This book situates Critical Pedagogies (CPs) within a foreign language education, especially the teaching and learning English in Indonesia. The plurality of the notion CPs makes it possible for the author to personalize them in his own reflections and actions praxes. The author's personal praxes begin challenging the predominant curriculum paradigm in Indonesia that at times overlooks systematic marginalization towards students and teachers alike at philosophical and practical levels. On top of personalizing CPs at the conceptual level, the author provides readers with his emergent praxes collaboratively with rural high school EFL and university students, and personally on some literary works. Some insights on critical assessment procedures are also discussed. Finally, the move to the future, especially beyond traditional classroom, is focused on by taking into account the ways people can become critical across worldviews, with a specific emphasis on spirituality.

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Personalizing Critical Pedagogies in Foreign Language Education

Joseph Ernest Mambu

Foreword: Francis B. Alip

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Personalizing Critical Pedagogies in Foreign Language Education

Joseph Ernest Mambu

Foreword: Francis B. Alip
To Ella Victoria, my wife
and
Joel Rafa Richelieu, my son
### Contents

**List of Tables**

**List of Figures**

**Acknowledgments**

**Foreword: TEFL in the Indonesian context**

**Preface**

**Chapter 1 Prologue**  1

**PART 1 SITUATING CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**  5

**Chapter 2 Conceptualizing Critical Pedagogies**  7

2.1 Introduction  7

2.2 Critical thinking  8

2.3 Critical literacies  9

2.4 Critical reading  9

2.5 Critical theory  9

2.6 Critical Discourse Analysis  10

2.7 Freirean critical pedagogy  10

2.8 Critical applied linguistics  13

2.8.1 *Pennycook’s transgressive pedagogy*  13

2.8.2 *From Bakhtin’s perspective to a critique of Paulo Freire and beyond*  16

2.8.3 *Problematizing sectarian secularism and spiritualism*  20
2.8.4 Problematizing one’s own epistemological stances 23
2.9 So, what are Critical Pedagogies? 25
2.10 Final remarks 27

Chapter 3 Critical Pedagogies as an EFL curriculum paradigm 31
3.1 Introduction 31
3.2 Critical Pedagogies as an alternative curriculum paradigm: A shift from the status quo 31
3.3 The breadth of critical literacies 34
3.4 Situating Critical Pedagogies vis-à-vis Critical Literacies in Indonesian EFL curricula 38
3.5 Aims of CPs in Indonesia: New wine in an old wine skin or a new wine skin? 42

PART 2 SOME PERSONAL CONTENTS, APPROACHES, AND ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION 45

Chapter 4 Thematic investigations with EFL rural school and university students 47
4.1 Understanding “conscientization” and “thematic investigations” 47
4.2 Critical themes 49
   4.2.1 Junk food is harmful for people’s health 50
   4.2.2 Food sold by poor/ordinary people may not be as competitive as junk food in terms of price 52
   4.2.3 The discrepancy between underdeveloped and developed countries 53
   4.2.4 Manager versus people 53
PART 3
PROSPECTIVE CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Chapter 7  Learning EFL beyond classrooms

Chapter 8  A critical outlook to the future
8.1  Personalized transgressive pedagogies
8.2  Being “critical” through worldviews
  8.2.1  Utopianism
  8.2.2  Humanism
  8.2.3  New Age
  8.2.4  Christianity
  8.2.5  Beyond Christianity
8.3  Transcending (or transgressing) worldviews

Chapter 9  Epilogue

References

Index
List of Tables
Table 3.1 Metaphors for literacy 37
Table 3.2 Indonesian EFL curriculums across decades 39
Table 8.1 Four Western Worldview Models 120

List of Figures
Figure 4.1 A simplified concordance outputs of “poverty-stricken” 66
Figure 4.2 More stretched concordance outputs of “poverty-stricken” 66
Figure 6.1 Criteria for evaluation of written journals. 87
Figure 6.2 Criteria for evaluation of oral presentation. 89
The first and foremost self to whom I express my sincere appreciation is Lord Jesus Christ who was, is, and will still be stricken by humans’ oppressions. He had been at times afflicted before he died and rose from death so that we all can learn how to get ourselves liberated and set other people free from oppressive bondage.

