Critical review of ESL curriculum: Practical application to the UAE context

Mary Cullinan [a] *

[a] London, The United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper is a critical analysis of curriculum with a discussion of its main tenets and exploration of issues within the literature. The focus is on curriculum in English as a Second Language (ESL) using critical applied linguistics as a framework. The ideas explored in the paper are synthesized and applied to ESL curriculum in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and includes a discussion on the feasibility and challenges of introducing a critical stance on curriculum in this context.

Keywords: ESL, curriculum, UAE

1. Introduction

While some of the description and discussion of curriculum design is general, the focus of this paper is on English as a second language (ESL) curriculum. I will briefly describe and analyse the core postmodern principles of curriculum design and how they are applied to English language programmes.

It is crucial to start with a clear description of curriculum and its difference from syllabus, while related they have certain distinct components. In the literature there is often a lengthy discussion of the differences between the two (Breen, 2001; Dubin & Olshtain, 1986; Nunan, 1988). Syllabus is described by Breen (2001, p. 151) as what will be worked upon by the teacher and students in terms of content and how teachers will deliver the content. The syllabus is the means by which the goals of the curriculum are carried out. The curriculum is described by Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p. 34) "as containing a broad description of the general goals by indicating an overall educational – cultural philosophy which applies across a number of subjects together with a theoretical orientation to language and language learning ….a curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well."

---

* Corresponding author name. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000
  E-mail address: marycullinan01@gmail.com

Thus curriculum is the umbrella that encompasses the goals of an educational institution; it is developed often with the national political agenda, and popular trends in consideration, such as communicative language teaching as an overall philosophy, or 'learning by doing'. It can be surmised from the description above that philosophical and theoretical issues are central in the development of curriculum. A further key element not mentioned is that curriculum needs to include programme evaluation, clearly indicating a change in ideology and reflects aspects of criticality.

Many ESL programmes do not specifically define their curriculum; rather they describe a program, course plan, objectives or goals. This lack of consistency may be due to what Nunan (1988) describes as limited attempts to apply the principles of curriculum development to language programmes and a neglect of systematic curriculum development. Outside of language programmes there is a well-developed field of curriculum construction (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p. 10) but for some reason language teaching has not made use of this. Addressing this imbalance are more recent publications by Richards (2001) and Nation and Macalister (2010) in the specific area of language curriculum design and development. Further problems for curriculum design are that it can be seen as a writing exercise that disseminate philosophies that teachers and students feel are irrelevant because they are based on philosophies and mission statements that do not deal with any real concerns (Slattery, 2006, p. 188). Another issue in curriculum design is who writes it? Is it a government policy or is it designed at a local level by teachers/curriculum designers? Plainly teachers are the means of administration of curriculum and must therefore be central in its design, as it is teachers who have a clear idea of what works, are in tune with their students' needs and have practical classroom knowledge (Young, 1985).

2. Why curriculum design?

The development of curriculum design in English teaching was in response to a need for a structured and integrated approach to language teaching and learning, as successful language programmes are assumed to be dependent upon curriculum development activities (Richard, 2001). Curriculum could be seen as an advancement of syllabus. Syllabus was historically concerned predominantly with teaching methodology and this has been a preoccupation in ESL, perhaps leading to the initial lack of interest in curriculum theory in English language programs. Curriculum has a broader coverage and includes within it: syllabus, context, students' needs, goals of the institution and the evaluation of the programme.

Curriculum development is seen as an essential task in the setup, delivery and evaluation of quality courses. It employs theories about second language acquisition, language learning, pedagogy and a cultural and environmental viewpoint in the development of goals, methodology, and evaluation criteria for a specific course. It

should be the first step in the development of an English language course and be used as a framework by teachers.

They are many models of curriculum design, most stemming from Tyler's (1949) linear model (below).

