Towards a Decolonization of Classroom Practices in Chilean Higher Education - A Suggested Framework

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ABSTRACT

Higher-education classroom practices in Chile have historically followed the Eurocentric model in which the student is an 'empty vessel' and the instructor the one who fills it. This has led to the perpetuation of a specific model of knowledge creation and transmission that has historically ignored both non-Western cultures and knowledges but has also neglected attempts at developing practices that might foster greater critical thinking skills or that view education as a way of increasing consciousness, advocating social changes and challenging inequalities present in the classroom. Drawing on a number of different perspectives, from Orientalism, Critical Pedagogy and indigenous knowledge, this paper is written as a way to challenge existing systems and methods, in order to suggest a framework of action anchored in non-Eurocentric approaches and that are further rooted in participatory action research.

Key words: Critical Pedagogy, Classroom Practices, Participatory Action Research, Participatory Education, Non-eurocentric, Indigenous Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Even if there are those who disagree with using the term 'global South/North' (see Toshkov, 2018), what is undeniable is that our colonial past shapes our worldview no matter where we are in that spectrum. When British-Ghanaian philosopher and critical theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah, in answer to an attendee's question about cultural belonging, suggested to avoid falling victim to the questionable idea that culture actually belongs to specific groups, and if that dubious concept of 'Westerner' were to disappear, it needed not to be replaced with something else but that we should rather learn to relate to people in different ways, respectful of each other's differences without an excess of identification. The lecture host (an English woman), cautiously navigating from question to assertion, said in relation to Western civilization: "But what holds us all together are these things you've sort of praised: liberalism, human rights, rule of law, all those things. That gives us the right to choose, it gives us control over who we are. There are people around the world, particularly in Islamic countries, who don't have that kind of choice. And these things ARE Western" (Appiah, 2018, pp. 30-36).

This condescending and paternalistic perspective, as well as the idea that Eurocentric culture and forms of knowledge creation are somehow 'better' or 'superior', as that host seemed to imply, are certainly not new. And for centuries, this Eurocentrism has permeated and shaped attitudes, perceptions and beliefs regarding the non-West which this essay

will challenge in an attempt to present a suggested framework for classroom practices within the context of higher education in the global South, more specifically in Chile. As I challenge these notions, I will draw on post-colonial and decolonial theories and approaches, beginning with Said's Orientalism (1978) and exploring the ideas put forth by other critical researchers, philosophers and educators in order to support such framework and analyze its possible advantages and limitations.

BACKGROUND

In order to shed light on the Western understanding and representation of the non-West and the historical repercussions this has had, it becomes necessary to travel back in time and follow Edward Said's timeline laid out in his *Orientalism* (1978).

Historically, our vision and perception of the geographical demarcation we call the East has been shaped by the historical experience of Europe in it: the travels of Marco Polo, the expansion of Islam into Europe, the crusades, all of which, according to Said, became a series of 'encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation' (p.58). It is important to note that the early narrative of these encapsulations is inevitably told from a European perspective, and this begins to create a certain image and perception of Eastern behaviors, attitudes and culture not only as different, but also as an inferior

(and a homogenous one at that). R.W. Southern (1962, in Said, 1978) contends that these limited representations of the East, due to poor religious and cultural understanding, had a historical impact in several lasting ways, of which I will highlight two I believe to be particularly relevant: the first was that Eastern ideas took on forms that suited Western demands and understanding; in other words the Orient was *similar* to some aspect of the West rather than presenting its own uniqueness (one example of this being the documented (and inaccurate) comparison of Mohammed's role in Islam to that of Christ in Christianity, leading to what has been referred to as "Mohammedanism" (the idea that Mohammed was the Islamic equivalent of Christ) thus adding a human centrality to Islam which it does not have (Krammer, 2003). The second was the onset of a precedent in scholarship at that time, wherein sources were not corroborated through verification and correction but rather through consultation of *other* Orientalist works; in short, a perpetuation of the European vision of the East.

