Power in the EFL Classroom

Power in the EFL Classroom: Critical Pedagogy in the Middle East

Edited by

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This book is dedicated to all the English teachers, past, present, and future, in the Middle East. Our students are our joy and our responsibility; their lessons are our passion and our purpose. Our colleagues provide sustenance for our continued endeavors of allowing the voices of our students to be heard, their individuality acknowledged, their culture honored, and justice done to their struggle for identity.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL	Cooperative Learning
CP	Critical Pedagogy
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teacher
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ESL	English as a Second Language
IEP	Intensive English Program
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NEST	Native English Speaking Teacher
NNEST	Non-Native English Speaking Teacher
NS	Native Speaker
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TL	Target Language

PREFACE

The idea for this book grew out of a class I taught in the spring of 2008 at the American University of Cairo called "Gender, Space and Power in the EFL Classroom." Six of the chapters came from the research projects done in that Master's-level course. My students' work inspired me to search for more studies with the same theme and I found other contributors through conference proceedings and among other MA students at AUC. As I have almost always used Critical Pedagogy principles in my teaching and research, I feel proud and privileged to be joined in this work by my students and colleagues.

I would like to thank Dr. Paul Stevens, Director of the English Language Institute at the American University in Cairo, for his support and encouragement in obtaining funds. My editor, Johanna Baboukis, has patiently and thoroughly read, questioned, and corrected every word. My debt to her is enormous for undertaking this work. I would also like to thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for the opportunity to see this volume in print.

July 2009
Cairo, Egypt

INTRODUCTION

PHYLLIS WACHOB

In order to understand the theoretical concepts of Critical Pedagogy (CP) that have been embraced in the past few years, it is necessary to see how this plays out in the classroom. Language learning is not just a simple matter of input and output, devoid of the individual human being attempting to learn a foreign or second language; it is embedded in the personal as well as the social and political milieu. The time is right now for a look at Critical Pedagogy as it is perceived and practiced in the Middle East. With new visions, new ways of cooperation, and a fresh lens to focus on how students and teachers in classrooms construct their identities and perform their duties, this volume hopes to bring Critical Pedagogy theory to practice.

"Critical pedagogy is not a set of ideas, but a way of 'doing' learning and teaching" (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 932). This definition puts CP squarely in the classroom and leads us to view how teachers interact with students and how students treat one another, while negotiating institutional and societal expectations. The chapters in the book use a variety of methods to address questions of power within educational institutions, from classrooms to the ministries of education.

All the contributors are, or have been, teachers in the Middle East, from Egypt to Iran. Their nationalities range from Egyptian, to American, Canadian, British, Tunisian, and Iranian. Ten of the contributors are women. All have conducted research and/or invited participation from among students and fellow teachers to explore issues of importance from various perspectives. The question of physical space relates to power but is also related to linguistic space; student choice is related not only to linguistic space but also to motivation and thus empowerment. Changing teachers' beliefs leads to empowerment for teachers, but also empowerment for students. Educational policy that recognizes social and personal identity reflects back to personal motivation. These studies meet and mesh, complement and sometimes take different viewpoints. However, all the studies embrace the concept that we must respect and nurture the human in our students, that we as teachers are the front line as enablers of our students’ empowerment. If we do not provide the space, and honor their dignity, our students cannot claim and embrace their power.

The first chapter is an introduction by Izadinia of the history of critical pedagogy, based on the seminal work of Paolo Freire. This exposition and explanation of the ideas of CP places them in the framework of Marxian thought and then goes beyond. In her final paragraphs, Izadinia calls for more practice of CP in classrooms, inviting teachers to share their authority, raise consciousness, allow room for students’ voices, and become agents for change. Thus the questions she poses prepare us for the chapters that follow.

The second chapter is Kim’s study of refugee school teachers, which reveals that the major issues of the participants revolved around space. Physical space, in classrooms, at home, and in the community, is at a premium for the refugees in Cairo. As outsiders they lack civic protections and so must carve out space for themselves in ways that can be disempowering and even degrading. The children who grow up in these circumstances find themselves without voices and one of their few signs of hope are their dedicated teachers, refugees themselves who lack the space they need to do their jobs. As an editor, I have erred on the side of caution, editing out author excess and making conservative choices, but I have left the statement, “It can be stated *unequivocally* that the circumstances for refugees in Egypt are difficult” (Kim, this volume). Other papers dealing with the problems of undergraduate anxiety pale in comparison to the immensity of the challenges for English-language education among the refugee community in Cairo.

