

Chapter 1

Integrating Language Skills, Practices, and Content in Equitable TESOL Lesson Planning

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ABSTRACT

Teachers and students in TESOL confront persistent racial, linguistic, economic, and social inequities in English language education. Many universities are striving to enact inclusive teaching that serves their diverse student body. This chapter offers a balanced approach that synthesizes language teaching research, theories, and practices to offer equitable strategies and tools for planning TESOL lessons and an exemplar university English as a Foreign Language lesson. These strategies, tools, and examples provide support for teachers to plan to explore inequities in the sociopolitical and raciolinguistic conditions of language and language learning with their students through lessons that integrate language skills, practices, and content. There is significant research on critical approaches to language education, but this chapter contributes to critical praxis in TESOL by providing detailed guidance for teachers on integrated lesson planning for adult EFL classes.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will contribute to critical teaching practices by guiding TESOL educators to plan learning experiences that are inclusive, engaging, and effective for students through leveraging an equitable approach to integration of language skills, practices, and content in an adult beginner-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The first part of the chapter will offer a conceptual history of

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language integration by presenting contested definitions and discussions of integration of language skills, practices, and content within TESOL and conclude with a critical orientation towards integrating students' language skills and practices in and outside the classroom to support multiple language proficiencies and sociopolitical competencies and practices inclusive of minoritized learners¹. The second section of the chapter will introduce a theory-based lesson planning template that integrates strategies to support teachers' comprehensive and conscientious instructional planning that is inclusive, student- and society-centered and leads to critical awareness and social action. We base our suggestions for awareness and action on research that shows that language skills, languaging², learning and teaching is always political (Alim, 2016) and if teachers and learners do not question assumptions and beliefs through reflection and act together on local problems in the TESOL classroom, then they will perpetuate the inequitable and often oppressive status quo (Benesch, 2001; Chun, 2015). The third section includes a menu of ways to engage the concepts associated with critical integration of language skills, practices, and content and the lesson planning template with in-service and/or pre-service TESOL educators in a class or training setting so they can further apply these concepts and strategies into their own teaching. The next part of the chapter describes a specific EFL university beginner-level lesson in Brazil that uses the lesson template and aims to offer learning experiences that center the critical integration of language skills, practices, and content. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the challenges and possibilities of critical instructional praxis around critical integration of skills, practices and content and on the enactment of the evidence-based practices for lesson planning that we describe in this chapter

INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE SKILLS AND PRACTICES

Developing multiple language proficiencies and sociopolitical competencies and practices inclusive of all learners, including minoritized learners, requires a comprehensive critical approach. To address persistent inequities in adult language education, we have built on and synthesized current work in social and critical theories and pedagogies in language education. Based on this work we name three orientations, or philosophies of teaching and learning and language instruction in particular: traditional (teacher-centered), progressive (student-centered), and critical (power and society-centered) (Au, 1998; Peterson, 2003; Stillman, Anderson, Arellano, Wong, Berta-Avila, Alfaro, & Struthers, 2013). Regardless of one's educational orientation, language educators agree on the centrality of the language skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing to language development. Based on one's orientation researchers and educators question which skills are more important to teach, whether to teach these skills together, if teachers should develop only these skills or focus on authentic use of language practices. Next, we discuss these questions from each of the three orientations: traditional, progressive, and critical.

Traditional Approaches to Language Integration

According to a traditional teacher-centered instructional model, the teacher's task is to impart or send knowledge or skills to students who do not yet have them (Kaufman, 2004). The traditional teacher aims to prepare students to succeed in school and career by assimilating to linguistic and cultural ways of learning, knowing, and living of the dominant group and through success on standard assessment measures (e.g., high-stakes tests or job interviews). This was the primary approach for language teachers in the 20th Century which advocates for teaching language skills separately (Rosa & Flores, 2017).

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