Fig. 1. Linear curriculum design (Adapted from Tyler, 1949)

Dubin and Olshtain (1986) developed a cyclical model and Nation and Macalister's (2010) model of the curriculum design process (shown below).
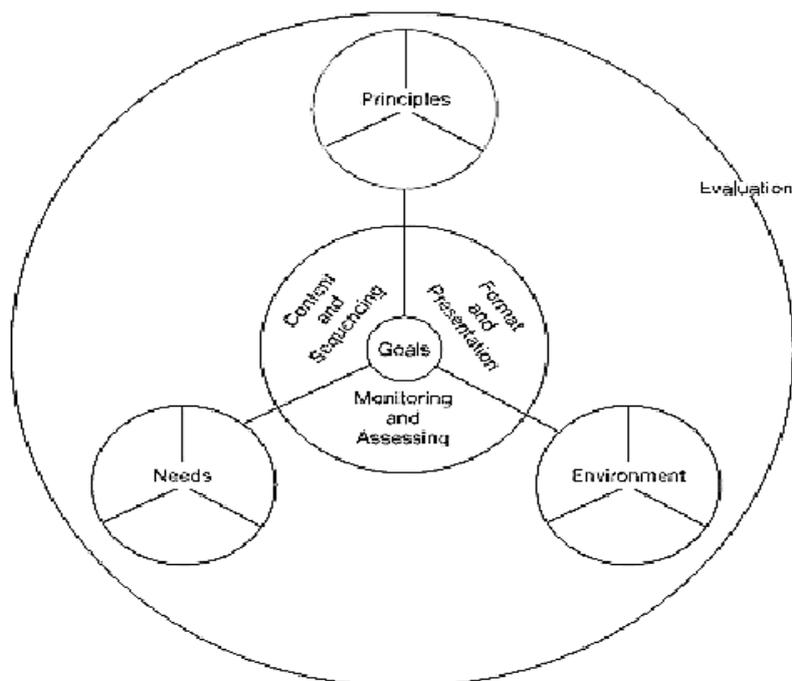

Fig. 2. Nation and Macalister's curriculum design model

Although there has been development of ideas on language curriculum design, the core principles have remained with the additional focus on environmental and needs analysis. This development in curriculum design, from Tyler's (1949) model to recent models (such as Nation and Macalister 2010) also represents a shift in ideology from modernism to postmodernism. Tyler's model is systematic and decontextualized; there is no consideration of the environment or the student and represents one reality that is

positivist in nature. Nations and Macalister's (2010) model manifests changing ideologies and reflect the postmodern era stressing an understanding of culture, history, context, etc. and their impact on the human condition (Slattery 2006). Postmodernism can be seen as a way of understanding contemporary social and cultural trends or as Lyotard defines 'postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv) The postmodern view is that reality is an individual or group experience which is conceptually constructed, therefore reality is relative. This philosophy is interpretive in nature, thus the inclusion of contextualising process e.g. needs analysis and situational analysis. The newer model also puts evaluation as an all encircling principle.

Running alongside this shift from modernism to postmodernism and its primary influence (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b; 2006a) is the move from the methods to a postmethod debate in ESL teaching methodology. 'Postmodernism seems to have influenced TESOL through the guise of postmethodism from the 1990s (Ahmadian & Rad, 2014, p. 593). Postmethod was a term introduced by Kumaravadivelu (1994). The postmethod theory is that there is no best method and the search for a new better method that prevailed in ESL was pointless. This is relevant here as the three main parameters of postmethod pedagogy which are particularity, practicality and possibility. Particularity can be addressed by the situational factors or context, whereas practicality relates to the relationship between theory and practice. The teacher's experience is in the postmethod debate is central and top down syllabus is rejected in favour of the teacher and student led interaction and negotiated bottom up syllabus. The teacher should not be a consumer of knowledge produced by theorists but should explore a paradigm of praxis, the idea that knowledge is derived from practice, and practice informed by knowledge (Ahmadian & Rad, 2014). Another important element is that teachers focus on reflection and action (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2003b).