Chapter Three is Jackson’s study of furniture arrangement, and it is also quite unlike other contributions as she takes a fresh look at an old problem. For far too many years, teachers and teacher trainers have accepted the notion of moving furniture for various activities without full examination of why and what role students can play in these choices. For her young adults, affect was important for feelings of belonging and identity with classmates. Ill-suited furniture arrangements broke bonds of interaction and feelings of connection, thus possibly demotivating and disempowering students. Her reports of students moving desks, asking for certain arrangements, and simply moving themselves to other groups are indications of students’ attempts at claiming their space within their own classrooms.

Chapter Four deals with gender—in this case, with the empowerment and claim of linguistic space within the classroom for females. As Fairley points out, male dominance of classroom discourse is well-documented;

compounded with visions of the silent female in Egyptian culture, it was with no surprise that she found female contributions in class discussions to be much lower than males. This project aimed at solving the problem of female silence by creating structures within the classroom's linguistic space that equalized contributions of the genders. We are still left with questions of how this might be reflected in the wider social situation, or whether it is confined to the classroom and to specific situations.

Another chapter that addresses gender differences is Matbouli's study on learner autonomy. In this classroom, females were slightly more likely to believe and engage in learner autonomy than males. Females also acknowledged their responsibilities towards their own learning and were happier when being consulted on activities than were males. Matbouli looked at beliefs, not necessarily at actions, and showed that it may, in fact, be easy to empower females by creating the linguistic spaces for females to take. They believed in their own power and perhaps they only needed encouragement from the institution to seize this power. On the other hand, student beliefs regarding the teachers' responsibilities in the classroom show that they still cling to "banking" versions of education and the authority of the teacher. This imperfect balance between what they know and where they want to go lies at the heart of student decision-making and empowerment.

The next four chapters address identity. Although Christensen's Chapter Six is titled "Language Identity," she has addressed more personal issues of anxiety, motivation, investment, and identity as an English language speaker. When students can embrace their identity as bilinguals, comfortable in themselves as Arabic speakers who also are competent code-switchers, they can lower the barriers and attain the communicative competence they seek. The concept of Multiple Intelligences, borrowed from "the West," seems to have resonated with her Egyptian students, despite their background in more traditional views of education.

In Chapter Seven, Abdulah found similar needs in her students. By giving students the opportunity to learn through experience about cooperative group work, she enabled them to find themselves within the framework of working in teams. They used less unsolicited L1 and spent more time-on-task as well as changing attitudes. By being able to understand and cope with working in groups, expected of them in other academic courses, they became equipped with skills that will empower them within the academic world. This micro-level of intervention is one that can be utilized by teachers in attempts to resist institutional constraints and give power to the teacher and her students.

Sharkawi (Chapter Eight) has also addressed the issue of empowerment of students by providing in-class activities aimed at helping students find their identity within competing paradigms. The narrative method used here is more context-bound and personal than the usual research report. But the “truth” of the othering of students, the attempts to claim linguistic space, the resistance of Sayeda Samia, and the final vindication and acknowledgement of her plight by her fellow students is more powerful in the telling than numbers could ever do. This is a story of “power, inequality, discrimination, resistance, and struggle” (Pennycook, 1999, p. 332) that is at the heart of CP.

In another study on identity, McLaren’s Chapter Nine addresses the individual Saudi Arabian student’s concept of himself vis-à-vis English. Motivation theories have heretofore looked at how learners are motivated by identifying with the target language and its speakers. But McLaren shows how a group of learners has rejected the notion of the superiority of English simply because it is the language of the global community and opens doors to the cultural superiority of another world. Instead, these young, proud Arabs have chosen to study English because they see the usefulness of the communicative skills it gives them. The model they pursue is a cosmopolitan Arab bilingual who values his own language and heritage above all.

