3 Critical Pedagogies as an EFL curriculum paradigm

3.1 Introduction

CP as a curriculum paradigm is distinctive from the currently dominating curriculum paradigm that has subconsciously been permeating through Indonesian people’s worldview over decades, and yet going relatively unchallenged in formal schooling despite changes of the names of curricula. Thinking naïvely, in particular, may reflect (EFL) teachers’ beliefs and practices in the present dominant curriculum paradigm. In fact, many teachers, especially EFL in-service teachers in Indonesia, resort to pedagogical practices they have been accustomed to (e.g., few meaningful dialogs between teachers and students) which they may have acquired as students themselves and been perpetuated even in teacher training colleges or institutes. These practices (especially reliance on memorization) may have been perceived by these teachers as “effective” and thus they do not really bother believing in, let alone adapting and implementing, newly introduced curriculums with sophisticated-sounding labels such as Competency-Based Curriculum in the early 2000s, and now school-level curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan or KTSP) (cf. the review of EFL curricula in Indonesia by Lie, 2006).

Thinking critically may evolve when teachers and learners know the ways and are determined to nurture it. The following discussions suggest some potential paths through which EFL educators and learners may cultivate critical inquiries through CP[s] as a curriculum paradigm.

3.2 Critical Pedagogies as an alternative curriculum paradigm: A shift from the status quo

Curriculum, simply put, involves “the aims, content, methodology and evaluation procedures of a particular subject or subjects taught in a particular institution or school system” (Carter & Nunan, 2001, p. 221). Curriculum rationalization and implementation are subject
to paradigms. Roughly speaking, paradigm in philosophy of science refers to “a pattern of thinking, a set of background assumptions taken for granted” (Mautner, 2000, p. 408). This suggests that once a person thinks and acts within a pattern, s/he belongs to a certain paradigm. In language pedagogy, there have been some curriculum paradigms and I will discuss two only: Perennial Analyticism and Critical Pedagogy (CP) (Lange, 1990; cf. also Hawkins, 2007 for a more thorough discussion on the dominant curriculum paradigm worldwide and Schubert, 1986, 1994 for more comprehensive curriculum paradigms – both in general education). My stance is departing from the former and embracing the latter.

Many teachers have deeply been entrenched within the predominant curriculum paradigm: perennial analyticism (PA). PA is very much top-down which restricts local teachers and students to explore their own learning paths. PA is characterized, as Schubert (1994) lists, as involving, among others, “… teacher’s editions to textbooks, lesson plan forms, curriculum guides, methods textbooks, and evaluation checklists …” (p. 27). The main limitation of PA is that it may not be focused on the student’s learning but rather on the amount of knowledge to be covered, the methods to teach that knowledge, and standardized tests by which the predetermined knowledge is measured. This paradigm has (sub)consciously been practiced in Indonesia, especially under Soeharto’s presidency (1966-1998) during which education was centralized by the government at central, provincial, district, and lower levels of society. The curriculum policies in schools were then dictated by the government and many teachers simply followed what the policies demanded. This does not mean that PA paradigm has disappeared. In fact, even with KTSP becoming the current discourse in education, the PA mentality is still very pervasive. Accustomed to the government guidance (or policy makers’ guidelines), ironically, a lot of (EFL) teachers lack in the ability to think and act strategically in the era of more pedagogical freedom made possible by KTSP (see Saukah, 2009).

Unlike PA, CPs believes in the power of “dialogue”; that is, “the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (Freire, 1990, p. 76). Dialogues also entail “critical thinking”
and attempt to eliminate “naïve thinking” (Freire, 1990, p. 81). The former necessitates more cognitively demanding (higher-order) thinking skills (e.g., applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating) and the former lower-order thinking skills, i.e., simply depositing knowledge and naïve comprehension of realities (cf. Hall, 2001, pp. 88-89). Freire (1990) contends that critical thinkers “perceiv[e] reality as process, as transformation”. This is different from naïve thinkers who view reality as a static entity. Critical thinking in this sense will constitute “true education” (pp. 80-81). In true education, the content of the program is not imposed by the teacher to the students. Neither is the content a gift to be devoured by (or deposited to) the students naively. Rather, it is “the organized, systematized, and developed “re-presentation” to individuals of the things about which they want to know more”. The representation may consist of bits of oppressive realities to be critically examined and reflected by learning participants (teachers and learners). Thus, “[a]uthentic education is not carried on by ‘A’ [teacher] for ‘B’ [student] or by ‘A’ about ‘B’, but rather by ‘A’ with ‘B’, mediated by the world” (p. 82).

