Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1963 led by figures such as Hall, Williams and Hoggart. According to Kellner (2004), the scholars at the Centre were influenced by Althussar and Gramsci and focused on class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationalities in cultural texts. They were among the first to study the acculturating effects of popular media, such as newspapers, radio, television, and film. In addition, scholars in Cultural Studies explicitly opposed the concept of 'high culture' and consciously strove to examine forms that had been previously designated as 'popular' or 'low'. They were also quite critical of the concept of the aesthetic canons, such as that had been constructed for English literature. Cultural Studies tended to condemn this privileging of a particular set of texts or art works, typically produced by 'dead white European males', as being ethnocentric and sexist.

The type of fieldwork that the Birmingham Center engaged in was groundbreaking, with much of it focused on some aspect of schooling. According to Quantz (1992), the Center drew on research by Becker (1963), Hargreaves (1967), and Gouldner (1968), which critically examined education from the perspective of students, to produce "the most sustained development of the research methods later to be called critical ethnography" (Quantz; p. 455). This research was characterized by strong preferences for scholars to adopt interdisciplinary approaches, explicitly tie theory to practice, emphasize the place of the researcher in the subject studied, and examine topics related to oppressive social situations.

Schools became one of the prime foci of research done through the Center because of education's important reproductive function. As Dewey, Durkheim and others have pointed out, schools have become the principal modern institution that transmits societal and cultural norms to the next generation.

One of the most important of pieces of educational research that came out of the Birmingham Center was Paul Willis' *Learning to Labor* (1981). This work, which Quantz describes as "radically altering the way many scholars would begin to think about ethnographic research" (p. 456), concretely demonstrated the value of linking critical theory to educational research. Willis examined deviant student behavior and placed it in the overall context of capitalist social relations, thus demonstrating how schools prepared working class children for working class jobs.

Willis (1981) showed that schools 'mark' working class children and limit their future career choices. Almost as importantly, he demonstrated that schools transmit subtle and ideological messages about the nature of the work that these kids can expect after graduation. These messages concern

the general ambience of working life; the fascination with processes and machines; the division between those who work with their hands and those who work with their heads; the apparent timelessness and

inevitability of industrial organization; the atomized, repetitive nature of the work around the corner; and the hardness and inevitability of industrial work (p. 161).

Through such messages, schools reinforce the feeling among these young people that their inevitable and natural place is on the factory floor, under the supervision of straw bosses and middle managers.

According to Quantz, other innovative critical research into education and youth culture that was produced by the Birmingham Centre included that by Robins and Cohen (1978), Corrigan (1979), Hall, Hobson, Lowe and Hall (1980), McRobbie (1978), and Hall and Jefferson (1976). The research coming out the Center tended to make greater use of case study methodology and symbolic interactionism.

The Birmingham Center was not the only group of scholars conducting critical research. In preparation for this paper, I've had the pleasure of reading some of the other scholars that Quantz recommends as being seminal, including Anyon (1980), Apple and Weis (1983), Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Britzman (1986), Cazden, John and Hymes (1972), Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963), McLaren (1986), Simon (1992) and Wolcott (1967).  Quantz provides an excellent and authoritative summary of their work.

What is striking to me about this body of research is that the points of view of the scholars involved are usually quite transparent. This demonstrates another one of Simon and Dippo's points about critical research in the definition I cited above: that it must address how the research itself is limited as a form of social practice. In this scholarship, there is little attempt to hide beyond an artificial pretence of scientific objectivity. This is true for both the statistically based examination of schooling's interrelationship with labour markets that Bolwes and Gintis conduct, and McLaren's detailed ethnographic examination of rituals used in a single Toronto Catholic school. This even involves the researchers making their close relationship to their subjects explicit, as Wolcott does when he describes himself as a teacher in the Kwakiutl school and village in which he works, lives and studies.

Taking the lead from Gramsci, these scholars also take on the role of transformative intellectuals, to use Aronowitz and Giroux's term, who consciously seek to effect educational change. This means, as Simon stresses, that education should be explicitly viewed as political practice that searches for new visions of what schooling could be, a process he terms a pedagogy of possibility.

