

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND MULTILINGUAL ELT: INVESTIGATING CLASSROOM PRACTICES AND LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

This research examines how English instructors in the multilingual Pakistani classrooms can use the Critical Pedagogy approach developed by Freire to promote empowerment among the learners. English language teaching (ELT) in Pakistan remains a teacher centred instructional process that has strict curricula and exam oriented culture. These dominant practises are limiting dialogue, reduce student agency and do not recognise the rich linguistic and cultural resources that students bring to the classroom. The qualitative research design was chosen to explore this problem. The research involved gathering data of forty English teachers by use of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires that were distributed in the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. Four major findings were produced by the thematic analysis. To start with, a large number of teachers tried dialogic and participatory teaching methods, which included discussions in groups, questioning, and problem-posing assignments; such activities helped to raise the confidence of learners and promoted significant interaction. Second, educators engaged the use of multilingual tools, e.g., discussions in native languages and culturally-grounded examples to promote understanding and inclusion. Third, critical pedagogy was hindered by a number of obstacles; they were rigid syllabi, excessive student populations, a lack of chances to facilitate professional growth, and the presence of an institutional counter-force. Lastly, peer support, contextualised content and flexible group work were all methods of coping used by teachers. On the whole, the paper shows that the application of the Freirean principles has significant potential in the multilingual ELT context, but organisational limitations suppress the full implementation of the principles. The results highlight the need to increase teacher education, curriculum design, and favourable institutional practises to make ELT more inclusive, participatory, and empowering to learners in Pakistan.

Keywords:

Critical pedagogy; Freirean ELT; multilingual classrooms; learner empowerment; dialogic teaching; Pakistan; teacher practices; multilingual education; ELT pedagogy;

1. Introduction

In many classrooms of Pakistani, the process of learning the English language (ELT) takes place in a very multilingual and culturally diversified setting. There are often combinations of local linguistic environments, Urdu, and English, but the linguistic portfolio of students is not actively used in learning (Gul, Shah, and Kifayatullah, 2022). The classrooms are usually full of rote learning, grammar-translation tasks, and examination-based learning, thus leaving very little room to discuss the language, reflect critically, and engage creatively with it (Laghari, 2025). Students might be unable to relate the material covered in the curriculum

with their life experiences or cultural context, which in effect foams off their motivation, engagement and language growth.

Teachers who conduct their work in such settings face a plethora of problems. Classes with too many children, the inflexibility of the curriculum, limited teaching materials, and the lack of professional development all limit innovation in pedagogy (Anjum, Pathan, and Shah, 2021). Structural and institutional constraints block genuine implementation of the interactive and student-centred methodology even when instructors are aware of the value that these approaches hold. As a result, the agency of students, as well as their critical-thinking skills, are not developed, and the experience in the classroom might seem to be disconnected with their sociocultural contexts.

Empirical studies have shown that the challenges could be reduced through the inclusion of dialogic and reflective pedagogical strategies. Indicatively, Bozkurt and Topkaya (2023) have determined that instilling the principles of critical pedagogy into ELT can allow one to provide learners with opportunities to be proactive with content, challenge the power relations embedded in language and society and engage in collective knowledge building. Likewise, Ahmad and Inamullah (2024) have found that dialogic methods in tertiary, Pakistani, English classrooms improve critical thinking and interaction of learners, even within traditional oriented educational environment. All these studies point to the same direction that recognition of linguistic and cultural resources of learners and their application creates a more inclusive, participatory, and empowering learning environment.

Using Critical Pedagogy by Freire (1970/2000), one can suggest an analytical framework to help overcome such problems. Freire criticises the traditional banking model of education where the teacher simply imparts knowledge to inactive students, and proposes problem-posing education. This method predicts dialogue, reflection and learner empowerment, which helps students to be active contributors in knowledge building and critically reviewing sociopolitical context. In the context of the multilingual ELT classrooms, the principles of Freire are especially relevant because to this extent the combination of the different languages and experiences of learners into the classroom instruction would have been promoted, which would then result in the achievement of the linguistic competence as well as the development of the critical consciousness.

