Chapter 12: Introducing a Critical Pedagogical Curriculum: A Feminist, Reflexive Account

Angel M. Y. Lin

<A>   Introduction

The body of this chapter is divided into three main parts. In the first part, I describe a teacher-educator's (my own) attempt to develop an MATESL course with the aim to introduce critical pedagogical practices to a group of in-service primary and secondary school English teachers in Hong Kong. In the second part, I look back at the course and what seems to have transpired during the course and reflexively analyze and discuss the difficulties, frustrations, as well as some instances of success experienced. In the third part, I discuss some inherent contradictions of critical pedagogy as delineated in the poststructuralist feminist literature and echoed in my own experience and explore future possibilities and ways of doing critical pedagogies without assuming universal, foundational subject positions.

<A>   Part I

                    Naming and Introducing Critical Courses into an MATESL
                    Program: Sites of Negotiation and Strategic Compromise

Like most MATESL[1] programs elsewhere, the existing structure of the MATESL program at the City University of Hong Kong does not have critical pedagogy explicitly laid out as one of its aims or core components. Last year, however, a few colleagues started to propose and build critical elements into a Year 1 core course: Understanding Classroom Practices. In program committee meetings, colleagues debated the name of the course and decided to give it a broader, more general name ("Understanding Classroom Practices") although it was understood that the course would also have as one of its aims the raising of students' critical consciousness about antiracist, sexist, and classist issues in TESOL. I can understand why many of my colleagues consider a general, mainstream name to be safer and more acceptable: Both staff and students have concerns about possible misunderstandings that can be induced by a nonmainstream name in the Hong Kong context, where critical pedagogy is a seldom-heard-of term and where few teacher-educators and students seem to know what it means apart from some radical connotations (and some unease, given the local cultural traditions)[2] that

the word *critical* seems to carry. A telling piece of evidence can be seen in a staff-student consultative meeting. When this new proposed course was discussed, a student representative misunderstood "critical" as behaving in an impolite and difficult way and remarked that her classmates might not want to do such a course. While Elizabeth Ellsworth (1992) succeeded in naming the political agenda behind her course by naming it "Media and Anti-Racist Pedagogies," it seems that in the Hong Kong context, any culturally "dirty" word (e.g., critical, often taken to mean disturbing harmony by creating dissent) has to be strategically concealed under a mainstream, "neutral" or instrumental, technical name (e.g., "Understanding Classroom Practices") so as to be acceptable and not scare students away.

Since the Year 2 students would not have a chance to take the above-mentioned new Year 1 course, and because it so happened that 15 Year 2 students signed up for my Year 2 elective course, "Language, Culture, and Education," I decided to try to develop a critical pedagogical curriculum in this course. While one might charge that I tried to smuggle in critical pedagogical elements into an otherwise "ordinary" MATESL course, I would rather describe the situation in a somewhat different manner. Traditional ways of dealing with issues of language, culture, and education tend to reproduce dominant cultural, linguistic, and educational notions and practices as neutral and unproblematic and, in this way, conceal relations of domination and subordination in the schooling system and the pedagogy of language teaching. I saw a course on language, culture, and education as an ideal site for interrogating our commonsensical notions about language, culture, and education as well as their interrelations. To me, at the time, I set out to attempt to do what Freire (1968, 1973) called "conscientization" and "re-experiencing the ordinary," what Michael Apple called "interruption of common sense," "relational analysis," and "destabilization of authoritative discourse" (Apple, 1999), what Giroux (as cited in Gore, 1993, p. 35) advocated-- "to both constitute and reorder the nature of our experiences and the objects of our concerns so as to both enhance and further empower the ideological conditions for a radical democracy," or what Dean called "the restive problematization of the given" (as cited in Pennycook, 1999, p. 343).

The teachers in the course were from a cohort of 23 second year students in a two-year part-time evening program--MATESL (Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language) at the City University of Hong Kong. In the first semester of their second (and final) year, they had to take one compulsory core course ("Assessment in TESL") and two elective courses. A list of elective courses are put up every year, and if more than eight students signed up for a course, then the course will likely be offered. The courses with the highest student enrollment which were therefore offered this year were: "Activating Creative Texts," "English for Specific Purposes," and "Language, Culture, and Education."