Not only the geographical East has been impacted by these paternalistic, colonial views in which non-Western cultures and people are seen as inferior, or even as Lord Cromer, British colonial administrator first of India and later of Egypt notoriously stated, 'subject races' (1932). In "Things Fall Apart" (1958) by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, tells us a fictional (though contextually accurate from a historical perspective) account of a group of Christian missionaries and soldiers who arrive at a local village in Nigeria during the 19th century. The first third of the book describes in intricate detail the richness and diversity of local life, from domesticity and parenting style to the inter-relations between different villages, their sporting traditions, and style of self-government, which instead of styling a single leader or any concept of Western democracy was carried out by a village-appointed group of elders who did not dictate but were consulted and later advised. The latter two parts of the book tell us of the arrival of a contingent of soldiers and missionaries, who appalled at the lack of elected leadership, rule of law or a church, and the locals' observance of polygamy and animism, begin their attempt at religious conversion and political re-organization with tragic consequences.

These examples speak of religious, cultural and political undertones shaping this historically unequal relationship not only between East and West but also between the North and South of the world; Mignolo (2002) offers us two additional dimensions in a post-modern critique of modernity titled "*The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference*": the first one is economic; the modern world-system, he propounds, originates in the 15th century and it's directly linked to capitalism. It brought with it the emergence of the Atlantic trade routes and thus began the exertion of colonial power. In other words, the colonial system coincides with the expansion of capitalism. He further argues that the since the Renaissance there developed a notion that 'there can be no others' (p.59) that not only has been maintained, but that gained strength with the displacement of capitalism from the Mediterranean to Northern Europe; this not only meant, in his view, that the organization and production of knowledge became ascribed to a geopolitical space but that it also erased the possibility of knowledge forms originating anywhere else (e.g. in East or South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, etc.).

The second dimension is intellectual and here we also its repercussions expanding into Latin America in particular, which is what interests us: as the 1960s and 70s began to herald the decolonization of Africa and Asia, dependency theory emerges in an effort to map out a suggested a course of action for Latin America: in fact, dependency theory is an attempt at explaining the lack of development of that region of the world, and it has an impact in the decolonization of scholarship. Orlando Fals-Borda argues in his "*Ciencia Propia y Colonialismo Intelectual*" (1970) that Western Colonialism was also educational and intellectual; he exemplifies it by describing how the colonial element was never considered when evaluating socialist alternatives to European liberalism: they were a path to liberation and emancipation from Europe, not from European knowledge. Thus, his writing advocates that intellectual decolonization cannot come from existing philosophies and schools of scholarship but through what Dussel called a 'philosophy of liberation' (1994,1999); this, due to the fact that up until that point, and as explored in his work, the knowledge being gained was still framed by the history and the ideological framework of Western/ European thought.

THEORETICAL POSITIONING

The theoretical positioning I present here stems from the perspective that, as de Sousa Santos contends, we need to understand the world not from a Western-centric perspective that claims universality while perpetuating power imbalance (in which the global South is inevitably the weaker partner) but from an epistemological diversity that considers a series of non-Western languages, script and movements of resistance (de Sousa Santos, 2001, 2014). Furthermore, I argue that, as it has been contended and widely demonstrated by decolonial and post-colonial critical theorists (de Sousa Santos, 2001, 2014, 2018; Smith, 2012; Apple, 2011, 2012, 2013; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999), there is no one single source of knowledge, not one single knowledge pursuit and not one single, linear development of knowledge. For this proposed framework, this means that the approach towards the forms of knowledge that will be used and that it will attempt to create is one rooted in the understanding that we live in world of great diversity where what is needed is inclusiveness rather than separateness, as well as collective inter-being rather than over-identification with social constructs that drive us further apart (Appiah, 2018).

There is the argument that imperialist and colonialist knowledge has been used to create certain false notions that perpetuate its views; drawing on a large number of sources, Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) uses these to establish the way history has been organized under a 'totalizing discourse': one that considers knowledge as fitting into one 'coherent whole' (p.32) and as a way to control the narrative of history as long, unified chronology of development. Going even further in time, and disputing this unified chronology,

we find that in yoga philosophy the view on knowledge is that *what we know* exerts control over us by being not true knowledge but deceptions based on false perceptions; thus, the aim is to break the chains between the 'seen' (what we know), and the 'seer' (the one who knows). It is this control that influences our behaviour, and logically when the links are snapped, freedom is elevated and the individual is emancipated through true self-knowledge (Iyengar, 1993). Here then is a less metaphysical, more practical connection with present day: countries and people who have been colonized have studied this Eurocentric version of history that has put forth untrue representations concerning science, religion, philosophy and culture; and they have been subjected to social and educational oppression (Freire, 1960, 1995; Said, 1978).