Although the theoretical potential of Critical Pedagogy in ELT is undoubted, scant empirical studies have studied its implementation by instructors in multilingual classrooms in Pakistan. The current research is mostly aimed on higher education or small-size interventions, thus creating an epistemic gap in the subject of classroom practises, strategies, and barriers on the levels of secondary and tertiary education (Gul et al., 2022; Anjum et al., 2021).

The current research attempts to address this gap by exploring the way English teachers in multilingual Pakistani classrooms apply the Freirean pedagogy, which strategies they use to empower learners, and which institutional or contextual factors contribute to or hinder such practises. This study aims to make a contribution to the area of applied linguistics and ELT in Pakistan by predicting the behaviours of teachers as well as the experiences of learners and emphasising the ways to make the classes more participatory, inclusive, and socially responsive.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In multilingual classrooms in Pakistan, English Language Teaching (ELT) is still largely defined by classic teacher-centred methods which focus on rote learning, grammar exercises and preparation to exams. These practises fail to engage the learners, fail to tap their

heterogeneous linguistic and cultural resources, and limit chances of critical thinking and active involvement. Despite the fact that Critical Pedagogy created by Freire has the potential to create dialogue, reflection, and empowerment of learners, there are few applications of this model in multilingual ELT classes. There are several barriers that face educators such as inflexible curriculums, huge classes, and institutional demands that limit the adoption of participatory and socially responsive pedagogical practises. Thus, there remains a significant knowledge gap on how ELT teachers can effectively implement the principle of critical pedagogy to develop learner agency, engagement and empowerment in multilingual context. This is a key concern that should be tackled in order to turn ELT into a more welcoming, interactive, and socially relevant business that will at the same time train linguistic proficiency and critical consciousness.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To explore how English teachers implement Freire's Critical Pedagogy to promote learner empowerment in multilingual classrooms.
2. To examine the challenges and strategies associated with applying critical pedagogy in ELT settings.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How do English teachers implement Freire's Critical Pedagogy to foster learner empowerment in multilingual classrooms?
2. What challenges and strategies do teachers encounter when applying critical pedagogy in ELT contexts?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The importance of the study has explored the practise of Critical Pedagogy by Freire in multilingual English language classrooms, where the issue of learner empowerment and critical interaction is often overlooked. Exploring the practises of teachers and the problems they face, the study can provide information on how ELT can be made more inclusive, participatory, and socially responsive. The results can be used in the teacher training programmes, and it helps teachers to adopt dialogic, reflective and learner-centred practises in their instructions. In addition, the research can provide guidance to policy makers and curriculum developers who aim to come up with instructional models that can make use of the linguistic and cultural assets of students. Finally, the study will help improve the teaching of the English language in Pakistan by developing not only linguistic but also a critical form of consciousness in learners, which will equip them to be active participants in both the educational and social environment.

2. Literature Review

Conceptualised by Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy anticipates dialogue, reflection, and development of critical consciousness in the education practice (Freire, 1970/2000). It questions traditional models of banking as teaching and learning, which focus on education as a revolutionary and liberating practise. In English language teaching (ELT), it is a model that offers a guideline in assisting learners to interrogate power relations, ideologies, and social structures, and not necessarily learning the language forms (Bozkurt and Topkaya, 2023). Bozkurt and Topkaya (2023) argue that ELT is not ideologically neutral, the English language and its pedagogy are deeply involved in historical and sociopolitical power relations. They promote the combination of problem-posing activities, culturally responsive material and guided reflection to make language learning more purposeful and socially accountable. Their study highlights the possibility of the critical pedagogy to enable students to challenge the prevailing discourses.

Rashidi and Safari (2013) add to this discussion focusing on materials development. They highlight the use of context-sensitive content, agency of learners, and culturally responsive materials in their model of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) materials based on critical pedagogy. According to their position, materials are not only to transfer knowledge but to challenge, criticise, and modify their social worlds (Rashidi & Safari, 2013).

