



Critical literacies and awareness in EFL teaching

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Overview

- English in Norway and France
- Critical literacy in English
- Challenges of developing critical literacy in the EFL classroom
- Responding to the challenges?

English in Norway and France

Vacancelle

Norway

- “Unique position as a 1st foreign language”
(http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Country_Report_Norway_EN.pdf)
- A separate curriculum for English
- The only obligatory foreign language
- Introduced in year 1 of school
- “Most children are used to hearing English from an early age and some do already have some knowledge of and about English before they even start school” (Country report published by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2003-2004: 11)
- EFL or ESL?

France

- Unique position of English. Loi Toubon (1994) against invasion of ‘anglicismes’. English as symbol of Anglo-American globalisation.
- In theory English as one language amongst many, in practice often the L1.
- Since 2016 language reform, active promotion of German as L1/L2.
- Until last year’s reform, English was generally not introduced before the 6th grade.
- Dubbing of television series and French language protectionism limits exposure to English compared to Norway

English in Norway and France: Teachers' views

Improved Language Learning (2015)

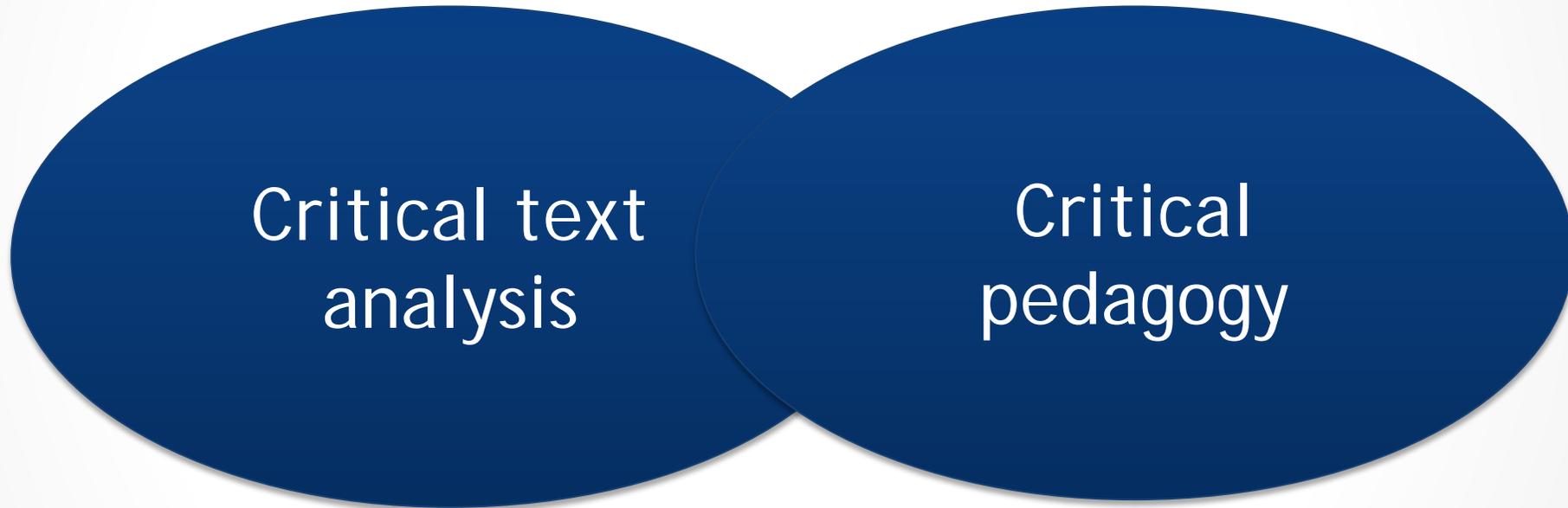
Erasmus+ Region Project

- L'Académie de Grenoble
- Rogaland County Council
- Lycée du Grésivaudan de Meylan
- Bergeland Upper Secondary
- Kopervik Upper Secondary
- Université Grenoble Alpes - CUEF
- University of Stavanger

- Teachers' focus
- Learners' motivation
- Learners' language level

Critical literacy in EFL

- Builds on our common CLAE framework (Fajardo 2015)



- Aims to improve language skills while developing critical consciousness of issues of social structures in order to transform both classroom and society (Rashidi & Safari 2011)

What is critical literacy?

Critical literacy is a student-centred literacy approach that calls for students to

- critically evaluate a text for author biases, accuracy, ethical dilemmas, missing perspectives, and how it informs the reader of social relationships in larger society
- to act upon their new understandings in order to better society.

Critical awareness

Social action

(McDaniel 2004)

Critical literacy

- Analyses texts for fairness (McCall 2002: 86)
- Critically examines biases in texts (Boutte 2002)
- Forces students to question their own preconceived views (Hall & Piazza 2008)
- Addresses the reality that texts can have differing meanings based on the viewpoints and values of the readers present (Ciardiello 2004:141; Creighton 1997)

Critical EFL pedagogy

Political and ethical issues of teaching a colonial language

- Questions institutional policies and cultural/community practices
- Aims to expose and resist oppressive hierarchies of power within education and society
- Replaces the banking model of education with a liberatory, dialogic and problem-posing model of education where 'all learn and all teach' (Freire 1970)

After decolonisation, English language teaching effective channel of hegemony (Canagarajah 2005)

Some critical literacy methods in English

Student-centred
EFL materials
development

Process drama and
critical performative
pedagogy

Multiple
viewpoints
texts

Digital
storytelling

Critical visual
literacy

Multimodal
texts

Contrasting
texts

Challenges of addressing critical literacy in the EFL classroom (Fajardo 2015)

- The focus on *language* learning
- 'ideology of pragmatism' (Benesch 2001:370), 'discourse of neutrality' (Pennycook 1997:256) - getting assimilated into literacy practices rather than challenging them
- Assumption that language is neutral (Pennycook 1997)
- Language learning seen as cognitive rather than social

Ambivalent learners' and teachers' views (Fajardo 2015)

Learners' perspectives

- Unclear connection between critical literacy and language learning (Ko 2010, 2013)
- Reading for comprehension preferred (Ko 2010)
- Reading for information and entertainment (Huang 2011)
- A balance between conventional & critical literacy skills?

