On the question of social justice: multicultural perspective language curriculum

Sohaila Javed

This paper questions the very notion of 'Multiculturalism' from the perspective of lived experience and practice in Canada, and because of its global manifestation, will be of interest to educators and thinkers worldwide. It critiques and challenges the theoretic aspect of this concept which, following Poststructuralist theories, draws attention to the cultural and historical specificity of all human knowledge, and cultural diversity of Western socio-cultural landscape, and yet falls short of translating this dream of reality in cultural representations and structures that give rise to inequities. My contention is that 'multiculturalism' exists more in theory than in practice and has yet to achieve a significant place in society, and for that, it makes considerable demands from stakeholders and provokes debate on what this 'Thing' called multiculturalism is, and proposes and alternative curriculum for all language teachers and learners worldwide. Drawing on my experience of living/ teaching/ learning midst plurality, I invite you to join my conversation as I struggle to make sense of my lived interpretation(s) of teaching and learning in the multicultural context. Engage with me in dialogue as I explore such questions as:

1. How does global social change and the increase in ethnically diverse groups affect how we understand Multiculturalism?
2. What does it mean to live/teach/advocate Multiculturalism?
3. How do the spaces (social, cultural, educational, political, etc.) we occupy effect our living multiculturally?
4. How does this quintessential issue get expressed in and through language?

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Language Curriculum, Social Justice

Introduction

The very concept of 'Multiculturalism' invites attention to the cultural and historical specificity of all human knowledge, and cultural diversity of western and eastern socio-cultural landscapes, and therefore posits immense interest as a global phenomenon. It affects all social, cultural and ethnic groups worldwide, and immediately, fosters a special magnetic appeal to a universal standard of equality and justice that would occupy

multiple diverse cultures in its all-encompassing embrace and consequently, affect equal social representation and practices.

On its explicit front, multi-culturalism is assumed to offer a check on oppression, privilege, and power in education and all manifestations of society so that, with its democratic ideal, it would provide a social habitus of equal opportunities of development and growth to all who inhabit this wonder land of dreams, imaginings, and open spaces and possibilities of becoming who they want to be. These constructs based on the promise of poststructuralist discursive undertakings, claim to constitute all inhabitants as conscious thinking subjects who, taking their responsibility in this equitable socially just context would contribute meaningfully to their world and act responsibly to develop and transform it. It is believed that Multiculturalism is a master narrative with epistemic certainty, stable signifiers, and established identities, based as it is on traditions such as "progressive," "radical," "emancipatory," and "liberation" pedagogies whose root metaphors are distinctly modern (Bowers, 1993a). The nature of this ideological discourse and its assumptions about humans and their position in society are a given and therefore, cannot be checked. However, it has been found that poststructuralism with many educative theoretical offshoots as critical pedagogy, encourages educators to challenge and critique these dominant assumptions as they have fallen short of subverting deep-seated humanist assumptions about humans, and have beleaguered to extend the divisive binaries that define the taken-for-granted "borders" (Giroux, 1991) between humans who live on the other side of the exclusive as well as exclusionary border within West as the devalued Other.

This persistent binary divide between the exclusive dominant, privileged essentialist Other and all others does not arise suddenly in academic debates or curriculum theorizing. Rather, it is the age-long practice despite many challenges from critical pedagogy and wise intellectuals on the meanings and voices, societal narratives and practices that are the manifestation of the virtually exclusive focus on these humans and human superiority based on their geographical, ethnic, racial, gender positionality and associated linguistic capabilities. Besides language, meaning, and subjectivity as points of discussion, language as "the place where social and political consequences are defined and contested" (Weedon, 1987, in Canadian Journal of Education, 2000, p. 189) needs to be the focal issue and denominator of social inequity, therefore, furthering "the question of how linguistic ideologies can and do become instruments of power as part of larger ideological complexes" (in Blommaert, 2007, p. 171). Implicitly, this position raises questions on the many spaces that

'multiculturalism' opens up and yet marginalizes and excludes diverse narratives and "plurality of audiences and constituencies".

Multi-culturalism is commonly understood in terms of fixed concepts of culture, ethnicity and language, reflecting society as it was, not as it is. My contention is that 'multiculturalism' exists more in theory than in practice and has yet to achieve a significant place in society, and for that, it makes considerable demands from stakeholders. I look at myself and reckon that I am a student, teacher and citizen simultaneously. I speak different languages (Urdu, Punjabi, and English). I have lived in two different countries and now back in Pakistan, am still struggling to understand what this 'Thing' called multiculturalism is.

Framing the Problem

In the advent of increasing global social change and advocacy of multiculturalism in Canada, and the steps taken in the "process of consolidating Canada's reputation as the world's first post-multicultural society" (Augie Fleras, 1995), it is imperative to read the multicultural narrative woven intelligently by power elite in the form of the Multicultural Act in 1988, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1985, and a federal department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship in 1991. As Augie Fleras re-reads the official multiculturalism's commitment to diversity, she celebrates the seriousness with which "racial and ethno-cultural differences are no longer dismissed as anomalies" in the "never-ending quest for national growth, identity, and unity." With this committed resolve, minorities formed an essential component of Canada's mosaic, and major institutions such as education and justice became organizational stakeholders as well as agencies responsible for real and effective changes in the socio-cultural fabric of Canada. A shift in the management of diversity is visible as far as perception and comprehension of these concepts are concerned, but what has emerged is official unresponsiveness and inequity as the "lack" in Lacanian terms, without maternalistic protection, because of which substantial representation of minorities in certain sectors is not emphatically visible. What is obvious is the "narrow sourcing" of the racial or ethnic community as far as resources are concerned. Moreover, the experiences and realities of racial minorities are considered substantial and exotic 'topics' for academic curriculum and excite much debate in limited circles. But these seem to be too substantive for the personnel who matter as they are "unable to comprehend the world from such diverse points of view, much less to appreciate the intensity of minority problems" or geared to their own estimation of minorities specifically immigrant minority, in the case of this study, they

continue to see them as outsiders. For them, the deviant otherness of foreigners or their "foreignness" does not allow them to accept this minority as normal and fully contributing members of society. The minority life chances availed by a few in the light of the greater majority is disheartening, more so in the advent of Canada's immigration policy and its central liberal-democratic intent.