Askari and Baumgartner (2024) consider the use of critical pedagogy in adult ELT. They cite such major challenges as poor teacher training, cultural bias, and the lack of consistency between evaluation and critical pedagogical goals. However, they say that the principles of Freirean thought could be appropriately applied to adult ELT programmes in order to develop social awareness and empower the learners (Askari and Baumgartner, 2024).

Under Pakistan, there have been some studies that have started exploring the potential of critical pedagogy to transform ELT practises. Anjum, Pathan, and Shah (2021) used a mixed-method design to explore the opinions of Pakistani EFL teachers. Their results point to the fact that teachers realise the value of critical thinking, but also report the ongoing issues: overcrowded classes, a strict curriculum, and pressure to assess. Peer collaboration, local examples, and informal discussion groups are some of the coping strategies that teachers use to overcome these limitations (Anjum et al., 2021).

Gul, Shah, and Kifayatullah (2022) used a university-level Pakistani poetry syllabus to implement the critique of Freire. They found that classical and archaic poetry did not appeal to many students who could not relate to historical and cultural backgrounds. The authors recommended a curriculum reform, which would include more culturally resonant texts and dialogic pedagogy, where students would be able to create their own meaning of literary texts (Gul, Shah, and Kifayatullah, 2022).

Critical literacy is another relevant strand of Pakistani applied linguistics. Shah, Mahmood, Hameed, and Haq (2014) criticised the national syllabus of English at secondary level because of their low focus on democratic values and social justice. They claimed that the curriculum does not teach students to be critical citizens hence restraining their ability to meaningfully contribute in civic life (Shah, Mahmood, Hameed, and Haq, 2014).

Similarly, Irfan, Alfares, Tahir, and David (2022) compared higher education ELT programmes in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They have observed that critical thinking is nominally being included in curriculum designs although inflexible course structure and conventional assessment practises are discouraging creative learning and independent thinking. Their research proposed the design of flexible programmes and pedagogical creativity to achieve critical thinking in ELT students (Irfan et al., 2022).

Khan, Khurshid, Malik, and Hameed (2017) provided the Pakistani higher education perspective as well. They investigated the techniques of narrative teaching in the classroom of the university and found that teaching does not always encourage students to think critically and reflect on themselves. Based on Freirean conceptualizations, their findings indicated that the classroom performances were conservative and teacher-centred instead of dialogical and critically focused (Khan, Khurshid, Malik, and Hameed, 2017).

Even though past research indicates the applicability of critical pedagogy in English language teaching, there are still numerous gaps in the research area especially in the Pakistani context. First, the majority of the research is concentrated on higher education and the monolingual classrooms, and little is said about the multilingual environment in which the linguistic repertoires of students include the regional languages, Urdu, and English. Second, although

the views and classroom issues of teachers have been examined, there is lack of empirical data on how teachers apply Freirean pedagogy in practise and the precise methods they use to empower learners. Third, most of the studies focus on critique of curriculum or curriculum development materials, and little has been done regarding the experiences and outcomes of learners. Lastly, studies have focused mostly on text or literary teaching (e.g., poetry), to the exclusion of other content areas and classroom activities in general. The proposed research fills these gaps by analysing the practises of teachers, strategies, and the experiences of learners in multilingual ELT classrooms in Pakistan and thus makes the multilingual ELT classroom more inclusive, participatory, and socially responsive to teaching practises.

This work is informed by Critical Pedagogy of Paulo Freire, which views education as a dialogic, reflective and participatory process that is geared towards the cultivation of critical consciousness and empowerment of learners (Freire, 1970/2000). The core tenets of this framework are the principles of dialogue, problem-posing education and agency of the learner, where the focus is on the learner co-constructing knowledge, not passively receiving it. In the multilingual ELT classrooms, the given approach by Freire emphasises the significance of the culturally and linguistically relevant teaching, whereby the teachers adjust their approaches to the varied backgrounds of the students, promote active learning, and encourage critical thinking over the taught materials. This conceptual framework offers a prism through which it is possible to explore the way in which teachers can use empowering pedagogical practises, negotiate institutional limits, and facilitate the independence of learners along with their critical thinking and meaningful engagement in the classroom.

