
Language is the most important type of communication and the most important tool in the educational process. Understanding and interpreting language (word) facilitates the education of all students. Freire (1970), it is through literacy that people learn the word to understand the world. Learning and teaching language is an arduous process, which exceeds communication and makes a profound impact in the cultural and critical practice. I agree that, language is the most important procedure in the educational process, not only to speak, read or write, but also to understand local, state, national, and international situations. This transformative process can promote and develop social and political action with the objective to empower society in a democratic way, by full participation. However, language can be manipulated by curriculum, which can be devoid of social relations or disconnected to the concrete situations of everyday life.

Following Freire’s concepts of critical pedagogy, the author’s main idea is to stimulate critical cultural awareness in foreign language education. This book explores the development of critical awareness through the process of teaching foreign languages.

Guilherme invokes educators, as cultural workers (Freire, 1970), to promote education as a center of the transformation context through foreign languages. She invokes critical pedagogy philosophers, such as, Freire, Foucault, Giroux, Gadotti, and Dewey to teach foreign and native languages. This provides a profound and reflective approach to intercultural education. The book also includes a research project among secondary English teachers in Portugal. The project works towards the inclusion of culture in the foreign language curriculum to promote and define critical cultural consciousness.

In her analysis, Guilherme explains contemporary philosophical movements in education. In particular, Critical Pedagogy provides strategies for taking a critical perspective toward cultural awareness. Her idea is to promote critical citizens in a multicultural world. She encourages teachers to develop the learning process in a multicultural way, because interchanges not only increase language proficiency, but respect individual cultures. In my view, respect and understanding individual cultures enhances the democratic process.

Guilherme raises important points on the nature of teaching foreign language and culture. Specially, when she comments on foreign language curriculum “is social, political, and transformative when it discusses racial and social relations. It can help all students acquire the critical social skills essential to interact in multicultural situations and to take personal, social, and political action that will help the world become more democratic and just” (p. xi). The author states that developing critical thinking in students by including Critical Pedagogy in classes is extremely important. However, critical thinking must be learned over time. Theory is different from practice, and critical thinking is hard to apply in daily life, because the idea is that teachers are not capable or not stimulated to relate critical thinking in their regular classes. Curiously, her research proved how difficult it is to apply these concepts. Multiculturalism is much more than communication in critical view. It is also a study of one’s own beliefs and values, with the proposal to deconstruct some negative influences from foreign cultures. Since local transformation is the beginning of world transformation, students must understand their realities and start to challenge then for transformation take place on a large scale.

Education is a two-way practice where teachers and students learn together. This form of education, respecting and understanding individual culture, can promote the democratic process. As people learn how to be just, equal and understand the world, they can change their individual reality. This is a pure form of education clearly defined in “Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World.”

The importance of education to the development and improvement of our communities cannot be understated. Schools must prepare citizens to transform society. Good educators must promote this challenge and encourage students to fight against injustice in a future democratic world.

Understanding the relation between true “world and word” must promote authentic reflection of education as the practice of freedom. Freire (1970) defines authentic reflection and considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but the people in their relations with the world. In these relations
consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it.

A very interesting point is that because of dictatorships and anarchy, people from Portugal value an education for critical thinking in a democratic society. I can state that countries with an underprivileged population, such as Brazil, have developed a very critical nation, in regard to discussion of social issues. People in both countries survive in poverty and criticize politicians and dominant class. This unfair distribution of resources, more than critical education, promotes critical views uncommon in developed countries. In my view, these social differences could be the starting point for future critical pedagogy in schools around the globe, especially from poor areas, and can help to transform their particular reality.
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