Such a mindset trains personnel to see immigrants as "troublesome constituents" who are a serious threat to both the system and Canadians as individuals. These troublemakers, as Augie Fleras (1995) contends, are presented in the media not only as stealing jobs from Canadians, but also having a "diminished respect for human life or basic decency." By putting them in this category, minority realities are "boxed in" and marginalized as irrelevant and therefore, unable to contribute significantly to progressive community development. Such persistent negative portrayal, perception and comprehension of immigrant minorities in post-multicultural societies or the minorities present in any society, confirms their exclusion as well as creates a strong psychological barrier between visible minorities and the rest of society. The authorities then, are likely to intervene and control the 'miscreants' and comply with the dominant ideology that promotes the exclusion of "alternative points of view, reduction of dissent, and disagreement, manufacture of consensus and consent," and thereby, precludes immigrant minorities from the centralized multicultural discourse and all minorities from the limits of permissibility in society.

This pervasive institutionalized discrimination and practice associated with such an infiltration of multiculturalism in institutions and their structures is likely to consolidate the context of crisis or calamity for all those involved, both minorities and the majority culture. The white color dictate given to the fabric of society is non-inclusive and as Augie Fleras, (1995) postulates, such restrictive measures not only reject but also devalue the sincere commitment to making significant contribution to society they belong to, based as it is on their seeing themselves as fully-fledged members of that society. The psychological barrier that gets created with feelings of rejection and lack of appropriation and authentic representation is not good for the national growth, identity, and unity of any society, most significantly, of societies that call themselves the world's top post-multicultural societies.

Multi-Cultural Frames: Experiential Basis

While making connections to such a 'thing' in Pakistan, it is imperative to read the multicultural narrative as a matter of Educational

4

reform with its implications for language education, the educational system, educational institutions, both teachers and learners as the central force of the curriculum field, and most importantly, the world society as the ultimate beneficiary of curriculum change. Such a reading recognizes Multiculturalism as the dominant discourse, but shows a marked shift towards the Cultural Studies discourse because of the social facts and the nature of cultural discourse that is already embedded in Multiculturalism, and that itself challenges its claim as the dominant curriculum discourse of the Western society. These assumptions are called into question by discussion of how relationships between language, communication, and meaningful experience are conceptualized outside the field of critical pedagogy. This has implications for social existence at large, and also challenges the fixedness that multiculturalism has inflicted upon perceptions, thinking and actions, and thereby questions the legitimacy and representation of the western cultural ideals, disclosing its practical implications and limitations, and then, considering what it offers to other cultures and groups outside the West, considering the overwhelming western influence everywhere.

The shift from multiculturalism to cultural studies and its movement through critical pedagogy, as pointed by Wright (1997), counterpoints to the processes of theoretical transitions that are happening in Curriculum theorizing today, and thus, help to redefine it as inherently political, combatant and mutable. There are so many simultaneous contestations coming from different disciplines and discourses that a definite and final definition of curriculum is not possible. In this context, one can look for a space where an understanding of curriculum from one's educational concept, education and learning and teaching practice as well as global and local education needs, can become one's principle and practice, despite the limitations and endless critiques.

The relation of curriculum with the larger world is a historical reality and unchallengeable. To deny or sever this intrinsic relationship would be a travesty of historical truth, and therefore unacceptable. Here, it would be profitable to see that the great proposition to educational realists was to recognize western society as a multicultural society, but the challenge is to see how far rejection of other cultures and races has been rejected in theory, and finally removed from public institutions, most importantly, educational institutions and social existence practically, so as to proclaim Multiculturalism as the dominant practicing curriculum or master narrative and ideological discourse of the western society, and thereby, ascertaining their claim to the dominating ideology as post-multicultural societies.

Multiculturalism, with its liberalism and commitment to diversity, is an assumption of living in a multicultural society, facing institutions and experiencing a new ethnicity as an outsider. Institutio..s and academia worldwide talk intensely of Freire's concept of critical pedagogy (1998) that provokes us "to rupture, to opt, to make choices". People choosing to live or studying in the west for the great options that it says it provides them, are taken in by huge slogans that multiculturalism brings with it. Experience, real life experience and actual happenings erode this myth of multiculturalism when institutions invariably ask in-comers, 'by the way, what are you?'