The oppressive situation is embedded in the so-called “limit-situations” in which people think that the “real” is unalterable, taken-for-granted, and thus they succumb to this reality. The reality limits them. In an optimistic tone, however, the “limit-situations” must be brought to the fore by critical educators and learners, and subjected to transformation by virtue of “limit-acts”. Such acts are to counteract the “limit-situations” (Freire, 1990, p. 89). Praxis is then for the people to figure out “limit-situations” through reflections of their present reality and “limit-acts” are the actions to transform (or to transcend) the present reality. Beyond the “limit-situations” is an “untested feasibility”; that is, the possible outcomes of transformation which are not yet tested. In Pennycook’s (2007) term (see chapter 2 above), the very act to go beyond limit-situations is central to transgression in pedagogy (or transgressive pedagogy). In chapter 4, Freirean dialogues will be specifically exemplified.

In the next section, the relationship between critical literacy/literacies and Critical Pedagogies will be established. The relation is
indeed important as one cannot transgress his/her illiteracy/illiteracies unless s/he is aware of what s/he is lacking.

3.3 The breadth of critical literacies

The notion “Critical Pedagogies and Literacies” can be ambiguous. It may mean Critical Pedagogies as one entity and (vis-à-vis) Literacies as another entity. It may also be read Critical Pedagogies and Critical Literacies. Though the former is, in it itself, pregnant with meanings, the following discussions are mainly of the latter meaning, which is particularly inspired by Norton and Toohey’s (2004a) edited book entitled *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*. As to why “language learning” is shifted into “literacies” is of my reason to be inclusive. That is, literacies as an entity is presumably broader in scope than language learning. While language learning is commonly associated only with learning another (or a second/foreign) language than a learner’s own/first language, critical literacies may involve learning first and second languages critically.

The most general view of literacy is the ability to read and write in a language. The way literacy is made sense of by scholars and laypeople alike, however, varies. Metaphors will help us understand the nuanced meanings of literacy.

In the media, literacy is often associated with negative terms related to crime, weakness and social disease because being illiterate accounts for these negative characteristics. As Barton (1994) witnesses: “In Canada illiteracy is often linked with criminality. In the United States the illiterate is a drain on the economy. In Britain an illiterate individual cannot get a job and is held back…” (p. 11).

Traditionally, literacy is analogized as a set of skills and sub-skills of reading (e.g., “bottom-up” approaches: word recognition, vocabulary acquisition, scanning, skimming, inferring, etc.) and writing (e.g., outlining, composing a rough draft, paraphrasing) taught at all levels of education. Literacy in this sense is inspired from the field of psychology. Typically, the teaching of these skills is ordered from the presumably easier skill to the more difficult ones, initiated with pre-reading to preview (to make a decision whether to read a text or not) or to predict as a “top-down” approach to activate
“schemata” or background knowledge. The other (sub)skills are taught “metacognitively” in “while reading”, e.g., summarizing, questioning, clarifying while reading) and “post-reading” strategies, e.g., reflecting previously read texts in the light of personal experiences (Barton, 1994; Kellogg, 1994; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Literacy in this sense is viewed as a variable which can be measured and thus students are divided into those which are “skilled” and those that are “less skilled”.

Literacy has also been viewed as “access to knowledge and information”. To be literate means having access to written and printed (and now on-line) materials. Some terms like “computer literacy”, “visual literacy”, and “political literacy” are inspired by this view. Furthermore, each of these literacies is seen as “understanding an area of knowledge” (Barton, 1994, p. 13). Gee (2004) distinguishes between “Old Literacies” and “New Literacies”. In the former, the learning of literacy is geared toward the acquisition of the “academic language”. This has made people to belief that this kind of language empowers each of them to have a better access to economic and political powers. In the latter, literacy is no longer simply an individual endeavor but also that of teams working in synergy. This synergy makes them more effective than what an individual alone can achieve. Such teams consist of people who are project oriented. So after one project is done, each individual can work with other people. Thus, the sense of security is not built up from permanent jobs as in the old literacies. Rather, people depend more on portfolios: “…the skills, achievements, and previous experiences that a person owns, and that he or she can arrange and rearrange to sell him- or herself for new opportunities in changed times”. Central to the enhancement of portfolios is “the ability to design new identities, affinity groups, and networks” (p. 284, italics original). This implies that people in the new (millennial) era cannot only depend on the academic language. As they shift from one identity to another, with academic life as one of identities, they have to be “literate” in a variety of fields.

