

Carving Critical Spaces in High-Stakes Systems Through Materials Analysis Workshops

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The author reports on an action research pilot study that attempts to introduce critical approaches to a high-stakes educational system through a workshop for in-service teachers centered on curriculum analysis. The workshop briefly introduces critical theories (e.g., gender criticism, materialist criticism, postcolonial criticism, critical multiculturalism, critical media literacy, and world Englishes) and then asks teachers to employ these theories to critically examine the contents of textbooks used in their schools. Having identified problem areas, teachers are asked to share their results with the entire group of 10 teachers. Then they are put back into pairs and asked to reflect on how their texts can be improved using Maley's (1998) 12 concepts of adapting materials. Finally, teachers are broken up into groups and asked to discuss what kinds of critical approaches they are already employing in their classes. Results indicate that teachers are very adept at analysing and spotting inadequacies in the materials but weak at coming up with ways to address these inadequacies. More work at adaptation is thus required in teacher training programs. It is also found that teachers are already employing critical approaches in their classes. More work is needed to investigate the critical approaches teachers are already using.

Keywords: **textbook analysis, workshop, critical English language teaching (CELT), high-stakes tests, education in Korea, education in East Asia**

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND HIGH-STAKES SYSTEMS

The chief challenge confronting critical education workers is, perhaps, that of how to carve out a space for doing critical work under a highly packed curriculum, driven by pressures of high-stake examinations, especially in schools where the administrative culture is not supportive of any critical, creative work that departs from drilling students for examinations and tests. (Lin, 2012, p. 81)

Lin's call for carving spaces in the curriculum for critical educators to work aptly summarizes the state of critical pedagogy in the school system in many parts of East Asia today. Earlier attempts at implementing critical approaches in East Asia advocated abandoning standardized testing based models of education for more student-centered models of education. Abandoning testing based models is an admirable goal, but it is unrealistic until a major change of public consciousness is achieved. Unfortunately, a change of public consciousness is hindered by a hyper-competitive educational system, such as in South Korea, in which a large number of students are striving to gain entrance to a few elite universities through an admission process controlled by a high-stakes exam that is administered once annually (Lee, 2009). As an educator based in South Korea, discussing this topic with some educators from outside Asia, I have been met with dismay that the system is difficult to change. It is not that the local populace does not recognize the problems and imbalances of the system. On the contrary, they are acutely aware of how expensive all the extracurricular classes are and how extremely competitive the entire system is. It is so competitive that most students' entire future depends on how well they do on the university entrance exam. As such, students spend their entire lives, often from 8 in the morning until 11 at night, up to the age of around twenty, preparing to do well on this one exam (some who do not do as well as they wished take the exam again the following year or years). Further, for their entire lives individuals are judged by which college(s) they attended. As this school-hierarchy based thinking is entrenched in society (*hakbeol* in Korea; see Shin, 2010), the high-stakes testing situation is nearly impossible to overcome. What

many in the Western world do not understand is that in this type of system a precise, objective assessment instrument is demanded by the general populace (especially parents), which eliminates any assessment instruments deemed subjective, such as essay exams or open-ended questions. It is not that parents do not value critical thinking, but that the public perception is that testing critical thinking skills involves subjective marking and as such is unsuitable for such a high stakes system: the populace demands public accountability of the objectivity of the yearly exam. Further, gaining entrance to these elite universities often provides students with more cultural capital in their lives after graduation. To not cover the material in the prescribed curriculum would, in most situations, leave students deprived of cultural capital (it is realized that there are other means to gain cultural capital than succeeding in the exam system, but this is the means the majority of the population uses to gain cultural capital as companies usually select new hires from highly ranked universities).

Freire's much cited concept of reading the word to read the world, centered on the notion that literacy leads to social agency (see Freire & Macedo, 1987), plays out strangely in this high-stakes context, for one must integrate the critical teaching on reading the world into the standard curriculum so that students possess the greatest possible social agency and cultural capital (see Osborn, 2006, p. 43, for a discussion of tensions with Freire when teaching to national standards). However, for students to be truly literate and educated, they need to be able to situate that knowledge in individual and social contexts – Freire's sense of reading the world. While the term situated knowledge has a long history and is used in a variety of ways, Pederson's (2012) definition is succinct (see Pederson's discussion of the pervasiveness of situated learning throughout applied linguistics):

The most common understanding of situated learning...is a form of pedagogy that allows students to make connections between content knowledge and their own lives, or more simply to apply knowledge to their own contexts. In doing so, SL theorizes that students not only learn more effectively but also engage in learning at higher levels. As such, this basic

understand of SL [situated learning] is a theory that addresses both cognitive and affective aspects of learning (pp. 123-124) .

Without both the standard curriculum and the ability to situate learning, to apply learning to one's own life circumstances and environment, one is not really literate or educated.

That the curriculum in Korea is indexed to a high-stakes college entrance examination test is another factor that has resulted in the current situation in which many teachers are resistant to any change as a 'teach to the test' mentality prevails:

The context in which teachers practice [in East Asia] not only does not value, or discourages, a reflective practice capable of self critique, it also stifles inquiry into how curricular practices might be modified in ways that allow CELT [Critical English Language Teaching] practices to occur within a standards based curriculum (Sung & Pederson, 2012, p. 161).