In the first meeting of the course, I asked the students why they had signed up for this course and what their expectations for this course were. Many said that they had not read the course description and had just guessed from the course title "Language, Culture, and Education" that the course was about these three topics which they were interested in. Some said that they thought it was similar to the core course I taught in the immediately preceding semester, "The Social Context of Language Teaching," and felt that they would want to do something along similar lines. Because they could still change their electives within the first two weeks of the semester, I felt that I needed to make it explicit to them what this course was about so that they could decide whether they still wanted to take the course or not. I distributed and explained the course outline, detailing the course objectives, weekly topics and readings, basic texts, and types of assignment for the course (see Appendix for excerpts from the course outline). I explicitly stressed that they should change to another elective if the course was not what they were interested in or expected. I did so because I felt that for the course to be successful, some matching of students' and instructor's expectations was crucial, especially in the Hong Kong context where chances are that my students had never before come across any course which required them to critically interrogate long-accepted, taken-for-granted notions about language, culture, and education. It turned out that in the second meeting 5 out of 15 students had changed to another elective, and I was left with 10 willing students, all female, in my class. I was pleased to have a smaller group of students for I felt that the atmosphere would be more cozy and there would be more opportunities and time for each student to speak up in class discussions. The remaining students also seemed to be the ones who seemed to have already developed a trusting relationship with me in an immediately preceding course ("The Social Context of Language Teaching"). I sensed that they seemed to find me friendly, sincere, and helpful, and would feel comfortable working with me.

To be honest, I felt both excited and nervous about setting out to develop a critical pedagogical curriculum in an MATESL course for this was the first time such a course was ever run in Hong Kong, as far as I knew. It would seem from the above paragraphs that I had a good beginning with the course and that the course was likely to run smoothly to its end. However, as reflexively and critically discussed in the next section, I experienced some dilemmas and the students seemed to have experienced some difficulties. The discussion is based on three main sources of data, apart from my reflections: (a) course materials and students' writings, (b) a diary I kept after each meeting, and (c) informal discussion about the course with two students after the end of the course.

<A>   Part II
                    Difficulties, Frustrations, and Some (Limited) Successes

In this section, I shall discuss the difficulties, dilemmas, and frustrations experienced in the course under two main themes: (a) brokering the difficult academic language of critical pedagogical texts, and (b) dealing with pessimism and frustration that critical consciousness, alone, cannot overcome. Under each of the headings, I shall also describe some (limited) successes and some possible future strategies to deal with the problems despite the difficulties.

<B> *Helping Students to Cope with the Academic Language*

To develop a critical curriculum around the themes of language, culture, and education, I chose James Paul Gee's book "Social Linguistics and Literacies" (1996) as a basic text for the course for four reasons. First, I felt that his concepts and discourse analytic methods (e.g., notions of primary and secondary discourses, social languages, language as design resources, cultural models, and situated meanings) could offer some useful conceptual tools for a sociopolitical analysis of the language and education situation in Hong Kong. Second, his text covers the themes of language, culture, and education. Third, I had found his text to be the most readable among other critical pedagogical texts and I felt that the book was intended for use with undergraduate or postgraduate students. Lastly, no local book of a similar nature is available. I had also thought of using a collection of articles instead of a book. However, I felt that James Gee's theories about language and literacies and his discourse analytic examples could provide my students with a coherent set of initial tools to do their own analysis of the situation in Hong Kong. I therefore felt that understanding and then learning to use his tools would provide a good initial focal point of the course. Given the short duration of the course (only 14 meetings), I assigned only four main chapters from the book (Chapters 4-7) and supplemented the chapters with two articles, one about Hong Kong English language education by myself (Lin, 1999) and one about the cultural incompatibility of the communicative language teaching approach in China (Ouyang, 2000). Due to limited time towards the end of the course, I found that I had to skip my own article and thus, the students had altogether read Gee's four chapters and Ouyang's article in "Anthropological and Educational Quarterly."

In the second meeting, students expressed that they had difficulties reading and understanding Gee's writing. They said his writing was dense and that they could only read it very slowly and still felt that they did not understand much of it, thus making the whole reading process very frustrating. This came as a surprise to me as I had not realized that my students, albeit being students at the Master's level, had been out of academia for some time and their previous undergraduate training had not apprenticed them in the specialized academic language of scholars/researchers in my field. Also, since this was the first time they had ever come across Gee's critical concepts about language and literacies, they had little background to help them to crack the new concepts.

I was worried and had some soul-searching reflections after the second meeting. Should I continue to ask them to read Gee's chapters? Should I rewrite Gee's writings to make the concepts more accessible to them--i.e., doing linguistic and conceptual brokering? I also felt guilty about not having been sensitive enough early on to realize that what I found "readable" and "easy to understand" myself was actually quite frustrating for my students who had come from different training backgrounds and positions. I said to myself, "Yes, I believe that introducing Gee's concepts to them is important because it will give them some analytic tools to do their own analysis later on in their critical analysis projects, and I've got to find ways of making Gee's concepts more easy to understand and relevant to their daily experiences."

I therefore designed some study questions to help them to focus on some key concepts and arguments in each of Gee's chapters. At the beginning of each subsequent meeting, I went through the guiding questions, explaining in advance (i.e., before they went home to do the reading) the key concepts and arguments in that chapter. When I explained Gee's concepts and arguments, I drew on students' familiar experiences in the Hong Kong context to illustrate Gee's concepts.