Institutions are veritable sites of recognition and accommodation that posit hope and possibility to its people. But these institutes of enlightenment and awareness have other intentions that are unrecognizable because of the implicit and hidden ways they work. Their discursive system fails to provide intellectual and moral support to its new in-coming people, who are normal decent human beings, and whose merit or credentials are appropriated by the immigration agents. At the point of entry, they are not discriminated against for their "membership in a devalued group". Rather, the causal-cognition of this membership leads to the restriction of employment opportunities when they are undervalued as if coming from institutions that lack quality, itself a reflection of "systemic" discrimination and differentiation that positions them as devalued Other, and also speaks of the application of over-generalized standards to unequal situations. This conditioning dissociates and distances, creating pathological states most unwholesome for careerists committed to making positive and sustainable contribution anywhere. These orchestrations tend to reinforce rather than subvert deep-seated assumptions about humans for borders that acknowledge and allow bordering rather than border crossing within the western society. Strict parameters are maintained and rigorously practiced. This refusal to accept and accommodate the other becomes a much orchestrated ground for dehumanizing experiences that are more demoralizing and de-capacitating than mere disregard. This mismanagement of diversity is an affront to human rights codes as to the original values and beliefs of this wonderful land and its peoples. It amounts to callous indifference and apathy that breeds insecurity, anxiety, and subsequent fear of the future of Canada when it misleads in "defining collective experience, shaping consciousness, and legitimating status quo" (Augie Fleras, 1995), and can generate resentment in and against those who do not conform to the mainstream ideal. Such deviation from professed declarations of equity and justice is unhealthy and not good for Canada. And it is also not so good for policy-makers and politics of countries anywhere in the world. This transgression in practice is a warning

to countries that proudly proclaim democratic charters as their vantage point, and yet for them, integration of diverse cultural and ethnic groups in their society in actual practice is a far cry.

These public institutions, with their normative universals of highest value, need to take a reflective pause and ponder on their assumptions, and think beyond their own interests. When confronted with needs and opinions based upon the practice of lived experience, according to van Manen's idea of practice, they will come to understand the limitations of the best policy for everyone. It asks for flexibility of approach and responding sensitively to individual cases that means coming down from that hierarchical cultural imperialism and generalized policy system in order to enter into a dialogical engagement with Others who opted to come here and live with other Canadians. It is simply a matter of intelligent choice and invites utmost care and trust, and not betrayal and distrust from host and other countries in this very decisive and poignant moment.

This thing of 'multiculturalism' etches deeply into the being of Canada and in fact, replicates deep etchings into the being of humans living outside west, and is therefore, deeply problematic. The educational vision it promises has brought me to the reality of my existence in Canada and Pakistan, to the limits and possibilities, the tensions between my reading of it and societal theoretical positions and norms. The social conditions and the conditioned cultural status, both in Canada and Pakistan depend on the way institutions act, and ask one to determine why things are as they are, making a much more specific analysis of real life-situations necessary if different concepts are to be re-conceptualized, and policies are to be re-made. Taking inspiration from Wright (1997) and critical pedagogy, we know that conceptual changes in isolation from actual practices lose their real significance and meaning. Perhaps this speaks for the prevalence of such labels that classify or categorize, while reflecting power, domination and even fragmentation. Such labels as the dominant group, superior/inferior, subordinate groups, the Other, differences, minorities/majority, one race/culture over the other, emerge in pedagogical arguments and draw on cultural differences between the constructed other and the larger group. Such discriminatory discourse has real outcomes in the real world, as seen in the effect of categorizing and discriminating between certain groups that legitimizes the practices which keep the Pakeha New Zealanders in their positions of power (Mills, 1999, p. 144-145). It is also known that the appropriation of Western as the definitive cultural and civilized (con)texts in schools and universities went unchallenged, and that was the axis on which others were regarded only as on the receiving end. This shows a strong tendency toward cultural

dichotomy that has long existed in inquiry and real life, and still exists and works against social integration and interpersonal expectations (Giri, 2002). Of course, changes are visible in the formal language, for example the use of the word 'diversity' and many changes in the socio-political structure of Canada, and a proliferation of such labels and play on words is now rampant in Pakistan as well. Yet the need is felt for insightful reading into this issue so that genuine social change, based on multiculturalism's diversity perspective, becomes a normative practicing principle. It asks for responding adequately to the situation, and that in turn rests on a willingness to critique prevailing cultural discourses and to consider alternative representations.

Co-Cultural Curricular Earthscape

This paper attempts to critique the taken-for-granted 'multicultural' label, and offers another way of understanding cultural differences that support cultural pluralism and have implications for human language in a human-centered epistemological framework with a focus on English language as a catalyst for social transformation. It is done with the hope of enlarging the concept of multiculturalism that might bring more understanding, interrelatedness and social equity, and offer a greater possibility of harmony and peaceful co-existence within countries and with all others outside. This also holds promise for languages other than English to take initiative and see them as "the place where social and political consequences are defined and contested" (Weedon, 1987, in Canadian Journal of Education, 2000, p. 190).

No one would argue against the perceived differences in various aspects of human experiences, and that defining differences involves complex issues that require critical scrutiny and a liberal intellectual space. Many would consider all that is at stake in such a situation. Permitting that cultural differences exist and that people as humans have individual lived experiences that may not be shared by other members of the same culture what to say of other cultures, and that there may be division within a culture regarding race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, language, geographical conditions, places, and cross-cultural influences, saying nothing about differences in a culture about the need for social change. The need therefore is to deeply respect and regard differences as important and not to consider people as superior/inferior or incorrect/correct on the basis of these differences and dissimilarities. It also points to the wonder way opened by Mandela with his reconciliatory discourse in the "old national conflicts imposed by now defunct political powers of East and West" (Gordimer, 1999), that people must learn to live together otherwise they

will continue to regard one another as enemies, vesting leading roles to the theory of racial/cultural superiority and the theory of subordination that divide us and set us apart from each other in an "organic apartheid" or bondage of colonization that seems to stubbornly persist.