2.1. Curriculum Design Process

2.1.1. Environment/situational analysis

An environment (Nation & Macalister, 2010) or situational (Richards, 2001) analysis is one of the first phases in the development of the curriculum. It looks at the context where the course will take place and considers things such as the physical resources, the cultural context, the teaching staff, political and institutional factors and the learners. Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 14) describe environmental analysis as a key factor in making the course usable and practical. Situational analysis is a key addition to English language curriculum as ESL/TESOL (Teaching English as a second or other language) course are conducted in a multitude of different environments and cultures across the globe and the need for courses that fit in locally is paramount. Kumaravadivelu, (2001, p. 538) when describing the particularity of a course says it "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular

set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu". It is not only identifying the environmental/situational factors, there is also a discussion on the importance of these issues, an application of best practice and a search of relevant research to develop an approach for that context.

2.1.2. Needs analysis

A needs analysis is described by Richards (2001, p. 51) as 'procedures used to collect information about learners'. This phase of the curriculum design process aims to elicit information on the motivation, expressed needs, likes, dislikes, learning styles and wants of the students with the objective of designing a course that is tailored to meet the specific needs of the student group or as Nunan (1988a) describes it a learner centred course.

From the needs analysis key areas to focus on in the curriculum design can be identified, which can include areas such as intrinsic motivation, materials and activities to support learning and developing autonomy and student learning styles.

Curriculum designers must be aware that the needs analysis that they are developing is subjective and biased by what is included and excluded; the analysis in this step is also subjective. The designers need to ask themselves: what is included in the needs analysis and by whom is it selected and for what reason? To disregard these concerns is to ignore the unequal social positions of the teacher, student, and curriculum designer and policy makers. "Employers, academic institutions, instructors, and learners are presented as occupants of a level playing field rather than as players whose differing access to power must be considered" (Benesch, 1996, p. 724). As such, the postmethod teacher needs to consider a critical needs analysis as an approach because the students will not always be aware of what it is that they need, or injustices that are present in their situation. However, the teacher or curriculum designer must be aware of his or her own assumptions and biases when exploring the needs analysis.

2.1.3. Objectives and goals

Often in the literature the words goal and objectives have been used interchangeably, but there is a distinction, I use goal to mean the expected end outcome and the objectives the steps to get there. Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p. 40) described the chief work of course designers as turning abstract goals into concrete objectives. The goal of a course, for example, can be to improve the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in preparation for achieving band 5 in the IELTS (international English language testing system) exam. These goals will be achieved by the development of many syllabus objectives. The setting of goals demands the analysis of the environment and the needs of students as well as the development of realistic goals from these factors. In most curriculum design models the goals of the curriculum are a central component (e.g. Figure 2 above). Nation and Macalister (2010) suggest that well designed courses need to consider one or more of the following: language, ideas, skills or texts. Richards (2001, p.

112) describes setting goals as '...not therefore, an objective scientific enterprise but a judgment call'. It would seem as if the core responsibility of curriculum design (i.e. setting goals for the course) is a 'judgment call' then it is subject to many different valued judgments based on who is designing the course; teachers, administrators or progamme developers.

2.1.4. Syllabus

Syllabus is described by Breen (2001, p. 151) as a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning. The syllabus can serve in providing detailed information for students on what is to be achieved in the course and therefore, can act as an implicit contract. Perhaps the most noted function of a syllabus is administrative in that it provides organisational structure to the course. Course syllabi are generally product or process oriented. The product syllabus "are those in which the focus is on the knowledge and skills which learners should gain as a result of instruction" (Nunan, (1988, p. 27). This approach can be chosen in exam classes where students need to work towards a fixed goal i.e. passing the exam. This type of syllabus suits programmes where the focus of the syllabus is on the textbook. Included within this type of syllabus is the grammatical (analytical) and functional (notional) syllabus. The process syllabus focuses on the way in which "knowledge and skills might be gained" (Nunan, 1988, p. 40). Included within this process oriented syllabus is task based learning, and content syllabus. Syllabus often times do not fall squarely into process or product but somewhere along a continuum between the two, for example in a product oriented syllabus there can be aspects of process in objectives such as wanting to develop learner autonomy and student responsibility for their learning. This approach may seem to lack direction, but Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p. 45) express that attention to all three dimensions of syllabus design as vital. The syllabus is cyclical, a theme can be revisited at different times or in different formats and each time the language or skill becomes more difficult e.g. the letter writing from a letter of introduction to a letter of complaint.