Though the critical pedagogy is of great importance in ELT, most of the past researches do not discuss its use in the multilingual classes, and thus there is a gap in knowledge about practical strategies of teachers. This paper fills these gaps by discussing the practises of teachers, learner empowerment, and contextual challenges in Pakistan.

Methodology

3.1. Research Method

The current work took a qualitative approach in order to explore the teaching approach of English language educators and learner empowerment in multilingual English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, based on the theoretical lens of the Critical Pedagogy theory by Freire. The use of qualitative inquiry was prudently arrived at because of its ability to provide a profound understanding of complex social events like classroom dynamics, teaching methods, and student participation, in their natural settings (Creswell, 2013). The selection of a methodology helped to capture the subtle lives of teachers and learners, thus, offering detailed rich information **that cannot be easily quantified.**

3.2. Population and Sample

The sample size was made of English-language teachers working at secondary and higher-secondary schools and colleges located in Pakistan, with a specific focus on those areas that are typified by multilingual classrooms, i.e. Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. These environments were usually characterised by learners with heterogeneous linguistic repertoires, such as regional languages, Urdu and English. The sample size of 40 teachers was chosen to give detailed information. Such a sample size was suitable in a qualitative study because it would enable the study of single experiences in detail and be easy to analyse them in the thematic way (Patton, 2015). The sample was comprehensive enough to include teachers in both government and the private institutions to illustrate the differences in institutional practises, resources and pedagogical practises.

3.3. Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling strategy was applied in the selection of the participants based on the experience in providing instruction in multilingual ELT settings. This non-probability method was supported by the fact that it was necessary to ensure that the respondents had the necessary expertise and were directly related to the research objectives (Creswell, 2013). Those teachers who had interacted with culturally different learners and used learner-centred strategies most probably would give rich information on the **practise of critical pedagogy**.

3.4. Data Collection Process

The methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (open-ended). Semi-structured interviews allowed probing the lived experiences, perceptions, and pedagogical strategies of the participants, and at the same time provided the flexibility to follow emergent themes (Kvale, 2007). The interviews were complemented with the use of open-ended questionnaires that allowed the participants to give detailed written descriptions and thereby expanding the range of views. The undertaking was done with ethical rigour. Participants had to provide informed consent and the data confidentiality was ensured using systematic anonymization. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the participants were given an opportunity to speak their answers in their desired language.

The researcher admits to a positionality that is based on a lecturerial relationship in the field of English, which might affect the interpretation of data. Reflexive journaling was observed throughout the study period to reduce the chance of being biased and to support the fact that the results are an accurate reflection of the opinions of the participants.

3.5. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, which is based on 6 steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to question the corpus of data. Familiarisation was done by first reviewing transcripts and questionnaires carefully, which led to an inductive coding stage that was done manually. Codes were later analysed and revised through a partnership with an independent analyst to increase the inter-coder reliability. Themes were formed by clustering codes related to each other repeatedly and were constantly checked against the raw data to maintain consistency. Critical Pedagogy by Freire offered the conceptual framework on the basis of the interpretive process through which teachers implemented dialogic, problem-posing, and learner-sustaining practises in multilingual ELT classrooms. The resulting themes included practises of the teachers, student engagement, contextual adoptions and institutional challenges. As an example, the implementation of group discussions, storeys, and culturally relevant resources were interpreted as the implementation of Freirean praxis, and limitations, e.g., rigid curriculum or high enrolments, were examined in terms of how they affected the empowerment of learners. This analytical path produced a rigorous, theoretically based explanation of classroom practise highlighting the role of teachers in facilitating critical discourse, active involvement and meaningful engagement in multilingual classrooms.

Results and Data Analysis

In this part, the empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires will be presented among forty English teachers working in the multilingual classroom set-ups in Pakistan. The information had been examined using thematic analysis protocol advanced by Braun and Clarke (2006). The four major themes identified in the process of analysis were:

1. Dialogic and participatory approaches to education.
2. Use of linguistic and cultural resources in teaching.
3. Issues surrounding introduction of critical pedagogy.

