Critical Literacy in the EFL Classroom

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The purpose of this article is to examine how critical literacy is related to critical issues in EFL education such as issues of power, identity, critical awareness and empowerment, and to suggest an alternative pedagogical framework for empowering EFL learners. This article begins by defining critical literacy, focusing on the tension between literacy as teaching the “cultures of power” and literacy as a practice in acknowledging and fostering diversity. Next, some of the implications of critical literacy for EFL education are discussed. In this regard, we suggest that taking a critical literacy perspective will inform EFL teachers in the following areas: (a) helping students understand the changing face of the world; (b) helping students celebrate their multiple identities constructed in a contact zone; (c) helping develop abilities and awareness in students that enable them to reflect critically on the world and the world; and (d) empowering students by challenging unequal power relations. Finally, we propose a pedagogical framework for critical literacy with the hope that EFL teachers can reformulate the framework to respond appropriately to their own teaching contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

To date, English educators in Korea have put forth an effort to innovate English Language Teaching (ELT) by actively adopting updated teaching trends. Among them, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a dominant teaching trend, and will continue to be emphasized in Korea (Kwon, 2000). We, however, claim that there appears to be a gap between theory and practice of CLT in Korea, and consequently this mismatch tends to trigger the inefficiency of ELT in Korea. For example, even though what is central to CLT is to maintain functional interactions rather than native-like perfection (Warschauer, 2000), native-like fluency tends to be privileged over functional interactions in Korea. Consequently, this prevalent notion results in a
distorted social phenomenon in Korea. For example, studying abroad is desperately popular mainly among the upper-middle class to obtain a native-like English proficiency. It is our opinion that the phenomenon is forming social stratification.

Throughout the 20th century, English has become increasingly international in character. Consequently, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frequently serves as a tool, which promotes economic, social, and individual benefits. Yet, Pennycook (2001) warns that English in a global context would generate an unequal power as well as wealth distribution unless English teachers and learners critically examine and problematize social injustices. Consequently, the very issues have increased interest in critical perspectives in first language (L1) as well as second language (L2) studies (Hammond & Macken-Horark, 1999; Kramsch, 2000; Pennycook, 2001). Therefore, in our opinion, ELT in Korea now calls for a new attempt such as critical perspectives to empower students as well as teachers. In fact, Sung (2002) notes that ELT in Korea can no longer ignore the importance of critical perspectives.

There exist various terminologies related to “critical” perspectives: critical thinking, critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and critical theory. At the same time, some people have confused one approach with another, because the boundaries of each field are blurred, and several researchers work on more than one approach simultaneously. Among them, this paper focuses mainly on critical literacy, because critical literacy has not been generally encouraged in the EFL classroom in either the wider or the narrower sense, whether we are talking of those with very limited English language proficiency or of quite advanced learners of English. As Wallace (1992) rightly points out, EFL students tend not to be invited to draw on their experiences of literacy, or to articulate their understanding of it as a social phenomenon. Reading has been seen to be unproblematic as an activity, simply as what goes on when reader meets text. Texts have not been generally selected for their potential to challenge. They are more frequently seen as either vehicles for linguistic structure, or as functional survival material for some groups of EFL learners who are given material such as forms or official letters, thus suggesting an assimilationist model of literacy – one which accepts rather than challenges the assumptions as to the future social and occupational roles of second language learners. In short, EFL students are often marginalized as readers and writers; their goals in interacting with written texts are perceived to be primarily those of language learners who are deprived of opportunities to engage in meaningful discourses and actions to better their own and others’ lives. Therefore, what is missing from the traditional literacy learning and teaching practices is:

1. an attempt to place reading and writing activity and written texts in a social context;
2. the use of texts which are meaningful to their own lives;
3. a methodology for (re)interpreting and (re)writing texts which addresses ideological
assumptions as well as propositional meaning.

We here argue that to improve the situation, we need new literacy practices which encourage learners to look critically, not just at texts themselves, but at the whole practice and process of reading and writing as dependent on social context. The social context EFL students are now situated in this early 21st century requires the students to “interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes and communication patterns which more and more frequently cross cultural, community and national boundaries” (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). The New London Group’s conceptualization of literacy as encompassing not only a variety of media but also a variety of forms, dialects, genres, and languages seems especially relevant to EFL students of our time in that these students will encounter new cultures and communication patterns more than ever before as we embark on the 21st century. This inevitably points to the need for new literacy practices to help these students develop the capacity not only to adapt themselves to changes in technology and society, but also to make choices and to transform the reality as they are simultaneously learning to communicate in new languages and dialects as well as new media.