Sung and Pederson (2012) specify a general framework of critical inquiry along similar lines to Lin in calling for educators to see "how 'spaces' may be created within standards based curricula that allow for the interrogation and reconstruction of issues of language, culture, ideology, power, and identity" (pp. 160-161). In the current situation the critical educator's task is multiple: s/he must persuade teachers that critical approaches are worthwhile, provide them with a learning and literacy environment that aids the development of critical consciousness, and then provide them with tools to critique the curriculum and develop effective responses, all the while keeping in mind how language, culture, ideology, power and identity are represented and function in the curriculum.

For the current study, critical approaches are conceived of broadly and include the concepts of widely practiced critical schools and current theory, such as critical consciousness, critical multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, critical thinking, cultural criticism, deconstruction, ecocriticism, gender criticism, materialist criticism, media literacy, ownership of English, postcolonial criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, reader-response criticism, situated learning, and world

Englishes. Making students aware of these concepts is a form of literacy education. It is difficult to determine which of these approaches is most pertinent to employ in the Korean classroom. As Korean demographics are in flux, critical race theory, which informs students to be conscious of race issues is relevant; it is also useful in analyzing race relations when Koreans travel abroad. Cultural criticism and its close ally critical media literacy are also especially applicable as they provide students with tools to analyze cultural artifacts in both their own and foreign cultures. As more and more cultural artifacts are multimodal, the analysis of multimodal means of communication is required in the twenty-first century. Materialist criticism is very relevant for students in an advertising dominated culture. World Englishes imbues Korean students with a right to voice. Finally, teaching students to reflect on knowledge and discuss how it relates to their own lives, as occurs in situated learning, may be the most usable life skill education can impart. However, it is likely that more approaches will eventually show themselves to be increasingly relevant in the multimodal age. The instructor's role is to create an environment conducive to students acquiring the literacies inherent to the critical approaches. Following Sung (2004), the term CELT (Critical English Language Teaching) will be employed to refer to this kind of teaching (see Sung & Pederson, 2012, for a discussion of the difficulty of defining the term '*critical*').

MATERIALS ANALYSIS AS A BASIS FOR CURRICULUM REFORM

It is not terribly new or innovative to begin curricular change with a materials analysis (Brown, 1995; Littlejohn, 1998; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Richards, 2001); many guides to curriculum renovation suggest beginning here and much has been written about the materials analysis of textbooks for language content. Another benefit of beginning with this step is that materials analysis is a practical first step that every experienced teacher can manage and has some experience performing. Numerous critical pedagogues have also called for curriculum analysis to determine at which points in the curriculum critical approaches could be

integrated: Kubota (2004) calls for a curriculum analysis based on issues related to critical multiculturalism; Benesch (1996) calls for a critical needs analysis for English for academic purposes (EAP) courses; Lin (2004) asks students to perform a “critical analysis of textbooks for their hidden perspectives and assumptions regarding gender, race, social class, or other distinctions” (p. 288); and Morgan (1997) calls for an analysis of the entire curriculum centered around critical issues. Meddings and Thornbury (2009) explicate the utility of this approach: “One way of resisting the covert values that coursebooks embody is by critiquing — or ‘interrogating’ — them” (p. 13).

What to specifically look for in these materials varies, but projected gender roles, class roles, depiction of class/economic differences, racial stereotyping, gender stereotyping, and class stereotyping are a good place to begin. Others have pointed out the need to be conscious of the inherent bias *towards* consumerism in many predominant EFL texts or publishers (Bell & Gower, 1998), the positioning of students as consumers, the ecological bias of texts and English language teaching (Canagarajah, 2006; Love, 1996; Hu, 2005), animal rights (Canagarajah, 2006), and speciesism (Pedersen, 2004). Yet others look to counter the projection of certain neo-imperial values present in global textbooks (Canagarajah, 1999), or similar privileging of one ethnic group’s values over another’s. This issue becomes extremely complex in state mandated education materials, where the promotion of national goals are linked to the curriculum (this applies to inner circle countries as well), yet the state sometimes is not even aware, especially in non-native speaking countries, that certain unconsidered attitudes toward world Englishes and/or correct standard English inadvertently undermine national authority while attempting to affirm it with the goal of developing global citizens.

Every critical practitioner subconsciously performs a critical analysis when looking over any materials as analysis is an engrained habit in an experienced practitioner. The question is how to instil and engrain these habits in teachers beginning to be critical and to show them how experienced critical practitioners approach materials, realizing that every experienced practitioner approaches materials differently depending on her/his active toolkit. Toolkit is a concept that is also known as ‘lenses’ in the humanities (Tyson, 2006) or bricolage in the social