These divisive acts of conduct and behavior reflect the inner intricacies integral to the way we think of differences, and in the way that labels are used. These also point to the deep investments power structures and communities have in setting themselves off from others, and by following these investments and definitive labels, we are complicit in the cultural isolationist program and policy carefully devised for such isolationist practices. This firstly, points specifically to the way labels symbolizing a cultural dichotomy are created and maintained to serve power relations in which the gap within a group and between groups is kept from being filled so that neither one nor the other group will change. This dichotomy manifests itself in the label 'multiculturalism' symbolizing power struggle within a culture and between cultures. Secondly, I see the Other adopting cultural distinctiveness and subsequent unrelatedness and rigidity towards other cultures or ethnic groups in their struggle for power. There is potential for hegemony and control resulting from seeing others as opponents and subsequently, placed in a position to contest their rights. Thirdly, I see the Other repressed and awed by the dominant presence and institutions that represent them (the result of their historical conditions that have enslaved them). I argue that this dominance has to be demystified and dichotomies lessened by critical insight expected of dominant groups to think on their thinking about multiculturalism and also to go beyond criticality to demonstrating human understanding for all groups that would lay the foundation for a more equal and newer pluralistic society and world at large.

The argument explicitly engages this new concept of interrelationship and needs to be premised on change. Mere tolerance of difference in which each community or sub-group just carries on separately from all other groups is an inappropriate response or approach. Groups with the concept of 'fair' distribution of power are likely to remain different and hostile for the intractable problem in defining the legitimate scope or measure of 'fair' as rightly pointed out by Phillips (1994).

Here difference is the mechanism which can transform and change the politics of dominance. Difference is not about a toleration tract but is to be taken as a challenge, something that not only challenges dominant groups and asks them to reassess their own values and perspectives, but also challenges smaller/subordinate or excluded groups to go beyond small

sectarian loyalties. Their narrow bonding or group self-interest will work against the larger good of society. The ultimate goal is a wider sense of belonging, which is why difference can be neither denied nor simply left as it is. Only then group representation, as legitimate will be lived by all without suppression or oppression or disadvantage. Here it is pertinent that each group recognizes its role and consequent respons-ability in the whole/part relationship. Potential is for each group as a whole/part phenomenon to develop and become as its own agency but also develop its own communion or fitting in with other groups that are an intrinsic part of its environment. This partnership places each group in a profound tension. It has to exist in its own right as a whole but also cannot exclude or deny its fundamental dependence upon other groups of which it is a part. Thus an extensive web of relationships exists, and for maintaining these group relationships as agency/community, are human beings, whose existence as a differentiation-integration unit is an acknowledgement that means that this theory of HOLONS as Wilber (1990) will agree, must not be anchored in power, prejudice, gender, race, and colonization. Of primary concern and interest to us are relationships among humans within the same social context as well as beyond. Relegating others with smaller stakes to an inferior position, and depriving them of opportunities that can grant them a compatible level of existence with inhabitants who have higher stakes reflects the structure and legitimization of human domination and exploitation of human groups. These dominations are a manifestation of oppressive social arrangements that in turn are connected with the instrumental exploitative gaze through which, we humans as part of a human group distance ourselves from the rest of humans. There is no relation between and among humans, and there is little acknowledgement of the systemic links between human oppressions and the domination of humans themselves. Human relationships have been ignored as if the suffering and exploitation of humans other than themselves were irrelevant before culturally positioned essentialisms. If we continue to treat social categories of human groups as dominant/subordinate, superior/inferior, upper/lower as defined by the theoretical 'Multiculturalism' and consider them as stable and unchanging, this will paramount to reproducing the prevailing relations of power (Britzman et al., 1991, p.89).

The fact is that culture is not something set in stone, and as a cultural combine, it is simply Culturalism in the making, and that making is destined to carry all of us straight to our places on this one beautiful Earth, one definite destination, with 'us' thus multiplying, the actual problem. This means that a multiperspectival and multidimensional approach to the reality of multi-culturalism is called for. Any simple/single perspective is

likely to be partial, limited, and perhaps even distorted. It is perhaps only by taking multiple perspectives and multiple contexts and multiple differences as distinctive markings that we can carry ourselves to our destined place. A holistic "aperspectival" view as coined by Gebser (in McCarthy, 1993a), more specifically the term integral-aperspectival to refer to the pluralistic or multiple-perspectives view in connection with worldviews needs to be considered when considering with Freire (1987), the importance of "naming" the world. The boundaries, according to Freire, are because of a sharp, hierarchical dichotomy that establishes human superiority of some groups over others. All this is being done, Freire reminds us, despite our knowing that humans alone are aware and self-conscious beings who can act to fulfill the objectives they set for themselves. Imagine the roles we humans as conscious human beings have set for ourselves and the objectives of domination and resultant domination and suffering that we have devised for others. Humans alone can restore the balance and with their creative presence more than their critical demeanor, perform meaningful acts and to overcome situations that limit them, and thus demonstrate a "decisive attitude toward the world" they co-inhabit and to which they at different times are "organically bound." It is the responsibility of their host contexts to accept them as co-inhabitants and make acceptance, appreciation, and reverence the criteria of change in the human perspective that is beyond race or ethnicity, gender, name and culturally determined social existence.

According to Gebser, "aperspectival" means that no single perspective is privileged, and thus, in order to gain a more holistic view, we need an aperspectival approach towards all cultures, ethnicities and other groups, which is exactly why I have hyphenated them as Co-Culturalism. Here no particular subject exists as the exclusive with an exclusive perspective that gets privileged above the other, but only as 'co' or joint to cultural subjects in culturalism that exist in communion with all others.