4. Pedagogical choices that are used by educators to address limitations.

The themes are outlined directly in line with the research objectives and questions.

4.1. Theme 1: Dialogic and Participatory Teaching Practices

Most of the teachers indicated the use of dialogic pedagogical interventions which they had been exposed to under Freire whose problem-posing education was reflected in their practise. They outlined a shift in a teacher-centred and lecture-based modality to the more interactive one.

Some of the instructors reported that they prompted the students to ask questions, reflect, and connect the content of the classroom with their lived experiences. One of the teachers explained: “When students talk about the problems of their own community, they become owners”. This makes one think outside the box of memorising.

Group discussions, think-pair-share tasks and reflective questions were common in the classrooms. The teachers noted that “such activities increased the student engagement, especially those students who usually were quiet throughout the usual lessons”

Another aspect observed by teachers was that dialogic activities led to building of confidence among students. One of the respondents of KP said: “The more students are listened to, the more they talk. Even weak students start contributing even when they are normally weak”. All in all, dialogic activities were closely related to learner empowerment, which proves that Freirean practises were used by teachers to empower learners and engage them.

4.2. Theme 2. Educators should use linguistic and cultural resources in their teaching.

One of the main discoveries was that the teachers used the multilingual repertoires of students to aid learning and this was in line with the critical pedagogy principles of affirming cultural identity. A lot of the teachers complained that teaching in English only hindered the understanding and involvement.

The teachers justified that they had deliberately allowed them to use their first languages (Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Urdu) in peer discussion or when generating initial ideas. One of the teachers said: “When students first explain a concept in their own words they are able to better comprehend it and engage more”.

Along with that, educators used culturally recognisable examples, local anecdotes, and real-life issues to render lessons meaningful, which can be associated with the notion of critical consciousness introduced by Freire. Some of the observers indicated that multilingualism increased inclusiveness. One of the educators of Sindh said: “When students with different languages are allowed to speak them in the classroom, they feel respected”. This theme shows how teachers used multilingualism as an asset and not as a hindrance which was directly related to empowerment of learners.

4.3. Theme 3: The Problems of the Critical Pedagogy Implementation.

Despite the positive attitude of teachers towards dialogic and critical approaches, they noted that there are various obstacles that limit their complete adoption.

4.3.1. Along with Inflexible Curriculum and Examination Stress

The majority of teachers explained that the curriculum was very structured and exam-based. They were obliged to complete the syllabus which did not give enough time to discuss and reflect. One of the teachers remarked: “We would like to teach critically, however, exams are based on grammar and memorisation. Students have to be ready to do that”.

4.3.2. Large Class Sizes

The classes that teachers in governmental institutions had to deal with were 50-100. They struggled to carry out group discussions or individualised activities and the big classes hindered the listening to all students and engaging in a constructive conversation.

4.3.3. Absence of Training in the Professionals.

Most of the teachers believed that they were not well prepared to use critical pedagogy. They themselves were not well exposed to dialogic approaches. One teacher said: "I never received grammar translation in my B.Ed. Critical pedagogy was never taught in our course".

4.3.4. Institutional Limitations.

According to some teachers, there was administrative opposition to student centred activities. Administrators favoured quietness, discipline and classroom textbook teachings.

On the whole, these issues can explain why critical pedagogy is not used in the multilingual ELT classrooms significantly.

4.4. Theme 4: Teacher Strategies to Deal with Constraints.

Nevertheless, educators expressed some viable ways of using critical pedagogy whenever they can.

4.4.1. Small Group Instruction in Large Classes.

Instructors divided big classes into small groups to encourage the discussion between peers. Group work helped students to express their ideas and support one another even in small areas.

4.4.2. Contextualised Materials

Teachers set up local, basic teaching resources based on newspaper articles, social issues, environmental concerns or cultural events. These materials promoted the problem-posing approach of Freire by inviting the students to analyse real-life issues.