Teachers' perspectives

- A change in teaching approaches (Ko 2013; Ko & Wang 2009)
- Print-based literacy & multi-modal literacy (Tan & McWilliam 2009)
- Younger and less proficient learners (Ko & Wang 2009, Park 2011)
- National tests



Responding to challenges?

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- ✓ Oral language activities
- ✓ Critical visual literacy
- ✓ Critical performative pedagogy

Oral language activities:

Raising awareness of language attitudes

- Judgements about languages or language varieties
- Tend to get translated into attitudes towards speakers
- Formed through socialization processes, including the media as the "focal point for the shaping, reinforcement or change of attitudes" (Garret 2010:22)
- Standard vs. Non-standard varieties
- World Englishes & English teaching - Teacher & learner goals

'correct', 'beautiful', 'nice', 'pure'
VS.
'wrong', 'ugly', 'corrupt'

How are language attitudes
created, perpetuated or
challenged in cartoons?

Critical visual literacy

- Stereotypes reinforced rather than challenged in Norwegian EFL textbooks (Brown & Habegger-Conti, forthcoming)
- Viewers positioned 'to enter a closer social relationship with the white participants than with the indigenous participants' (Brown & Habegger-Conti, forthcoming)
- Learners need to be 'trained' to uncover hidden ideologies in images
- Visual literacy: the ability to 'ponder the meanings of representations and visual orders and become aware of the forces, structures and power relations connected to them' (Seppänen, 2006:130), including 'the ability to understand [their] cultural meanings' (94) (e.g. race and gender issues)

Visual Representations of Indigenous Cultures in Norwegian EFL Textbooks (Brown 2016; Brown & Habegger-Conti, forthcoming)

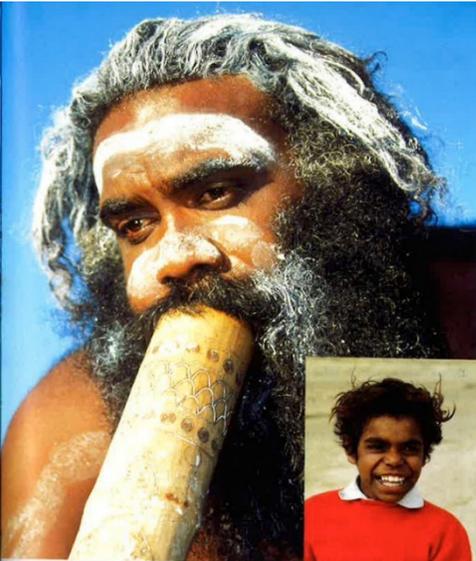
The Inuit are a people who live near the Arctic, from the North of Russia to Alaska, northern Canada and parts of Greenland.





The natives of Australia came from south-east Asia more than 60,000 years ago. They are called Aboriginals, which means "from the beginning".





The Native American people probably came from Asia some 35,000 years ago. They settled all over the American continent and formed different tribes.









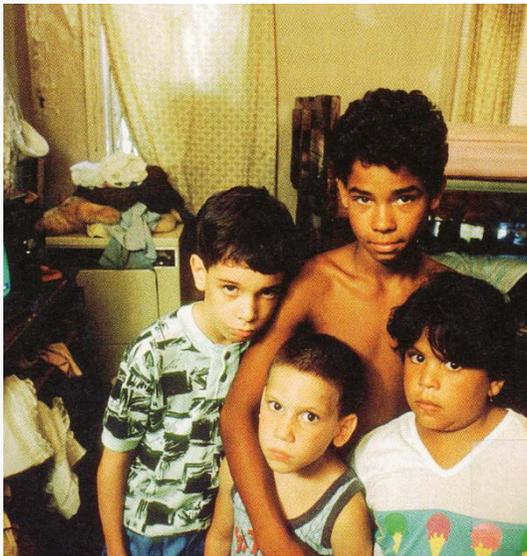
LET'S TALK!
What do you know about these native peoples?

28 Chapter 2

New Flight 2,
2007: 28-29 (in
Brown 2016)



Angle of shot



High angle, viewer power
New Flight 2, 2007: 81



Eye-level angle, equality
New Flight 2, 2007: 8



Low angle, participant power
New Flight 2, 2007: 81

Critical visual literacy concepts

(Janks et al. 2014: 99-100)

Concept	Positioning (effects)
Type of shot	Are we invited to establish a relationship and how?
Angle of shot	Are we invited to establish a relationship and how?
Framing	Who is in a position of power? Intimacy or impersonality?
Cropping	What is included and what is left out?
Gaze	What is included and what is left out?
Body positioning & body language	Eye contact or lack of it (demand or offer)?
Composition & layout	What kind of relationship are we invited to establish?



Context dependent, but still a useful set of awareness raising tools

Critical performative pedagogy

- Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal 1992)
 - Image theatre
 - Forum theatre
 - The rainbow of desire
- Can be used with limited proficiency EFL students (Rozansky & Aagesen 2010)
- Allows students to perform oppressive situations and enact solutions to them → reflection → social change
- Can be used to explore institutional practices & teacher-student hierarchies and provides embodied experiences of language learning practices
- Student active and student creative learning
- Draws on students' lived experiences
- Is by its very nature multiperspectival and lends itself to praxis



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