sciences (Kincheloe, 2001). The concept of looking through lenses refers to how a theorist will view something differently according to which theory s/he is employing to look an artifact. If a theorist employs gender theory to look at a cultural object, s/he may see something different than if s/he were to look at the same object through a reader response or materialist lens. Similarly, toolkit refers to a theorist's active theories — the theories an analyst can employ to analyse an object. The more theories a theorist has studied, the more theories that are active in the mind of that theorist that s/he can employ when analyzing a cultural object. Clearly, every theorist is different as every theorist carries a different 'active' toolkit depending on what mixture of theories s/he has read. Every critical practitioner has a constantly evolving and expanding tool bag of approaches s/he will employ differently in different situations (see Kellner & Durham, 2012). Bricolage refers to how an analyst employs, and mixes, a variety of theories to solve a problem. If a theorist wants to analyze an image, and that image is of a thin, young, woman carrying a designer label handbag, s/he may employ a variety of theories to analyze that image – materialist and feminist are the most obvious. A practitioner is always learning, and always adding to her/his toolkit. For the current study, the most important point of a toolkit is that it provides a teacher with tools s/he can use to analyze materials. A critical practitioner, when analyzing teaching materials, also automatically and subconsciously considers a range of techniques that could be deployed in teaching or responding to this material, as critical practice is also located in the creative application of theory to a problem.

The overall curriculum in Korea is set by the Ministry of Education (MOE), and individual textbooks are created under the guidelines of and vetted by the MOE. Textbooks used vary by school as teachers at each school choose their textbook from the list of accepted textbooks. Each textbook series has different inherent weaknesses, and the analysis of these materials varies by critical school and demands of teaching circumstance. Whatever a teacher's critical training, textbook analysis can be conducted on text, image, and audio/visual materials as well as the associated websites and teaching materials that accompany a textbook series.

The central issue is not really materials analysis but pedagogy as the materials are somewhat irrelevant — what matters is what the teacher does with the materials in

the classroom. An experienced teacher cognizant of CELT theory and approaches will, ideally, automatically analyze the materials each and every time s/he teaches class and adopt an appropriate stance to the materials. However, we know from our own blunders in the classroom that this does not occur every time we teach. But the approach advocated here is not intended for the experienced critical practitioner. Rather, it is designed for those who have not adopted or are only beginning to consider adopting a critical stance on materials to provide them with a taste of the approach and a few examples of critical practices. It is realized that in time these examples will become irrelevant. The point is to begin to inculcate a critical perspective.

The current approach aims at educating teachers in the process of interrogating materials concerning a nexus of themes and issues so that these teachers can notice and extract a variety of themes in teaching materials that are related to social injustice. Noticing and calling attention to these themes creates a literacy environment in a safe setting of teachers surrounded by other teachers that gives attendees of the workshop practice in the approach. It is hoped that when these teachers return to their own teaching situations, they will continue the process and create literacy environments that encourage their students to interrogate similar issues in the assigned texts they encounter. The hope is to begin to instill a constant criticality in teachers so that they will be constantly scouring the school texts they read, which will lead them to instill criticality in their own students. It is envisioned that all of these kinds of literacy events will be a product of this approach.

Another potential product of this approach is that it may show how integrating critical thinking into the system is more desirable than employing transmission models such as the grammar translation method and may help students improve their test scores. That some teachers have reported that they are teaching only 4 or 6 students out of classes of 30 or 35 students as the rest are either studying other subjects or sleeping in class clearly demonstrates that there is a crisis in the secondary education market in Korea and something needs to be changed. Reasons teachers provide for not integrating critical approaches into the curriculum are a) parents will refuse to recognize it, b) my principal will think I am not teaching properly, c) students will not be interested, or d) there is limited time classroom time

coupled to a belief that grammar translation practice best prepares students for the university entrance exam. The principal argument against integrating criticality into the curriculum is that any endeavour to teach outside the set curriculum will result in lower test scores, thereby disadvantaging students. Critical educators working in high-stakes systems need to answer two questions to counter the criticism that teaching critical approaches disadvantages students: 1) How can we integrate critical questions into the material that students are required to learn?, and 2) How can we make that integration more memorable for students in order to increase the likelihood they will remember this material on an exam?

Though critical approaches are anathema to the entire concept of high-stakes testing as determiner of validity as they frequently critique the grounds on which high-stakes testing is based, they may ironically be a teacher's best friend within a high-stakes testing system in that they may aid memory retention. In the school system in South Korea, especially at the high school level, one can see many students memorizing English vocabulary lists that provide little to no context for each word. One more word to memorize in a vocabulary list is unlikely to be remembered. Students are also unlikely to learn the collocations of vocabulary items if they only memorize lists of words. Ausubel (1968) showed that memory retention depends substantially on how items are subsumed into a larger system. And it is through increasing the likelihood of subsumption that critical approaches aid retention of material. It is far more likely that a student will remember a word used in a context in which she is asked to reflect on how an issue bears on her life, using vocabulary prescribed by the curriculum, than she is to remember that same vocabulary item if asked to read a sample definition and memorize the word or choose a multiple response definition of a word used in a listening exercise. Having more personal discussions that springboard off issues, themes, vocabulary, and/or grammar structures in the set curriculum in class may help alleviate the problem of students not paying attention in class and enhance learning as personal use of language often makes language more meaningful to the learner (Pederson, 2012, discusses the increased efficacy of situated learning approaches as does Clancey, 1995, who relates situated learning to cognitive anthropology and cognitive science). If a question uses vocabulary/collocations/grammatical patterns that are

