CULTIVATING A LANGUAGE & SOCIAL JUSTICE PRAXIS: Reflection, Action, and Dialogue for Social Change

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THE STORY OF YOUR NAME

Share with your partner your name story

Listen to your partner’s name story

Ask a question about your partner’s name story

Critical Empathy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKSHOP OVERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; Social Justice: Frameworks &amp; Approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; Social Justice: Case Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Literacy Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praxis: Scenarios, Guiding Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now What?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRAXIS

“Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire 1972, p. 52)


See also: https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2020/03/12/what-is-praxis/, https://annwalkerwea.wordpress.com/2013/08/04/praxis/
Community Agreements

• Assume positive intent
• Be accountable for the impact of your actions and words
• Call people In (vs. call people out)
• Come to the discussion with kindness for each other and for yourself
• Challenge an idea, not the person
• Language is important (inclusive, respectful)
• Use “I” statements
• W.A.I.T. - Why am I talking/Why aren’t I talking?
• We are all responsible for this space
• What’s Said Here Stays Here, What’s Learned Here Leaves Here

Adapted from MIIS Symposium on World Languages Education (SOWLE) and Queers & Allies at MIIS
• How do you define social justice?
• Where does this definition come from?
• How specifically are language and social justice connected?
• Social justice is relational
• Social justice is about solidarity
• Social justice is aspirational
• Social justice is a reimaginations of our world
(Avineri & Martinez, 2021)
• Process & Goal
(Bell, 2007)
SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Human rights
- Resources
- Opportunities
- Respect
- Representation
- Recognition

(Picower, 2012)
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS

Who am I? What do I believe?
Where is my context? (macro, meso, micro, me-cro)
What are my goals?
Who are my trusted colleagues?
What can I do?
EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS & SCALES OF JUSTICE

• **Me-cro:** individual students’ and teachers’ identities, intersectionalities, experiences, language learning histories (integrated into the teaching/learning experience)

• **Micro:** interpersonal interactions in classrooms, differentiation, lesson planning, textbook/materials selection, assignments, classroom activities, online activities, equity, inclusive teaching practices

• **Meso:** institutional structures, curriculum design & assessment, language varieties, language policies, power dynamics, ethics

• **Macro:** language ideologies, which languages get taught & learned at the global scale, how different languages are valued/perceived, hegemony of English, power dynamics, histories of oppression & structural inequalities in the communities/countries/regions where we teach and learn
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE &amp; SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ways we use language to engage with/describe the world</td>
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<td>The languages/speakers who do and do not have power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Language Change + Social Change

1. Noticing, Observing, Reflecting, & Critiquing
2. Centering language
3. Recognizing positionalities
4. Collaborating
5. Raising awareness

“long-term, in-depth understanding of issues, contexts, and communities alongside active engagement in collaboration with others”

APPLIED LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY: 4 CASE STUDIES

• “Language Gap” (challenging deficit models) (Paugh & Riley, 2019)

• Sports Team Mascot Names (redressing public naturalized racism)

• I-Word (counteracting processes of dehumanization)

• Census Categories (recognizing communities and languages)

• Avineri, Johnson, Perley, Rosa, & Zentella (2021)
LANGUAGE & SOCIAL JUSTICE REFLECTIONS

• What are the language & social justice topics that are important to you? Why?
• How might you bring these topics into your educational practice?
• What tensions might arise? (E.g., internal, external, ideologies vs. practices)
EQUITY LITERACY FRAMEWORK (Gorski & Pathini, 2014)  
(recognize, respond, redress, create/sustain)

https://organizingengagement.org/models/equity-literacy
https://gradschool.oregonstate.edu/sites/gradschool.oregonstate.edu/files/equity_literacy_in_college_teaching_0.pdf
#1 Language/Textbook: The textbook you are using includes language describing different groups of people in a particular region. You believe that some of the terms the textbook includes are not appropriate in terms of race and ethnicity. How might you approach this situation?

#2 Language/Discussion Board: One of the readings you have assigned mentions differences in the ways that men and women use language. In their discussion board posting a student highlights this, noting that the author should have included the language use/experiences of non-binary people. How might you approach this situation?

#3 Language/Class Paper: One of your students who knows an L1 and is learning English as an L2 submits a class paper to you with English words, phrases, and syntax that are different from what you imagine an L1 English user would use. How might you approach this situation?
PRAXIS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

• Creating spaces for dialogue
• Building “Nests” (Comfort & Challenge) (Avineri, 2019)
• Being intentional in our pedagogical and curricular decision-making
• Being “meta” in partnership with our students/colleagues
• Modeling the balance between humility and expertise
• ”Yes and”
PRAXIS: NOW WHAT?

**Who** do you want to be as a language & social justice-oriented educator?

**Whom** do you want learn from/with?

**What** are you learning today that you can connect with your professional practice?

**Where/when** can you use what you have learned? At what scales?

**Why** do certain frameworks/ideas/approaches/activities resonate with you?

**How** will you move forward in your communities of practice (socialization vs. liberation)?