

L2 Teaching in the post-communicative era: Developing intercultural consciousness, critical awareness and consistent attitudes for social inclusion

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For most of the 20th century, functionalism and functional literacy focused on communicative and text-oriented approaches, emphasizing mainly sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences (Canale & Swain, 1980: 1-47; Savignon, 1983). However, in recent decades, language teaching and learning, including L2 (second language) teaching and learning, has been influenced by social constructivism, multiliteracies, and critical literacy. Social constructivism stresses that human development is socially situated, and an individual's learning takes place because of his or her interactions in a group (von Glasersfeld, 1989). Multiliteracies highlight linguistic diversity and multimodal forms of linguistic expression and representation (New London Group, 1996). With both the dramatically changing social and technological contexts of communication and learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009: 164-195) and the steadily increasing transnational movement of populations (Castles, 2018: 151-162), the need arose for new literacies and new learning through the elaboration of various multimodal textual types from the socio-cultural environment of the learners (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009: 164-195). Critical literacy enhances critical reflection (Freire & Macedo, 1987), as it involves making sense of the

sociopolitical systems through which we live and question these systems. It contributes to transformative learning, as it concerns imagining thoughtful ways of thinking about reconstructing texts, images, and practices to convey different and more socially correct and equitable messages and ways of being (Vasquez, 2017). Therefore, L2 teaching and learning began to focus on post-communicative approaches.

The "post-communicative era," i.e., the period since the year 2000, has been characterized by an emphasis on the strong power of language to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct social reality. Under the influence of the Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire and his fundamental work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972), social justice pedagogy emphasizes critical orientation, in which the aim of language teaching is not limited to the improvement of language and communication skills, but also aims to develop students' critical awareness (Chapman & Hobbel, 2010: 1-6; Gorski & Seema, 2014). Students participate in the process of critical interpretation of written or oral discourse and dispute sovereign ideologies and established powers. In addition, social justice pedagogy places an emphasis on constructive orientation in learning by focusing

on students' individual needs and preferences, differentiated teaching, and exploration of learning (Bell, 1997). Students become actively involved in solving problems through co-operation and interaction in a task-based and student-centered context.

Hence, L2 applies modern learner-centered didactic approaches with an emphasis on:

- 1) The social character of teaching, which includes inter alia the ability to develop deep and sincere relationships among all participants in the educational process and to engage students in learning (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996: 191-206);
- 2) Experiential, discovery-based, interdisciplinary, and cross curricular thematic learning, using flexible language material, as it is an opportunity for learners, on the one hand, to apply what they have been taught to solve real-world challenges, and on the other hand, it involves a conscious effort to apply knowledge to more than one academic discipline simultaneously (Knutson, 2003: 52-64; Bruner, 1961: 21-32; Ellis & Stuen, 1998);
- 3) The reinforcement of critical thinking, which inter alia promotes the development of reasoning, analytical and evaluative skills, as well as self-reflective capacity and open-mindedness. Critical thinking also encourages curiosity and fosters problem-solving ability and hence independence (Luke & Dooley, 2011: 856-868);
- 4) The use of critical discourse analysis, which enables an important assessment of what is meant when language (form and content) is used, as well as what the ways are that people use language to communicate their ideas and beliefs (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997/2004: 258-284);
- 5) The strengthening of students' multiple identities, taking into account and using their experiences (Dervin, 2016);
- 6) The enhancement of students' intercultural competence (Baxter, 1983: 290-324; Ali, Kazemian & Mahar, 2015: 1-10);
- 7) The reinforcement of intercultural language learning and reinforcement of L2 teaching via culture (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999 113-126; Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco, 1999: 1-20; Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000: 1-22; Liddicoat, et al., 2003);
- 8) The internal differentiation in the classroom with an aim to employ a variety of teaching styles to ensure that students, approaching learning in different ways, will be able to have similar outcomes (Gregory & Chapman, 2012);
- 9) The use of translanguaging practices to provide an opportunity for multilingual speakers to use in their multilingual classes their own languages as an integrated communication system (Lasagabaster & García, 2014; García & Wei, 2014);
- 10) The use of new technologies (Computer-Assisted Language Learning / CALL), which strengthens student's interest and motivation (Chapelle & Jamieson, 2008);
- 11) The creation of open learning environments, which are rooted in learner-centered design principles and highlight activities and contexts, supporting students' efforts to understand what they determine to be important (Hannafin, Land & Oliver, 1999: 115-140).