There are a number of converging ideas that explain the evident absence of a non-Western worldview: the first one is offered by Merican (2012), who contends that such frames of reference do not exist 'outside Western consciousness' (p.79), and attributes it as the result of centuries of secularization in the global North, and to an interpretation of research as a way to pursue a single, unique, generalizing perspective. Smith (2012) goes further and argues that European thought has tended to dehumanize forms of knowledge present in colonized territories and lands, and through this dehumanization, which can be seen throughout history in the imposition of social norms, languages and legal systems that have eradicated indigenous ones, moral assertions of superiority have been justified.

In Chile, it is also important to consider how these perspectives intersect with indigenous knowledge; a former Spanish colony from 1536 to 1818, when it became independent, the country is still home to indigenous communities whose culture, language and knowledge were almost entirely wiped out during those times (not only by colonists but also by local governments who engaged in an armed effort for territorial conquest (Boccara & Seguel-Boccara, 2005). These communities, however, survived and so did their culture, though (understandably) access is made difficult as they have become more protective of their land, their culture and traditions (Ortiz, 2007). The issue of indigeneity is important here: within the global South, South America presents us with its own unique historical challenges. To begin with, the neoliberal paradigm in place has accentuated, perpetuated and - according to Harvey (2008) - also deepened already acute social inequalities. Secondly, the educational model used in South America, which follows the European tradition of humanistic-scientific instruction followed by a university degree, has been legitimized over the centuries to the point of excluding local (indigenous) forms of knowledge considered 'inferior' (Alcoff, 2007) and of indigenous people feeling disenfranchised. Aman (2017) describes, for instance, his experience with indigenous students who had come to believe their own culture was inferior and that being indigenous equated to 'lacking' (p.111). These studies make it clearly evident that there is a need to take further steps in incorporating indigenous knowledge into educational research.

The ubiquity of indigenous groups within South American societies (and Chile is a prime example), the aforementioned economic, social and educational inequalities impacting both access to and performance in higher education (Gaentzsch & Zapata-Roman, 2020), and the historically relevant fact that the educational system and curriculum are rooted both in colonial elements and Western epistemologies to the detriment of other forms of knowledge production offer a further opportunity to address (or attempt to address) this educational and cultural inequality from a non-Western, decolonial perspective. The suggested framework presented in this paper stems from the belief that there must a recognition of the existing diversities (racial, sexual orientation, gender, linguistic, economic, social and cultural) and that these diversities should translate into epistemological ones.

In addition to the indigenous element, further factors add to the need for greater social inclusion in higher education in Chile: one is socio-economic segmentation (Larragañe et al., 2017), a second is racial bias (Campos-Martinez, 2010) and a third is the lack of inclusive educational policies in regard to the migrant population which, as of 2018, is nearly 500,000 (MPI, 2018). To begin with, as Sandoval (2016) explains, the migratory law in Chile (Law 1094) dates from 1975, when Chile was under a military dictatorship; this law, which though modified has remained practically unchanged, conceived both migrants and immigration as a threat, a notion that was passed on for generations and which has shaped social attitudes in Chile towards non-white immigrants (Mora Olate, 2018). The eradication of this idea is not helped by the lack of oversight (or willingness) on the implementation of public policies that have been formulated specifically to address this issue; the Ministry of Education has called for greater diversity and the recognition of learning spaces as a meeting point for learners regardless of their nationality, gender, socio-economic background or religion (MINEDUC, 2016b). And yet, as Mora Olate (2018) highlights, the social and cultural hegemony remains unchanged and hence the need for practices that bring these policies into action.

THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

Ladislaus Semali was born in Tanzania in 1946. He belonged to the Chagga people, spoke Kichagga as a native tongue and grew up in a large peasant family, working the fields and listening to his elders explaining how different plants could be used to treat certain conditions, or telling stories full of symbolism in which nature and animals were protagonists. The stories containing humans were mostly the ones about being colonized and avoiding becoming a slave (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

What is most telling about Semali's story, however, is his next chapter as it so adequately captures the realities of other indigenous people around the world and how their language, traditions and belief systems have become subordinate to predominantly Western epistemologies.