Troudi’s Chapter Ten also questions the rush of schools and universities in the Arab world towards English as a medium of instruction, thereby shortchanging students in instruction in their mother tongue. He has specifically highlighted science and academia as areas that could just as easily be taught in Arabic with a little more effort on the part of Arab governments and book publishers. This position paper with informant input looks critically at the rush towards English to the detriment of Arabic and warns of the linguistic imperialism that threatens the mother tongue. Both McLaren’s and Troudi’s chapters take the debate of critical pedagogy out of the classroom and put it into the public area as a policy concern (Phillipson, 1992).

The final chapters all look at a number of issues concerning teachers, the way teachers’ beliefs affect students, how the debate of native- versus non-native-speaking teachers reaches deep into classrooms and outwards towards society, and the way teachers are trained, or not, in issues of critical pedagogy.

In Chapter Eleven, Lamey describes how a teacher’s beliefs can affect students both in daily classroom encounters and in students’ gains, or lack of, in proficiency. She tells her story in a different genre, one that many have seen as feminine or a feminist version of “truth-telling.” In a volume dedicated to critical pedagogy, I am very proud to include this non-conformist research paper. In an intensely personal, and at times painful, reflection on her own growth as a teacher, Lamey takes us into her classroom and lets us listen to her students and to her own inner voice. She takes us with her on a voyage of discovery of a teacher who sees how deep-seated beliefs about classroom control and the power of the textbook impact her students and set them up for failure. By using deep reflection, she learns to share control of the classroom with her students and learns to value the structure of a textbook instead of allowing the textbook to dominate and rule the classroom space.

In Chapter Twelve, Fathelbab tackles the topic of native- versus non-native-speaker teachers by exploring the spaces between the two (Holliday, 2005). By examining the bicultural teacher, one who is a native speaker of both L1 and the target language, she tears down the labels that divide teachers into "us" and "them." The "other" is now us. She seeks to reconstruct a vision of the ideal teacher that draws from all the qualities available to teachers. Educating students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and society at large about the nature of EFL teachers and the neo-colonialist hegemony of the native speaker is an important point of Fathelbab's.

Abednia challenges teachers and teacher educators in the final chapter, Chapter Thirteen. By exploring principles of CP, he eventually challenges all of us to define methods and post-methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) for ourselves and apply CP principles to our classrooms. He ends with a personal note on his own attempts at teaching Critical Pedagogy and reminds us of a path "not signposted but full of dilemmas" (Abednia, this volume).

In his comments on TESOL at Forty, Canagarajah (2006) addresses the state of Critical Pedagogy within the discipline. He links CP to individuals and the ethics of justice and democracy. He has acknowledged the progress made by CP, but also notes that TESOL needs to "develop a more dynamic and balanced orientation by conducting a nuanced reading of the interface between the micro and the macro, mind and body, classroom and society as they are negotiated in language learning" (p. 17). This volume is an attempt to add to the myriad voices that seek to define, explain, expose, research, and tell our students' and our own stories from perspectives that focus on the search rather than the answer, and the process rather than the product. We seek justice for our students and colleagues through continued heightened awareness of our practices in the classroom and community.

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CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

MAHSA IZADINIA

Introduction

Education, baby-like, has passed from infancy to adolescence. It has left behind many stages of communication disability and has evolved into a more mature state as the purpose of education and its definition have changed.

Years ago, teachers were considered unquestioned authorities who were only responsible for delivering knowledge to students, and students, in turn, were doomed to listening meekly. Any possibility for changing this structure was hampered by the formalities and strict regulations schooling had imposed on the student-teacher relationship. In such situations students were expected to grow and eventually occupy their teachers' places, still walled inside classrooms. Effective communication between students and teachers as one of the purposes of education was missing in that educational system. How could students develop communicative skills when their voices were barely heard? How could they dare to air their ideas when there was often no one to listen? And finally, how and when could they succeed in breaking down the wall of silence in their classrooms?