Miano (2004) discusses the relationship between Bakhtin (1981) “authoritative discourse” and “internally persuasive discourse” in relation to literacy. The former is the most “hegemonic” and widely accepted “literacy” as proliferated in schools all over the world. Recall
the traditional approach to literacy that solely focuses on psychological (or psycholinguistics) frameworks (e.g., top-down and bottom-up approaches) and measures. The latter refers to practices of literacy that are done by learners independently, apart from approaches introduced formally at traditional schools. One of such practices is website authoring that requires a person to master different skills simultaneously: basic typing, web-authoring, pouring out ideas to promote oneself through the Internet, etc. This is “literacy as hybridity” in that expressions are not limited to writing as simply understood or practiced at traditional classrooms but also “transcend[ing] the ‘identity challenge’” through web-authoring, among others. For example, a student may be considered “low-achieving” (“not very literate”) from school point of view but he/she is successful in uncovering his/her identities electronically (cf. also Gee, 2004).

Greenleaf and Katz (2004) use the term “literate practices” to explore the idea of literacy. This essay discusses teachers’ empowering students to read instead of spoonfeeding them with teacher-centered, predetermined techniques, e.g., selecting parts of a novel that are regarded as important by teachers, thus not providing ample opportunities for students themselves to have direct access to and grapple with the complete text however difficult it is. The empowerment evolved over years and was made possible through collaborative and dialogic classroom discourse in a professional development program called the Strategic Literacy Network (SLN). Prior to being immersed and actively participating in SLN, the teachers were enormously concerned with the students’ very limited reading skills or “literate abilities” (p. 185), e.g., incapable of summing up a novel in their own words. They resorted to teacher-centered pedagogical practices as they pessimistically presumed that the students were hopeless and not interested in reading literary works. In SLN, nonetheless, these teachers were facilitated to inquire into students’ voices. Responding to a student’s videotaped sincere reaction to a difficult text (“I can’t hear what I’m read’n. I like to hear what I’m read’n or feel what I’m read’n. And I can’t really feel it or hear it, and I just don’t like the story”), for example, a teacher (Carla) began to challenge the mainstream claim (“authoritative discourse”, in view of Bakhtin), that students’ literacy
limitations are their own problems that are often believed to be beyond teachers’ help (p. 182).

Critical pedagogy engendered by Paulo Freire is particularly related to (critical) literacy which is aimed at empowering the oppressed through *conscientization* (see samples of analysis on thematic investigation below in chapters 4 further discussion).

In relation to second/foreign language teaching and learning, this book addresses the literacy of a second/foreign language without ignoring first language literacy. It may be through the first language first that students think critically or through both languages in tandem (e.g., see chapter 4 below). Despite different linguistic systems (orthography, phonology, morphology, lexicon, semantics, syntax or discourse) across languages or approaches to literacy as outlined above, the following metaphors of talking about literacy can be summed up as follows (see Table 3.1):

**Table 3.1. Metaphors for literacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sickness Handicap</td>
<td>Treatment Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Clinical intervention Compensatory aids</td>
<td>Remittance (release) Alleviation</td>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ignorance</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Orthodox literacy tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Incapacity</td>
<td>Therapy</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>Adjustment Assimilation Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Oppression</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Political organizational/ legislation</td>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Conscientization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Deprivation</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Reallocation of material resources</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>Positive discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Deviance</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Isolation Containment Physical coercion (force)</td>
<td>Correction Conformity</td>
<td>Negative discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The contents of Table 3.1 are mostly quoted from Barton (1994, p. 13); number 7 and 8, however, consist of my own metaphors. No. 7 is inspired by Gee (2004) who distinguishes – please recall – old literacies from new literacies. The metaphor set no. 4 was in line with Miano’s (2004) call for non-formal schooling literacy, Greenleaf and Katz (2004) literacy practices in SLN, and Freirean praxis, among others. The impetus for metaphor set no. 8 is the gap in the literature of literacy studies on spiritual issues (see Chapter 8 in particular).

Thus, sets of metaphor nos. 4 and 8 are specifically relevant to the notion of critical literacy/literacies that are within the spirit of CPs. Nos. 1 and 2 may be beneficial for marginalized people suffering from dyslexia or psychological disturbances, but I will not discuss them here. No. 2 is typically interpreted by adherents of Perennial Analyticism as a curriculum paradigm. No. 5 reflects a capitalistic society that views “discrimination positively” as those in such a society believes that the haves and the have-nots are all too common and the have-nots (“illiterate people”) are there because, according to the haves, they should be there somehow. No. 6 may represent an authoritarian society (either capitalistic or socialist) in which those not conforming to laws are illiterate and subject to “negative discrimination”. Thus, there are no attempts in Nos. 5 and 6 to raise the illiterate people’s awareness of their being oppressed and how they can ameliorate their life conditions. No. 7 is particularly unique, in my opinion, as it is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand it may perpetuate the rat race of the new capitalistic society that venerates modern technology and marginalizes those who are technologically ignorant or illiterate. On the other hand, technology is the very instrument marginalized people can be empowered and empower themselves.

