


Chapter 13

Teacher Identity and Language Ideology via Critical Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aims to determine how language teachers' ontological beliefs on critical pedagogy build teacher identity and language ideology. Participants included 18 public junior high school teachers. Results revealed that critical language pedagogy (CLP) constructed teacher identities against its trajectory. These identities include the lack of familiarity and misunderstanding of CLP, resistance to a critical teaching approach, dependency on the official textbook or learning modules, and confidence in their traditional practices. Similarly, distorted critical language ideologies were also determined, such as language as an apolitical entity, CLP as a threat to social and cultural harmony, L1 as a threat to L2 learning, and the perceived dominance of American English. Both identities and ideologies are attributed to social conflicts and sociopolitical activities that produce oppression and marginalization. Hence, it is recommended that the education sector provide an opportunity to fully understand the role of criticality through dialogue, reflection, and praxes.

INTRODUCTION

Critical pedagogy (CP), associated with Paulo Freire, aims to concretize the process of transforming the oppressed into humanized and empowered individuals. Its criticality roots in constructing a just, democratic and liberated society where every member experiences “political, economic, and cultural control” (p. 77). With such a goal, CP rejects the dominance, violations, marginalization, oppression, and inequalities by developing social consciousness (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). In language teaching, its criticality is still influenced by the Freirean ideology of teaching for social justice, which is supported

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by “democratic values associated with equality, freedom, and solidarity” (p. 247). Several approaches are highlighted in achieving such critical language teaching, which include the following: problem-posing, dialogic engagement, praxes (reflection and action), and critical thinking (Crookes, 2021). In Henry Giroux’s principal features of critical language pedagogy (CLP), he emphasized the students’ subjectivities and voice which is their political nature, in search for truth, equality, and justice through language use (Pennycook, 2017).

While critical pedagogy, generally, has been explored in different contexts across the globe, language teacher identity through CLP remains underrated in research; hence, it is interesting to know how critical language teachers construct their identities, specifically with the influence of radical teaching, which aims transformational achievement and social consciousness (Kubota, 2017). With the complexities of teachers’ identities, it was suggested by Higgins (2017) to investigate further teachers’ experiences [in using additional language] and their language ideologies for the class. With such intricacies and limitations of critical studies concerning teachers’ identities and language ideologies, this study determined to respond to those established gaps, specifically in the Philippine context, where education remains conservative.

Teacher Identity

It has been established by several studies that teacher identity undoubtedly builds relations between and among teachers and students, including their relation to the institutions and the formation of language teaching and learning ideologies (Toohey, 2017). However, language teacher identity is not confined to a single ground of understanding because of its multifaceted, dynamic, and adaptive characteristics, which are shaped and linked by their internal and external worlds (Cheung, 2017). Its complexity lies in the multiple influences of the social, historical, and political realities acquired or inherited, such as physical appearance, actions, decisions, perceptions through human interactions, and experiences and associations, which further produce several more identities that construct self-image concerning social reality. In pedagogy, teachers’ teaching experiences and their philosophical stance on language teaching could also serve as a reference for building language teacher identities (Matsuda, 2017). These complexities that shaped identity caused Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva (2017, pp. 260-261) to define teacher identity as a fractal system because it constantly “changes, self-organizes, and adapts to the environment.” Hence, this complex interactive system produces complex human identities associated with gender, social, political, and religious affiliations and associations to their communities, including the “imagined community of English speakers.”

In language education, teacher identities are “cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical” (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 4), which defines language teachers as influenced by executing language learning, interacting with other members of their academic and professional community, philosophical underpinnings that guide them in pedagogical practices, their perception of themselves and their society, and the influences of their past to define their present self.

These complexities were addressed by Nelson (2017) as an identity-related dilemma, but this conflicting understanding is believed to provide language education with even more excitement brought upon by social changes.

Previous studies and narratives on teacher identities were conducted, which were associated with or correlated to different factors or variables. For instance, English language teachers’ professional identity and autonomy were investigated to determine their impact on instructional success. Having participating Iranian EFL teachers, using the Teacher Autonomy Questionnaire (TAQ), the Teacher Professional

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