Today's classrooms provide the ground for ascending the ladder of improvement for both teachers and students. The responsibilities are no longer just on teachers' shoulders since students have appeared on the stage and have become more active and responsible participants in the learning process (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). For instance, post-method pedagogy treats learners as autonomous learners, where learner autonomy means not only learning to learn, but goes beyond that to include a capacity to learn to liberate—that is, to become critical thinkers (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

As a result of sharing authority in classrooms, teachers have come down from their sacred and safe places to a more friendly and open environment wherein they can easily negotiate the class procedures, structure, content, and grading criteria, as well as their own roles in relation to students. This ground-shifting has not ended in classrooms, but has found its way into a wider and more real context, that is, society. The ideas of sharing authority, negotiation, and humanization to which the changes in classrooms owe a lot have brought a new life to students as social participants as well. They have been invited to be active and critical members in their society and to critique and challenge oppressive social conditions, and that is what critical pedagogy intends to realize (Freire, 1972).

Critical pedagogy, which tries to raise students' consciousness and prepare them to engage in larger social struggles for liberation (Freire, 1972), is a new approach toward education. The aforementioned changes, along with many others, are the legacy of critical pedagogy. In order to know more about the changes that critical pedagogy has made since its emergence, let us take a look at the conditions that favored traditional learning, what education was like then, what outcomes such education had, what incidents set the stage for the emergence of critical pedagogy, and finally, what it intends to realize.

Traditional pedagogy

Traditional pedagogy is a name assigned to a period that favored pre-defined syllabi and focused on agreed-upon course materials to be taught (Moreno-Lopez, 2005). The good and evil of the what and how of teaching, the evaluation criteria, and generally, the ultimate objectives of learning were determined a priori by theoreticians and handed down to teachers, while the legitimacy of all these decisions was unquestionable. Teachers in this regard were thought of as the sole authority, of course just within the classroom, who had shouldered the heavy responsibility of delivering knowledge, and they were quite determined to keep it (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

With a widespread and considerable concern for content knowledge and the heavy emphasis given to memorization, no doubt the students could not think of education and its purpose as anything beyond learning the A to Z of what they were designated to learn. The way the knowledge was handed down to students was more akin to "an act of depositing in which the students were the depositories and the teacher was the depositor" (Freire, 1972, p. 58), and that was the essence of a "banking education."

The banking concept of education put forward by Paulo Freire positions students as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher. Banking education, as opposed to critical pedagogy, occurs when the teacher attempts to transfer the contents of his/her mind into those of the students (Bartolome, 1994; cited in Crookes & Lehner, 1998). It in fact isolates the learner from the content and process of education. According to Freire (1972), in banking education the teacher lectures, and the students "receive, memorize, and repeat" (p. 58). He likens the knowledge to a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. He explains that banking education is generally characterized by the following oppressive attitudes and practices:

1. the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
2. the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
3. the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
4. the teacher talks and the students listen meekly;
5. the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
6. the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
7. the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
8. the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who are not consulted) adapt to it;
9. the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
10. the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

(Freire, 1972, pp. 46-47)

As was mentioned, in banking education teachers play the main role in classrooms. Occupying such a position, they are perceived as the sole and absolute knowers who can skillfully and completely transfer information. In this framework teachers are called *passive technicians* (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). The concept of teachers as technicians has its root in the behavioral school of psychology, wherein content knowledge was the focal point of teaching. It was believed that content knowledge should be broken down into discrete items and presented to students. According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), "in technicist or transmission approach, the teacher’s primary role in the classroom is to function like a conduit, channeling the flow of information from one end of the educational spectrum (i.e., the expert) to the other (i.e., the learner) without significantly altering the content of information” (p. 8).

The metaphor of banking education clearly shows the objectives the teachers and theoreticians were pursuing. Freire (1972) reminds us of the objective behind banking education by saying that “the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed” (p. 67). Getting used to passively receiving the seemingly best knowledge from the upper position, the oppressed develop a deep sense of silence, submissiveness, and obedience. Putting aside exploring questions, the minds of students will be completely closed towards the deeper and hidden layers of education—that is, finding a voice in society. When the classrooms that are expected to act as a springboard for giving students voice and for creating critical participants change to a place of oppression, it is no surprise the students cannot make their voice heard in society. When they do not dare to oppose and resist ideas, rules, and the strict structures imposed upon them in classrooms, they can never dream about resisting the unequal conditions imposed on them in their society. This is what Freire refers to as the *culture of silence*. When the dominant culture silences the oppressed through ignoring or demonizing other discourses that might challenge its authority, the oppressed learn to lower themselves and break all the positive images they have of themselves until they perfectly fit into the present suppressive condition. By so doing, they remain passive and silent forever (Freire, 1972).