Although there is a substantial literature that addresses critical literacy in L1 and ESL contexts (Cummins, 2000; Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999; New London Group, 1996; Pennycook, 1999), little attempt has been made to address such important issues in EFL contexts and to provide a pedagogical framework on how EFL teachers can implement critical literacy in their classrooms. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to examine how critical literacy is related to the issues of empowerment in EFL education and to suggest a pedagogical framework for learning and teaching critical literacy in EFL contexts. This article begins by defining critical literacy, focusing on the tension between literacy as teaching the “cultures of power” and literacy as a practice in acknowledging and fostering diversity. Next, critical investigations of to what extent taking a critical literacy perspective will inform EFL educational practices are presented. Finally, an alternative pedagogical framework situated within the critical literacy perspective is presented with the hope that EFL teachers will further reformulate the framework to respond appropriately to their own teaching contexts.

II. CRITICAL LITERACY: DEFINITION

To begin, it is necessary to define critical literacy as it will be used in this article. In defining critical literacy, we will focus on two salient aspects of the term: the extended vision of “literacy” and the “critical” part of literacy. The extended vision of “literacy” focuses on a
construct much broader than language itself. Following Lankshear and McLaren (1993), we postulate that literacy must not be seen as something singular, "like an essential technology, a specific skill, or a universal phenomenon such as print or script" (p. xvii). Rather, reading and writing exist in myriad social and socially constructed forms. That is, reading and writing are made, socially, into many and diverse forms. Lankshear and McLaren’s understanding of literacy as "socially constructed" parallels a view of "literacy as practice" that Guerra (1998) suggests. In exploring major ideological perspectives operating in literacy studies, Guerra identifies four constitutive metaphors including literacy as entity, literacy as self, literacy as institution, and literacy as practice, arguing for the "literacy as practice" perspective as integrating all of the other conflicting frames. In other words, individuals can acquire various types of literacy while they engage in a variety of social practices. Based on this view, literacy is no longer considered a singular, monolithic, or universal entity; instead, there are "many literacies in any society serving multiple and culturally specific purposes" (p. 57). From this social practice-oriented perspective, it seems reasonable to argue that an individual’s literacies vary according to the personal and social circumstances of his or her life.

Accepting the premise that the use of literacy is essentially a social practice, Gee (1991) contends that literacy practices are "part of the very texture of wider practices that involve talk, interaction, values and beliefs" (p. 32). Gee calls such practices "Discourses with a capital D" (p. 32). Gee argues that "literacy is inherently plural (literacies) and that writing, reading, and language are always embedded in and inextricable from Discourses (social practice, cultures, and subcultures, or whatever analogous term is used)" (p. 33). Viewed from this perspective, reading and writing are not private affairs involving a set of discrete skills but rather social acts that one engages in within a community. The goal, from this perspective, is not to master a particular form of literacy, but to develop one's ability to engage in a variety of social practices.

Given that literacy is plural rather than singular, we must turn to a second salient insight from literacy studies, pertaining to the "critical" part of literacy. Broadly speaking, "critical" literacy is concerned with the extent to which reading and writing enable human agents to understand and engage the politics of daily life in a quest for a more truly democratic social order (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). This "critical" literacy perspective owes its greatest debt to Freire (1970, 1974), who has envisioned education as an integral part of democracy. He suggests that classrooms usually model the power relations currently in force in society. The situation that pertains in the traditional classroom, according to Freire (1970), can best be understood through the analogy of banking: "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing...Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 58). Such a system entails oppression, Freire
argues, because it projects an “absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression,” and “negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry” (p. 58).

As a counter to the banking method of education, Freire advocates a dialogic method in education as a means to critical consciousness because this method requires a mutual relationship between people. In the classroom, this means that teachers and students should be engaged with a subject in a joint search for knowledge where both act as equal participants in the quest for democracy. The assumption behind the quest for democracy in education lies in acknowledging diversity in origins and finding the potential for transformation. Critical literacy based on that understanding of diversity is expected to empower teachers and students to find substance in origins and to make opening spaces in which together they might negotiate the meanings of terms like “rights” and come to realize a “critical presence in the real world” (Robinson & Stock, 1990, p. 271). In doing so, students learn to relate to the real world, without at the same time losing their own identity within it and to “use literacy as a tool in bettering social conditions” (Au, 1998, p. 308).