Rogers (2010) argues that top-down syllabuses, which are written by experts and then distorted and delivered to learners by language teachers which is the common practice, regards learners as passive receptors of language leading to cultural imposition, teacher - learner dichotomy, and not enough learning. This leads to a call for a syllabus that is negotiated between and with the students/participants, undertaking the environmental and needs analysis and developing a syllabus for the context or bottom-up syllabus as described by Kumaravadivelu (1994) thereby preventing this dichotomy and developing student learning.

2.1.5. Methods and principles

There has been a move away from the debate on teaching methodology (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986) to a more principled approach in ESL/TESOL curriculum. This is

evidenced in Nation and Macalister's (2010) inclusion of principles as a core component in curriculum design. The earlier model included a philosophical stance on the nature of language, language learning and the role of culture. The later includes twenty principles of language teaching subdivided into content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment. We can see clear links between the two, such as the nature of language comparing nicely to content and sequencing, the difference being that the up-to-date version is not limiting itself to one particular perspective or methodology. Additionally, the provision of a list of principles gives curriculum designers a structured path to follow, they can, where necessary, implement strategies that are successful in their context. According to the authors this principle facilitates easy evaluations of existing curriculum and the inclusion of new ideas or research into the design that is therefore more adaptable than previous designs that were restricted by methodology.

2.1.6. Evaluation

Course or curriculum evaluation is a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting data about the components of a course in order to improve the programme and enhance student achievement (Genesee, 2001). It is the reflective phase of curriculum design and examines if the course is meeting its objectives, if students and teachers are satisfied with the curriculum, have those involved in the development and teaching of the course done a satisfactory job and does the curriculum compare with others of its kind (Richards 2001). These are the criteria for evaluation but another concern is the purpose and audience for this evaluation. Weir and Roberts (1994) describe two main purposes of evaluation, accountability and development; these two reasons are comparable to summative and formative respectively. Accountability evaluations are usually for an external audience or decision maker, whereas development evaluations have the purpose of improving the quality of the program. There can be numerous audiences (e.g. teachers, administrators, policy makers, students, curriculum developers) consequently a careful consideration of the purpose and audience of the evaluation must be made prior to conducting the evaluation. It is important to mention here that assessment (final exams, IELTS etc.) can be a means of evaluation of objectives, but should not be considered uniquely as an evaluation of the course.

3. A critical stance on curriculum design

Critical applied linguistics is an approach to applied linguistics that does not take the given as granted. Its aegis ideology is critical research that stems from the Marxist and the neo-Marxist philosophy of the Frankfurt School. Within the field of education, critical ideology is most often associated with Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and Henry Giroux (1943-). All look at the power and politics behind the language and text that is used in education.

Critical applied linguistics applies this critical ideology to the many different domains of applied linguistics e.g. pedagogy, curriculum, language policy, literacy, language testing, etc. Pennycook (2010) argues that critical applied linguistics should be more than applying critical theory to applied linguistics as it should problematize practice and he takes the view of language being 'inherently political: understands power more in terms of its micro operations in relation to questions of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and so on' (Pennycook, 2010, p. 42).

Critical applied linguistics is not just raising awareness, it is reflexive in that we must as practitioners question our own practices and beliefs while also requiring an understanding of power not just in a political or conventional framework but, as described by Pennycook (2001) its micro operations. A crucial element here is the action taken to make changes happen and emancipate those who are the subjects of power.

