

Introduction to the Special Section on Critical Pedagogy

Alessia Cogo

The seven articles that constitute this Special Section relate to the area of critical pedagogy. Since Graham Crookes's anniversary article on critical language pedagogy (2021) the number of submissions concerning this topic has increased exponentially. Given their common theme, I thought it would be a good idea to gather the submissions in a Special Section. Special Sections, unlike Special Issues, are not curated by guest editors and do not aim to be exhaustive representations of the field, but simply draw together studies that contribute in different ways to a certain area, and what follows is a very simple introduction to the area of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching that aims to develop students' critical understanding of the world and is based on values of social justice. In fact, most people would say that critical pedagogy is 'teaching for social justice'. In this approach, teachers are not merely teaching skills, but are engaged in the political and social context and make this relevant for their students. Therefore, the role of the teacher is to raise critical questions, pose problems and facilitate students in addressing the issues that are relevant to them. Classroom content, teaching priorities, and curricula are negotiated anew between the students and the teacher, in a dialogue that is participatory and places the students at the centre.

When used for languages, especially English, this approach then challenges the view of the ELT profession as the teaching of linguistic skills detached from reality and makes teaching something intrinsically political (Akbari 2008). Seeing English language teaching as a political activity also requires problematizing any form of dominant knowledge and discourse, even problematizing English and its power in relation to aspects of colonization, discrimination, and oppression.

All the papers in this Special Section relate critical pedagogy in different ways—I hope you enjoy reading them.

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