In combining the extended version of “literacy” and the “critical” aspect of literacy, we will use critical literacy as an ability of human agents to engage in a variety of social practices and in so doing, to read the world more critically, on the basis of which they can enter into rewriting the world into a formation in which their identities are more fully present.

III. CRITICAL LITERACY FOR EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Even though there appears an increased interest in critical perspectives in first language as well as second/foreign language studies, the feasibility and the answer for “why” critical literacy is needed in EFL contexts have not been fully explored. Thus, in this section, we will provide critical investigations of to what extent taking a critical literacy perspective will enlighten EFL educational practices.

1. Constructing Social Future

Seen from the critical literacy perspective, what EFL students need to learn is rapidly changing, and the main thesis of this change is that there is not a singular, canonical English that should be taught anymore. Cultural differences and rapidly shifting communications media suggest that EFL learners are expected to “face the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness” (New London Group, p. 63). According to D'souza (1999), despite all the claims and counter-claims regarding the ownership of English, one basic truth is that English
does not belong to any one country or to any one speech community. As a world language it belongs to anyone who chooses to use it. A second basic truth is that every speaker of English is a native speaker of his/her own variety. The plurality of English, therefore, is “a reality that should not be a matter of contention in the future” (p. 271). Others also note the emergence of a local variety and see no reason for it to be denied legitimacy (Butler, 1999; Pakir, 1999; Shim, 1999). In fact, as an increasing number of people around the world turn to English as a medium of international communication, they emphasize their own local variety of English rather than subject to colonial standardized norms. It would be odd to insist that all learners adapt to a British or North American model when EFL speakers increasingly use English to speak to a multiplicity of audiences in various circumstances.

The realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness will therefore necessitate a new respect for developing one’s ability to engage in a variety of Englishes. It points to a new challenge for conscious classroom practice. Efforts should be made in this regard to “inculcate a flexible attitude to standards rather than a rigid, only one right way, approach” (D’ souza, 1999, p. 271). Students should be made aware of the nuances of language and should be made to realize that there are different ways of saying the same thing depending on audience and circumstance.

New communication media and information technology are also reshaping the way we use language. Reading practices are shifting from the page to the screen, especially among the younger generation. Reading from the screen requires “a self-conscious act of creating knowledge from a variety of sources” rather than “a passive act of decoding a message from a single, authoritative author” (Warschauer, 2000, p. 521). Similar changes are occurring with respect to writing (Faigley, 1997; Kress, 1998). The widespread use of computers and the Internet raises the need for effective written communication and new opportunities for agency defined as “the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices” (Murray, 1997, p. 126).

In sum, if the proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity and the multiplicity of communication channels are key attributes of our time, the very nature of language teaching has to change. Most importantly, the change in the role of different varieties of English in the world and new communication media will affect the way teachers think about syntactical, lexical, and phonetic standards and the great importance placed on the use of “correct” language. In the 21st century, speakers of English may increasingly need to diverge from what they have been taught is correct in order to make themselves understood to interlocutors around the world in the new communication environment. In such circumstances, narrow emphasis on the observance of decontextualized rules will serve learners poorly. In its place, introducing critical language awareness into the curriculum so that EFL students can better understand the interrelationship of language, discourse, and power will be necessary.
2. Celebrating EFL Learners’ Multiple Identities and Voices

Because of the increasing local diversity and global connectedness, notions such as agency, identity, and voice have become the central issues in current literacy studies. Literature shows that schools in the U.S. have failed dismally in teaching children from linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds other than those traditionally implicit in mainstream literacy classrooms by not dealing with such important issues (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Perez & Torres-Guzman, 1996). Ogbu and Simons (1998), in investigating the ways to educate involuntary minority students who become a part of the U.S. society permanently against their will, urge educators to recognize and deal with opposition, ambivalence, and mistrust. They argue that as a result of a long history of racism and discrimination, many involuntary minorities have developed an oppositional identity to white mainstream society which makes them reluctant to cross cultural boundaries and adopt what they consider to be “white ways” of talking, thinking, and behaving. They fear that doing so will displace their own minority identity and alienate them from their peers, family, and community. What Ogbu and Simons might have implied here is a need for healing and a reason for celebrating cultural and linguistic diversity in a classroom so that students can reestablish their own identities in relation to the school language, the curriculum, and the teacher.