In educational research critical theory was used most notably by Paulo Freire in his work with underprivileged and oppressed minorities in Brazil and elsewhere. His work laid the foundations to critical pedagogy (teaching/learning based on critical theory). Giroux (2011) theorizes critically about the politics of education (particularly North American) and describes the globalization of education: "it is not surprising that education in many parts of the world is held hostage to political and economic forces." (Giroux, 2011, p. 12). He argues that universities should serve a moral and political purpose and not be a mere training ground for jobs. He describes the current status of education as 'banking' which Freire (2000) described as the teacher making deposits of information into the students who learn through rote.   The 'banking' concept then leads to students who 'accept the passive role imposed on them' (Freire, 2000, p. 73) and accept the fragmented reality that they have been taught. Teachers and students are then autonomously operating as mere pawns in an economic hegemony without any recourse to moral, political and possible transformative activity.

3.1. Knowledge and power

Language is deeply political and therefore, powerful. Furthermore, there is an assumption that knowledge and power are interrelated; indeed Pennycook (2010, p. 39) says that "all knowledge is linked to power". The political decision then to introduce English as a second language is not a neutral one. So why was English chosen and who benefits? The English language is the first choice for a number of reasons: first, it is the oil that keeps the cogs of capitalism moving, second, it has become the key to access information in the technology revolution and third, it is a remnant for many of historic colonisation. Therefore, it would seem adopting English as a second language is a good strategy. This perception however, denies the hegemony of English and illustrates the internalization of dominant ideology. To work within a critical framework one must question these assumptions. Phillipson (1992, p. 8) describes English language teaching

(ELT) as "an international activity with political, economic, military and cultural implications and ramifications". The inequalities that linguistic imperialism describes are evident in the fact that in countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) allocate more resources to English language teaching and English as a means of instruction than Arabic language. Arabic is losing ground because of the assumption that the use of English in education will result in a higher level of global competitiveness (Badry, 2015). This type of reality maintains an inequitable relationship between the local language and English. The harshest critics of ESL (cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 3) have referred to it as "an imperialism which may conceivably result in linguistic and cultural genocide" (Day, 1981, p. 78).

There is an ideological influence in the reproduction of power relations through the language as well as a material impact of English. Phillipson (1992) describes education as serving the state in three functions - economically, ideologically and repressive. To start economically, ELT has been colonized by consumerism; a free market economy has been developed to make money out of teaching certification, international exams such as IELTS and TOEFL (test of English as a foreign language) etc. Gray and Block (2012, p. 120) describe education from a neoliberal perspective as producing workers who are capable of competing in a global economy or developing the human capital of a society. Bourdieu (1986) described the different forms of capital as social, cultural and symbolic since in all these areas individuals have some form of capital able to be translated to power. Education has become increasingly under government control, with the focus on accountability and efficiency. All this push for efficiency leads to a dehumanizing effect and advances the notion of human capital in turn this reflects the financial and economic undertones now commonplace in education.

Hegemony can operate through common sense views of the world, i.e. ideas that we consider as natural because they are historically construed. Ideology operates through hegemony rather than conscious imposition of the ideas of one group over others. This repressive function of education also has serious consequences if we consider that the majority of TESOL/ESL teachers are western who bring with them their own cultural baggage and use material that is mainly designed in the west to 'educate' diverse communities and cultures. According to Hall (1976), (cited in Al-Issa, 2005) This sets the two cultures on a collision course because each feels misunderstood, misrepresented, and unappreciated A critical approach to curriculum will attempt to deconstruct culturally constructed ideas that are presented as natural (Guth, 1993).