For instance, to illustrate Gee's notions of *primary and secondary discourses*, I drew on the example of new immigrant students from mainland China and elicited from the class what they had observed about the learning styles, manners, and cultures of these students in their schools. I then asked them to articulate the kinds of learning and speaking styles, manners, and cultures acceptable in their schools. My students could relate to this example easily and were eager to contribute their observations to the discussion. Then I drew their attention to the discrepancies between the indigenous speaking and learning styles of the new immigrant students (e.g., speaking up freely in class without raising their hands to get their teacher's nomination to speak first) and those acceptable to the schools as the discrepancies between the immigrant students' primary discourse and the school's discourse (the secondary discourse) which the new immigrants must pick up to be successful in school. I then asked the class to suggest ways of helping these immigrant students to cross the gap between their primary and secondary discourses without labeling or judging them as "poorly-behaved" students, as some Hong Kong teachers had. I was relieved to see that the class discussion was animated by these examples drawn from their familiar contexts.

From that time onwards, I tried my best to find examples from the local context to explain and illustrate Gee's concepts in his chapters. I could see my students' lit-up facial expressions and verbal responses whenever I engaged them in discussions involving local, familiar examples. In my diary after each class, I revisited the concepts and my ways of explaining them and tried to think of better examples and ways of explaining them if I were to do this again. In my informal

discussions with two students after the end of the course, both of them said that using the study questions and explaining the concepts in advance had helped them to read and understand Gee's chapters.

Critically reflecting on this experience in the class, I started to realize what Apple (1999) said about how critical pedagogues have established their own field and own capital. For instance, to publish (and to survive in universities) one has to use the specialized language of that field. Critical pedagogues who are adept in this academic game might find it difficult to shift between registers when talking to school teachers, and, thus, their theories run the risk of "talking over their heads." The institutional job appraisal requirements and constraints imposed on academics and teacher-educators often make it an unrewarded (i.e., not to say it is unrewarding, but just that it is often not rewarded by tertiary institutes) extra effort on the part of even critical pedagogic academics to develop a nonacademic, teacher-friendly language to relay their theories to teachers to whom their theories purport to be important. This explains why it is difficult to find a critical pedagogy book which is intended for, and written in a language accessible to, schoolteachers. Moreover, teacher-educators working outside of North American academic circles need to further contextualize the critical pedagogy theories in their respective local contexts. I realize that if I am to run the course again next year, I have to develop and write my own course readings for my students to arouse their interest in critical pedagogy (and I will need to find extra time to do this albeit being fully aware that this effort will not be rewarded by my institute in my annual appraisal as this does not count towards my journal publications). Although I can continue to do linguistic and conceptual brokering in class (i.e., annotating foreign texts with local examples), much more valuable class time can be saved for discussions if the readings are more accessible to the teachers so that the teachers can come to class already familiar with the concepts and analytic tools. I must also hurry, after writing the above, to point out that I am not academia-bashing, but I think academics need to be more reflexive and recognize the different language games we are engaged in, like it or not. We need to realize that our own critical pedagogic writings are themselves situated in a political institutional context.

There might be a counter-argument that we must not encourage teachers to be "anti-intellectual" and so we need to encourage schoolteachers to read original critical texts and to learn the academic language to train their mind to be more critical. However, I think that such an argument runs the risk of naturalizing academic texts, claiming that they embody some universally superior forms of rationality or ways of knowing (and that those forms really exist). Schoolteachers, unlike academics, are situated in a different social field where different kinds of capital count (e.g., the ability to use daily life examples to explain concepts). Academic language is just one way of knowing and speaking, among others. The

discourses of critical pedagogy theorists, like those authoritative discourses which they critique, are themselves likely to run the risk of becoming authoritative discourses themselves in relation to schoolteachers whom they often purport to set out to empower (Ellsworth, 1992). So, even as I am writing this chapter now, I am reflexively aware of the difficulty of walking the thin line between academic texts and readable texts intended for in-service or pre-service teachers. The reader will notice that I deliberately violate some academic writing conventions--e.g., using "I" often, adopting a more conversational tone, and even referring to my own personal feelings. I hope, in doing this chapter, to achieve the goal of contesting dominant academic writing conventions, showing that it is possible to address complex theoretical issues using a language familiar to schoolteachers.

However, overcoming the frustrating texts is just a first step. Achieving critical consciousness, albeit advocated by critical theorists as the first step towards liberation, can result in pessimism and helplessness, especially in political and working contexts where the room for democratic contestation and alternative practices is limited. Hong Kong presents an example of such contexts. It is to this topic that I am turning in the next section.

<B> *Dealing With Pessimism and Frustration That Critical Consciousness, Alone, Cannot Overcome*

While achieving a critical consciousness of the relations of domination and reproduction in the schooling system and one's position and implication in it has been a common goal in critical pedagogy, how to move from criticism to substantive vision (Giroux, 1988, as cited in Gore, 1993, p. 34) and from substantive vision to substantive action geared towards change is an unanswered question, at least in contexts where the political system is far from democratic, where teachers' unions are underdeveloped, and labor relations in the schools are lopsidedly unfavorable to teachers, such as in the situation of Hong Kong.