These observations can be equally applied to EFL learning situations. In the context of L2 education in general, Kumaravadivelu (1999) notes that an L2 classroom “manifests, at surface and deep levels, many forms of resistance, articulated or unarticulated” (p. 472), which seem to resemble that of marginalized ethnic minorities in the North American inner-city schools that Ogbu and Simons have identified. In an ethnographic and classroom discourse study of EFL classrooms in Hong Kong, Lin (1999) also shows what happens when students’ “cultural capital” (language use, skills, and orientations, dispositions, attitudes, and schemes of perception) is incompatible with what the English lesson requires of them. She highlights her observation that when students are confronted with a language in which they have neither interest nor confidence but a language they recognize as a key to success in society, they appear to conclude that they can never learn the language and that they will be excluded from any chance of social success. She further explains that students’ contradictory feelings about their recognition of their own inability to change the situation often lead them to engage in classroom practices oppositional to the curriculum and the teacher (e.g., ignoring the lesson task or the teacher and talking to their peers in their mother tongue). The solution here might be that instead of denying the very identity of students including their resistance to the target language as the norm, thereby making them invisible, teachers need to learn to read the resistance students manifest both explicitly and implicitly in the classroom and explore ways to encourage “being
for themselves." As Lin herself suggests, understanding existing classroom practices and their sociocultural and institutional situatedness is the first step toward exploring the possibility of alternative creative, discursive practices that might contribute to the transformation of students' cultural capital.

Clearly, understanding learners' struggle in "being for themselves" in the target language involves an understanding of how sociocultural meanings are linked in complicated ways to social identities. In studying L2 literacy development, researchers (Lam, 2000; Peirce, 1995) have shown how identity affects the ways in which learners develop and demonstrate their competence in the L2 and how they draw on diverse discourses and identities to assert and develop their voice in the L2. Zamel (1997) reveals the reflective and generative power of writing for learners in creating their own voices in a new language. Instead of viewing discourse practices as discrete sets of conventions or processes of enculturation that overdetermine the learner's identities, Zamel argues that students can appropriate elements from a diversity of discourses to create a new written voice. Similarly, Lam (2000) gives an account of "textual identity" of one Chinese teenager in the networked computer media, highlighting the finding that while classroom English appeared to contribute to his sense of exclusion or marginalization, the English he controlled on the Internet enabled him to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to a global English-speaking community. Lam's account points to the importance of opening up a space where EFL learners can develop their voices and explore their own ways of representing and repositioning their multiple identities across real and imagined cultural and linguistic boundaries.

3. Promoting Critical Awareness

Another important implication of critical literacy for EFL learning and teaching is related to its premise for promoting critical awareness in a broader sense, of what reading itself is, which in turn, involves a consideration of cross-cultural aspects regarding who reads what and why in what situations, on the basis of which one can rewrite the world. Considerable debate has taken place in recent years over whether critical awareness or critical thinking can and should be promoted in EFL learning and teaching contexts. Participants in these discussions can generally be grouped into two broad schools of thought. The first school assumes that critical thinking is a uniquely Western or U.S. middle-class phenomenon and thus casts doubt on the prospects of success for critical thinking in the EFL classroom (Atkinson, 1997, 1998; Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996). The opposite school expands the definition of critical thinking to include what the critical literacy perspective embraces: "a thorough study and consideration of various viewpoints" (Benesch, 1999, p. 576) and suggests that critical
thinking can be taught through the encouragement of greater awareness (Gieve, 1998; Raimes & Zamel, 1997; Spack, 1997; Stapleton, 2001; Zamel, 1997). For example, Gieve (1998) counters Atkinson’s claim that critical thinking is a uniquely Western, by distinguishing monologic and dialogic critical thinking. He argues that while monologic critical thinking, on which U.S. skills-based school curricula are often based, is “defined by the informal logic movement” (p. 126), dialogic critical thinking is “a form of dialogical discourse in which the taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions that lie behind argumentation are uncovered, examined, and debated” (p. 125). Gieve adds that this type of thinking is a powerful tool for dissent across cultures and classes, not just in the West or among the middle class.