Pennycook (2010, p. 50) describes a key aspect of relating power to language as "how we understand relations between language and society". Looking at the specifics of a language, Honey's (1997) Language Is Power argued that certain forms of language conveys social and economic power. In other words if you speak 'proper' English, you convey a certain image, whereas those, for example foreigners, who speak with an accent

are somehow deficit. Honey's (1997) work suggests that the ability to speak a Standard English is a recipe for curing many social ails. This is quite similar to the Ebonics debate in the US; Ebonics is sometimes called slang, Black English or African American Vernacular English. Murray (1998) relates the choice to use a particular language such as American Standard English or Ebonics as a question of identity and calls for an understanding of the role of power language and pedagogy. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) developed a bill of rights for language and language education to counter what she described as linguicism, a racism based on a person's language use.

3.2. The hidden curriculum

Thus far I have looked at the documented curriculum and its development process. But as Giroux (1978, p. 148) points out, schools are much more than their curriculum or course contents. They are interrelated to the community and serve as a means of socialization. Kelly (2009, p. 10) identifies the hidden curriculum as an implicit form of learning where, for example, social roles are learnt. Giroux (1978, p. 148) states "For the heart of the school's function is not to be found in the daily dispensing of information, but in the day-to-day social encounters shaped by the structural properties of the educational setting". These day-to-day encounters teach students how to work as part of a homogeneous group, that the teacher is powerful, and how the reward punishment system works. Giroux (1978) describes some consequences of the hidden curriculum, such as students when behaving as a group must wait, be patient and refrain from what they want to do. Students learn the expected norms of behaviour through the reward and punishment system as the desired behaviours are rewarded. They also learn to respect authority and this in turn disempowers them. Moreover, Bowles and Gintis (1976) have argued that students from different social-class backgrounds are rewarded for classroom behaviours that correspond to personality traits of different occupational strata-the working classes for docility and obedience, the managerial classes for initiative and personal assertiveness. Any curriculum then should consider its hidden ideologies, and the impact this has on the student and society. An example of the hidden curriculum is illustrated in Auerbach and Burgess (1985) study of survival ESL. The study looked at the subject matter taught to refugees to the US and found, the text about jobs dealt only with menial jobs e.g. waiters and cleaners, this implies that newcomers have to start at the bottom of the ladder. The language text for functions only included "asking for approval, clarification, reassurance, permission, and so on, but not praising, criticizing, complaining, refusing, or disagreeing". (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985) indicating a clear message to refugees and/or an assumption that refugees had to know their place and act and behave in a prescribed manner that meets the host countries expectations.

Sambell and McDowell (1998) describe assessment as a key element in defining the hidden curriculum. Accordingly, to get a clear picture of the ideologies that underpin an institution or a course one need only look at the type of assessment used.

3.3. Economic factors

It can be argued that Educational institutions are agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture. Funding is the main factor that influences the educational approach that a program can take (Guth, 1993). This is a means by which economic conditions control activities including curriculum practices. As is the case in the UAE and in many other contexts, the State funds ESL programmes. This funding often entails competency-based education, a movement rooted in the States' need for accountability (Guth, 1993). This affects the type of curriculum used and the modes of evaluation as programmes must be able to meet their goals.

3.4. Content selection

Content of the curriculum is selected to maximize learning opportunities. Activities need to allow students to be active participants and involve them in enquiry. The majority of institutions purchase a textbook, and they often act as the sole content for a course or its curriculum. In many cases ESL teachers have little choice in the textbook or content they teach. The ELT textbook production line is mainly in the UK or US thus the materials of these books will have a distinct western ideological perspective. In the UK alone ELT textbook production is a multimillion-pound industry (Gray, 2012, p. 97). One can then assume that textbook industry is keen to develop and protect its market share. Gray (2010b) undertook a study on the use of celebrities in ESL textbooks and observed that the ideology of personal success and development was one ESL textbooks supported in addition to the underlying message of English learning being equated with success (Gray, 2012, p. 104). The use of celebrities in textbooks is one example of a western perspective that might not translate well to different contexts because of a lack of familiarity with the subject matter, or relevance to the lived experiences of the students.