For instance, at the beginning of the third meeting of the course, I noticed that some students were sighing and groaning to one another about the oppressive administrative measures they experienced in their respective schools. I therefore started the class by asking the students to talk about their difficulties. One after another, they complained about the arbitrary and absolute power of their school principals, about how teachers were treated with disrespect, how they were asked to perform duties which they found abhorrent (e.g., in one school, teachers are asked by the school principal to check students' uniforms at the school entrance), how they were monitored (e.g., their marked compositions are checked to see if they have made any errors and whether they have marked each single mistake in students' compositions), how little autonomy they have about what to teach, and how the school principals are only concerned about putting up a superficial good school image to the public (e.g., the parents) and do not really care about the education of students. And when it came to Emily's[3] turn to talk about her school,

she was so full of grievances that soon she switched to Cantonese (from English) to pour out more freely what she had to say about her school. She seemed to have wanted to have some sympathetic ears to her grievances for a long, long time. She sighed and talked about how her school had imported a management and quality assurance system from the business sector. In order to meet the standard of "ISO" (International Standardization Organization), the school has implemented a number of quality assurance procedures to make sure that the teaching staff's performance is up to an objectively defined standard. The procedure operates in terms of quantification of work (e.g., setting a minimum number of different types of assignments each week) and regular inspection of teachers' marked assignments. There are also frequent seminars and discussion meetings. Although Emily thought that these should have been good for them, too many of them added to the workload of teachers, who simply found it difficult to cope with all these activities and requirements of the schools' management system.

I tried to relate Emily's school situation to the notion of the colonization of education by capitalist, globalized business, and management discourses. Capitalizing on the example of Emily's school, I tried to illustrate how contemporary education is under the risk of colonization by business ideologies which make teachers' lives unnecessarily difficult without actually improving the quality of students' education. While this theoretical delineation might seem elegant to me, my students did not seem to be particularly interested in the theories. They seemed to be totally consumed by a sense of frustration and helplessness as they stand to lose their jobs if anyone dared to speak up against the management. In the context of Hong Kong, school principals have great power over teachers, who have little bargaining power, and any effective unionization has so far been unsuccessful (partly due to the acquired helplessness of many teachers and partly due to the fact that school principals do have the power to find excuses to fire teachers who are active in unionizing or organizing any collective contestation). At that moment, I felt a strong sense of frustration myself as I felt that I failed to connect a critical analysis of their situation to any substantive vision or action strategies that might work towards changing their situation. While James Gee's analytic tools of discourses might help them to do a social analysis of their situation, it seems to fall short of helping them to see any practical way out.

What the teachers in my class and, in fact, in Hong Kong, face is a situation similar to that of the intensification of teachers' work and the centralization of the curriculum in the U.S. described by Apple (1999). The capitalist, globalized management discourses of "value-addedness," "quality assurance," and "standardization" have inserted themselves into Hong Kong's education discourses and justified or intensified the dehumanizing, deprofessionalizing, and deskilling working conditions for teachers, the majority

of whom are females who often also have their families to take care of apart from their jobs. While Emily's school administration takes pride in getting for their school the status of "ISO," an indicator of objectified quality assurance, the school's teachers are overworked and cannot see how the quality of education is linked to such management practices.[4]

After the third meeting, I could not help feeling frustrated and unconvinced about the potential usefulness of critical pedagogy and critical sociological analysis, and I recorded in my diary that while the theories I cited might have helped the teachers to see the sources of their oppression under the current school administration system, they remain just that. This reminded me of what Carrington and Luke (1997) said of the need to go beyond critical pedagogy to have a broader "public pedagogy":

> …. the challenges of convincing employers, politicians and the public of the persistent need for the equitable distribution of resources, nondiscriminatory access and fairness in the social institutions of work, government and community life [remain]. Such a project would need to be part of a broader "public pedagogy" (C. Luke, 1996) incumbent on us all. (p. 110)

However, in the context of Hong Kong where a democratic political system is not yet in place and where civil disobedience as a way of contesting socially unjust policies and pushing for more democracy is often met with police disciplinary actions and prosecutions, teachers are, in general, silenced and have acquired a sense of helplessness and sometimes even indifference. Doing critical pedagogy in such a context is frustrating and doing public pedagogy might put oneself in danger.

To be honest, I was caught up in this sense of frustration and helplessness myself, and, for some time, I could not continue the writing of this chapter because merely reflecting on how ineffective my critical curriculum was in the face of teachers' sufferings agonized and almost paralyzed me. What rescued me from such a depressing mode of thinking and helped me to see the value (albeit limited) of the critical curriculum I put into the course was the publication of the teachers' writings (i.e., their critical project reports in my course) in TESL-HK (A newsletter for English language teaching professionals in Hong Kong) and some of my students dropping by my office telling me how proud and happy they felt about the publication of their writings and the opportunity to voice their views and share them with other English teachers in Hong Kong. Below I shall give the reader some background of the TESL-HK project and how I integrated the course assignments with this project to provide an avenue for the teachers' voices to be heard in the local school community in Hong Kong.