Besides conceptual debates revolving around critical thinking, the pedagogical feasibility of this construct has been the focus of a wave of studies in the field of L2 teaching. Despite Atkinson’s (1997, 1998) skepticism about the success of critical thinking in the EFL classroom, based on the lack of empirical confirmation of the transferability of critical thinking skills, there are indeed empirical indications that critical thinking can be applied with encouraging results in EFL contexts. In a recent study, Stapleton (2001) attempted to access critical thinking in the writing of Japanese EFL university students. The author notes that his Japanese participants displayed critical thinking by demonstrating a fundamental understanding in their English writing that opinions require support, that reasons need to be backed up with proof of some sort, and that clear voice supported by reasoning is desirable. Benesch (1999) also presents an example of dialogic critical thinking, showcasing a discussion event that took place in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading class. She argues that critical thinking can and should be taught through the encouragement of greater awareness. It follows that promoting critical awareness is feasible in an EFL classroom as long as EFL educators see their one of important instructional goals as helping students develop their abilities to deal with personal and social issues in their everyday lives, to find out how things are happening, and to keep posing questions about the why.

4. Dealing with Issues of Power in the EFL Classroom

In the mid-1980s, the notion of empowerment surfaced in literacy studies (Lankshear, 1997). Gee (1996) distinguishes “dominant literacies” from “powerful literacies,” and asserts that these literacies empower individuals in different ways. That is, dominant literacies are language uses that can empower people by providing privileged access to social goods and benefits. To some extent, the use of dominant literacies emphasizes individuals’ acquisition of social conventions. However, powerful literacies could empower individuals by affording learners meta-language ability with which to understand, analyze, and criticize dominant literacies. Gee then explains
that meta-language ability provides the basis for reconstituting individuals’ identity and restituting the self within society, which is an ultimate goal of critical literacy. Following Gee, if we see L2 critical literacy goals as helping students design social futures and negotiate their multiple identities by promoting critical meta-language awareness as illustrated above, an important question remains: Is it possible to achieve those goals in EFL classroom contexts? Several researchers suggest that what makes the attainment of such goals difficult is the distribution of power and that the attainment of critical literacy goals can be achieved only if power issues are addressed (Mckay; 1993; Pennycook, 1999; Stucky, 1991).

Dealing with the issues of power could well start by examining the “culture of silence” of the oppressed (Freire, 1970, p. 12). In Freire’s view, the oppressed are not marginals, and are not people living outside society. Rather, they have always been inside – inside a structure which made them “beings for others.” While it is true that we cannot acknowledge all the absent and silent individuals, they must be present somehow, and their voices should be heard. Absence and silence, after all, suggest “an emptiness, a void to be filled, a wound to be healed, a flaw to be repaired” (Greene, 1993, p. 14). From Freire and Greene’s perspective, the solution is not to promote the mechanical learning of reading and writing skills while sacrificing the critical analysis of the social structure of oppression, but to transform that structure to encourage “being for themselves.”

In fact, concerns have already arisen about models that focused on native speaker proficiency as the norm in the field of L2 learning and teaching. Spack (1997) and Zamel (1997) point out that models focusing on the language product failed to consider the learning processes, social context, and individual variables in which the L2 was learned and used. Their contention is that in order to empower L2 students, teachers need to open themselves to alternative meanings and alternative possibilities rather than focusing on one-dimensional monological models of language learning and teaching.

One way to do so might be by recognizing and respecting various forms of cultural capital that EFL students bring to the classroom, seriously engaging them for learning and teaching purposes, and encouraging them to create meaning for themselves among conflicting discourses in the classroom. Considerable research seems to support this claim, suggesting that teachers should capitalize fully on the many strengths students bring into their classroom (e.g., McCarty et al, 1991; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Moll et al., 1992) and make the classroom into a kind of “contact zone” where students connect their own life experiences to larger, oppressive social patterns (Pratt, 1991). Kramsch (1993) pictures such L2 classrooms as sites of struggle where learners create their own personal meanings at the boundaries between the native speaker’s meanings and their own everyday lives: “From the clash between the familiar meanings of the native culture and the unexpected meanings of the target culture, meanings that were taken for
granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized" (p. 238). It might be argued that to overcome the barriers of exclusion posed by conventional literacy practices, teachers must work with an expanded vision of critical literacy in the EFL classroom, so that the classroom becomes a place where both teachers and students continually challenge the status quo, especially in terms of how the students use "literacy as a tool for inquiry and thinking" and enrich their learning with new issues, activities, and questions (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994, p. 451).

In sum, a critical literacy perspective will open up a space to move away from the predominant view of EFL education in terms of the technical details of language acquisition, reading and writing, and so forth. Instead, a much broader view emerges that emphasizes the need (a) to understand the changing face of the world, especially in terms of the variety of Englishes and shifting media literacies; (b) to help students affirm and even celebrate their multiple identities that are constructed in a contact zone; (c) to help develop abilities and awareness in students that enable them to reflect critically on the word and the world; and (d) to empower students with a practice that challenges unequal power relations.

