# Chapter 18
# Fostering Active Learning via Critical Pedagogies:
## Applying Reflective Research

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to provide a guideline for pre-service and in-service teachers to apply reflective research in language classrooms to gain a multidimensional overview of language teaching strategies in increasing active learning via critical pedagogies. A previously conducted reflective research will be used throughout the chapter to reach the stated aim. Analyzing language teaching techniques and strategies in an English for Academic Purposes classroom where all the students are originally from East Asia, the sample reflective research illustrates the needs and expectations of East Asian students in language learning through the research students, and also it aims to provide clues for TESOL educators to implement a similar study in classrooms employing critical pedagogies to develop language instruction.*

## INTRODUCTION

Participation and the strategies that the teachers employ to increase the engagement affect students' learning. Examining the approaches and orientations used in language teaching, language instruction can be improved by understanding the role of active learning. Bonwell and Eison (1991) state that active learning should involve higher-order thinking tasks such as analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating to encourage students to think about what they are doing. It urges teachers to engage in self-reflection delving into appropriate, alternative and critical pedagogy methods to promote learner autonomy. Kumaravadivelu (2003) claims that cultural dynamics of L2 classrooms develop with the comprehension of the individual cultural identity in class, which is named as critical cultural consciousness. There is not a single culture that represents all and with the help of critical consciousness, one can discover, transform and evolve to better meet current challenges. Employing a critically reflective mind in the classroom will help question dominant ideologies and power relations. Critical reflection strengthens cultural understanding in

the classroom as teachers appreciate and validate students' cultural knowledge that is brought into the classroom. It helps create a learning environment where students share their personal perspectives with classmates and teacher as cultural informants, and eventually increases active participation and motivation as students use their own power and knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

In multicultural environments where the students have varied racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, language teaching strategies impact students' self-confidence and academic success (Brown, 2007; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Gee, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKay, 2002; Rosa, 2016; Rosa, 2019; Rosa & Nelson, 2017). Teachers who employ critical pedagogies consider those students' backgrounds and previous language learning experiences. They adapt the curriculum, materials and classroom activities to provide equitable education respecting the varied populations in the classroom. They create environments in which each member of the classroom finds opportunities to bring funds of knowledge-historically accumulated information based in cultural practices and experiences-to the classroom eagerly (Moll et al., 2005). Students can express themselves comfortably and actively take part in the learning process. This is why, this chapter employs critical pedagogies to explore diverse and inclusive teaching strategies while increasing international students' engagement and participation considering their varied backgrounds.

The chapter gives insights by drawing a road map to conducting reflective, applicable research in classrooms, encouraging curious and reflective TESOL teachers to keep up to date in the area and further develop their language instruction. The sample reflective research introduced in the chapter helps to bring theory into practice regarding a small group of international students' language learning experiences in an English for Academic Purposes classroom. Through detailed information and guidance, teachers can conduct an adapted reflective research in classrooms and engage in self-reflection.

## CONCEPT

## The Definition of Critical Pedagogies

Various terms have been used to better align school culture with home culture in order to improve academic success of the students, reconceptualize teaching and adapt teaching strategies (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Osborne, 1996). Ladson-Billings (1995) offered a theory around the reformation of teacher education at the intersection of culture and teaching, formulating the culturally relevant theory. Based on this theory, besides academic success and cultural competence, content should be scaffolded to recognize, understand and question social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). This formulation prepared a base for students of color to sustain their heritage, empowering them to critique dominant power structures (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Inquiry into connecting learning principles with a thorough understanding of culture provided a base for new concepts adding on culturally relevant terms, such as culturally responsive or culturally sustaining (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 77). Culturally responsive teaching is characterized as using ethnically diverse learners' cultural awareness, experiences and performance types to make learning opportunities more meaningful and efficient for them (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2010; Gay, 2013). The principle of responsive teaching consists of recognizing and comprehending the significance of culture, language and race/ethnicity in teaching and learning (Chu & Garcia, 2014, p. 219). Villegas and Lucas (2002) draw on six objectives for culturally responsive teachers as "gaining sociocultural consciousness, developing an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds, developing the commitment and

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