In 1997, some colleagues and I started the publication of TESL-HK with a small teaching enhancement fund obtained from our university. This was the first nonprofit professional newsletter devoted to secondary school English teachers in Hong Kong (over 5000 copies sent to all secondary school English departments in Hong Kong). We also obtained some funding to develop a parallel website where one can download past and current issues of TESL-HK (http://www.tesl-hk.org; the interested reader can go to this website to see the sixth issue which contains articles written by students in the course). Over the years, we have been struggling with funding, but so far we have been able to publish the sixth issue in June 2001. Honestly, we do not know whether we can continue the publication under the current atmosphere of government budget cutting imposed on the universities and our own university's recent shifting emphasis on research more than community outreach. However, in my "Language, Culture, and Education" course, doing a critical analysis project and writing an article for TESL-HK based on the project were made into a major assignment (see Appendix for assignment structure). Three students in the course did a critical analysis of the sexist, racist, and classist stereotypes in English textbooks in Hong Kong. Another two students did a survey of teachers on teacher stress and their working conditions in schools. Other students did some interesting critical projects as well but due to the length of their reports I could not include all of them into the sixth issue of TESL-HK. It is my hope that I will obtain funding in the future to publish all their reports in a book for Hong Kong teachers. In the first meeting of the course, I explained to the students why I deviated from the traditional course assignment pattern, asking students to write for a wider audience (i.e., other Hong Kong English teachers) apart from the course instructor. I explained to the class that I hope the course could produce some actual useful products which could be shared with other Hong Kong teachers and that the aim of doing the assignments was not just intellectual training or an exercise, but also to make an impact in the local school community through our intellectual, analytic work.

It is true that just helping teachers to get their voices heard is still far from any substantive change in the oppressive system that teachers are still faced with in their everyday school life. However, it did give me hope when my students came back to say how happy they felt about seeing their articles reaching a wider audience. In their faces that radiated with assertive pride, confidence, and agency, I could see the value in introducing a critical curriculum in an MATESL course and connecting the assignments of that course to a community publication project. If, as academics, we are best with our words (not to say that we should not also be engaged in other forms of social movements and advocacy work), then I can see some hope in a critical and public pedagogy project that connects the production of "words" in an academic course to the production of active, defiant, assertive subject positions by teachers through writing their own words for a wider

audience in the local education community. On this rare occasion, for the first time, I witnessed the empowering effect of words produced by teachers, themselves, as agents analyzing their own situations and voicing their own views about the oppressive system in which they are caught and in which they have, for so long, felt so helpless. If more and more teachers can find their own ways of recreating their own subject positions (e.g., by substituting the helpless subject positions produced for them by the school system with new, confident, assertive subject positions that they, themselves, produced by drawing on some of the critical sociological analytic tools that a critical discourse might be able to provide them with), then I think there might be some value to such a discourse. I must also hurry to say that the above example is just one possible way among many and it would be arrogant to assume that using critical sociological tools advocated in critical pedagogy (and critical discourses) will always be the best way (Pennycook, 1999). It depends a lot on the local strategic work of social actors in specific contexts, not on a totalizing grand theory of liberation that critical pedagogy provides (Glass, 2001). This issue is connected to some of the theoretical problems of critical pedagogy--a discussion of which I am turning to below.

Amidst the limited successes experienced, there were nevertheless some troubling issues which resonate with some of the fundamental theoretical problems of critical pedagogy that poststructuralist feminist educators (Gore, 1993; Luke and Gore, 1992) pointed out nearly a decade ago. In the next section, I shall share with the reader my critical reflexive account of my own struggles and blunders in the course and what I have learnt from the process that might point to some possible ways of doing critical pedagogy without committing the errors of assuming universal, foundational subject positions or privileging certain forms of rationality and practices as necessarily always "higher" or more "liberating" than others.

<A>   Part III
        Some Contradictions in Critical Pedagogy: Poststructuralist Feminist
                              Perspectives
In this section, I shall organize my discussion along two issues: (a) dealing with the institutional power relations enacted and reproduced in the classroom, and (b) coping with the working conditions of female junior education workers--e.g., heavy daily workloads outside of the course both on the part of the instructor and students.