My vision of Co-Culturalism respects all groups with their perspectives as worthy of deep respect, and thus attempts to grasp the whole, the multiple texts within the con-text that etch deeply into the flowing co-cultural tapestry. This is the mode of evolution and evolution needs to be the mode and manner of Co-Cultural West, and Canada as part of the West, with an inclusive intelligible context for Pakistan in actualizing themselves as large cultural-ethnic combines. This integration promises a genuine unity in diversity. The domains are importantly different and should be allowed to be so but their access follows a simple pattern of awareness, disclosure and unfolding in a mutual reciprocity of care and communion and compassion through communication. This is the

actualizing principle of growth and development that transcends and includes but does not repress or repel by lower impulses. Otherwise, "normal and natural hierarchies can degenerate into pathological hierarchies, into dominator hierarchies" (Wilber, 1998) with power, domination and oppression as degenerate substitutes. It is intentionality that has to be weighed over all other considerations for its consummate potential for making this beautiful Earth a meaningful constructive place for all.

Multiculturalism with its opaque and onerous form does not contain a mesmeric that joins and integrates differentiating components of the large cultural combine. Culturalism that is 'multi' exists in its own right as a name or definition determining diversity without vows or promises far beyond its mainstream counterparts or just worrying away at the condition that will generate change. Co-Culturalism instead is a more flexible representational mode that shows willingness to opt, to nurture, and receive each group with respect, understanding and awareness of their presentness in this historical moment. It is an apt linguistic usage that gives meaning to their multiplicity, diversity and variety, and also expresses the need for "unity within diversity". It raises consciousness about political existence and also vies for a democratization of existence that promises "meaningful civic participation" (Phillips, 1994), interconnectedness and solidarity to which all group members will like to inhere.

Moreover, it is not just praxis or a pulsating dogma that will induce change. In a simple change of heart lies the initiation as Gilligan and Rogers (1990) will like to listen. So, another heart and other pulses for resuscitation of the human phenomena here is the viable novelty to work upon. The best instinctive urge will be to accept from the heart that 'all of us are here, now.' Resistance does not help nor does ignorance or avoidance. What can help is a commitment to an 'us' as well as a 'me' and to be worked out on sites now opening up for entry into the webs of communication all around us, and also arise above monotonous, culture-specific social existence.

Here all groups will reckon that "while difference must be recognized and equality guaranteed, none of the differences is set in stone" (Phillips, 1994). And then, sitting down calmly and sharing the communicative act round the table is a step toward wisdom of humility that urges a wise civility and ethical commitment to sharing and compassionate communication. The minimum condition of such an approach is loosening the self that was not before and therefore inhibited dialogue and brought unrelatedness and frozen indifference. What this

indicates to me is the emphasis on public interaction between different groups and exposure to alternate perspectives as a positive development. It will upset the monopoly on ideas and self-interest, break the state of stasis, and make for change. A process for self-reflection that encourages reassessment needs to be initiated, and a new genuine democratization that upholds justice, equality and community-mindedness will thus be recreated.

Schools as transformational sites

Schools as social institutions are seen to be the optimum place of social change, where respectability, moral values and social commitment as normative experiences are said to be fostered. Their role in imparting education through core curriculum is always reckoned as core stuff, and therefore, less time is given to the possibility of social change in terms of relationships, attitudes, inner needs and creating expectations for greater personal and social integration, students' moral, intellectual and emotional nourishment, self-esteem and self-realization. This is a serious endorsement as envisaged by such serious-minded visionaries, philosophers and educators as Dewey (1963), Eisner (1985), Huebner (1999), Noddings (1992) with their progressive education movement, and theorists of critical pedagogy as hooks, Freire, etc., who see active and transformative learning and the social relations that academic training provides as necessary. Here attainment tasks and examinations are more important for schools rather than social interactions that begin at these preliminary entry points that can bring more learning, greater understanding and closer ties among and across different groups. As Chandra Mohanty (cited in Giroux, 2005, p. 66) reminds us that "the language of critical pedagogy needs to construct schools as democratic public spheres," and that it can focus on the issue of difference in an ethically challenging and politically transformative way. With the knowledge that student identities and subjectivities are constructed in multiple and contradictory ways, students can be encouraged to reflect and talk openly about the diverse ways in which their experiences and identities have been constituted within and outside of the schools in webs of domination, hierarchy, and exploitation. This inter-dialogic and inter-cultural communication will offer students the opportunity to see themselves differently from the dominant discourse that is power-centric. For Giroux (2005), it promises "the possibility of creating pedagogical practices characterized by the open exchange of ideas, the proliferation of dialogue, and the material conditions for the expression of individual and social freedom " (pp. 68-69). With the heteroglot that language is seen to form from top to bottom, students can engage in conversations about

themselves as they negotiate their sense of identity, politics, and culture but in a context of trust and authenticity where language teachers in the ambit of critical pedagogy as suggested by Giroux (2005, p. 142), invent "a new language for resituating teacher/student relations within pedagogical practices that open up rather than close down the borders of knowledge and learning," and in the horizon of dialogic ex-change, both teacher and students, through forms of ethical address and cultural work, can become critical referents of change in cultural production.

Therefore, critical pedagogy along with Cultural Studies recommends practices situated in student's cultures (Shor, 1992) and communities and schools of practice that transgress self-binding positions, and open themselves to celebrate and share relationships, contexts, and local histories in defining who we are, calling into question the individualistic and universalistic narratives that shape curriculum and schooling generally (Giroux, 1991, p. 24). Here, the ecological contexts and environmental ethos that gets constructed with such role binding issues ignores students' training in relationships, and thus deprives them of their human embeddedness in schools and other social contexts of which they are a part along with others. This naturally results in our failure to understand what sustains and nourishes us, and how our dependence on others, in fact, how we are situated in cultures and our embodied relatedness to the human world as well as more-than-human world has left us outside of the creative space that acknowledges our human bonding and therefore, the importance of holistic development that comes with sensual, emotional, tacit, and communal knowledge that is grounded in meaningful experiences with others. This is how we are "socially constructed within discourses of race, class, gender, age and other forms of oppression" (S. Taylor, 1991, p. 61). Acknowledging the discourses that construct us and without ignoring their cultural and political dimensions, we need to go beyond critical approaches to education and give attention to our kinship with each other and the fact that like us, knowledge is socially constructed and therefore partial, and also realizing the importance of creative space, encourage "the personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding" (N. Gough, 1997, p. 621), without which spontaneous acceptance of others and their life-worlds is not possible. This will then become the normal way of seeing the world, and with this discourse of normalcy, recognizing others as co-beings will help us take up and confront inequities as abnormal practice and pathology in dire need of treatment. Such wondrous possibilities can happen if we pause for a moment for these important considerations: How can schools contribute to building a society with less partisanship, less restrictive and

formal contexts? What measures need to be taken that will give back the schools their normative nomenclature as unique social institutions?