needed to pass a high-stakes exam, and that question gives the respondent reason to pause in constructing her/his answer, that question is challenging the respondent's notion of identity, making the respondent (re)consider her/his core values, think about how those values relate to society and particular situations, and construct an answer based on that thought process. From a pure numerical perspective, this would ask students to reflect on target language a minimum of three times while connecting that target language to their own experiences. Even if less material is covered, such an approach would be more efficient over the long term if students' retention rates increase. Further, any educational moment that involves a challenge to personal identity becomes undeniably etched on a subject's identity and increases the likelihood that the vocabulary/collections/grammar patterns related to that challenge will be remembered, possibly forever. While this certainly does not guarantee retention on a test, it increases the odds of items being retained. It is also more likely that the material will move from being simply learned to being truly acquired. Many critical approaches have focused on the social side of the critical equation, suggesting challenging the status quo, overlooking the individual side of the social equation and how making the individual reflect on her/his role in society, in a very practical way, can aid memory retention. If we accept these tenets, does it not make more sense to integrate critical approaches as often as possible?

Some General Suggestions to Improve Materials

The central tenet of the workshop approach is to introduce practical suggestions for integrating situated learning into classrooms to provide examples of approaches that teachers can later develop. One easy technique teachers can employ, especially in situations in which native speaker teachers are co-teachers who can be used to verify the grammatical accuracy of sentences, is to use the vocabulary and grammatical patterns presented in the textbooks to generate lists of questions for students to ask each other. Recasting the vocabulary or grammatical focus of lessons or reframing it in a question with critical goals is one way to reinforce vocabulary and grammar learning by repeating the target language that is required on the national college entrance exam. As "World Englishes" is used in one third-

year of middle school textbook, one could ask students these two questions: “Does the concept of World Englishes change how you view yourself as a speaker of English? If not, why not?” If a little bit of thought is spent generating the questions, they can be designed to include a critical component. This has the added benefit of practicing the vocabulary that is expected to be known for the exam, and possibly the grammatical patterns if care is taken in creating the examples. One possible drawback is that some students will feel they have already mastered all of the vocabulary and grammatical structures under consideration. If that is the case, it is nearly impossible to motivate students except through the construction of compelling questions. Much of the material viewed every day on television has no lexical material beyond the average viewer’s comprehension: it captures viewers’ attention with compelling material. Modifying materials to make them more compelling is part of our task as teachers. The greatest difficulty, especially in today’s high-stakes test situation in which students ignore their teacher as soon as they feel that they are familiar with an issue, is to socialize students to realize how this teaching approach benefits them, for if they do not perceive a benefit, they will tune out.

In high-stakes situations, any adaptation of the materials needs to be directly linked to the content presented in textbooks so that students feel that engaging with this lesson will improve their chances of performing well on the high-stakes test and *notice* that learning the material will improve their performance on the high-stakes exam. The teacher needs to clearly show the students that doing the critical activities and asking the questions the teacher has designed are relevant to their goal of passing the exam. In this way, the teacher also passes on the skill of noticing grammatical patterns and collocation to students.

Another technique to employ is to teach critical media literacy (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). The easiest way to use this approach is by analyzing the images of a textbook specifically for how they may suggest oppression or misrepresentation of any group, paying special attention to how other cultures or minorities are represented (see also Kubota, 2004). Many current school materials include matching videos and web pages, making the techniques of critical media literacy even more pertinent. This article does not have time to examine these issues in

depth, but time can be spent teaching a critical approach to film studies (e.g., Sikov, 2010), video game criticism (for example, Bogost, 2007; Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan, 2004; Beach, 2007), social media sites (boyd & Ellison, 2012) and new media such as Youtube (Kellner & Kim, 2009). It is hoped that critiquing the cultural artifacts that are part of students' daily lives will increase student involvement and let them see the relevance of this kind of education to their daily lives, though this is not always the case. Teaching students to be informed agents aware of how various forms of popular media try to manipulate them and increasing their awareness of and willingness to be responsive to inequities in society will create both informed and socially conscious citizens.

PROVIDING TOOLS TO RAISE CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH CURRICULUM ANALYSIS AND PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSE WORKSHOPS

In the spring of 2012, I was asked to deliver two two-hour long workshops to two groups of in-service elementary and middle school teachers who were regular English teachers employed by the public school board of a large city in South Korea (one two-hour long workshop for each group of ten teachers). These teachers were given a six-month sabbatical from their regular teaching duties to improve their English and English teaching skills at a training center run by the local municipal board of education. They were near the end of the third month of this program, so they had been with the teacher trainer who invited me to conduct the workshop for about three months. They ranged in age from twenty-six to forty-five, and their experience teaching in the public school system ranged from between three and twenty years. I pondered over this invitation for a few days, wondering what would be the best thing I could impart to these two groups of teachers. This invitation sparked my initial interest in the workshop format, for most of my teaching until then had been conducted within a course format and a university setting, which spurred me to reflect on how to meld critical English language teaching into a workshop format.

While the workshop is one of the most common venues for training teachers, it is one of the least utilized venues employed by critical pedagogues in TESOL. There are good intuitive reasons for this avoidance of the workshop format on the part of critical pedagogues: What can a critical educator impart in only a few hours to a group of in-service teachers that would suit the workshop format and provide workshop participants (in-service teachers) with tools they could use in the future, for usable 'tools' (read: plug-and-play lessons) are what most teachers seek to gain from this kind of in-service training? Another drawback is that many teachers feel that (CELT) theory is unusable in practice (Sung, 2012). This resistance to theory on the part of some teachers dictates a light treatment of theory when introducing pedagogical activities so as not to alienate these teachers, many of whom are untrained in poststructuralist theory even though *posthumanist*, *transhumanist*, *hypermodernist*, *metamodernist*, and *affective theory* are now *au courant*.