4.4.3. Flexible Language Use

Teachers said that they switch between the English and local languages to explain things. This activity of translanguaging served to sustain the interest and minimised anxiety among the learners.

4.4.4. Silent Dialogue Activities

In cases where administrators did not accept noisy discussion, teachers used writing-based dialogue journals, reflective notebooks, and writing problem-posing tasks. These techniques maintained a vital interaction and still maintained the silence of the classroom.

4.4.5. Peer Learning and Leadership Roles.

Other teachers have introduced student facilitators to conduct the small discussions, thus transferring power to the students and facilitating agency to learners.

These strategies show that educators negotiated institutional limitations in such a way that the dialogic, student-centred learning was encouraged.

5. Discussion

The results show that those teachers who work in the Pakistani multilingual classes are trying to incorporate critical pedagogy, but the attempts are not complete and consistent. The statistics show that there are positive habits and some systemic limitations. These findings are consistent with the world academic discussions on the difficulty of implementing Freirean ideas in conservative or examination-based systems.

5.1. Dialogic and Participatory Practises.

Teachers have indicated the shift of lecture-based teaching to dialogic teaching practises. This change can be linked with Freire (1970) that suggested problem-posing education. Pedagogical strategies (think-pair-share, reflective questioning and experience-based discussions) are also based on the research by Shor (1992) who proves that dialogic instruction helps develop the voice and agency of learners. Empirical research conducted by Ali and Kazemian (2015) in Pakistani English-language teaching settings supports the idea that structured discussion tasks can help the students to go beyond rote learning.

However, implementation is not balanced. Numerous educators hope to use guided discussions instead of an open dialogue, and this aspect is reflected in the argument of Luke (2012) that many educational systems follow the language of critical pedagogy, without adopting their political position. As long as students are involved, the discussions can be kept within harmless limits, and teachers rarely address structural inequalities or hegemonic discourses. This selective use undermines the radicalism of critical pedagogy.

5. 2. Linguistic and Cultural Resources.

The teachers viewed multilingual practises as resources, which aligns with the study conducted by García and Wei (2014) on the topic of translanguaging, which records that multilingual students perform better at school when they are allowed to use their full linguistic resources. The remarks about the enhanced understanding and inclusion are reminiscent of the claims made by Canagaraj (2013), according to which linguistic flexibility strengthens the process of participation in multilingual classrooms.

This practise, however, is limited. Other teachers are worried about institutional criticism in case they allow the heavy use of L1; this aspect is justified by Rahman (2020), who concludes that Pakistani institutions often equate the English-only instruction with the quality. These ideologies create tension to teachers as they embrace multilingualism to achieve their goals but they also have the intentions to meet the expectations of the institution. This paradox depicts how policy and ideology limit culturally responsive teaching.

The other limitation is that the teachers include cultural examples in a shallow manner giving little evidence of applying the examples to question social inequities, which is a significant part emphasised by Freire. According to McLaren (2003), critical pedagogy requires associating culture with power structures, and not just familiarity. The results show cultural assimilation and lack of critical thought.

4.3. Difficulties in the practise of Critical Pedagogy.

The difficulties expressed by the teachers are the same as those recorded in many situations of the Global South.

Rigid curriculum: Teachers stated that they were under pressure to follow the given syllabus and that is a common occurrence. Norton and Toohey (2011) argue that examination oriented systems repress space of critical discussion. In Pakistan, Aziz and Mahmood (2018) noted that teachers are under examination pressure and as such, they tend to focus on memorization, although they prefer interactive approaches.

Big classes: Teachers found it difficult to control group discussions in big classes- a result similar to that of Blatchford et al. (2012), who also note that the quality of teacher student interaction reduces in big classes. In Pakistan, there is poor infrastructure and lack of teaching staff, which worsens this situation.

Absence of training: Lots of teachers observed that critical pedagogy is not part of their professional development, which confirms Khan (2019), who discovers that most Pakistani teacher-education courses still focus on grammar-translation and behaviourist models. In the absence of theoretical background, teachers apply only partial components of critical pedagogy.