All these concerns and questionings point to establishing a critical social consciousness that penetrates ideology and curriculum content practiced in daily classroom contexts. This kind of critical inquiry will initiate incisive efforts towards bolstering the hidden curriculum that deals with the ways in which knowledge and behavior get constructed outside the course materials and school curriculum. It is about resisting the aged illusion of neutrality, objectivity, and anonymity, and going beyond rational approaches and empiricist designs to social foundations and sites, where teachers and students meet in meaningful, participatory ways to opt, nurture, and make choices about the way they want to be and become who they are. This politically-oriented curriculum will problem-pose as to why are things the way they are, and who is responsible for this social stasis. Theoretical things like a transformative literacy document about "reading of the word" and "reading the world" for social justice, the kind ushered in by Freire and Macedo (1987), as part of classroom readings will stir consciousness, invite critical thinking and creative presence that will widen the mental horizon, and make for change.

As to why these issues want critical dispensation and how this critical inquiry receives legitimacy and representation through language is the next stop over.

Re-visioning a living language curriculum

The bolstering of language, communication and meaningful experience is one human possibility that makes a point of entry into the practice of communication all around us, where language can become the medium through which, instead of setting ourselves apart and above, we develop relations with an astonishing diversity of life forms, human groups, and a world in which everything has intelligence, personality and voice. Here we see ourselves in spaces where "polyphonous echoes are not reduced to homophony" (Kane, 1994), but sharing this polyphonic space, we are more open to listening to many representations of human voice and language as well as "otherworldy conversations" that are happening all around us, a world right here in which all of the actors are not "us" (Haraway, 1992, p. 84).

Such educational projects need to posit a cultural psychology perspective to education, the kind Bruner argues (1996) because of the interactional, communicative, and situated nature of education, also

because the shaping of identities and worldviews and a sense of personal place in society is happening in "works" or "oeuvres" that allow for exchange and sharing of ideas. It is on these sites that Bruner calls "enabling cultures," where meaning making and sense taking in collaborative, communal settings happens, and a respect for cultures interacting through different conscious subjects can be exemplified. The scope of this thinking about education and its role in contemporary world society is immense when through intersubjectivity, "people come to know what others have in mind and how they adjust accordingly" not only to successful developmental and educational outcomes, but also to each other by the close proximity where the understanding of self and others can happen, and through empathic understanding and interpersonal ability practiced through language, practical stability in complex communities can be ensured.

Another viable novelty that I see emerging is from a living language curriculum location- the schools- all educational institutions, that reflect and reify the social realities, and to make change here is indispensable, even as we work at changing the society itself. And the best articulate site of the language socialization perspective to me is the language class. On this cultural site, the pedagogy and practice of cultural experience is to be enacted by all students as representational modes of a widening culture that is not a narrow, restrictive monoculture in any possible way. The effort has to be collective, involving creative language teachers and their students, so that the teaching practice and learning within the class, is responsive to cultural sharing (Spradley, 1972) in co-cultural terms.

I propose table-talk sessions about 'here and now', in which students and teachers jointly engage in a discourse on co-cultural interests and topics, cultural scenes and events, myths and grandmother stories, traditions and new visions, many ideas and sensibilities, multiple perspectives heard and spoken about, leaving no vacant spaces or silences within and without. These communication patterns will bring about genuine communication that can open up all students through talking. Since students are inclined to think of theory as the opposite of practical things, they need to know that getting them to work through their own cultural stories would practically engage them in creating their own theoretic constructs. I therefore see the language class as the most accommodating space for others and differences, where social understanding, accommodation and integration, can really get started. If undertaken passionately and with compassion, it will emphatically break the status quo in pedagogical methods and compartmentalized thinking

patterns through human thinking and feeling. This 'wake-up call' to education will at once awaken students' epistemological curiosity and be so close to our understanding curriculum autobiographically.

Most important is to get students to talk to each other as fellow human beings accepted on the basis of fraternity, not simply on the basis of equality, about issues and problems about others and differences that are important to them. This is not a discourse about issues that come from outside and is not connected with students' daily existence. It will be an emotive representational mode of sounds in words, that are symptomatic of the living language that resounds with interest, excitement, curiosity, tension, doubt and fear; even language that allows them to get down into their tensions and fears and helps them to open up, to know who they are, where they are, and what they need to do as they are. This will largely bring students close to Spradley's (1972) idea of "rendering experiences into words" and what Mohan (1997) says about communicating ideas through words alone and that too in face-to-face communication.