In addition to the problems of textbooks, teachers often select and create their own materials for their classrooms; in doing so they have an ethical responsibility to ensure their materials are culturally appropriate and do not cause any harm.

4. Critical stance in my the context of the UAE

In the UAE all tertiary education is free for UAE nationals, but all national tertiary institutions use English as a medium of instruction. Students usually need to have a minimum of IELTS 5/5.5 (IELTS band ranges from 1(which would be a non-user) to 9 (Expert User)) to access these undergraduate courses. The universities offer an English

language programme to bridge the gap of students who are not at this level. Those who do not achieve this will not be given a place on a degree programme. There are a number of other opportunities for young Emiratis, mainly the military or the police, but again they will need to achieve an IELTS band 5/5.5 to become officers. Clearly the UAE's language policy is putting a priority on developing English as a second language. Education which promotes economic growth, which Giroux (2011, p. 8) describes as characterized by a pedagogy focused on high stakes testing, and helping students find a good fit in a market orientated culture of conformity and standardisation, appears to be the goal of UAE's education policy makers. How then can a critical stance be taken in this neoliberal pedagogy that dominates not only in the UAE but also many western countries? Are there any other goals of education? Habermas (1970) sees education as developing students' critical reasoning which is required for a democracy. Giroux (2011, p. 9) when discussing critical pedagogy also talks about the democratic goals of education as providing a formative culture that produces engaged citizens which makes democracy possible. The UAE is not a democracy; this then begs the question of the appropriateness and relevance of a critical pedagogy in this setting. Teachers in this setting are mostly working with the empowered minority of locals, while most poor migrant workers do not have any access to educational opportunities. What then can critical pedagogy do? Perhaps it would be useful to describe its ability to raise awareness of the ethical and moral dilemmas that neoliberal policies create and develop in students' social responsibility and civic duty.

The powerful status of the English language in the UAE could have a dramatic effect on the native Arabic, as it takes a secondary role in academia and economy and could ultimately lead to Arabic being undervalued. The power of English is also seen in its role as a gatekeeper to tertiary education. Even when students want to study the Arabic language they must get an IELTS 5 to access the course. This erosion of the value of the first language needs to be addressed and a balance between English and Arabic reached. This advancement to equitable bilingualism would help to improve the prospects for all as Skutnabb-Kangas (2002, p. 15) points out, "Thus education that leads to high levels of plurilingualism produces not only local linguistic and cultural capital but knowledge capital that will be exchangeable to other types of capital in the information society."

5. Conclusion

It is a key ideological tenet of critical applied linguistics to be critical of everything; therefore it is important too as a reflexive activity to do the same here. Some have criticized critical applied linguistics as relating only to grand theory with little application to practice, for doing little more than criticizing (Pennycook, 2010, p. 8). It also seems that critical applied linguistics deals only with problems relating to power and inequalities; perhaps this is a limitation. Widdowson (1999) suggests that education

should not be so concerned with politics. Furthermore, when educators or teachers try to introduce a critical applied linguistics stance to their practice they do so from a position of power and superiority. The risk here is that they may make assumptions about who or what needs emancipating, this leads to the danger of a patronizing view of the 'other'.

I have outlined above some problems of introducing critical applied linguistics to the context of teaching in the UAE. When we look at ELT with a critical lens the context must be the most salient point. The context may not appear to fit an emancipatory scenario on a grand scale, but at the micro level we need to continue to challenge assumptions made at every level of the curriculum. If, as I have advocated here, the context is our starting point we can and should adapt new ideologies and theories to find what is suitable and practical. In this case a realistic critical approach in the context of the UAE would be to continue to challenge assumptions and problematize our teaching practice.

References

Ahmadian, M. & Rad, S. E. (2014). Postmethod era and glocalized language curriculum development: A fresh burden on language teachers. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5 (3) 592-598.