As he started going to school, he witnessed how his native Kichagga was replaced by English as he studied Greek philosophers, Mark Twain and Dickens, and how the

content he had to learn was about 'drinking tea in an English garden, taking train rides, sailing in open seas, and walking the streets of town'. (p.9). Innocuous as that might sound, the implications had devastating effects: whereas local people relied on the tradition of oral literacy for the transmission of knowledge on issues as diverse as inheritance rights, the laws of the land and cultural norms, and used language not as a concatenation of words but as a means to convey meaning through riddles, proverbs, tales and songs, the colonial language became the yardstick by which achievement in, intelligence of and ability with Western-based scientific and humanistic knowledge was measured. Kichagga became a subject taught once a week and speaking it beyond its allotted time a punishable offence. And over the years, as Semali summons, it was colonial knowledge the one which determined future economic prospects and political possibilities (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). This is confirmed by Kincheloe (same date), who chronicles his field trips in Tennessee along his friend Larry, a small child well-versed in the medicinal uses of different herbs and plants but who, having been raised in an oral tradition of knowledge transmission and unfamiliar with the written language used in modern schools, struggled in that environment and was often labelled as 'unintelligent'.

In looking at Latin America specifically, we find examples that intersect with Mosha's: Mamani-Bernabé (2015), for instance, describes the Aymará[1] worldview as one strongly rooted in collective work that supports the community, such as farming and shepherding. Although she alludes to how the pervasive influence of individualism and neoliberalism has begun to creep in, thus somewhat debilitating this sense of communal labour for collective well-being, their ancient systems of mutual support are still practiced. Furthermore, and in addition to the equal, equitable social role given to men and women, their relationship with the Earth is one that Mamani-Bernabé describes as one of 'brother and sisters with nature, who care for her (p.66). Apaza Huanca (2019) tells us of the deep relationship the Aymara have with the Sacred Mother Earth (which they call *Pachamama*), with their families and their communities, and as one in which all living and not-living entities are part of 'all that is' (p. 13). In other words, "nothing in the cosmos is more or less important than anything else" (Campana, 2005, p.30). Another relevant example within the Chilean context is that of the Mapuche people, who are in fact the largest indigenous group in Chile (84%, according to the latest IWGIA report[2]). Ortiz (2007) highlight some of the very same elements I have hitherto described in his aforementioned study amongst Mapuches, who call their body of knowledge 'Kimün' (ibid, p.124). Rather than a traditional Western-based division of subjects, such as languages, science and math, Kimün is an interconnected body of knowledge in which the concrete and the metaphysical form a holistic whole. In arguing that for indigenous people their metaphysical worldview stems from more concrete, physical elements, Mapuche scholar Juan Ñanculef (2016) defines the word "Mapu[3]" as an everything that contains both the visible and the invisible, the earth and the skies, where we live, what we produce, and that Mapuche

philosophy derives directly from this sense of integrality. In further describing Kimün, Ñanculef points to the fact that the way Mapuche people come to know is through direct observation; knowledge in itself, rather than being created, exists already within the universe and is acquired through constant observation and then passed on through metaphors, as they represent a way of 'replicate with real facts what has been observed" (p.46)[4]. So here we have a way of relating to nature, a way of approaching knowing and knowledge and a way of relating to one another and our social groups that promote a sense of union and oneness rather than separateness, all of which is not only removed from Western epistemologies but also has a distinct place within this project, which seeks to find avenues for inclusiveness.

Why does this concern us? Because although the above examples, connected to both earthly subjects and to spiritual and philosophical ones, speak of a world view that is essential to the suggested practices in this paper and that links inextricably with the philosophical and ontological principles upon which the recommended framework is based, and of how this world view has been neglected or outright denied (Merican, 2012; Said, 1978).

SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICES

In her book "*Teaching to Transgress*" (1994), bell hooks tells of her own experience as a minority student in classrooms where the balance of power was heavily leaning towards the teachers and lecturers, and where learners, rather than being encouraged to develop independent, critical thought, were taught obedience to existing systems and structures in a way that she perceived helped perpetuate social inequalities present both inside and outside the academic sphere. She further described her vision of what a socially just classroom would look like: a 'communal place' of collaboration and shared responsibilities sustained by 'collective effort' (p.8).