<B> *Dealing With the Institutional Power Relations Enacted and Reproduced in the Classroom*
I ran the course in the same way I had run other courses in the past five years as a teacher-educator. Reflecting on what transpired in the course, I realized that I had not been self-reflexive enough to realize that I had simply reproduced the

traditional forms of disciplinary power that I, myself, experienced as a student and then picked up and imposed on my students when I became a teacher and, later, a teacher-educator--all these done largely without much metareflective awareness. To me, for all these years, that was just a taken-for-granted way of "being a liberal teacher." My teaching style resembles that of many middle class liberal teachers. While I do not explicitly discipline students in class, I use indirect, equally coercive technologies of disciplinary power that many Chinese teachers have traditionally used (largely unreflectively because that was the way they were treated as students)--e.g., through producing arguments (or forms of discourse-knowledge) that have the power to impose "self-shame" that students internalize and exercise upon themselves when they violate the behavioral norms constructed in the arguments/discourse-knowledge (similar to Foucault's notion of "technologies of the self"). The agonizing irony is that all the time I was thinking of introducing a critical curriculum and providing my students with social analytic tools to critique forms of domination and subordination in the schooling system of Hong Kong, I had never for a moment during the course used those tools reflexively to critique my own implications in the reproduction of institutional power relations in my own classroom. I had not, in critical pedagogic terms, interrogated my own common sense regarding acceptable teaching styles--not until one of my students told me after the course in an informal chat about their feelings towards some aspects of my teaching style.

Tammy dropped by my office one day and I asked her to give me feedback on the course I taught in the previous semester. She told me quite candidly that although she and her classmates could understand my good intentions for them, they found some of my expectations rather unacceptable for mature students like them. For instance, I expected them to be punctual for my class. Tammy said that although they were teachers themselves and knew the importance of punctuality, they hoped that I could be more understanding since they had full-time jobs during the day, and sometimes it was difficult for them to make it to the class on time. Another source of their unease was with my expectation that they would do the assigned reading before coming to class. For one thing, Tammy said, they were overworked at school and, for another, they felt that James Gee's book chapters were too lengthy and they often could not find time to finish reading the whole assigned chapter. She suggested that I should assign a short excerpt as a core reading and let the rest of the chapter be an optional reading. Tammy also said that many of her classmates were afraid of my questioning them about the concepts of the assigned readings. She said if they had not managed to finish reading it and were unable to answer my questions, they would feel very embarrassed. Tammy said that these aspects of my teaching style were too much like those of secondary school teaching which they felt uncomfortable to be subjected to as they were not secondary school students.

I thanked Tammy for letting me know her classmates' and her own feelings towards my teaching style, of which I was so uncritical all along. I began to realize that I had, myself, long internalized these technologies of the self--I had always expected every student (whether secondary, undergraduate, or postgraduate students, and including myself) to live up to those norms of traditional Chinese teachers--e.g., to be punctual, to do the assigned readings so as to be able to benefit from the class, to answer teacher's questions about the readings so that the teacher can find out which concepts they have problems with, etc. I had reproduced the traditional institutional forms of disciplinary power in my own "critical" classroom.

I was agonized to learn of these blind spots in myself and it took me some time to resolve the conflicts between my students' perspectives and my own. On the one hand, I truly believed in what I did to be "good" for my students (but good only from my own perspective and according to the regime of truth I imposed: e.g., imposing all those expectations of self-disciplining mentioned by Tammy). On the other hand, Tammy and her classmates did have a valid point--they want to be treated as mature, responsible adults who are agents of their own learning and who can determine their own ways of learning. They had every right to resist being put into subject positions which were subordinate to my disciplinary power, like children who are subjected to their parents' disciplinary power. For some time, I had been so confused and agonized that I could not carry on with the writing of this chapter until I came across Gore's (1993) discussion on a similar topic. She (1993) pointed out that critical pedagogy (just like any other traditional or even progressive pedagogy) runs the risk of constituting a regime of truth and seems to lack a self-reflexive awareness of the hierarchical institutional power relations reproduced in the critical pedagogic classroom. Gore made the following suggestion:

> If indeed the institutionalization of pedagogy in schools and universities constrains attempts at radical pedagogies, then investigations of disciplinary power in various institutionalized and non-institutionalized pedagogical sites might identify specific alternative pedagogical practices which teacher-educators could attempt to integrate. Pedagogical sites outside of schooling institutions, such as voluntary women's groups and parenting, might successfully employ different practices and, at the same time, avoid effects of domination. (p. 148)

I would add that teacher-educators can openly invite their students to discuss and negotiate aspects of their teaching style. For instance, if I had the reflexive awareness to ask my students early on to discuss my ways of teaching in an open, receptive, and sincere manner, I might have been able to co-develop

alternative ways of teaching and learning with my students. This might not always resolve all conflicts of perspectives between instructor and students. Nevertheless, this will help to open up some discursive space in which ruptures of the current pedagogy (e.g., as embodied by the instructor) can be induced and new locally effective pedagogies can have a chance to develop. As Gore (1993) suggests, drawing on Foucault's notion of "spaces of freedom":

> Foucault (1988) wanted to identify "spaces of freedom" we can still enjoy. According to Foucault's analyses, there will always be regimes of truth and technologies of the self. The point of identifying spaces of freedom is not to escape all regimes and technologies, only current ones; to increase awareness of current regimes and technologies; to recognize that current regimes need not be as they are; to continually identify and squeeze into those spaces of freedom . . . . I would argue that a Foucauldian perspective establishes the instructional practices of pedagogy as an important site of investigation for radical educators, points to ways out of the pessimism often associated with poststructuralist positions (especially vis-à-vis its focus on specific power relations and technologies of the self in local contexts), and (despite arguments to the contrary) does not mandate rejecting visions of different societies, but proposes that *they get worked out locally*. (ibid., p. 156, italics added).