A difficulty in attempting to instill a critical approach in a two-hour format is that most critical approaches derive their efficacy from a gradual dawning of the validity of the approach in students as they progress through courses in literature, film, cultural studies, critical theory or education: it can take time for the habits of a critical realization/ontology to set in, often weeks, months or years (hooks, 1994). As such, initial attempts to instill a critical ontology are vital in that they plant a seed which may take years, and multiple critical incidents, to reach maturity; such literacy events are foundational moments in the development of critical literacy.

A central prerequisite for critical comments to be made without a defensive reaction on the part of students is the trust and familiarity of all parties participating in the conversation. Jumping into a workshop does not allow time for the gradual development of rapport central for critical discussion and trust of students in the central interlocutor, usually a lecturer, to ensue. Nor does it allow time for participants to read widely in critical theory, a drawback which limits the depth of critical consciousness that may be achieved. Yet another obstacle to developing critical consciousness in such a short period of time is that in-service teachers' knowledge of critical theory varies greatly depending on whether their first degree was in education, linguistics, or English, and some have never encountered any critical approaches in their studies. Conversely, it is necessary to recognize these

individuals as experienced teachers worthy of respect for the experience and knowledge they bring of their own classrooms to the workshop — they are the true experts concerning their own teaching environments, not some (usually West-based) theory passed down to them (see Kumaravadivelu’s post-transmission perspective, 2012; Love, 2012). As the goal is to aid in developing more critically conscious teachers, the target audience for the presentation and workshop was not already critical practitioners but practicing teachers with the hope of making them more open to integrating critical approaches into their lessons.

Procedure

A PowerPoint presentation that introduced a wide variety of critical approaches was presented to establish that the participants were adequately familiar with the concepts that would be employed (40 minutes). Participants were then divided into partners and asked to analyze their textbooks using one of the critical theories that had been covered in the presentation (10-15 minutes). The workshop reconvened and each set of partners shared their findings with the entire group (10 minutes). Then the group was introduced to Maley’s procedures for adapting materials and asked to consider ways they could adapt their materials to compensate for the problems they noticed when analyzing the materials (10-15 minutes). The group reconvened and each set of partners presented their findings to the entire group (10 minutes). Finally, participants were asked how they were integrating critical approaches in their daily teaching. For this last discussion students were divided into small groups (3-4 members per group; 20 minutes). Time ran out, so the entire group could not reconvene to share their findings.

The Presentation

As these groups’ experience with critical approaches was unknown, the workshop began with a 40-minute PowerPoint presentation that very briefly introduced the concepts of widely practiced critical schools and concepts (critical consciousness, critical multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, critical race theory,

critical thinking, cultural criticism, deconstruction, ecocriticism, gender criticism, materialist criticism, ownership of English, postcolonial criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, reader-response criticism, situated learning, and world Englishes) and discussed how these theories relate to teaching English as a foreign language. This is a lot of content to cover quickly. The goal was to briefly introduce the concepts, since many teachers are familiar with some of these concepts. Teachers were not expected to have mastered the concepts of all of these fields but to have enough background knowledge to work on these issues when prompted by representative questions handed out to groups.

The presentation also provided participants with a short example of curriculum analysis by showing a few issues I had found in the textbooks (I had received a few textbooks teachers were using in their schools before the presentation). One textbook used at the elementary-school level in the school system in South Korea contained pictures and photographs of individuals from a variety of races. However, the photographs of students in the classroom were limited to Korean students, suggesting that multiculturalism is an issue for the greater world but not for the Korean classroom as it assumes a single racial identity in the classroom. In 2009, *The Korea Times* stated that 50% of students in rural areas of Korea in 2020 would be from multicultural families (Han, 2009). Even if the percentage of multicultural children in schools does not rise to 50%, these numbers show that a much larger percentage of multicultural children will soon be in the school system. One other problem with this same textbook is that it asks children what they want for Christmas, thereby assuming a religious cultural identity for students while instilling materialist values.

Analyzing Materials Using Critical Perspectives

Workshop participants were paired-off and asked to choose a critical perspective from which to analyze their materials. The critical perspectives they could choose from were gender criticism, reader-response criticism, materialist criticism, social class criticism, deconstruction, cultural criticism/critical multiculturalism, postcolonialism, critical media literacy, and world Englishes/English as an

international language/ownership of English. These theories were chosen from the lists of theories presented above because they are the easiest to teach and learn quickly in a workshop format. A theory like psychoanalytic criticism cannot be taught in a short workshop unless the entire workshop is devoted to only that theme, and even then the theory can only be dealt with lightly. While some of the deeper aspects of deconstruction may not be appropriate for a short seminar, a quick introduction that states that deconstruction is a theory that looks at how the implications of a text contradict its stated aims provides another practical tool for curriculum analysts. There was also a strategic reason for covering more theories in the presentation than the participants would be asked to employ in the workshop — I wanted to pique participants' interest and introduce them to a wide range of approaches in the hope that they would investigate some of the other approaches on their own to expand their own toolkits. Sample questions were provided for each topic to get them started, but workshop participants were encouraged to come up with their own questions for each category (the questions for the workshop sheets were inspired by a mix of Kachru, 1992; Kubota, 2004; Lin, 2004; and Tyson, 2006). For example, if a group chose gender criticism, they were given a piece of paper with the following questions.