IV. A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FROM A CRITICAL LITERACY PERSPECTIVE

In discussing the various ways in which the critical literacy perspective informs EFL literacy teachers in the previous section, we have argued that the task of teaching literacy in EFL goes beyond the teaching of skills in decoding and encoding. We have also suggested that the role of teachers in helping students develop pride in who they are and who they will be, as well as improving academic skills, is critical to developing alternative social relations between people. Having discussed some of the implications of critical literacy for EFL classrooms, we now want to propose more concrete curricular guidelines for how EFL teachers might implement critical literacy in their classrooms. In what follows, therefore, we will suggest a pedagogical framework for critical literacy. In proposing our framework, we will draw on several models suggested by Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999), Cummins (2000), New London Group (1996), Pennycook (1999), and Wallace (1992). However, because these models are mostly discussed in light of ESL settings (with the exception of Wallace's model which focuses on the EFL classroom), we will of necessity carefully select and adapt some of the key features of the models to achieve a workable pedagogy that can be made accessible to EFL teachers. One should note that critical literacy practices do not necessarily deal with only heavy-handed issues or take a negative stance toward what we are reading and writing about. Rather, it implies looking at things from multiple perspectives and analyzing and reflecting on them with an eye
toward finding an opening space for potential changes or improvements. We here argue that critical literacy practices based on this premise is applicable to all levels of literacy education in this regard. It is our hope that EFL teachers can further reformulate the framework to respond appropriately to their own teaching contexts.

1. Focus on Situated Meaningful Practices

As a starting point in implementing critical literacy in the EFL classroom, the teacher focus first and foremost on meaning or messages in his/her English instruction by helping the students obtain comprehensible input through extensive reading and understand what they read. The focus of meaning component, however, must move beyond simple literal comprehension. Students should learn to read between the lines, that is, to understand not only what is said but also whose perspectives are represented and whose have been excluded in the text and how power is exercised through various forms of discourse such as advertisements, political rhetoric, and textbooks (Cummins, 2000).

In order to illustrate how reflective critical reading of texts may work in the EFL classroom, we want to here introduce Wallace’s (1992) critical procedures of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. In the critical pre-reading tasks, the teacher can encourage the students not only to give their personal opinion about the topic but also to think of why the topic has been selected in the first place. In the critical while-reading tasks, the teacher can ask the following questions to help raise awareness of the ideology of texts: (1) Why is this topic being written about? (2) How is the topic being written about? In addition, the teacher can encourage the students to consider a whole range of ways of continuing a text, not just the most probable ones. Furthermore, teachers can ask them to generate their own questions of any text rather than reading to find the answers to given questions. In post-reading tasks, teachers can ask students to think about in what other ways the text could have been written. By answering this question, the students can be made more aware of which options were and were not taken up.

We believe that in order for this kind of meaning-focused learning to possibly occur in the EFL classroom, the teacher must be aware that the students first need to be immersed in meaningful practices within a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences. With this awareness, the teacher needs to actively initiate his/her students into the given field of knowledge in which the targeted project is situated (e.g., the field of science, literature, social studies, and history). In doing so, the teacher can help the students move from everyday and common-sense of understanding of the field, toward understandings of specialized technical knowledge, and from there to more critical perspectives on the field. The work required on the part of both the teacher and the
students to establish a common knowledge base may include, for example, discussion of terminology and its application to diagrams, flowcharts, and cloze comprehension exercises (Hammond & Macken-Horark, 1999). Toward this end, the teacher should strive for diverse representations in classrooms and materials. Allowing students to identify with various texts and roles and thus broadening the scope of choices is an important step toward a transformative pedagogy. For example, in presenting materials for reading, the teacher can purposefully select materials that feature fewer white families and more single-parent families, people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and different physical conditions.