This scholarship also demonstrates a broadened of the field beyond traditional ethnographic description to examine issues related to knowledge construction, testing, teacher training, identity formation, and teaching methodology. As such, the field has become increasingly better known as critical pedagogy.

One influential study that demonstrates this broadening of concerns is Anyon's (1981) research into the way textbooks were used in one Eastern U.S. school district by schools that served various socio-economic neighborhoods. She noted that the pedagogical content in classes at identical grade levels varied considerably according to the socio-economic neighborhood in which the schools in question were situated. Anyon examined how the attitudes held by teachers about the class membership of their students influenced how they used the same assigned set of textbooks. Working class children were given factual knowledge to memorize and assimilate. Children from bourgeoisie families were encouraged to critical examine texts and engaged in higher levels of cognitive tasks. Anyon went on to say how these approaches to knowledge construction reinforced the class positions of the children under study.

It was with the work of Pablo Friere, however, that critical pedagogy came into its own. Originally published in 1970, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1989) has enjoyed immense popularity and influence in most fields in education. According to Luke (2004), Friere's work blended Hegelian dialects, Marxist materialism, Dewey's aesthetics and Christian existentialism. The explicit influence of Christianity was new to critical theory, and was characterized by "the recollection and recovery of the self, with a focus on the ethics of care in the face of physical and symbolic violence" (p. 23). As Luke puts it, even though such figures as Young, Bernstein and Bourdieu were developing similar sensibilities in the field of critical scholarship, Friere's unique language "spoke more directly to the psychic memory and bodily experience of Other" (p. 22).

Friere extrapolates on the relationships between ideology, alienation and the physical forms of oppression, places great value on the role played by intellectuals and is highly critical of sectarianism. What I find especially valuable in Friere's thought is his stress on the importance of problem solving as a key element in the construction of knowledge. This emphasis is closely related to his criticisms of what he called the banking model of education, the conception that learners are empty vessels into which knowledge is poured (not unlike Descarte's tabula rasa). In Friere's pedagogy, on the other hand, learning is part of the construction of knowledge and is closely related to how people interact with their environment to solve problems and complete tasks. These tasks are not for their own sake of course. As Luke puts it, Friere's legacy means that these tasks must be activist critiques of civil society, political economy, and the human psychology of struggle and oppression.

The impact of Freire's writing was also in large part due to the fact that he practiced his pedagogy in the third world. This was an important break in the previous pattern, which featured educational theorists almost exclusively from Europe, North America and former British colonies. Outside of a lonely few, third world scholars in education have appeared to be 'below the radar'. Friere's eminence helped build prestige for scholars who write from a third world (ie. non-Caucasian) perspective, such as Brabha, Hall, and Said. In recent years this has spawned the post-colonial approach to critical research, which critiques the English as a Second Language Teaching profession as a profit-orientated industry that subordinates non-western and local forms of knowledge. Within second language pedagogy, scholars such as Canagarajah and Kubato are leading this emerging field.

Feminist contributions to critical pedagogy have also been immeasurable. Maturing in the early 1980's, feminist educational research has been multi-varied and innovative. Roman (1992) outlines three research positions taken by feminist qualitative researchers. The first “implies uncritically that feminist research, methods, theories and practice consist of any research done by women about women or with women as research subjects” (p. 576). This outlook, according to Roman, tends to romanticize and essentialize women, frequently rejects positivist research traditions as inherently masculine and chauvinist.

The second position taken by feminist researchers takes the opposite view, contending that there is no necessary shared set of experiences or interests that unite women. What makes for research feminist according to this outlook, is its faithfulness to the political interests that women share for greater emancipation.

The third position in feminist research is what Roman has called a ‘feminist materialist’ approach, which she outlines as an alternative to the other two. It focuses on what Jagger (1983) describes as the “standpoint” of women. Although there is no single form of feminine subordination, Roman claims that feminine research occurs “when its methods, theory and practice draw on the differences among groups of women to theorize about what is common or different in their experiences of various forms of oppression and privilege” (p. 578). These differences among groups of women are their ‘standpoints’.

