


Chapter 13

A Socio–Critical Glance at EFL Through the Exploitation of Cinematographic Texts: How We Got Here, Where We Are Now, and What We Ought to Do Next

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines an instructional combination of multiliteracies pedagogy (ML), critical applied linguistics (CAL), and cinema-based instruction for the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL). Despite being greatly beneficial and pertinent to our students' multimodal and heterogeneous reality, these approaches are rather absent from both the EFL class and academia, and even more as a single method. A scoping state-of-the-art literature review is presented, illustrating the complementarity of ML, CAL, and cinema-based instruction; and systematizing the research field. The review results have verified the effectiveness of the method proposed as regards EFL students' linguistic, intercultural, and socio-critical development. In light of the various research shortcomings identified within each area, concrete avenues for action are established. Another end result of this review is the compilation of a clearly-defined methodological framework to apply multiliteracies and critical applied linguistics designs to TEFL.

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INTRODUCTION

The discipline of English as a foreign language (EFL) has hardly kept up with today's demands. While learners' habits and reality have evolved, the same instructional model is being followed to a large extent, meaning printed teaching materials still prevail in the English class, and courses are chiefly grounded on an overwhelming quantity of graded assignments (Erlangga & Ayu, 2022; Ypsilanti & Karras, 2024). Contemporary students, labelled as "digital natives" or "the image generation," have grown up in an entirely digital environment and they got used to learning online and autonomously during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is, therefore, comprehensible that they find such methods discouraging (Lozano del Amor et al., 2023). Students have lost enthusiasm for learning English, and their growing apathy represents a perceptible barrier in the classroom (Bribesh, 2024; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). Neither has the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) adopted the social function it is required to perform in order to tackle the present troubling matters. We are now confronting the aggravated consequences of environmental degradation, the outbreak of armed conflict, a wider socio-economic gap due to inflation and food shortage, the resurgence of violent extremism unleashed by migration movements, and greater technological dependency, to name just a few. This panorama certainly shapes the teaching-learning experience (Romero & Bobkina, 2023; Talaván et al., 2024). Educational laws worldwide establish social issues as cross-curricular content in pursuit of integral learning. Still, in EFL courses, this is often supplied through the corresponding topical vocabulary or related reading comprehension tasks included in coursebooks, limiting the discipline to the linguistic training of students, and disregarding the humanitarian cause, which is crucial so that learners know how to apply the acquired language competencies in any context; and, most importantly, so that they, as future active citizens, attain comprehensive personal development (Tomlinson, 2019).

In our ever-increasingly interconnected world, proficiency in English has become indispensable due to its status as the predominant lingua franca. It is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of traditional TEFL approaches, as such limitations extend beyond the confines of the classroom, affecting various aspects of learners' lives and, to a certain extent, global progress. International authorities are well aware of this and have recently incorporated the discipline into the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) with the aim of encouraging better results (OECD, 2021). In brief, we need to renovate TEFL, and this mission demands a complex, two-fold innovation process to be gradually completed, including, first, the refinement of EFL methodology through modern resources, and, second, a deeper transformation of its core essence.

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