There has been, as I mentioned earlier, a recent effort in Chile to recognize learning spaces in the way hooks envisioned them: the Ministry of Education has in fact formulated policies that are a call to tackle issues of diversity in a way that acknowledges the way minority groups have been excluded (MINEDUC, 2016b). However, as Mora-Olate (2018) emphasizes, more work remains to be done, especially in the inclusion of individual belonging to indigenous or migrant communities.

The question then arises: how do we create a more equitable classroom setting in which, through shifting the power balance towards the learners, they are and feel more valued through the different stages of the learning process? That is how Osborn (2006) and Randolph and Johnson (2015) defined social justice.

In "*The Subject of Power*" (1982), Foucault defines it as a relationship between partners in which there is a set of actions which induce further, subsequent actions that follow after the other; is it this set of actions that determine influence over or submission under another. In other words, power requires action within a relationship. This is then the core factor: because power is relational, in changes as the

relationship does. Part of this suggested framework is to look into the types of actions both teachers and learners can engage in that will shift the power imbalance to create fairer, more equitable relationships. Developing empowerment requires equipping individuals with the social and motivational wherewithal needed to engage in such shift: in other words, increasing social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990); thus, it becomes essential to ascertain how to increase this and what practices are needed to achieve that.

The first one of these practices is curricular. While Bourdieu (1977) describes three types of capital (symbolic, cultural and economic) which people have, and how these shape relations and the power (in)balance within them as well as the exchanges that take place as a result in every field of social endeavor, Michael Apple (2013) takes these notions directly into the field of education, and analyzes how curricular and instructional practices can be - and have been - used to legitimize certain forms of knowledge, structures and systems that preserve inequalities. In describing his own learning experience as a state teacher in New Jersey, he chronicles in depth how his teacher training was conducted in complete disconnection from the realities of those they were going to teach, which were students from inner-city background dealing with issues of poverty, gender, and social inequality. Apple also noted how this curricular disconnect made him ask "Whose knowledge is this?" "How did it become 'official'"? (2013, p.5). So here we have, in short, an unequal relation in which the power of one partner over the other is reflected on the type of decisions that are being made, and on the impact these decisions have in those at different ends of the spectrum. In line with other critical pedagogists, Apple has called for educational practices to be aimed at creating a more critical consciousness on the learners as a way of stop the reinforcement and reproduction of unequal curricular, instructional and evaluative activities (Apple, 2011, 2012).

Yet a second practice is language and how it is used to either create a chasm between instructors and learners, or to close it. Empowerment, in the context of classroom learning has a number of dimensions. To begin with, there is the notion of educating not for accumulating knowledge, but to instill in students an independent spirit of freedom of pursuit (Freire, 1960; hooks, 1994). Secondly, and on a key component of Critical Pedagogy, the classroom experience is about democratizing it. One of these democratizing practices is the way language is used to either perpetuate or disrupt existing power structures, such as the ones we are likely to find in classrooms because of their traditional hierarchical nature; Paulo Freire describes a 'knowledge game' he played with Chilean peasants, who were convinced that he just 'knew' and they didn't, because he was an educated person, and they weren't. Freire demonstrated, by having them ask him questions about machinery and their means of production, that this assertion was untrue: they knew things he didn't, and vice-versa, but they all used very specific language that was unfamiliar to the other (Freire, 1995). Although highly influential within the realm of critical pedagogy, his work "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" has been criticized by some for the intricate, often obscure language in which it

is written, which might seem a contradiction of his aim of education as a means of liberation (a criticism Freire himself addresses in his later work (Freire, 1995). Hence the importance of democratizing the way information, knowledge and language are generated and used so that it breaks down existing or perceived hierarchies. Further expanding on the concept of empowerment, and using Peterson's postfeminist sensibilities as a springboard, I would like to see how far we can go in actually transforming any type of hierarchy that denigrates members of a community rather than empowering them (Peterson, 2003, in Aslan & Gambetti, 2011).