- How are men and women represented in the materials?
- How are men and women depicted visually in the materials?
- What activities do men and women engage in?
- What kinds of things do men and women say in the text?
- How do the materials define masculinity and femininity?
- Do you notice any other gender issues in the materials?

It was hoped that the questions provided would both teach the basic concepts associated with each critical theory and get teachers to think about how they can integrate more critical thinking into their own classes. The final questions distributed to each group asked teachers to think of other categories that had not been covered by the questions provided to show that critical analysis is a continually developing process. While there are limits to a two-hour workshop, it

was hoped that participants would acquire a nascent form of Kumaravadivelu's (2008) *critical cultural consciousness*: "a complex process of creating critical cultural consciousness through constant and continual self-reflection" (p. 5). The presenter circulated among groups to clarify any issues that may not have been understood and provide help if needed.

The implementation of the analysis portion of the workshop seemed very successful as all groups but one found some inadequacies or problems with linguistic or visual representation in their textbooks using the questions provided. One group using class criticism found that the materials were elitist as the houses depicted in their textbooks had many rooms (living room, attic, and study), whereas many of their students lived in houses that contained only one room in addition to bedrooms (apartments). Another group of participants noted that their textbooks failed to incorporate any examples of disabled individuals and suggested the questions be expanded to ask whether differently abled individuals were considered in the textbooks. Yet another noted that their textbook regularly depicted black individuals wearing athletic clothing. Another found the textbooks were obsessed with accuracy and did not really consider communicative competence to be a central issue. The discussion about this extended to consider how this related to ownership of English and World Englishes. Curiously, one of the textbooks even had a section on World Englishes, but the lesson in the textbook dealt with how expressions vary in differing inner circle nations and did not attempt to get students to reflect on some of the deeper issues related to World Englishes, ownership of English, or the different teaching approach(es) demanded by the recognition of English as an international language (Alsagoff, McKay, Hu, & Renandya, 2012). Encouragingly, most textbooks analyzed portrayed positive roles for both genders, both textually and visually.

Overall, few problems were encountered during the workshop, but a few groups needed help getting them started in their analyses. The most problems were seen with groups discussing the concept of World Englishes/English as an international language, basically because groups had difficulty in conceiving of English as something that does not belong exclusively to Kachru's inner circle countries, a prejudice still widely spread. More teaching is definitely needed concerning

ownership of English and right to voice in English, for both native speakers and non-native speakers.

Encouraging Adaptation

Once the analysis was complete and shortcomings in materials had been identified, participants in the workshop were asked to reflect on how to adapt the materials, or how to teach the materials for critical purposes in such a way as to correct the social imbalances and/or counter any prejudices the groups had identified in the materials. Many authors have written on how to improve materials through adaptation (cf. Brown, 1995; McDonough & Shaw, 2003). Maley's (1998) approach was used to introduce procedures for adapting materials because it is a succinct summary of how teachers regularly modify materials when they teach broken down into twelve categories: expansion, reduction, media transfer, matching, selection/ranking, comparison/contrast, reconstruction, reformulation, interpretation, creating text, analysis, and project work (pp. 288-291). Workshop participants were asked to think about ways to teach that would account for inadequacies they discovered in their textbooks using Maley's twelve concepts. This activity may be difficult to conduct with new teachers, for whom many examples may have to be provided, but all of these teachers were very experienced in adapting materials for classroom use.

A few examples of techniques they could use were first provided. These included simple techniques such as asking students questions about pictures in the textbooks to raise awareness of race issues, which may lead students to draw their own conclusions (Maley's category of expansion). They were also encouraged to think about the body language of people in the textbook. A more advanced approach might ask students to think about the concepts of English as an international language and World Englishes and how these concepts change how one conceives of the process of learning English and ownership of English. The students could then be invited to reflect on whether the textbook encourages ownership of English and communicative competency or rote learning of patterns.

In the workshop, few suggestions for adapting the materials were made by groups. Surprisingly, only a few suggested raising students' awareness of the problems observed in the textbook(s), and some mentioned that this material would be too difficult for their students to understand, assuming that their students could not understand this material explained in L2 (many current high school students in Korea could manage this kind of conversation, and even some in middle school, especially those proficient in English who are overlooked by the set curriculum). But there is no reason why teachers could not comment on the inadequacies of the textbook and hold a conversation with students in their L1 about these inadequacies. Teachers did mention that other teachers address these kinds of issues when they teach social studies, Korean, or ethics classes, but felt they were not proper for an English course. Is there thus a hidden curriculum that critical thinking is alright for every class but a foreign language class or English? Are students thus expected to turn off the critical portions of their brains for English classes? Further, was this silence a form of resistance? If so, what was the source of this silence? Why did teachers resist adapting materials? On reflection, I should have addressed the silence and tried to discern its source. Many students in my graduate school classes readily adapt materials and submit very creative lessons that integrate approaches taught in the classes. As such, I did not expect the workshop to shut down at this point. As I did not address the silence, I can only speculate as to its source, though it is an issue whose source I will attempt to determine through discussions with students in my regular classes.