Al-Issa, A. (2005). When the West teaches the East: Analyzing intercultural conflict in the classroom. *Intercultural Communication* Studies, XIV, 4

Auerbach E. R. & Burgess, D. (1985). The hidden curriculum of survival ESL. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*(3) 475-495.

Badry, F. (2015). United Arab Emirates: Searching for an elusive balance in bilingual education. In P. Mehisto & F. Genesee (Eds.), *Building bilingual education Systems: Forces, mechanisms and counterweights* (pp. 197-214). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. F. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory of research for sociology of education* (241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Benesch, S. (2001). *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics, and practice.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bowles, S., & Gintes, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.

Breen, M. P. (2001). Syllabus design. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 151-159). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cadle, B. (2012). The pursuit of best practice in teaching and learning: Visualisation of a Framework for an Ideal Curriculum. *International Journal of the Humanities, 9*(8), 195-206.

Day, R. R. 1981. ESL: A factor in linguistic genocide? In J. C. Fisher, M. A. Clarke, and J. Schachter (Eds.), *On TESOL '80. Building bridges: Research and practice in teaching English as a Second Language* (pp.73-78). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

Dubin, F., & Olshtain, E. (1986.) *Course design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fleming, T. (2010). Condemned to learn: Habermas, University and the learning society. In M. Murphy & T. Fleming (Eds.), *Habermas, critical theory and education* (pp. 111-124). New York: Routledge

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* 30th anniversary edition, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.

Genesee, F. (2001). Evaluation. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 144-150). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1978) Developing educational programs: Overcoming the hidden curriculum. *The Clearing House, 52(*4), 148-151.

Giroux, H. A. (2011). *On critical pedagogy.* New York: Continuum.

Gray (2010b). The branding of English and the culture of the new capitalism: representations of the world of work in English language textbooks. *Applied Linguistics, 31*(5), 714-733.

Gray, J. (2012). Neoliberalism, celebrity and 'aspirational content' in English language teaching textbooks for the global market. In D. Block, J. Gray, & M. Holborow (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and applied linguistic*s (pp. 86-113) New York: Routledge.

Gray, D., & Block, D. (2012). The marketization of language teacher education and neoliberalism: Characteristics, consequences and future prospects. In D. Block, J. Gray, & M. Holborow (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and applied linguistic*s (pp. 114-143). New York: Routledge.

Guth, G. J. A. (1993). Profiles of adult ESL literacy programs. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(3), 533-537.

Habermas, J. (1970). *Toward a rational society.* Boston: Beacon Press

Honey, J. (1997). *Language is power: The story of Standard English and its enemies.* London Faber and Faber.

Kelly, A. V. (2009). *The curriculum: Theory and* practice. (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly, 28(*1), 27–48.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly, 35*(4), 537-560.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003b). A postmethod perspective on English language teaching. *World Englishes, 22,* 539-550.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006a). *Understanding language teaching: From method to post-method.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lyotard, J .F. (1984) *The Postmodern condition: A report on knowledge.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press,

Murray, D. (1998). Ebonics: A Case Study in Language, Power, and Pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(1), 144-146.

Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design.* New York: Routledge.

Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction.* New York: Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (1992) *Linguistic imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sambell, K., & McDowell, L. (1998). The construction of the hidden curriculum: Messages and meanings in the assessment of student learning. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 23*(4), 391-402.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education - or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2002). *Why should linguistic diversity be maintained and supported in Europe? Some arguments.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era.* (2nd Edition). London Routledge.

Tyler R. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and Instruction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weir, C. & Roberts, J. (1994). *Evaluation in ELT.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Widdowson, H. G. (1999). *Coming to terms with reality: Applied Linguistics in perspective.* Plenary address to the 12th World congress of Applied Linguistics AILA '99, Tokyo.

Young, J. H. (1985). Participation in curriculum development: An inquiry into the response of teachers. *Curriculum Inquiry, 15*(4), 387-414.

Copyrights