Critical pedagogy

The description above characterizes the usual schooling approved by traditional pedagogy. Although many traces still remain of traditional pedagogy, the new era belongs to critical pedagogy, which has fashioned a new type of education.

Critical pedagogy considers education as a tool for individuals to “better themselves and strengthen democracy, to create a more egalitarian and just society, and thus to deploy education in a process of progressive social change” (Kellner, 2000, p. 7).

Critical pedagogy, which was introduced in the 1960s by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, begins with “the basic assumption that the human vocation is to take action which changes the world for the improvement of life conditions” (Crawford, 1978, p. 2). The primary preoccupation of critical pedagogy is with social injustice and how to transform inequitable, undemocratic, or oppressive institutions and social relations (Burbules & Berk, 1997). More precisely, in response to the demands of fledgling societies tired of social injustice, critical pedagogy came to eradicate false and deep-seated beliefs of power as a God-given right bestowed upon the upper classes; thus it specifically changed the role of teachers and students. It foregrounded the indispensable interplay between teachers and students to go against the dyed-in-the-wool tradition of naming teachers as the sole authority in classrooms. What it suggested was to share authority and responsibilities between teacher and students, to empower all members to become active, responsible participants in the learning process, and not merely passive consumers (Freire, 1972).

In order to take a closer look at critical pedagogy and the message it tries to convey, five of its key issues will be discussed in the following sections.

Teachers as transformative intellectuals

Critical pedagogy has assumed new identities for teachers, and what has been proposed as the umbrella term for such identities is the "transformative intellectual" (Giroux, 1988). Empowering students to become critical and active citizens rests on teachers who have the potential to "combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful, active citizens" (Giroux, 1988, p. 122). Thus, what teachers are supposed to do in order to be transformative intellectuals is to resist the assumption that teachers are simply transmitters of knowledge and that they are "high-level technicians who should carry out dictates and objectives decided by experts far removed from the everyday realities of classroom life" (Giroux, 1988, p. 121). On the contrary, teachers are required to be socio-politically conscious and strive not only for educational advancement but also for personal transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Conscientization

Coming to a critical consciousness—or, as Freire (1972) calls it, conscientization—is a process whereby individuals develop a greater ability to think critically. Heaney (1995) points out the difference between "consciousness raising" and "conscientization" and concludes that the former is the outcome of banking education, in which transmission of knowledge is fashionable, and the latter means reaching new levels of awareness, the awareness of being a subject rather than an object in the world. Freire has developed several famous methods for achieving conscientization, among which are codifications, generative themes, and problem-posing education.

Codification

Codification, or code, is a representation of the learner's day-to-day situations, which can be a photograph, a drawing, or even a word (Heaney, 1995). Freire used these codes in Brazil for developing not only literacy but also political consciousness of the rural peasants. He drew theses codes in the dirt with a stick. (*Freirian Dictionary*, ¶ 9). The code or the representation generated dialogues and led to analysis of the concrete reality it represented (Heaney, 1995).

Generative themes

Generative theme is a single word or phrase that is likely to generate considerable discussion and analysis. Heaney (1995) explains that generative themes are codifications of complex experiences that have political significance. They are derived from a study of the specific history and circumstances of the learners. Freire used generative themes to start problem-posing dialogues. The following paragraph shows clearly the use of generative themes in Freire's critical literacy method.