Discovering Critical Approaches Teachers Are Using in Their Classrooms

The final step of this workshop aimed to discover how teachers are already using critical approaches in their classrooms. Workshop participants were asked to discuss the following four questions in groups:

Think about your last term of teaching. Did you integrate critical thinking into any of your lessons?

How did you integrate critical thinking into your lesson? Tell your group members what you did.

What issues were you discussing?

Can you think of areas of the teaching materials (textbook, videos, etc.) that need more critical treatment? What are those?

These questions were incorporated into this workshop for a number of reasons. 1) Most articles written about teaching in high-stakes situations like Korea treat the teaching here as monolithic, rote-based learning, and fail to acknowledge that teaching varies from teacher to teacher. It is a great cultural injustice to assume that an entire nation's teachers do not practice critical approaches (Kubota, 1999, shows a wide variety of creative teaching practices going on in Japan). 2) Many teachers have submitted pedagogy projects in our classes that demonstrate they are integrating critical approaches in their teaching. 3) My students make too many astute comments for me to imagine they do not have any critical background. 4) Teachers are still popular with their students. Why? They must be doing something that is culturally relevant that makes them popular. Perhaps we can discover what it is that makes them popular. It may be that they are raising critical issues in class while teaching to a standardized curriculum, even if that critical consciousness is hidden in humour and causal asides that are part of unregistered and unacknowledged teaching. 5) To even imagine that no critical teaching ever occurs is to imagine that everyone in the classroom including the teacher has turned off her/his mind and is operating on auto-pilot. This seems impossible. The entire notion of situated learning suggests that whenever anyone situates knowledge, the act of situating modifies that knowledge and automatically critiques the knowledge as it determines whether that knowledge is applicable or not to the current situation: criticality is a(n unintended) consequence of situating any knowledge (M. Love, 2012), which makes situating knowledge a foundational pedagogical concept in all critical education.

After being posed these questions, many participants talked about how they were using critical approaches in their classrooms. These questions were asked 20 minutes before the workshop ended, and participants were still talking about

different ways they were incorporating critical thinking in their classrooms when the workshop ended. I was impressed while walking around the class by how many different approaches teachers were already using in their classrooms to get their own students to critically engage with a wide variety of issues. I deeply regret not taking field notes of what I observed during this time, for the groups were actively discussing their critical approaches, but I can remember few of the details. My strongest recollection is that I was surprised by how much the groups were talking in both the middle school and elementary seminars, and it was all on-topic conversation. The discussions were so vibrant that they offset the frustration felt during the adaptation phase and left me with a very pleased sensation that the workshop had been successful. These groups proved my point: teachers are not just repeating the information in the textbook. Notably, more elementary school teachers are incorporating critical approaches into their teaching, mostly because they are allowed and encouraged to, as opposed to middle and high school teachers who teach more strictly to the test. Students at the elementary levels are regularly doing activities such as book reports, science quests at national galleries, and creative writing in special after school classes. Creative endeavours are alive here, they are just not seen to be typical of the educational system. We need more papers outlining creative work that is going on in the Korean educational system, especially at the elementary level. These papers would let the educational world know this system is not completely dominated by rote learning as it is portrayed in much West-based TESOL literature as well as address the othering of Asian educational systems that is still rampant in much West-based literature. (Unfortunately, much learning in secondary school is still dominated by more traditional approaches to education and rote learning, though some teachers are already carving spaces there for more critical work, especially in extracurricular classes and club activities.)

RESPONSES AND REFLECTION

One question that remains is whether the workshop was successful or not. I asked the teacher trainer who had worked with this group a few months prior to the workshop what he thought of it. He responded, “Teachers were, for the most part, very engaged in the seminar. The content of the seminar was very 'fresh', and quite a few teachers reported afterwards that this had been the first occasion they had come into contact with a critical analysis of instructional materials.” That they were engaged showed that these groups of teachers do seem to be interested in this kind of approach. One surprising aspect of this quote is that it shows practicing teachers are not taught to be critical of their materials.

There was some negative response as well. When asked how many in the group resisted this kind of workshop or did not like this kind of activity, one respondent said none, while another said one or two. The reason they reported for not liking this workshop was that they expected something different. More specifically, they expected a workshop that would improve their English and were not expecting anything like this. As learning about new theories should improve one’s English, it is difficult to ascertain the real target of this criticism or the real reason why they did not like the workshop.

One respondent to a survey sent out after the workshop mentioned that the content of the workshop is particularly apt for Korean public school teachers because they have to choose their textbooks every few years. Concerning this process, she said, “We really have to have a critical viewpoint and ability of textbook analysis.” When asked about whether she had heard any negative comments about the workshop, she responded, “the workshop was really interest and helpful to me. I think English teachers need it. However it was a little difficult theme to some teachers who were not interested in textbook analysis.” It is intriguing that teachers who have to perform textbook analyses every few years are not interested in the topic. That she felt teachers needed this kind of workshop is greatly encouraging. Her final comment on the survey, in response to the question “Any other comments” was, “If I have a chance I’d like to learn more!!!!^^ Thank you for your teaching.” Though it certainly is not true of all the workshop

participants, some of them hunger to learn more about critical approaches. There are few locations that post-qualified teachers can learn in Korea. More need to be created, and the workshop format is most suited to experienced in-service teachers.

