

# Chapter 13

## Achieving Praxis for TESOL Educators: A Reflective Self-Checklist to Support Culturally Sustaining Practices

**Samantha Jungheim**

*University of Southern California, USA*

**Jacqueline Vega López**

*University of Southern California, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*Shifting educational landscapes have revealed a need for structured critical reflection. While research on culturally responsive teaching practices and critical reflection prompts exist, there is little in the way of short, synthesized resources for busy educators who desire to change systems of inequity. The authors of this chapter have developed the TESOL educator reflective self-checklist (TERS) for on ground and online educators that utilizes recent research on motivation to activate critical reflection and further culturally sustaining classroom practices. This chapter expands on the evidence and development of this reflective checklist, implementation of the checklist, and provides vignettes of the checklist in use.*

### INTRODUCTION

Critical reflection is a valuable step in praxis, but how can educators achieve praxis without any support? Research indicates that educators are better equipped to elevate their socially just classrooms when they have a reflective framework to accommodate them (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1987; Bryan & Abell, 1999; Deaton, 2012). This chapter asserts that purposeful and habitual reflection through the completion of a self-checklist can enable practicing or training TESOL educators to enact critical praxis regularly in their learning environments. Rather than requiring educators to scour through research, the TESOL Educator Reflective Self-Checklist (TERS) provides reflective statements that distill current research and best practices.

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Originally, this checklist was born out of need, as many educators struggled with the transition to online classrooms in spring 2020. Due to governments' regulations regarding the global COVID-19 pandemic, educators were no longer able to teach in person, as planned. The pressure to maintain high teaching standards left little time for educators to reflect during the pandemic; thus, a need for critical reflection in online classrooms was the leading call to action for the authors in summer 2020. At the onset of the pandemic, the authors were enrolled in a TESOL master's program at a private university in a southwestern area of the United States, where they engaged with sociopolitical issues as both teachers and students. Bearing contemporary challenges in mind, the authors developed this checklist and presented it virtually at the CATESOL 2020 Annual State Conference. After presenting the checklist and receiving additional feedback, the authors reworked their initial checklist to create the version presented in this chapter (refer to Appendix).

## **CONCEPT**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Simply stating the terms “culturally responsive teaching,” “culturally sustaining pedagogy,” “critical pedagogy,” and the like evokes the names of such scholars as Drs. Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Sharroky Hollie, Django Paris, H. Samy Alim, and Paulo Freire. The groundwork in which these theories is rooted has cultivated newfound pedagogical perspectives over the years. Asset-Based Pedagogies like these bring in the strengths of the diverse student population to the forefront; these factors may include but are not limited to influences or personal characteristics involving culture, immigration status, disability, or sexuality (López & Louis, 2009; Chavez, 2016; Krutkowski, 2017; Morrison, 2017). Practitioners of these pedagogies leverage student “funds of knowledge” to improve their learning experience, which refers to the set of “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills” students bring into the classroom (Moll et al., 1989). When pertaining to language learners, this experience draws in the application of Translanguaging Pedagogies<sup>1</sup> by consistently including home language practices that promote additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1981; Garcia et al., 2017). At its heart, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) and its various iterations aspire to transform classroom instruction into a practice that respects students as the multifaceted people they are. It seeks to position them as empowered and critically conscious individuals equipped to extend their agency throughout the myriad aspects of their lives.

Hollie defines Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning (CLR) as a “validation and affirmation of the home (indigenous) culture and home language for the purposes of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and mainstream society” (Hollie, 2011, p. 23). In CSP, Paris and Alim move one step further by proposing that creating a responsive curriculum is not enough to produce equitable schooling—in addition, educators and administrators should seek to “sustain the lifeways of communities [of color] who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling” (Paris & Alim, 2017). This is especially true for educational spaces existing in pluralistic societies and is markedly important for TESOL educators who often work with multilingual and multicultural students. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy thus emboldens a conceptualization of cultural, linguistic, emotional, socioeconomic, and political factors as a shared responsibility of educational institutions, for the sake of both community equity and liberation. This concept of pedagogy has developed

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