I also thank my critical teachers whom I do not know personally but are close at heart: Paulo Freire, James Paul Gee, Alastair Pennycook, and Neil T. Anderson. To my insightful mentor, Robert Kleinsasser, I will never ever forget your critical praxes embodied in our weekly meetings in Second Language Teaching, Applied Linguistics, and Issues in Language Development Program graduate courses.

To my students (1) in Critical Pedagogies and Literacy course at the English Department of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga, (2) in Generasi Baru (New Generation) Alternative School in Getasan village, Central Java, whose thoughts are included here, I must thank you all. Without your collaborative spirit, I would probably have buried much of my passion in actualizing Critical Pedagogies.

Last but not least, I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Francis Borgias Alip, M.Pd., M.A. from English Letters Department, Sanata Dharma University, who has sharpened my ideas in this book through his astute review, editing, and foreword.
Foreword

TEFL in the Indonesian context

People have always complained about the teaching of English in Indonesia. They compare its result with that in Singapore, where English learners reportedly manage to gain adequate communicative competence, particularly the speaking skills. Under the ambition to achieve equal success, the syllabi of English in schools have been redesigned and likened to those in neighboring countries. Unfortunately, the expected results are still yet to materialize.

Indeed, teaching English in Indonesia is different from that in the neighboring countries. In Singapore (and Timor Leste, and formerly also in Malaysia and the Philippines), English has been one of the official languages. As a result, in those countries it has become a second language for most of the population. In Indonesia English has never been a second language and it remains a foreign language, which has no function in the daily life of most Indonesian. Therefore, comparing the result of the teaching of English in Indonesia and that in the neighboring countries without changing the role of English among the Indonesian population will be futile and fruitless.

High expectation has been cast with the adoption of English as a medium of instruction in Indonesian bilingual schools, where English is not merely as an academic subject (which sometimes is taught not in English!) When English is used a medium of instruction for other subjects, English holds its very natural function as a language, as a means of communication. Thus, in Stephen Krashen’s terms, it is not only learning that takes place in the classroom but also acquisition. In this model, it is expected that students will be proficient in English. Nonetheless, it has to be realized that such bilingual education does not guarantee success when the teachers are not proficient in English. It is a sad fact that in many bilingual classes (or even the so-called ‘international’ classes) only the handouts or perhaps the printed texts are in English. The teacher-student interaction is mostly conducted
in Indonesian, and so English has again lost its role as a means of classroom communication. Sometimes, the teachers’ English is also so localized that might lead to fossilized errors among students. (In lower classes, the danger is also bigger because the students rely on their teachers’ English so heavily that they ignore correction from more authoritative sources.)

The adoption of English as a daily medium of communication among Indonesians is not meant to westernize or “anglicanize” its speakers in Indonesia. Though speaking or mastering English, it is expected that English-speaking Indonesians are still patriotically and culturally Indonesian. In other words, teaching English in Indonesia is not meant to assimilate Indonesian in the culture of countries where English is a native language. In this aspect, Critical Pedagogies in teaching English are very relevant.

Critical Pedagogies, which do not only teach the language and its cultural contents but also lead language learners to critically examine the context and purposes of its use, encourage language teachers and learners to bring the teaching of English to the Indonesian context. English teachers should try to make English relevant to the life of their students. Thus, the classroom activities and the materials presented both inside and outside the classroom must deal with what the students do in their life.

However, it should be noted that such teaching should not lead to ‘localism’, where English is used limitedly to local issues. This tendency is against the nature of English as a foreign language, which is a window to the world. It is through English that we communicate with the world beyond Indonesia. Then, English learners in Indonesia should be made familiar with global issues in addition to the local or national ones.