2. Focus on Language

After initial work in establishing meaning-based practices by exposing the students to a variety of texts of the given field and promoting reflective critical reading of the texts, the teacher needs to deliberately teach the language of the given field of study by providing a systematic introduction to a functional meta-language, which ranges from discussions of the choice (and function) of technical and other vocabulary items in texts, to the importance of headings and subheadings in organizing written texts, to the significance of specific ways of using punctuation, to patterns of rhetorical organization and grammar in the given text. The teacher, at this point, should provide very strong scaffolding for the students. That is, the teacher needs to actively engage in constructive interventions that scaffold learning activities that allow the students to focus on the important features of their experiences and activities. Moreover, the teacher needs to allow the students to gain explicit information about the language used in the activities, building on and recruiting what the student already knows and has accomplished. In short, the goal here is conscious awareness and control over what is being learned on the part of the student. Thus, at this stage, the teacher needs to find an instructional space for the students to develop language awareness, which includes not just formal aspects of the language (English grammar, phonics, and so on), but also critical inquiry into issues of language and power. In this regard, we find Cummins’ (2000) suggestion for critical language awareness very helpful. Modifying Cummins’ activities which were targeted for ESL learners, we suggest the following activities to promote EFL students’ critical language awareness: (1) students can carry out research on the status of different varieties of language (e.g., colloquial language versus formal “standard” language) and explore critically why one form is considered by many educators and the public to be “better” than the other; (2) students can also research issues such as code switching and the functions it plays within their own lives and their local communities; or (3) students can analyze letters to the editor on controversial issues such as the role of English in globalization and examine how the language used in these letters positions and potentially
privileges one variety of language over the others. These activities will encourage EFL students to discuss ideological positioning that any language assumes and thus introduce a critical dimension to a classroom.

We believe that as Wallace (1992) suggests, one advantage which many EFL students may have over L1 students is that they know about grammar. They have a metalanguage, a way of talking about texts which native speakers often lack. Some of the traditional terms such as 'pronoun', 'subject and object' and 'active and passive voice' can therefore be drawn upon in performing the suggested activities. It means that this knowledge can be put to use in looking not just at propositional content but ideological assumptions. Rather than just focusing on form for its own sake, as in traditional language and reading exercises, students can do so to gather evidence for the text's ideological positioning.

In what follows, we will present one concrete example of how this kind of metalanguage discussion might work in promoting EFL students' critical engagement with the language itself. We will draw on Wallace's (1992) framework, which used Hallidayan grammar as a basis for discussing a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

In reading and discussing a particular text (e.g., newspaper article), the teacher can ask the students to focus on Hallidayan categories of field, tenor, and mode. In the category of field (indicative of experiential meanings – how the writer describes what is going on), the teacher can ask the following questions: (1) What/who is talked about?; (2) How is X talked about? (i.e., what adjectives or nouns collocate with X and what verbs co-occur with X?); and (3) what/who initiates an action?

In exploring tenor (indicative of interpersonal meanings – how the writer indicates attitude to self, subject and reader), the students can try to answer the following questions: (1) What mood (affirmative, imperative or interrogative) is selected when the writer refers to self, subjects, and reader?; (2) What kinds of modal verbs are selected?; and (3) What personal pronouns are selected?

In examining mode (indicative of textual meanings – how the content of the text is organized?), the students can think of the following questions: (1) what information is selected for first position?; (2) when is active or passive voice selected?; and (3) what kinds of connectors are used?

By offering the students this kind of framework in reading and discussing a text, we strongly believe that the students will begin to think of the roles of texts and readers in more critical reflective ways. There will be a developing awareness that even authoritative texts, such as newspapers, are ideologically loaded, and a more clearly articulated awareness of social influences on the interpretation of texts.
3. Focus on Transformed Practice

At the final stage, the teacher now needs to help students actively use their growing mastery of knowledge in practice (from Focus on Meaningful Practices) and conscious control over the language (from Focus on Language) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice. Here, the teacher must take a crucial step to help students to denaturalize and make strange again what they have learned and mastered, constructively critique it, and eventually innovate on their own, within old communities and in new ones. That is, the teacher needs to help students to return to the starting point – Situated Meaningful Practices, with the goal of transforming the old practices.

For that purpose, with the students, the teacher should develop ways in which the students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values (New London Group, 1996). We believe that project work can be incorporated in order to facilitate the transformed practice. Throughout the project work, teachers will be able to provide students many opportunities to express themselves such as their identities and intelligence through the language. The focus should be on students’ authentic use of language such as generating new knowledge, creating literature and art, and acting on social realities. In order to motivate such language use, there should ideally be an authentic audience (real or imagined) that encourages two-way communication in both oral and written modes. In this regard, the teacher can employ various project activities: research projects, text projects, correspondence projects, survey projects, and encounter projects. Research projects involve gathering information through library research. In the case of text projects, the activities include encountering with various texts, such as literature, reports, news, media, video and audio material, or computer-based information. Correspondence projects encompass communication with individuals to solicit information through letters, faxes, phone calls, or electronic mail. Survey projects require creating a survey instrument, collecting, and analyzing data. Encounter projects entail face-to-face contact with people inside as well as outside the classroom (Stoller, 1997). Through the project-based classroom activities, students can critically inquire, share, and negotiate their ideas with peers and a teacher, rather than merely receiving information from the teacher. Indeed, project activities have been successfully utilized in EFL classrooms in Pakistan (Sarwar, 2001) as well as in ESL classrooms in Canada (Turnbull, 1999). They both assert that the project-based work promotes students’ involvement in the classroom, and high achievement in target language learning.