We will see them living through language in lived experiences, and continued practice in such a living community, will develop in them the art of hearing profound messages and calls, that has been lost in living ordinary lives separately. As language teachers, we need to allow the voice of language itself to speak to each other and thus to be heard and listened to. The multiplicity of sounds and meanings that we will infer from the living language and living in language will shape them and mould them to live authentically as young in the present and as adults in the future. The message that unfolds will address us and allow us to live together with the young and all others in the home of being, that is language, so Heidegger confers (1976). This is the poetic space where building, dwelling, and thinking will take place, and where we will soon begin to see the rationality of relationships as defined by our children and adult learners to us, to share insights acquired through the voice of language and be emotionally moved to talk about our cultural non-sharing, reflect upon our living without relationing across groups, and think about living-in-relationships with groups, thus becoming more passionate creatives, who are ready to live with all others.

These groups discussions, as praxial sites of cultural relationships, can be developed into more discussions on texts through the teachers' use of questions, feedback, and develop further into writing sessions that will want reflection, speculation, and more imaginative insights. Here, peer collaborative learning and working can offer great chances of academic achievement and intellectual development for minority group students

and will be beneficial for all language students. For them, talking with this dialogic approach to agency and subjectivity, would give them assurance of being, as Bakhtin (1984, cited in Dialogue with Bakhtin on Second and Foreign Language Learning, 2005, p. 149) ensures: "To be means to communicate. Absolute death (not being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized, unremembered." It would develop in them an urgency to talk for, according to Vera, adult immigrant (cited in Dialogue with Bakhtin on Second and Foreign Language Learning, 2005, p. 149), "I cannot live when I cannot speak. *Yazyk eto zhizn* (Language is life)". With this speaking repertoire, they will learn about interdependence and how to solve problems and to learn together which can be a learning site for socio-cultural programs that will benefit all groups.

It also posits the possibility of using folk stories as opportune moments for using community languages while also considering their possibilities as heritage texts. This is another aspect of "enabling cultures" role of education and language curriculum, which for Creese, Wu & Blackledge (2009), becomes a curriculum resource for learning and teaching language as well as cultural heritage. Here the prospect of multiple literacies and multilingualism through the use of folk stories ensures social identification of all cultures that are present in the social setting of the class; and through intersubjective and interactional telling of folk stories, I contend that these language teaching and learning spaces can, in deep and thoughtful ways, get to the heart of the matter of education, that is, to build relationships and encourage relations-in-practice. Through this narrative mode of meaning making, the central discourse of education that is, developing the understanding of self and others gets realized, and social and cultural cohesion practiced. Another study (Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani, and Martin, 2006) sees using the linguistic practices of students and teachers in minority language schools for negotiating young people's multilingual and multicultural identities. I consider these as innovative spaces, where both committed and compassionate educators of language curriculum engage learners' linguistic resources in "sophisticated and creative ways to negotiate subject positions which appear to contest and subvert school's attempts to impose upon them the dominant heritage identity".

This is active occupation that has a social origin and use, and is about a discourse, which is familiar to both teachers and learners. This is, in Dewey's (1963) view, the best implication. And what a fair sense of being, that is in touch with all their senses in history and their surroundings. Their teachers will have touched real lives and helped students relive lived experiences through spoken and written word. Both

students and teachers will thus collaborate in creating and re-creating a living, real, tangible, perceptible Co-Cultural curriculum. This will make them sensitive to familiar co-curricular issues, and thereby, create support and hope for greater collaboration outside of schools. These students will have been put into the habit of collective action and cultural sharing as Spradley (1972) puts it. The goal is *compassionate communicative action* for present and future use through the praxis of inviting all language discourse, for co-existing in the one big community that this new cultural studies envisions for them. The co-cultural dimension of language curriculum would add a new understanding of "unity in diversity" and simultaneously, offer a possibility of change in the outlook, attitude of educational institutions, higher education community, educationists, teachers and students, parents and the community here as everywhere in the world, and also invite an "aperspectival" outlook toward other worldviews, wisdom traditions and world cultures.

This is an invite for language teachers to know and reflect on the need of creating spaces for compassionate collaborative action when they finally get to work with language learners in the classroom. It will also prepare students to think of earth and their environment and other life forms as living entities that have to be taken care of and treasured. It will have enhanced human perception, self-awareness and coexistence. And encouraged its practice very quietly in a spirit of supreme love and egalitarianism that all have helped to create. This cultural edge shift is an intellectual awakening that will then, be applied or practiced in real-life situations.

We will now understand and communicate that conceptual changes in isolation from actual practices lose their real meaning. We will have seen that the prevalence of such labels that classify or categorize only reflect an inordinate ambition for power and domination, and also fragmentation. Such labels as the dominant group, superior/inferior, subordinate groups, the other, differences, minorities/majority emerge in pedagogical arguments manifest cultural dichotomy and borders that works against social integration and interpersonal expectations (Giri, 2002). With a cultural edge shift from multiculturalism through critical pedagogy to cultural studies being expressed in formal and informal language and communication, we will see ourselves working together for many changes in the socio-political structure of advanced and developing countries. This will show how we are inclined to another representation and also another way of understanding cultural differences that support cultural pluralism by rejecting cultural isolation, and have implications for

the English language as an activity for social transformation that will bring interrelatedness and social equity.

With this theoretic construct as our grounding, language teachers need to begin a new conversation of the humankind as Rorty (in Madison, 1988) had dreamed to imagine, and initiate the following language curriculum at all levels in the Co-Cultural perspective:

i.   *Cultural differences* as a form of knowledge

ii.   Critical consciousness for the understanding of *real human experiences*

iii.   Collective consciousness that *accepts difference* and ends *exploitation, rejection, and violence.*

Language used for these activities will be engaged in a conversational mode of inquiry as the following:

i.   Self-expression

ii.   Face-to-face communication about cultural themes, personal and family experiences. Teacher's compassionate being is imperative.

iii.   Group language discourse that stresses empathy and critical thinking for community building processes.