With these theoretical antecedents, I propose that in order to create a classroom in which social justice is prevalent, students and teachers should actively engage in the development of these practices together, as per the principles of Participatory Action Research (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014), I argue that this choice is fitting for a number of reasons: first, I contend that social research within the global South should have a clear intention of democratizing and decolonizing knowledge with participants that have experienced different degrees of exclusion, or who have participated, whether willingly or not, in the exclusion of others. Smith (2012) describes several ways in which even when recent research on indigenous communities might have been done with the best intentions, it has not succeeded in bringing either participants or their knowledge to the forefront in equal degree to traditional, Eurocentric ones. Second, and although Chilean classrooms are not exclusively indigenous, indigenous people are an intrinsic part of its demographics and student body; thus the principles of democratic inclusion stand. It is from this perspective that I argue research needs be done *with* the participants rather than *for* the participants in a way that allows for knowledge to developed by the participants themselves (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007); third, and most importantly, because the very nature of PAR allows not only to gain the knowledge research is meant to gather but also involve the participants in the resolution of a specific social problem (Lawson et al., 2017).

FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

Because of the existing socio-cultural structures one finds in classrooms in the Latin America (and because it is in the nature of decolonial theories to challenge such structures), it is essential for a research design to address ways in which inequality can be reproduced through negative pedagogical practices that have become entrenched over time. Goudeau and Croizet (2017), for instance, argue that students from disparate economic backgrounds possess contrasting levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), and this has an impact on a system that is so heavily focused on assessment outcomes. To further compound this, higher-income learners are more familiar with academic expectations and have been exposed to a series of cultural practices that facilitates their possible academic success (Bradley et al., 2001). These findings can be correlated to recent research in Chilean classrooms: a study by Levin (2011) showed that in spite of improvements made since Chile's return to democracy, its own internal assessment of student outcomes revealed

deep inequalities when comparing students from rural or poorer schools to those coming from wealthier, more privileged ones (The same study draws an interesting comparison given the distinctly different models they follow: he looked at outcomes in Chile and Cuba, with the latter surpassing the former by a very large margin). His analysis of the underlying reasons for this gap revealed six areas, three of which specifically highlight the need for attention to teaching practices and the educational community as a whole.

Furthermore, not only does current education advocates assessment that at least in the social sciences focuses heavily on the use of written language in all of its expressions but it also aims at the accumulation of knowledge as its main goal (Freire, 1960; Goudeau and Croizet, 2017; Lareau, 2001). These approaches and actions benefit those who are of course more familiarized with those articulations through storytelling and visits to museums, for instance, thus widening not only the achievement gap but also the social divide in the classroom as learners from lower-income backgrounds, unaware of this invisible social disadvantage, tend to look at their underperformance as a sign of intellectual inadequacy and inferiority when compared to their peers (Kelley (1967), in Goudeau and Croizet (2017).

Therefore, for the purposes of this essay I have divided such practices in two often overlapping but generally distinct strands:
1. Curriculum and assessment
2. Behaviour and language

Curriculum and Assessment

In "Teaching Critical Thinking" (2008), hooks argues that by teaching and training students to ask questions aimed at discovering the 'what, when, where and how of things' (p.9), learners are able to create the knowledge they need to decide what's important and what isn't.

Following from this, I argue that a key classroom practice must be to encourage learners/participants to actively question and determine what elements of their existing curriculum should be challenged, and what of what they've learned should be questioned. I have previously presented in this essay how the current higher educational system in Latin America and Chile has perpetuated European cultural hegemony, and the critical thinking element is essential to create an openness to other perspectives and positions (Barnet and Bedau, 2005, hooks, 2008). I further contend that the element of critical thinking is at the core of PAR, as it calls for everyone's initiative to share ideas as openly as possible, so that learning becomes meaningful and useful, and through this collaboration, empowering (hooks, 2008). Examples of this can be co-developing a curriculum based on counter-hegemonic elements, such as indigenous knowledge and critical theory, rather than using an existing one that puts a certain group at a disadvantage, developing a series of workshops aimed at assisting participants develop critical thinking skills (Apple, 2013; hooks, 2008) and using and developing materials rooted in the principles of epistemic diversity. Such curriculum should constantly evaluated, revised

and rewritten based on evidence (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Kemmis et al., 2014).

Yet an additional factor to consider in regard to curricular and assessment determinations is how language is used; as I have proposed in this essay, an academic setting that focuses heavily on the use of an hegemonic written language, both for instruction and assessment, perpetuates existing social inequalities (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). Therefore, socially just practices should include instructional materials and evaluative methods that allow learners to participate in a manner that does not confine them to a specific, normative language or language form. This, I offer, might provide disadvantaged learners and those who are more familiar with oral or visual literacy, for instance, with alternative channels for expression which in turn advances the democratization of language and the learning spaces.