At this final stage of transformed practice, the teacher should help raise students’ awareness that questions of difference, identity, and culture are not merely issues to discuss but pertain to
how people have come to be as they are and how discourses have structured people's lives. That is, the students should be brought to an awareness that questions of gender or race are not simply alternative representations or social issues in EFL, but are a way of thinking and a way of learning. Therefore, what we expect from our students is not "the predictable results of mastery" but "the unpredictable effects of a changed relationship to our histories and desires" (Pennycook, 1999, p. 340). This final stage of transformed practice would become even more crucial in today's EFL educational settings as speakers of English are increasingly using the language less as an object of foreign study and more as an additional language of their own to have an impact on and change the world in the 21st century.

In this section, we have proposed a pedagogical framework for promoting critical literacy in EFL classrooms. As we have explained above, this framework can be employed in various manners in accordance to various teaching contexts. Critical literacy practices are not necessarily associated with only heavy-handed issues. Moreover, the practices do not necessarily mean taking a negative stance toward what we are reading and writing about. Rather, it implies looking at things from multiple perspectives and analyzing and reflecting on them with an eye to find an opening space for potential changes or improvements. We here argue that more critical literacy practices need to be done in EFL settings so that the students should be able to critically reflect on and challenge many taken-for-granted assumptions English texts convey both explicitly and implicitly. In doing so, the students will ultimately be able to empower themselves while reinterpreting, reconstructing, and transforming the given texts.

V. CONCLUSION

Robinson and Stock (1991) have rightly pointed out that while English teachers appear to agree that students have a right to critical literacy, too many educators are content to allow such literacy to go unrecognized, and too many are content to blame others for making students into "the marginal." They further argue that rather than accepting the status quo as inevitable, self-transforming teachers can and should make important changes in the lives of their students. However, we are acutely aware that it is not an easy task at all to practice what critical literacy perspective asks of us: understanding the changing face of the world, especially in terms of the variety of world Englishes and shifting media literacies; helping our students celebrate their multiple identities; helping develop abilities and awareness in our students that enable them to reflect critically on the word and the world; and empowering students by challenging unequal power relations.

Meanwhile, a number of countries try to change their educational system, but such changes
are not always desirable (Warschauer, 2000). Holliday (1992) explains this social phenomenon as "tissue rejection"; the notion is taken from cases in which an organ transplant fails because it is not accepted by a host. She mentions that the phenomenon of tissue rejection is common in ELT when there is insufficient communication between new project managers and host institutions. For example, if the new instruction leaps too far from the previous experience, local teachers would formulate an alternative hidden curriculum, and continue what they were doing before.

In Korea, it is a reality that even though CLT and other innovative teaching practices are advocated, many localized classrooms still study for the tests such as university entrance exams. At the same time, teachers should design their classroom within the boundaries placed by their institution; narrowly specified curricula, texts, and resources, which makes it even more challenging for the teachers to practice critical literacy we have suggested in this article.

However, here we are not looking for sweeping changes and monumental efforts toward critical engagement. Instead we might view our role in the classroom as a trickle-down effect. If we are able to empower just a few students each year to "read" their own lives, develop their own opinions, and respond in meaningful ways, we will have affected a considerable number of individuals during the course of our careers. While classroom assignments that superficially attempt to engage students in critical literacy – such as current-events essays, letters to the editor, taking-a-stand papers, and the like – can quickly become decontextualized and formulaic in classrooms, a thorough and consistent pedagogical approach to critical literacy as suggested in this article may substantially change the ways students read texts and respond on their own. This kind of work should help students develop a critical self-awareness of their relation to the world.

We want to conclude this article by conveying Kumaravadivelu's (2001) words. He suggests that in order to make important changes in the lives of their students, teachers themselves must be encouraged and empowered to these possibilities by critically reflecting on their own social conditions and obligations. That is, language teachers cannot hope to fully satisfy their pedagogical obligations without at the same time satisfying their social obligations. Self-transforming teachers will be able to reconcile these seemingly competing forces if they achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality.

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