The greatest testimony to the efficacy of this workshop approach is the response one participant provided when asked some months after the workshop was conducted whether it had affected her teaching or not: “Yes, I can say so because unconsciously I’ve come to pay more attention to what/how textbook describes in terms of gender, social class, and nationality.” She further stated that she thought the workshop was new and valuable for teaching concepts such as paying attention to the body language of gendered bodies in a textbook, which she felt most people do not consider. She further mentioned that she had never thought of analyzing the body language of characters in the textbook as she thought of the pictures as supplements to the material that did not signify anything on their own. In other words, a nascent form of critical consciousness, or criticality, has emerged from a short workshop. It is hoped that some aspects of this consciousness will survive the harsh realities of teaching to a high-stakes exam and bring about a slow change to the system.

This pilot study showed that while the analysis portion of the workshop was successful, the adaptation stage was the weakest. Many groups fell silent even though these were experienced teachers who claimed to be knowledgeable about adapting materials. Some suggestions for improvement were made above, but whether these suggestions will be successful or not can only be determined by running the workshop again in the future.

The final step in any critical process is reflection before beginning the inquiry cycle anew. This workshop was not without its problems. The presentation stage would benefit by introducing fewer theories. One workshop participant suggested focusing on only one theory and analyzing textbooks more in-depth using one theory. When the groups reconvened to present what problems they had discovered in their materials, one of the groups had found nothing, even though I had personally shown the group how to conduct the analysis. I should then have thrown the issue to the entire group and asked how they would conduct such an analysis. This would require budgeting five or ten more minutes for this activity. That this

problem only occurred in one group of ten suggests it may be anomalous. While the presentation of Maley's twelve concepts for adapting materials was generally well received, in an aside comment, one class participant told me that he already knew all of this material. Even so, his group offered no suggestions on how to modify the materials, a reticence that was mentioned above. Participants in the workshop could have been informed that even the process of noticing is often enough to induce criticality, though noticing followed by improving the materials as a class makes the students responsible consumers of textbooks, and culture. It would also have been productive to have asked one group to tell the entire workshop one of the criticisms they had made of a textbook. Then the entire workshop could be asked to brainstorm pedagogical innovations they could make to overcome the problems observed with the materials using each of Maley's twelve categories to provide a model. After this, the workshop could be separated into partners again and asked to come up with ways to adapt the materials to address the problems they had found. The workshop would then reconvene in full and discuss the pedagogical innovations they had thought up. This would add another fifteen to thirty minutes to the workshop, perhaps more. Fortunately, the final discussion about what critical approaches teachers were already using in their classrooms went very well. I would only eliminate it due to time constraints as it both encourages teachers that they are being critical and provides other members of their groups with creative teaching ideas.

Were I to conduct this workshop again, there are three principal changes I would make. First, I would be sure to record the data in some way. I was surprised by how many good conversations I overheard that I cannot pass on to the reader of this article because I did not record the data. The best way would be to collect and photocopy the worksheets handed out to the pairs. While one could videotape the workshop or provide each group with some kind of recording instrument, it is likely that this would inhibit conversation rather than promote it, especially in a group with which one has not had time with which to become comfortable. As recording is unlikely to be successful, I would have taken more field notes of good conversations I overheard (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001). Finally, I would allot more time and believe three hours would suffice.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we do not need to create a new methodology for world language education (indeed, “methodology” may be a concept that should go as well)—we need to work within existing political frameworks and methodological approaches to create space for dialogue related to advancing social justice.

(Osborn, 2006, p. 14)

The approach to carving spaces in the curriculum for critical work described above is very similar to Osborn's in that it strives to work within existing curricula and systems rather than overturn them. The foregoing discussion outlined the current situation in Far East Asia, discussed why it is difficult to implement critical approaches, offered ways of overcoming the reluctance to engage critically with material, outlined reasons why it may be more advantageous to engage with critical material than to neglect it, and discussed a few results of such an approach. The issues mentioned above were offered as a way to begin discussion and were not intended to begin to define what criticality is, for criticality is a constantly evolving nexus of ideas that are centered around an individual's and community's response to external events. Rather, the approach mentioned above is seen as a way to begin to introduce criticality in a short period of time. That the participating teachers caught on quickly and began to relate stories from their own teaching was greatly encouraging. The most significant observation that emerged from this project may be that many participants related at length how they had been using critical approaches in their classrooms. I think this aspect of this project is the one most worthy of further examination, for this may show that many practitioners in highly competitive educational systems, similar to the educational system in South Korea, are engaging in critical practices. Unfortunately, what these teachers are doing in their classrooms is not accounted for in the literature. To carve spaces in the curriculum for critical thinking, we need to find ways to catalogue and describe what teachers are already doing in the classroom as well as find as many ways as possible that critical approaches can make students more successful in high-stakes systems rather than viewing critical approaches as not preparing students for the future.

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