It will be seen as an act of necessity born from awareness of, and deep respect for multiple voices and the experiences that represent them in the Co-Cultural perspective of language. Only as collective hope, it will make us work vigorous actions that will be based on the curriculum that embraces cultural differences and practices 'compassionate communication' as praxis. This co-cultural community will adopt 'multilingualism' as a major contemporary need and also as a space for cross-cultural character of discourse, a curriculum of faith, of hope, of sustenance and survival, of existence and coexistence. It will come to reckon that an ethic of inter-understanding and inter-communicative nature of contextual fluidity is the normal and natural hierarchy for the greater good of society that is truly democratic and egalitarian in its practices, with its promise of starting that dialogue of civilizations and cultures that Giri (2002) and Bellah (1991) saw as an antidote to hegemonic monoculture and the practice of moral wisdom as the basis of any good institution respectively. And all this lies in the practice of communication praxis about here and now that is the context of socially relevant action, a curriculum divine for all language teachers and learners worldwide offering a genuinely transdisciplinary learning experience, that

is transformative, inspired as it is by a pragmatic discourse of alternative languages of many selves, diverse cultures and societies, and that is grounded in intersubjective relationships among peoples of the world.

References

Arnett, R. C., & Arneson, P. (1999). *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Banks, J. (1993). The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher*, 22 (5), 4-14.

Bell, A. & Russell, C. (2000). Beyond Human, Beyond Words: Anthropocentrism, Critical Pedagogy, and the Poststructural Turn. Canadian Journal of Education 25, 3: pp. 188-203.

Bellah, R. (Ed.). (1991). *The Good Society.* New York: Random House.

Bhaskar, R. (1993). *Dialectics: The Pulse of Freedom.* London: Verso.

_____. (2000). *From East to West: The Odyssey.* London: Routledge.

Blommaert, J. (2007). Discourse. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bowers, C. A. (1993a). Critical essays on education, modernity and the recovery of the ecological imperative. New York: Teachers College Press.

Bruner, J. (1996). The Culture of Education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Britzmen, D. Santigo-Valles, K., Jiminez-Munes, G., and Lamash, L. (1991). Dusting off the erasures: Race, gender, and the problem of pedagogy. Education & Society. 9 (1/2), 83-99.

Creese, A., Bhatt, N. Bhojani, & P. Martin. (2006). Multicultural, heritage and learner identities in complementary schools. *Language and Education* 20/1: 23-44.

Creese, A., Wu, C., & Blackledge, A. (2009). Folk stories and social identification in multilingual classrooms. *Linguistics and Education*. 20/4: 350-365.

Dewey, J. (1963). Experience and education. New York: MacMillan.

Eisner, E. W. (1985). *The Educational Imagination.* England: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

Fleras, A. (1995). "Please Adjust Your Set": Media and Minorities in a Multicultural Society in Communications in Canadian Society, 4th Edition.

Freire, P. & Macedo. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World.* South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of the Heart.* New York: Continuum.

_____. (1990). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Continuum.

Gilligan, C. Lyn M. B., & Rogers, A. (1990). Psyche Embedded: A Place for Body, Relationships, and Culture in Personality Theory. In A. I. Rabin, R. Zucker, R. A. Emmons, & S. Frank (Eds.), *Studying Persons and Lives*. New York: Springer Publishing.

Giri, A. K. (2002). *Conversations and Transformations.* Maryland: Lexington Books.

Giroux, H. A., (1991). Border pedagogy and the politics of postmodernism. *Education and Society.* 9 (1), 23-38.

_____. (2005). Border Crossers. Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education. New York & London: Routledge.

Grumet, M. & Pinar, W. (1976). *Toward a poor curriculum: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Currere.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Gordimer, N. (1999). Living In Hope And History: Notes From Our Century. New York.

Gough, N. (1997). Education and the environment: Policy, trends and the problems of marginalization. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Hall, J. K., Vitanova, G. & Marchenkova, L. (2005). Dialogue with Bakhtin on Second and Foreign Language Learning. New Perspectives. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New Jersey.

Haraway, D. (1992). Otherworldly conversations: terran topics; local terms. Science as Culture, 3(14), 64-98.

Heidegger, M. (Ed.). (1976). Letter on Humanism. In Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. New York: Harper and Row.

James, G. (1987). *The Search For Faith And Justice In The Twentieth Century*. New York: Paragon House.

Kane, S. (1994). The wisdom of the mythtellers. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Madison, G. B. (1988). *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

McCarthy, C. (1993a). Understanding Curriculum as Racial Text: Multiculturalism, 323-327. In Understanding Curriculum: an introduction of the study of history and contemporary curriculum discourse. 17.

Mills, S. (1999). Discourse. London & New York: Routledge.

Mohan, B. and Naerssen, M. V. (1997). *Understanding Cause-Effect. Learning Through Language.* English Teaching Forum. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The Challenge to Care in Schools.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Phillips, A. (1994). Pluralism, Solidarity and Change. In *The Lesser Evil and the Greater Good.* New York: State University Press.

Reid, William A. (1998). Curriculum as Practice: essays in the deliberative tradition. Part 1.

Rogers, C. (1980). *A Way of Being.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Spradley, J. & McCURDY. (1972). *The Cultural Experience.* Toronto: Science Research Associates.

Taylor, S. (1991). Skinned alive: Towards a postmodern pedagogy of the body. *Education and Society*, 9(1), 61-72.

Wilber, K. (1990). Eye to Eye. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books.

_____. (1998). The Marriage of Sense and Soul. New York: Random House.

Wright, Handel K. (1997). Nailing Jell-O to the Wall: Pinpointing Aspects of the State-of-the-Art Curriculum Theorizing. Educational Researcher. 29 (5). 4-13.