Under Critical Pedagogies, teaching English in Indonesia should be a means of learner empowerment. Students are not the objects of the teaching but should be the subjects of learning, where they have active roles in the instructional designs and implementation. Their mastery of English should equip them with more competence to deal with life. Such can happen only when students are really involved in the designs and implementation of their learning.
In relation to the above, the teachers’ personality is a key to the success of teaching English as a foreign language. Their personality is much influenced not only by their professional training but their personal backgrounds, including their religious beliefs. In a multi-religious country like Indonesia, personal religious beliefs should not impede the acceptance of students with beliefs different from their teachers’. On the contrary, the teachers’ personal beliefs should enrich the students’ personal experience in other faiths without endangering their own. In this way, both teachers and students will refine their personality development.

Hopefully, this publication will enrich the readers’ perspectives in teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia.

Yogyakarta, Desember 26, 2009
Francis Borgias Alip
Preface

My toughest challenge of being an English lecturer in an Indonesian university is how to be passionate in my teaching, research, and community service despite my “limited” English proficiency. By limited I mean that from the so-called English native speakers’ standards, my paper-based TOEFL or IELTS scores, for example, are not “perfect” – 677 or 9 respectively. This was (and sometimes is still) personally very heartbreaking but later I find it really motivating to know that regardless of my imperfect English I can use it as a personal weapon to reflect upon oppressive realities that abound in our societies – with the facts that I speak English “with an accent” and my overall English is “far from perfect” according to oppressive standards being included. Besides that, I believe my (and others’) personalized English(es) can be empowering. For example, through English(es) spoken, written, or translated from Bahasa Indonesia by Indonesians, much wider audiences worldwide will be able to understand oppressive realities in Indonesia and how the Indonesians perceive and resolve them in real actions. This hypothetical example has motivated me to find real examples through dialogs with my students both in the university I am currently working and in a rural school, and with myself who has kept seeking for answers, ways, or even more tough questions as to how oppressions can be laid bare and removed. Such dialogs, which aim at taking sides with the oppressed in its broadest sense of the notion, are the very core of Critical Pedagogy.

This book embodies my initial attempts in the past few years to personalize the making sense of and implementations of Critical Pedagogy. I certainly have yet to know the responses or repercussions that will (or will not) emerge following this book’s publication. I imagine that some may be apathetic. Even if some others, especially those claiming to be “critical” pedagogues, are enthusiastic, they probably are zealous about attacking my logics, which only further marginalizes me for not being successful in writing in English “lucidly” and “critically”.
Notwithstanding, this is me, interweaving others’ voices which I agree or disagree, I acclaim or critique. If I happen to critique my current reflections here in the future, won’t that be a valuable moment when the legacy of Critical Pedagogy as a flexible construct is re-affirmed: that critiques are (always?) susceptible to criticisms.

Or, if at all some readers appreciate my ideas, this is at least what I can hope, quoting Wittgenstein’s as cited in Silverman (1993, p. x):

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them (he must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it). He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. (Wittgenstein: 1971, 6.54).

As Silverman further comments on Wittgenstein’s:

It is my hope that... this book may serve as something like Wittgenstein’s ladder, providing an initial footing for readers to go off to do their own [praxes] – charting new territories rather than restating comfortable orthodoxies. (p. x)

It is also my hope that this book helps accommodate the restlessness, the uneasy tight feelings, that both foreign language teachers and students sense when they experience or observe oppressions. Together we share our passion to ameliorate “the world aright”.

Joseph Ernest Mambu
Salatiga, Desember 2009
This book situates Critical Pedagogies (CPs) within a foreign language education, especially the teaching and learning English in Indonesia. The plurality of the notion CPs makes it possible for the author to personalize them in his own reflections and actions. The author's personal praxes begin challenging the predominant curriculum paradigm in Indonesia that at times overlooks systematic marginalization towards students and teachers alike at philosophical and practical levels. On top of personalizing CPs at the conceptual level, the author provides readers with his emergent praxes collaboratively with rural high school EFL and university students, and personally on some literary works. Some insights on critical assessment procedures are also discussed. Finally, the move to the future, especially beyond traditional classroom, is focused on by taking into account the ways people can become critical across worldviews, with a specific emphasis on spirituality.

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