In addition, L2 teaching aims to cultivate various forms of citizenship, such as: civic citizenship, which consists of behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect concerned and active membership in a community (Jamieson & Grundy, 2004: 127); multicultural citizenship, in the context of a discourse on the rights of minority groups (Kymlicka, 1998) as well as in the context of accepting and respecting the existent pluralism in our society (Miller, 1995: 432-450); flexible citizenship, which asserts that economic reasons are the primary purpose people choose their citizenship instead of identifying with a community based on shared political rights (Ong, 1999), and global citizenship, a citizenship concept that signifies ways of thinking and living within multiple cross-cutting communities and international collectives (Davies, Evans & Reid, 2005: 66-89; Schattle 2012). In this context, the teaching of L2 that goes hand in hand with education in citizenship should consist of three main areas: a) social and moral responsibility, b) community participation, and c) political literacy. In other words, students must learn how to make themselves effective in public life through the knowledge, skills, and values they learn (Citizenship Advisory Group, 1998: 40-41).

Respectively, L2 Teaching applies modern didactic methods, including, but not limited to:

- 1) Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) that focuses on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language (Ellis, 2003);
- 2) Game-Based Language Learning (GBLL) that focuses on exploring and experimenting with the target language having fun and without fear of failure or bad grades (de Haan, 2019: 1-57);
- 3) Drama-Based Language Learning (DBLL) that inter alia on the one hand, develops creativity and spontaneity, very important features in L2 learning, and

on the other hand, provides opportunities for expression and acquisition of meaningful interaction in the target language (Wessels, 1987: 10; Winston, 2011: 1-5);

- 4) Art-Based Language Teaching (ABLL) that has the potential to develop students' creative as well as critical thinking skills and to lead students to gain a positive attitude to learning, understanding others and expressing their own thoughts (Shier, 1990: 301-316; De Jesus, 2016: 1-4);
- 5) Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience (TLAE) as – according to Dewey (1934/1980)– an aesthetic experience is the pre-eminent tool of developing the imagination, a fundamental element of the learning process, and it may even lead to transformative learning (Kokkos, 2011: 155-177); and
- 6) Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) that increases motivation as L2 is used to fulfil real purposes to learn the substantive material and enhances specific target language terminology acquisition, putting the emphasis on meaning rather than on form of the target language. Moreover, CLIL may introduce students to the wider cultural context, broadening their horizons and drastically increasing the amount of exposure to the target language (Cole, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Banegas, 2012: 46-56; Ball, Kelly & Clegg, 2015).

L2 Teaching aims not only to improve students' receptive and productive language skills, but also to transform the language lesson into a vehicle for inclusion, developing critical consciousness as well as a vehicle to political action for peace and social change.

In a period of mass (and often forced) population movements, inclusion can be the key to providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. Education, and especially language education, can lead among others to gain more self-confidence, to establish deeper and more significant relationships with the population of the host country, and to increase the number of professional opportunities (Magos & Margaroni, 2018: 1-6).

Developing critical consciousness can lead to the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and to the commitment to take action against these systems. In this way, the vulnerable social groups –in this case immigrants and refugees– can take action to “become an expert in authoring their own lives,” improving their living conditions and establishing their position in the host country (Schell, 2019).

The official recognition of the contribution of education to world peace and safety and its role as a key channel of communication between peoples is, in principle, a philosophical product of the Enlightenment and has become a key political and social issue of international peace mainly from the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Page, 2008). Ongoing wars between peoples, successive genocides, the absolute devaluation of human life, relentless ethnic and cultural conflicts fueled by growing socio-economic antagonisms between west and east, north and south, as well as the growing internal differentiation in the class stratification of each society, make peace education a timeless requirement in order to systematically cultivate the principles and skills of tolerance, cooperation, democratic behavior, management of aggression, and a willingness to take responsibility (Moorehead, 1987: 18-54). L2 lessons can include the principles of peace education to help alleviate conflict, consolidate

democratic and peaceful mentalities and attitudes (Takkaç Tulgar, 2017: 72-77), and lead to a social change for more social justice and equality.