The some important implications associated with this third position, which. First, there is a close unity between theory, method and praxis. In contrast to naturalist or positivist inquiry, the form of research that Jagger advocates is tested by its usefulness in transforming the multiplicity of female experiences in the face of oppression. Second, the depiction of reality found in this research is contested. The consideration of power relations is central to this approach, both in terms of what is examined and how it is conducted. Third, feminist materialists are open to the participation of men in research.

Queer theory is another emerging field within critical pedagogy. Its focus is on the experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual students and teachers and questions definitions of and common assumptions related to homosexuality, heterosexuality and gender. Although a base of scholarship is undoubtedly being built, there is little published research from this perspective at this moment. A Google search of a popular critical pedagogy website (Stevens, 2004), for example, only brings up four references to research with a queer focus. One of these, however (Grace, 2001), is an exceptional resource for adult educators.

**Critical Theory and Research in Second Language Education**

Critical theory in SLE is such a relatively recent phenomenon that my copy of the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1997) makes no mention of it. In fact, the first anthology of academic research on the topic has only just been published (Norton and Toohey, 2004). The growing importance of the approach is further evidenced by the fact that the Kluwer Handbook on English Language Teaching (ed. Cummins & Davison, in press) devotes a substantial portion of its contents to critical approaches.

Due to the fact that SLE often occupies a critical role in multicultural societies, critical researchers in this field have commonly drawn on critical multicultural and citizenship theory (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 1992; Corson, 1990; Cummins, 1988; Isin & Wood, 1999; Kymlicka, 1992; and Young, 1987). Given the importance to the field of the incredible speed associated with changing forms of communication, extensive use has also been made of critical theories related to multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996).

Judging by Norton and Toohey's (2004) anthology, critical research in SLE is focused on identity, the role of research and teacher education in an effort to reconceptualize the field. Issues around gender, race, sexuality, linguistic human rights, testing, the place of grammar, popular culture, and community education are prominent concerns of the scholars contributing to this volume. As the editors point out, the common thread in the anthology is a struggle to make power relations explicit because "action on one's oppression comes only with naming, externalizing, and reading the world, including the cause of one's own oppression" (2004, p. 11).

**Conclusion: The Limits of Liberalism**

In arguing for an alternative approach to liberalism with SLE, Ryuko Kubata outlines the basic tenets of critical multiculturalism, a term, as I noted in my second paper, that was first coined by the Chicago Cultural Studies Group. Kubata notes that

while liberal multiculturalism values and appreciates cultural differences, it also supports the idea all people, regardless of their backgrounds, are equal and should have equal opportunities in society. This egalitarianism lead to the view that each individual's academic and economic success is dependent upon his or her own effort. (2004; p. 30)

When a student fails to gain academic and economic success, on the other hand, it is his or her own fault. Striking close to home, Kubata goes on to say that liberal second language educators often

revert to the blaming-the-victim, no differential treatment, or the discrimination is everywhere arguments when confronted with such challenging questions as, Why are black and Latino(a) students underrepresented in certain educational programs? (2004: p. 30)

Mitchell’s 2001 research study of the struggles around the goals of public education in Richmond illustrates how public debates often feature competing claims from first and second language communities. The immigrant community whose struggles she studied had specific needs that were clearly different from those found in dominant discourses on education in the district. These needs could not be met through individualistic approaches.

What, then, does this all mean for the kind of research I hope to conduct in a Canadian immigrant community? To my mind, the common thread found in the anthology above brings questions related to ideology and illusion to the forefront. Naming the root causes of oppression means to unmask the means by which oppressive ideology is propagated and, in turn, assimilated by oppressed peoples. As I noted in the first paper in this series, I believe that the concrete and physical sources of oppression of immigrant communities in Canada have had the benefit of some scholarship (Bannerji, 2000; Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 2000; Li, 1990; Ng, 1993). What has not been extensively treated, however, are the psychological reinforcements of this oppression. As I hope I've illustrated by my discussion above, these psychological processes are complex, defying easy answers and preconceived notions.

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