Behaviour and Language

When considering this strand, there are a number of questions that need to be asked so certain behaviours are changed, challenged or developed: how do we shift the power balance towards the participants in a traditionally hierarchical setting, such as a classroom? How do we shift the decision-making process in a way that everyone feels included and participants can begin to become empowered? Examples of this can be the use of collaborative and project-based learning where participants make their own decisions and choices, and making content relevant for learners by tapping into elements of intrinsic motivation: what are *they* interested in learning and how do they want to learn it? (Bacquet, 2020; Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014, Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2011).

Another element to consider when addressing behavioral changes is seeing the classroom (and learning spaces in general) as spaces of true democratic participation. Dewey (1937) warned that reduced participation could lead to a subsequent "lack of responsibility" (p.314), thus curtailing the process of empowerment. Taking the above into consideration, the development of such spaces could should involve creating instances for greater learner engagement in all stages of the decision-making process and the pedagogical choices made, and making language choices according to what the students know and need to know, thus making content accessible and de-hierarchizing the classroom structure. Other examples can be encouraging learners to use visual or non-written language (oral expression), to bring their own knowledge forms into the discussion rather than pigeonholing them into specific norms (this can be indigenous knowledge, their own social reality as well as their linguistic/cultural knowledge in the case of migrants).

A further aspect to this strand is how language is used as a means of non-violence; that is, in ways that are inclusive, and reflective of both collective well-being and growth, as well as the possible consequences of what is said to whom and how this is said (Kemmis et al., 2014). Navigating these two facets when pitted against the element of free-speech is something that the participants need to discuss and agree on as part of the enquiry; however, it is essential to keep rooting the conversation on the principles of inter-dependency and

the reciprocal value of developing an inclusive mindset rather than one grounded on separateness and individuality (again: 'what are the consequences of my language choices on collective well-being?') Here, the Yoga Sutras provide with further guidelines in the practice of 'ahimsa' (non-violence), which should 'intend no harm in word, thought or deed, being sincere, honest and faithful' (Iyengar, 1993, p.30)

One final dimension I will highlight here, which in some ways intersect with the earlier strands, is the way language is used to either bridge the existing cultural chasm or to widen it, such as Freire's example with Chilean peasants: he describes a 'knowledge game' he played with Chilean peasants, who were convinced he 'knew' and they didn't, because he was an educated person, and they weren't. Freire demonstrated, by having them ask him questions about machinery and their means of production, that this assertion was untrue: they knew things he didn't, and vice-versa, but they all used very specific language that was unfamiliar to the other (Freire, 1995. I argue that it is essential for the democratization of learning spaces to find language forms that are available to all and not some, such as providing digital or visual presentations when the written text is not available, and to choose written and spoken forms of language that can be easily understood by those with a disadvantaged cultural or social capital.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL COMMENTS

In this section I will mention some possible limitations to bringing this framework into action, as well some possible implications for teachers and researchers working within the context I have established in this paper.

The first of these limitations is the abundance of d*escriptive* studies on the Chilean educational context, to the detriment of other forms of research, such as longitudinal ethnographic studies, classroom ethnographies, action research or participatory approaches. This absence of participant-led enquiry within Chilean academia could create resistance in certain institutions, and any research study incorporating such approach would consider lengthy and meticulous participant training involving both theory and practice before engaging in it.

The second limitation is the actual socio-cultural-economic divide that permeates society and inevitably the classroom ecology. Campos-Martinez (2010) and Hevia et al. (2005) give detailed examples of this segmentation affecting people from lower-income families or other disadvantaged or minoritized groups. This type of segmentation could possibly hinder efforts directed at creating harmonious co-existence, and it would require perseverance on part of the researcher and the more willing participants to overcome.

Yet a third limitation is structural, given how curricular design at public schools and universities is a highly centralized process run by the Ministry of Education; thus, making significant changes would require developing the necessary network of contacts that could facilitate any changes to existing programs of study and obtaining approval from them.