In this volume, researchers with long experience in formal, informal, and non-formal language education for migrants and refugees in western and southern Europe, the Near East, North America and sub-Saharan Africa at all language levels (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages / CERF) present and discuss various aspects of using L2 teaching for social inclusion of migrants and refugees in the host societies.

The first three studies concern valuable L2 teaching practices that aim at familiarizing immigrant and refugee students with the host country (culture and citizens), and at strengthening intercultural dialogue and intercultural understanding and empathy. The authors of these articles apply modern teaching methods to improve both the cognitive, language, and soft skills of their students, and to create the appropriate conditions for more effective inclusion, not only in the classroom, but also in the wider host society.

At the beginning of this section, Konstantina Kalogirou, Christianne Fernée, Dewi Stamenkovic, and Konstantinos Trimmis, in their study concerning the city of Cardiff in the United Kingdom entitled “A Town of Many’: Drama and Urban Heritage Landscapes as Mediums for Second Language Acquisition and Social Inclusion,” present a cultural heritage-inspired teaching method that addresses the introduction of cultural heritage in multicultural education as a medium of promoting language acquisition through drama in education. Highlighting the importance of heritage applications in (language) education, the authors discuss how the recording of urban heritage could be used to achieve social inclusion, acceptance, and equal opportunities

for refugees, asylum seekers, and newly arrived students.

In their study, “Overcoming Anxiety in Adult Migrants’ Language Learning by Means of Process Drama,” Veronica Maistrello and Fiona Dalziel explore how drama activities can provide an opportunity for adult migrants to develop their competence in the language of the host country in a pleasant, protected, and anxiety-free space. This enables them to express themselves combating foreign language anxiety, to discover new ways of learning the target language, to interact, and especially to gain self-confidence—a prerequisite for smooth integration in the host country.

In her study, “The Host Country Culture in Second Language Acquisition,” Olja Milosevic describes and analyzes how a group of high school L2 English learners in the international school of Belgrade, the capital city of Serbia, studied their host country’s cultural heritage. This gave them the opportunity to develop target language proficiency, soft skills, as well as intercultural sensitivity and awareness. The requirements, therefore, are developing empathy, ability to change perspectives, critical thinking to recognize the reasons for misunderstanding, and finding ways to resolve them.

The second section of the volume contains three articles that discuss teachers’ perceptions about effective ways of teaching L2 language to students with a migrant and refugee background to integrate them better and more fairly into the host society.

In the first study of part II, “Teaching L2 for Students with a Refugee/Migrant Background in Greece: Teachers’ Perceptions about Reception, Integration and multicultural Identities,” Giorgos Simopoulos and Kostas Magos describe the educational landscape concerning new supporting structures to facilitate refugee children to learn Greek as a L2 before accessing

the mainstream school program. At the same time, the authors discuss the perceptions of the L2 teachers about their lack of experience in refugee education as well as the lack of support in training or professional development. They also underline the importance of teachers’ attitudes and practices in relation to refugee primary and secondary school L2 students. A deeper critical reflection by the teachers leads to the development of their intercultural competence and to a “crossing borders” transformative process.

In her study, “The Applicability of Learner-centered Education in Refugee Settings: The Syrian Refugee Teachers’ Case Study,” Iman Sarif analyzes Syrian teachers’ views of appropriate pedagogy in the Syrian refugee context in Turkey. She specifically shows how the challenges of pedagogical change include more learner-centered practices and teachers’ capacities to implement them in the refugee context.

Finally, Michelle Solorio presents in her study, “Refugees, Immigrants, and Language in Ivorian Education,” a complex language landscape that includes more than 60 local languages as well as French, the language of instruction that was imposed by the former colonial power. She then moves on to discuss the lack of literacy and its impact, especially on non-native students such as immigrants, migrants, refugees, and the stateless. She analyzes teachers’ and parents’ opinions about the benefits of Integrated Schools Programs (*Programme des Écoles Intégrées*) for non-native students, focusing on using various didactic strategies to support foreign students and to include them in the (L2) school class more effectively and successfully.

All the above studies map different dimensions of the current topic of L2 teaching to students with migrant/refugee background. We hope this volume may contribute to further

dialogue on the language education of this vulnerable social group, and can give rise to critical thoughts about how L2 teaching can be a tool for peace and social change.

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