Gore's emphasis on the importance of working out, in local contexts, critical visions of alternative practices is echoed by Glass (2001) in a recent article:

> The aim is to retain the liberatory power of the critique of dehumanization while recognizing the malleability and contradictions of identity, embracing the uncertainties and varieties of reason in knowledge, and respecting the plural compelling conceptions of the good that can shape a just, democratic society. (p. 22)

While the above remarks sound like workable strategies, the constraining aspects of the working conditions of both myself (a junior female university academic then) and my students (junior female education workers in the schools) often leave little space for both instructor and students to have room for doing critical readings of, and reflections on, our own teaching and learning practices. The hectic day-to-day work of the semester often leaves us just enough time to stick to the daily routines to "survive the working day" without much room left for critical "conscientization" or self-interrogation. It is to a discussion of these dilemmas that I shall turn in the next section.

<B> *The Working Conditions of Junior Female Academics and Education Workers*

During that semester, I had 15 contact hours of teaching per week plus over 20 school visits to do over the term for supervision of students' practicums; I had over 200 lesson plans to read and give feedback on and I had three postgraduate research degree students and three undergraduate final-year projects to supervise. I also was Deputy Program Leader of the BATESL Program and had administrative duties. Of course, I still had my on-going research projects to manage and research reports and articles to write. I was under constant institutional pressure to produce research publications in high-ranking "international" (i.e., in reality, "U.S.") journals that have acceptance rates of only 15-17% and that have, until recently, been interested in publishing research studies situated mainly in North America. I had long working days and when my students came to my 6:30 p.m. classes after their full day's work in their schools, both the students and I were exhausted. Most of them had not had supper yet. I sometimes couldn't help wondering how critical we could afford to be when we even had to keep our bodies awake and functioning amidst all the work that we had for the day. The intensification of teachers' work and the deskilling of teachers due to this intensification (e.g., because teachers are so busy that they have to rely on routines and standardized textbooks) that Apple (1999) talked about ring very true in Hong Kong, not only at the secondary school level but also at the university level. However, what is often neglected in the critical pedagogy literature is the gendered pattern of the division of education labor.

At the university, the administration- and labor-intensive "practice-oriented" front-line courses such as "Practice Teaching" (supervision of students' practicums in schools) are coordinated and taught mainly by local female Chinese-English bilingual faculty members. The "theory-oriented" education courses are taught mainly by male, expatriate, English monolingual faculty members. There is a gendered division between *theory* and *practice* resulting in the female local faculty members having to bridge the gaps between the imported theories taught by their male expatriate colleagues and the local classroom realities that they have to help their students to deal with. Similarly, in the case of my students, they were largely female junior education workers in their respective schools working under the quantifying "quality assurance" management style with which their male school principals operate. Under such working conditions, both my students and myself found it difficult to engage in self-reflective journal diary keeping which is usually encouraged in critical courses.

To deal with the fatigue factor, I used a tape recorder to record my immediate reflections after each meeting as I was too physically exhausted to write. During the semester, I did not even have time to revisit my audiotaped diaries. As for the assignments for the course, early on, my students asked me to

reduce the number of assignments, which I did because I empathized with their difficulties. In the course, I also assigned an autobiography of one's language learning and teaching journey. I had not realized how difficult it was for busy teachers to sit down and to have some extended period of time to reflect on their language learning and teaching journey until, one day, a student dropped by my office and shared with me her feelings. She said she simply could not get her mind to wind down and have some quiet time to think and write about her past as a learner and teacher.

It seems extremely difficult for women to have the resources (e.g., time, energy, peace of mind, privacy free from interruption of family duties) to engage in critical pedagogic practices. This important aspect of reality faced daily by female education workers whether in schools or in universities has been a seldom-talked-of aspect in the critical pedagogy literature. By pointing out these difficulties faced by women in doing critical pedagogies, I hope to raise awareness among the academic circles of the gendered patterns of inequalities in the school as well as in university institutions. I also want to point out that simply producing a critical pedagogic academic literature without also finding ways to address and redress these forms of institutionalized gendered forms of domination in which critical pedagogy is implicated and embedded is a very big blind spot that needs to be overcome in the field.