How the nuanced meanings of critical literacies and CPs are closely linked to Indonesian EFL curricula is the next focus of this chapter.
3.4 Situating Critical Pedagogies vis-à-vis Critical Literacies in Indonesian EFL curricula

(Hidden) voices may have resonated from EFL teachers in Indonesia that they are entangled, if not “tossed to and fro” by the cruelty, instability, inconsistencies of government-mandated curricula. Just like “Jalan Raya Pos, Jalan Daendels” (Pramoedya Ananta Toer, 2005), a thousand-kilometer street built by thousands of enslaved-by-the-Dutch inhabitants of Java, from the edge of northern coast of West Java in Anyer to that of East Java in Panarukan, the history of Indonesian curricula, especially EFL, has been very gloomy too. That is, besides incompatibility between policies and practices (see Lie, 2006), Indonesian EFL curricula across decades have been trapped in, by and large, government-stipulated, standardized curriculums (see Table 3.2). Even though the approaches (or names) have kept changing, the paradigm has not shifted substantially. There are of course changes, at face value, from Grammar Translation approach to Audio Lingual and later to Communicative approaches. The first two approaches are restrictedly linguistic, with the first focusing on written form and the second on spoken/oral form. The third approach has bloomed ever since 1980s in Indonesia and is not limited to linguistic mastery, that is practiced with behaviorists’ typical tenet of repetition and drills, but also acquisition of sociocultural, discourse, and strategic competencies (cf. Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1995; Savignon, 1997). While the last approach is commonly claimed to be conceptually sound, still many EFL teachers in Indonesia are reluctant to go beyond textbooks that are purportedly recommended by the government, let alone to critically examine and expose injustice in our society in a meaningful, persistent, and systematic way.

Table 3.2 Indonesian EFL curriculums across decades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting Year</th>
<th>Name of Curriculum</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Grammar Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Oral Approach</td>
<td>Audio Lingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Oral Approach</td>
<td>Audio Lingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Curriculum Type</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Communicative Approach</td>
<td>Communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Meaning-Based Curriculum</td>
<td>Communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Competency-Based Curriculum</td>
<td>Communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>School-level curriculum (&quot;KTSP&quot;)</td>
<td>Communicative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quoted and adapted from Lie (2006).

Remember also that the communicative competencies in EFL curricula are on the whole biased as they mirror the sets of competencies to be mastered in marketplace settings or leisure activities driven by capitalistic, middle-class people. I am not saying, however, that such competence-biased education is entirely awful and hence has to be abandoned. Rather, it is significant that language learners identify the bias so they can critique the competencies they are learning (if they are forced to learn) or choose not to learn.\(^\text{10}\)

Prior to addressing the EFL teaching and learning prevalent paradigm in Indonesia further, let us make a detour by reviewing some snapshots of tyranny in this country that highlight our failures to embrace a humanizing education.

To begin with, the number of oppressed and systematically killed people in massacres has been enormous, despite not always being well documented, in various epochs in at least the past three centuries in Indonesia: Daendels (c. 1800-1805), cf. Pramoedya’s “Jalan Raya Pos, Jalan Daendels” again; the Dutch in post-Daendels era up to 1942, the Japanese (1942-1945); slightly “decreasing” in Soekarno’s era, though some riots triggered by fanaticism to a religion was responsible for the deaths of thousands of non-adherents of the religion; the New Order Regime when unfairly alleged Communist Party or “Without-Shape Organizations” were slaughtered or denied access to vital resources at best; the so-called “Reformation Era” where the four last presidents (Habibie, Gus Dur, Megawati, and SBY) have had no wiser choices than rising up the prices of gasoline, electricity, but deliberately ignoring high-class, feudalistic corruptors, which has only intensified the gaps in the society between the powerful and the powerless.

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\(^{10}\) See an example in chapter 8 section 2.2 below, in which the lesson that contains a letter from Sydney, Australia, is put into question.
And now the people may be marginalized in different forms: being in poverty, hunger, apathetic to the government—perhaps because they are already tired that their voices are not heard so they have lost trust in law enforcement. Or if they are heard, the voices have only perpetuated those of in corrupt power—thanks to the successful brainwashing that accounts for corrupt practices handed down from generation to generation like briberies in government offices or police stations in order that official matters are quickly settled by people in power.