Institutional resistance: Administrators prefer silent and disciplined classrooms which is an argument by Giroux (1997) that schools tend to resist pedagogies that destabilise hierarchy or disturb the order. According to Pakistani studies by Ullah and Fatima (2021), principals often deter participatory work because they are afraid of losing discipline and undermine the efforts of teachers to build dialogic spaces.

All these issues reveal a systemic mismatch. The teachers can support critical thoughts, but the system is driving them towards traditional obedience.

5.4. Teacher Strategies to cope with constraints.

Pragmatic strategies are strategies used by teachers to bargain institutional obstacles.

Small-group work: Small groups are organised by teachers even in big classes. According to Hammond and Gibbons (2005), structured interaction is useful to assist learners to develop academic language, but the technique is only effective with the help of monitoring, which is hard to implement with 80-100 students.

Contextualised materials: Teachers make use of newspapers and local problems, which is in line with the local problems of Freire. Akbari (2008) discovers that contextual materials promote critical literacy in EFL classrooms. However, these are the resources that teachers use primarily in comprehension and language assignments and not to critically reflect on power.

Language flexibility: Translanguaging enhances anxiety, which aligns with the argument presented by García (2009), that multilingual classes can flourish when there is flexibility in the language by teachers. However, there is an unspoken order of preference by teachers towards the English language at the expense of the local languages, thus curtailing the true empowerment of languages.

Silent dialogue techniques: Teachers employ journals in reaction to administrative intolerance of noise. This new practise is reminiscent of Lillis (2001) who argues that reflective literacy is facilitated in silence writing spaces, indicating the influence of institutional control on pedagogical decisions.

Peer facilitators: Teachers hand-over the leadership roles to students, which may democratise classroom space (Shor, 1996). The figures however show that these roles are mostly informal; unless there is structural support, peer leadership is prone to vulnerability.

These plans show resilience and, at the same time, indicate a discrepancy between teacher intention and institutional reality. In this context, critical pedagogy is an agreed-upon compromise, instead of a revolutionary project.

Conclusion

The research was conducted on the premise of exploring the ways in which English instructors working in bilingual classrooms in Pakistan understand and practise critical pedagogy. The results suggest that educators are characterised by genuine desire to go beyond traditional, teacher-centred instructional approaches; however, their efforts are weighed down by institutionalised constraints and limitations within the system. The dialogic practises that teachers adopted included discussion, reflective questioning and problem posing tasks. These approaches ensured more people were involved and participated with confidence especially those learners who were known to keep silence in the traditional teaching environments. Also, educators made use of multilingual/cultural resources of students, thus, improving comprehension, and advancing inclusivity. These practises are symbolic of the overall goals of critical pedagogy i.e. learner empowerment, cultural affirmation and the development of meaningful knowledge. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate the partial implementation of critical pedagogy. Curriculum that is inflexible and test-oriented; classroom size; insufficient teacher education; and the unwillingness of administrators to facilitate change all hinder transformative teaching. Those structural impediments teach out teachers the possibility of engaging students in serious social critique or critical of the prevailing ideologies, leading to the classroom practise that is a watered-down form of critical pedagogy instead of fully exercising it. In spite of these hindrances, the

educators worked out viable mechanisms to make concessions. They implemented small-group practises in dense classrooms, used locally-specific materials, used translanguaging to overcome anxiety, and created silent discussion areas to meet the needs of the administration. These adaptive measures demonstrate the agency of the teacher and strength.

To sum up, the research suggests that there is an emerging but limited development of critical pedagogy in Pakistani multilingual English-language teaching classrooms. The teachers are committed and creative but the wider educational framework does not allow critical interaction to be sustained. To have a complete realisation of critical pedagogy systemic reforms are required, which includes curriculum redesign, improved teacher education programmes and institutional promotion of dialogic and multilingual practises. Without these reforms, teachers will probably still be inclined to introduce only partial forms of critical pedagogy instead of unleashing its revolutionary prospect.

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