

○ **M. GUILHERME *CRITICAL CITIZENS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL WORLD: FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS CULTURAL POLITICS***

(CLEVEDON: MULTILINGUAL MATTERS. 2002. PP. XIV, 296).

This is the third book in a series on ‘Languages for intercultural communication and education’, whose acronym is divided between the spine and front cover of the volume so that it is less obvious that it spells ‘LICE’. The book itself is the sort one might either love or hate. A few years ago I would have been put off by its rather abstract discussion of such things as Critical Pedagogy and Postmodernism, but now that I am more familiar with the scholars and issues involved I find it stimulating and insightful. This discussion is the real strength of the book. While one chapter also considers data obtained from a study of English teachers in Portugal, this does little to back up the more interesting aspects of the discussion.

The book is divided into an introduction and five chapters, including three on various ‘critical’ matters, one discussing data on ‘critical cultural awareness’ in EFL classes in Portugal, and one proposing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of foreign cultures. The book ends with an extensive bibliography, appendices that present the questionnaires used to gather data, and a useful index.

The introductory chapter takes the position that:

It is fundamental that higher education and teacher development programmes aimed at foreign language/culture teachers explicitly relate their practices to philosophical and educational theoretical frameworks so that teachers become aware of which potential trends they may choose from to inspire their practices (p. 5).

While the volume later draws heavily on Critical Pedagogy, this chapter lays the groundwork for this by first considering some opposing educational standpoints, namely conservative, liberal, humanistic, and radical pedagogies and the new sociology of education.

Chapter 1 then provides a solid review of Critical Pedagogy as cultural politics, taking the position that it ‘provides the educational backdrop for the development of critical cultural awareness in foreign language/teacher education’ (p. 17). After describing how

Critical Pedagogy draws on Critical Theory, Postmodernism, Cultural Studies, Progressivism, and Reconstructionism, it discusses it as a pedagogy of reflection, dissent, difference, dialogue, empowerment, action, and hope. The chapter then notes how Critical Pedagogy has been criticised for attempting to reconcile the quite different approaches of Critical Theory and Postmodernism, for its unclear rhetorical style, for its lack of clear guidance for practice, and, among more conservative voices, for its emphasis on cultural production rather than transmission.

Chapter 2 then looks into the philosophical foundations for critical cultural awareness through a discussion of aspects of Critical Theory and Postmodernism. It takes Critical Theory as the basic philosophical foundation for critical cultural awareness (p. 88), with cultural knowledge being viewed 'not ... as a distant object to be acquired but as a process of reciprocal identification and representation, accomplished mostly through interpersonal relations' (p. 89). While Postmodernism resists definition (pp. 90-91), a discussion of some of the key concepts employed by various proponents shows how it takes a 'deconstructivist, disruptive, ironical, and aesthetic approach' to cultural critique (p. 117).

Chapter 3 then applies this background to the development of a theory of critical cultural awareness. The chapter begins with a list of 54 brief statements, divided into five categories, as guidelines for undertaking a critical approach to foreign cultures (p. 121-124). Several sections then deal with issues of cultural identity that can have 'profound consequences not only for ... foreign language/culture classes but first and foremost for teacher development' (p. 124). The chapter then proceeds to discuss eight specific models for intercultural communicative competence (pp. 132-146), a set of sections I found particularly valuable for the way they contrast alternative conceptualisations, although they do not cover all alternatives, such as the recent Australian approach of Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco (Crozet et al. 1999). The chapter then considers the differing perspectives of the *Common European framework* and the *Standards for foreign language learning* (pp. 146-154). The conclusion to this chapter is surprisingly open, suggesting that it is valuable to examine these models and documents, but not drawing specific conclusions from the author's own attempt to do this.

Chapter 4 reports on research undertaken with upper secondary school teachers of English in Portugal through questionnaires and focus group discussions, as well as interviews with a syllabus author, administrator, and a textbook author. How the research was conducted is not well described in the text itself, although a footnote (fn. 3, p. 205) gives such details as the number of respondents (75 and 101 respectively for the two questionnaires), and the questionnaires and focus group protocol are presented in appendices. The general thrust of the findings were that the teachers tended to be quite open

to the inclusion of cultural content in language classes and advocated doing so along the lines of certain of the models discussed in the previous chapter, but that they fell short of ‘fully applying the idea that foreign language/culture education is political education’ (p. 203), and that their view of English-speaking cultures is mainly Eurocentric rather than global (p. 204).

Chapter 5 advocates a critical approach to foreign language/culture education that integrates such broader educational frameworks as Human Rights Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship and which takes an interdisciplinary approach drawing on Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies and Intercultural Communication. Here one might hope for more direction in how such an approach might actually be applied in practice. The volume does address its stated task of encouraging teachers to relate their practices explicitly to philosophical and educational theoretical frameworks (p. 5), but ultimately leaves it up to them to do so.

In sum I found this an excellent and thought-provoking discussion of the theoretical underpinnings for intercultural language education. My main criticism of it is the same as that levelled by the author at Critical Theory: that it presents little in the way of clear guidance for actual practice.

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REFERENCES

- Crozet, C.; Liddicoat, A. J.; Lo Bianco, J. 1999. ‘Intercultural competence: From language policy to language education’. In *Striving for the third place: Intercultural competency through language education*, edited by Lo Bianco, Joe; Liddicoat, Anthony J.; Crozet, Chantal. Melbourne: Language Australia.