In schools repressions are not scarce. Although at regulatory level the government bans any kinds of perploncoan (i.e., physical and mental terrors to new students in a very militaristic way by senior students), at practical level schools at any level seems continue on allowing this to happen within a more euphemized activity known as “Orientasi Mahasiswa Baru” (an orientation for new students). A lot of new students have suffered or even died. In early 2007, Indonesia was shocked by the death of an IPDN (Institute of Domestic Affairs Governance) student, Chris Muntu. Some seniors were allegedly involved in torturing Mr. Muntu. Some were eventually disrespectfully fired from government institutions and imprisoned. However, it is doubtful that violences in schools abate.

Thus far, one preliminary question appears in my mind: To what extent should the above facts be addressed in critical EFL learning/literacy in Indonesia? It may be irrefutable that a lot of EFL teachers have included social political issues in classroom discussions. They are either in the form of digressions (when teachers deliberately depart from lesson plans) or planned. Nevertheless, few, if any, EFL teachers in Indonesia have brought up historical, social, and political issues in their classrooms with such a two-layered vision as this: (a) raising the awareness of the prevalence of power discrepancies in the society no matter how subtle they may be; (b) liberating from bondage of ignorance and empowering these students to use their conscience to ameliorate, or at least address, multifaceted problems in the society.

The first vision has probably been put into practice by many EFL teachers although these teachers are often unaware that being bogged down in uttering pessimistic criticisms toward existing oppressions
does not lead educational participants to get out of any guises of tyranny. In fact, the worst and most ironical tyranny is likely to happen when the oppressed becomes the oppressors (Freire, 1990).

The second layer may sound too grandiose. At least, however, it is still relevant to the field of Applied Linguistics which is a “practice-driven discipline that addresses language problems in real-world contexts” (Grabe, 2002, p. 10). Some salient language problems here are the discourses (and discoursing) practices that account for unequal power relationships in the society, e.g., between government officials and laypeople; between teachers and students in classrooms; and recall senior students’ tyranny (perploncoan) to new students.

The language for accomplishing these visions is mainly English so Indonesian EFL learners will need to have access to materials which are written and spoken (recorded) in English. This suggests that critical EFL literacies are to improve students’ English language proficiency as well as how to “read” world phenomena in English, and “write” their critical reflections in English, without overlooking their critical literacies (the abilities to read and write critically) in Bahasa Indonesia.

3.5 Aims of CPs in Indonesia: New wine in an old wine skin or a new wine skin?

What is wrong with Indonesian EFL curricula, then? Answering this question is a tricky business, not because it is a wrong question but what is “wrong” or “right” anyway? Moving away from binary oppositions such as “right” or “wrong”, my position is that we need to offer a pedagogical option for the betterment of EFL teaching and learning in Indonesia. The option at issue here is raising our awareness of paradigms that have shaped or will potentially inspire the existence Indonesian EFL curricula. Assuming that CP is the new paradigm (or “the new wine”) in EFL curricula, the question is how to incorporate it: “pouring it out” in a “new wine skin” and thus replacing the Perennial Analyticism (PA) paradigm (or the “old wine skin”) altogether; or adding some CP flavors into an “old wine skin”? Somewhat theoretically, if a learning community is not yet educationally “tainted” by the PA paradigm, it may become a new wine skin ready to be filled with new wine. This may be done by establishing own alternative
learning centers (cf. Farrell, 2007; Illich’s *Deschooling Society*, 1971; Rogoff, Turkanis, & Bartlett, 2001), including what is commonly termed as “homeschooling”, with no need of certification or accreditation. This is not easy to be implemented (but see Manurung, 2007).

Realistically speaking, however, schools worldwide have been so perennially analytic, so to speak, that even those who are determined to apply CPs may encounter obstacles from other stakeholders whose minds are already schooled within the PA paradigm. Notwithstanding, CPs-inspired educators still have some opportunities to disseminate and negotiate tenets of CPs with teachers and, more importantly, students in traditional schools. Will CP be sort of “a voice in the wilderness”, then? While to some, if not great, extent CPs-inspired educators let themselves be immersed within the dominant PA-driven educational system, they seek for “critical moments” when changes or some sort of novelty may occur however trivial these may seem (see Pennycook, 2004, pp. 340-342; see also sections 4.2 and 4.3 below in which I found moments while reading rural school and university students’ comments; their comments provoked my reflections which in turn became rejoinders of dialogues on themes they brought up).

Recalling Carter and Nunan’s (2001) definition of curriculum in language education, we will see that curricula do not only consist of aims, but also contents, approaches, and evaluation procedures of CPs and learning literacies in EFL curricula. These will be tackled in part 2 below.