<A>   Coda

In this last section of the chapter, I would like to share with the reader some of the psychological difficulties I experienced in writing up this critical reflexive account. I want to problematize my own personal experiences in critical reflexive work and I hope to arrive at some principled understanding of the intimate relation between knowledge and human interests and desires (Habermas, 1987). Contrary to my past experience in writing academic papers (which are largely nonreflexive; i.e., I researched and analyzed others, not myself), this time I felt an enormous amount of psychological negativities which almost paralyzed me and thus, I had to suspend writing for long periods of time to deal with them. Exposing one's own mistakes, conflicts, confusions, and dilemmas to the public through writing this critical reflexive account is not only an intellectual task, but also a political action, full of psychological and social risks. However, through learning from my mistakes and explorations in organizing a critical curriculum in an MATESL course, I hope to invite other teacher-educators and teachers to join in the journey of re-imagining and working out, at their respective local sites, critical pedagogies specific to, and suitable for, each of our respective contexts.

<A>　　　　　　　Appendix: Excerpt from Course Outline

EN6486 Language, Culture, and Education

Course Objectives
This course is designed to introduce you to some theoretical concepts and methodological tools in the *anthropology and sociology of education, social linguistic*s *and literacies*, and *ethnography of communication*. The course aims at providing you with a chance to use the concepts and tools learned to critically analyze issues in your own teaching as well as in language education in Hong Kong

Course Materials
Basic Reference Book: Gee, J. P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies (2nd Edition).* London: Taylor & Francis.
A packet of essential readings and weekly lecture handouts and notes.

Course Structure
The course is divided into two parts.

Part 1. Background concepts and knowledge (Weeks 1-6)
In the first six weeks of the course we will focus on five key concepts in James Gee's works. James Gee's works are chosen for this course for the breadth and depth of his discussion of the key topics in language, culture and education as well as for the useful illustrative examples in his writings. The five key concepts crucial in understanding the inter-relationships of language, culture and education are laid out as follows:
•　　　language as a set of design resources
•　　　social languages
•　　　situated meanings
•　　　cultural models

Primary and Secondary Discourses

Intermission: Week 7--Reading Week / No Classes. You will make use of this time to write an autobiography (approximately 1500-1800 words; i.e., 5-6 pages double spaced) of:
your own language learning experience since childhood, and
your own journey as a language teacher.
In your autobiography as a language learner and language teacher, *both describe your own experiences and critically reflect on them, drawing on the insights*

gained from the concepts and knowledge learnt in the previous weeks, as well as your own background and practical knowledge.

Part 2. Application & Mini-Research Project (Weeks 8-13)
In this part of the course, you will work in pairs, applying the concepts and knowledge learnt, on a self-chosen research topic. The topic can be an issue of interest to you in your own teaching or school, and/or in the language education system in Hong Kong (e.g., critical analysis of textbooks for their hidden perspectives and assumptions regarding gender, race, social class, or other aspects). The instructor will provide some examples of topics to facilitate your thinking, but you are also strongly encouraged to select and develop your own research topic which is of immediate concern and interest to you and your partner. Based on your analysis and findings on your selected topic, *each of you will prepare your own <u>individual</u> project portfolio, which consists of the following 2 items:*

Individual *contribution to TESL-HK (A Newsletter for English Language Teaching Professionals in Hong Kong)*--this will be in the format of a nonacademic newsletter article written for other schoolteachers in Hong Kong. You will describe your topic of concern, report on your analysis and findings on the topic, as well as your suggestions and recommendations based on your research insights. Remember to change your academic writing style to a teacher-friendly style and summarize your research findings into a short piece of article for teachers (approximately 900-1200 words; i.e., 3-4 pages double spaced).

Individual *letter to the editor*--this will be in the format of a letter to the editor of a major English newspaper in Hong Kong (e.g., South China Morning Post). In the letter, you will describe the issue/problem of concern to you and your views and recommendations based on your analysis/research findings on the topic (300 to 350 words). You can use the newsletter article above as a basis for this letter.

<A> Notes

1. MATESL: Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language.
2. Hong Kong people, including teachers and students, seem generally to hold an especially negative notion of politics. To them, political agendas are always dirty and selfish. Their naturalized and technicalized conceptions of education lead them to feel that education should be free of politics (meaning free of political intervention). Education agendas for promoting social justice and an ethical life are seen as forms of moral education and not political (i.e., not tied to the interest of any political groups, and morality is not seen as political). In this sense, Hong Kong people have developed a special understanding of the word "politics," one that is different from the way it is used in the critical pedagogy literature. It is in this context that any critical pedagogical courses, to be acceptable to teachers and students, must not have a name that is associated with political actions, although one can include *values* education in the curriculum.
3. All personal names are pseudonyms.
4. I recently read in the newspaper that teachers in her school have reflected their discontent about being overworked to the Inspectorate of the Education Department of Hong Kong. The news report did not mention any response from the school administration or from the Education Department. My MATESL course has ended and I no longer see Emily and cannot find out how the situation is in her school now.

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