As a final point in this section, I would like to further expand on both the convergence with and contributions of critical pedagogy to the main areas I have described here: non-violence, equality and inter-dependency. A study by Chubbuck and Zembylas (2011) sheds some light into how critical pedagogy and peace education can inform each other in the context of classroom teaching. To begin with, they established a clear philosophical and theoretical link by connecting critical pedagogy's goal of liberating those who have been subordinated by oppressive structures with earlier ideas of Gandhi and Thomas Merton, both of whom promoted this liberation through non-violent means of resistance, such as the establishment of 'non-threatening relationships' (p.261), dialogue, developing empathy and compassionate listening. Secondly, they established a theoretical framework marrying these two approaches in what they coined termed 'critical pedagogy for non-violence' (p.262), a practice rooted in three key principles: the first is that such practice should be an integrated way of life that permeates every facet of the educational process; the second is the acknowledgement and commitment of this practice to address structural inequalities and relational power imbalance; the third is the recognition of emotion as a potential element that can help support resistance, just as Martin Luther King and Gandhi before them argued (ibid). Their paper, a case study on a novice teacher committed to both social justice and non-violence can inform this research in a couple of relevant ways; firstly, Chubbuck and Zembylas (2011) noted the challenges faced by the teacher in transmitting this perspective to the students; many of whom remained sceptical and pessimistic about the possible positive impact of non-violence. Though there were those who experienced a change in perspective and for whom non-violence became a viable choice to challenge social violence (including that existing in the classroom), not everyone was on board.

The second aspect of their study germane to this paper is the importance of approaching the possible integration of non-violence not from a 'White-saviour' position, but from one that more holistically involves students/participants as thinkers and producers of knowledge. Chubbuck and Zembylas' research, a case study following a novice school teacher as she attempted to bring non-violent practices and critical pedagogy into her own teaching experience, notes that the teacher, a white woman herself, in spite of all her efforts to promote a non-violent attitude in her learners, became acutely aware of how her own more privileged backdrop and upbringing as an American middle-class white person had erected an invisible barrier between her and the students; many of her students were African-American from poor backgrounds who had regular experiences with violence, either expressing it or witnessing it first hand; these different backgrounds, and mostly their different experiences with structural violence created a certain degree of resistance in the students when they were challenged to persist with their non-violent path, which admittedly they were too quickly pushed to pursue. Finally, the researchers note the importance of emotions or, more accurately, what they termed 'critical emotional praxis' (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008) in the practice of critical pedagogy for non-violence: because it can uncover discomforting emotions and attitudes

towards lack of privilege, structural violence or unequal social structures, it becomes essential to engage in a dialogical process that challenges these emotions and seeks non-violent alternatives to cope with them.

Chubbuck and Zembylas' 2011 study presents us with valuable insights that can hopefully help teachers and researchers navigate the above successfully. The first of them is the importance of engaging with and reflecting on emotions as they appear, since they are likely to manifest both in teachers and students: as the social and political context challenge and places emotional demands on us, it becomes crucial to identify, understand and deal with these demands. The second significant insight concerns the question of who is to be the agent for social change, as advocated by critical pedagogy theorists (Freire, 1960; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 2003); Chubbuck and Zembylas (2011) argue that historically, the large majority of those engaged in socially just education are White, middle-class practitioners working with students from disadvantaged communities; they further argue that empowering those who have been subjected to structural inequality is equally important as helping raising awareness in those who have experienced the privileges of their more advantageous position so they can become allies in the creation of a more egalitarian and equitable society; this is certainly an important consideration in this study, where participants, as I have noted are likely to come from a diverse spectrum of social groups and where my own background (white of European background, educated in the UK) might also erect the invisible barrier Zembylas and Chubbuck speak of. Yet a third observation to be drawn from the study concerns the fact that addressing racism, sexism and classism should be a core element of a socially just classroom so it does not become a place aiming for mastery of content, but one where social issues are discussed and challenged. Hence, engaging in the practice of critical pedagogy as well as conducting research using critical participatory action research (PAR) design might better allow for the co-production of knowledge to emerge as a democratic, participatory process whereby social problem are identified and tackled.

ENDNOTES

1. Note from the author: Aymara people share a geographical area comprising northern Chile, Peru and Bolivia (the Andes altiplano).
2. Report available at https://www.iwgia.org/en/chile.html
3. Mapuche is usually translated into Spanish as People of the Land (Mapu: land, Che: people). But as it can be seen here, the meaning of Mapu is far more complex than its simple translation.
4. In Spanish in the original: "*replicar con hechos reales lo que se ve*" (translation by me)

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