> Freire would choose a theme very relevant to the lives of the people with whom he was working for example, perhaps starting with the word "shovel" if he was working with miners. This theme would be the first word learned within the "lesson" and be the launching off point for various questions concerning the implications of the theme within the community. Thus, these themes were developed so as to develop ownership among the learners not only of the words themselves but also the political situation surrounding them. (*Freirian Dictionary*, ¶ 9)

Problem-posing education/method

Problem-posing education, as opposed to banking education, rejects the process of transferring information and favors a view of education that centralizes the practice of dialogue. The problem-posing method, as Freire (1972) believes, does not "dichotomize the activity of the teacher-students: he is not 'cognitive' at one point and 'narrative' at other" (p. 54).

Through dialogue, he continues, “the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (p. 53). And this is when “all become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (p. 53). Auerbach (1992) has mentioned five steps for problem-posing as a way of teaching critical-thinking skills in students. They are as follows:

- Describe the content. The teacher presents the students with a code, which, as mentioned above, can be a photograph, a drawing, or even a word related to the students’ concerns and experiences and important to them. Then students respond to the representation by describing the code.
- Define the problem. The students uncover the issue(s) or problem(s) in the code.
- Personalize the problem. At this point, the teacher asks the students to talk about how this problem makes them feel so that they can relate the issue(s) or problem(s) to their own lives.
- Discuss the problem. The teacher leads the students toward a discussion on the social/economic reasons for the problem.
- Discuss alternatives to the problem. Students explore solutions to the problem.

Dialogical method

The core of a transformative pedagogy wherein the individuals can transform the world is dialogue, according to Freire (1972). The lecture format of the banking approach to education is severely criticized in Freirian philosophy; instead, this philosophy supports dialogue and open communication among students and teachers. Freire (1972) believes depositing ideas in another mind is not dialogue, nor is it a hostile argument between people. Dialogue, he continues, needs a profound love for the world and for men. Freire asserts that without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no liberatory education. Consequently, the approach that positions the teacher as transmitter of knowledge is not a dialogical approach but an anti-dialogical method. An anti-dialogical person, in Freire’s words, aims at imposing her/his own objectives and conquering the other. He or she tries to make the masses accept her/his objectives by means of manipulation, and finally he or she penetrates the culture of the other group and imposes her/his own world view.

Praxis

Freire (1972) defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 60). To him, word without its dimension of action is just an “ideal chatter” or “verbalism.” The opposite is also true. When action is overemphasized, he believes, the word is changed into “activism.” True words with which people transform the world, he concludes, are accompanied by work.

Humanization

One of the outcomes of critical pedagogy is humanization. Despite being born humans, Freire considers it as the vocation of each individual to become even more fully human by tearing themselves from oppression. He believes the oppressed must learn to liberate themselves and protect themselves against the “dehumanization” process that oppresses human beings and limits their freedom. But learning to be human does not rest just with the oppressed. He believes the oppressed should also help their oppressors, who are also dehumanized through the process of oppressing, to become human.

Conclusion

Years have passed since Freire introduced critical pedagogy and foregrounded the importance of bringing about transformation not only in our educational system but also in our social lives. However, critical pedagogy has not yet found a comfortable home among us. Critics have leveled severe criticisms at critical pedagogy so far and labeled it pedagogically impractical (Kanpol, 1998) and its focus on students’ voice a “confused and misdeveloped idea” (Simon, 1992), for instance. Maybe that is why traditional pedagogy is still around, not to mention the political and economic reasons behind its dominance.

Students are still suffering silently from the outcome of banking education, i.e., suffocation of their personal voices both in the classroom and in society as a result of considering themselves as objects in this world rather than subjects. Teachers are also victimized by the legacy of banking as they internalize the belief that their main role is to be merely concerned with transferring information to students and to distance themselves from students' life concerns so that the power structure of the system is maintained. Accordingly, they remain unfamiliar with the emancipatory role they can play, and have become oppressors for their oppressed students as well as oppressed by their own oppression.

To the contrary of what critics suggest and what many teachers have been historically doing, evidence has recently been accumulating in support of positive outcomes of teachers' sharing authority, raising students' consciousness, and giving voice to students who become agents of change in society (Abednia & Izadinia, 2008; Abednia et al., 2009; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005). Whether or not critical pedagogy results in any self and social transformation is a question that should be answered by students who have had the experience of such education, rather than by those who have not tried to put this perspective into action and have not gone beyond what Freire calls "verbalism."

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