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Criticality, Intentionality, and Intercultural Action

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Introduction

This chapter presents an ecologically-framed understanding of criticality developed through and for our MA-level researcher education courses. For students on our MA programmes in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (hereafter, TESOL) and Intercultural Communication (hereafter, IC) we provide similar but separate courses preparing them as researchers in their respective fields. More specifically, the aim of these courses is that the students will develop and demonstrate criticality in their immediate, academically-located, research-focused activities such as the dissertation with which their programme culminates. Further, although not an explicit aim, we hope that the course fosters a similarly critical habit of mind in their ongoing and future activities (including any research dimensions to them).

The chapter is organised in three main parts: we first situate the development of this understanding of criticality within our collaborative teaching and supervision, then exemplify such criticality in the research-for-practice thinking of one course participant (Ralitza), and finally, we discuss the implications of our understanding of criticality for practice beyond the immediate academic-research context.

Developing understandings of criticality

Our understanding of criticality is anchored in and integrates three aspects of our collaborative teaching and supervisory activities, namely: a) *the 'contextual'*; b) *the 'disciplinary'*; and c) *the 'conceptual'*. We now briefly outline these aspects in turn.

a) The contextual element

The understanding of criticality in this chapter has arisen from our shared experience of teaching on linked MA TESOL and MA IC programmes. The programmes share a similar critically-edged approach to the study of interculturality although the students on the former programme are all experienced teachers whereas those on the latter tend to be intent on an intercultural career but not yet experienced in such a role. The ethos of the more-established TESOL provision combines: a) a reflective practitioner orientation linked to the teachers' theorisation of their own practice (i.e. the development of praxis); b) an international outlook linked to a strong belief in appropriate methodology and the need for situated understandings of professional practice; and c) a habit of questioning the readily-available conceptual architecture of TESOL (including, for example, the native/non-native teacher distinction). The newer IC programme is

less practitioner-oriented and focuses mostly on the last point above. Thus, it invites participants to question the usefulness of some of the readily-available intercultural conceptual architecture, e.g. the dominant 'large culture' (Holliday, 1999) understanding of the key concept of culture. Moreover, this programme is a joint initiative between an Institute of Education and a School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, and the meeting of these two distinct, disciplinary and organisational cultures represents both an intercultural dimension to the programme and an opportunity for students to share the (intercultural) experience of discovering the academic cultures of this joint programme.

Our researcher education course - initially created for the MA TESOL programme, and subsequently extended for the MA IC programme - has provided the main context for the development of our thinking about criticality. The 'researcher education' and 'researcher development' discourse we use articulates a researcher-oriented pedagogy contrasting with transmission-oriented training (i.e. research methods) (Boud & Lee, 2005; Wagner, Garner & Kawulich, 2011). That is, the researcher education course uses an experiential, reflective, and learning-by-doing approach (Oliver &Whitman, 2008; Winn, 1995). This involves the participants in designing and undertaking a small-scale pilot study. For the TESOL students, this is typically practitioner-based research focusing on an aspect of their context and professional development for it; thus, they might want to better understand a phenomenon in their professional context, or take advantage of a new (technological, curricular, organisational, or other) possibility. The MA IC students do not always have such a professional context so we encourage them to make links to likely future professional contexts and/or to view their intercultural communication as intercultural practice.

The scaffold for the small-scale pilot study is a ten-step research process (which we developed more for its pedagogical affordances than for its correspondence with, or prescription as, an ideal/idealised research process). There are five steps in the design phase of the process, and five more in the implementation of the planned study and reporting on it. To illustrate what the process involves, in the design stage of their pilot study, the students-as-developing researchers must:

1. identify a puzzle, challenge, opportunity, or concern ('puzzle' in brief) arising from their reflections on their (professional and/or intercultural) experiences;
2. interrogate this puzzle using their own further reflections and also insights drawn from the available literatures and from peer engagement with their articulation of this emerging focus;

3. use the thinking from the previous steps to produce one working research question to focus the pilot study;

4. consider various research methods and what each might offer for their pilot study and how each might require a slightly revised research question; and

5. having chosen one method, produce a research plan and begin designing whatever tools, instruments, schedules, and other resources needed to turn the chosen method into an actual means for generating or collecting the data required to respond to their research question.

The implementation phase involves a further five steps focused on the actual data collection and/or generation, data processing and analysis, interpretation of the findings, and the writing of a final report on their study. In tandem with this experience of conceiving of, designing, and undertaking the pilot study, the students use researcher journals (cf. Borg, 2001; Moon, 2006) to reflect both on each of the ten steps as they occur and on the completed process. These reflective processes can be understood in terms of Schön's (1983, 1987) *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. As designed for the MA TESOL programme, the ultimate course objective was that the reflections of the students (all of whom are teachers) serve what might be termed *reflection-for-action* – we hope that they will develop a clearer sense of their developing practice as researchers. Given that these teachers-as-students identify research puzzles that are meaningful to them in their ongoing professional-academic development, the researcher journals also have the function of helping them to manage their reflexive relationship with the research design and rationale, and also the relationship between the study and their professional-academic worlds. Thus, the course invites the participants to be both reflective and reflexive as they develop as professionals (Boud & Walker, 1998; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2007) and as researchers (Borg, 2001; Roulston et al, 2008). For MA IC participants, we follow the same ten-step experiential model and linked reflective and reflexive processes, and, instead of focusing on TESOL practice, we encourage them to think about their own developing intercultural practice in the world generally and in possible future employment more particularly.

The disciplinary element

At its broadest, a conceptual backdrop to our academically-situated and practice-oriented MA-level teaching and supervisions with TESOL and intercultural practitioners is provided by the long-established critical tradition in education (e.g. Freire, 1968/1970) as well as by the internationally-focused thinking now challenging the Anglocentric theorising for critical pedagogy (e.g. Darder, Mayo & Paraskeva, 2016). Closer to home, we understand our teaching

and supervisory context in terms of the critically-oriented space within Applied Linguistics as articulated in recent years by, amongst others, Pennycook (2010). He argues that Critical Applied Linguistics (hereafter, CAL) is "more than just a critical dimension added on to applied linguistics" (p.10) but something more embedded with it. The ethos underpinning our academic-professional space has much in common with his position. For our present purposes, three key elements of CAL can be usefully highlighted:

a) the constant "problematizing of givens", a process which requires "a skeptical eye [to be turned] toward assumptions, ideas that have become 'naturalized', notions that are no longer questioned" (p.7) - thus, researchers need to question what is meant by, and what is maintained by, many of the everyday categories of their disciplines (p.8);

b) the interplay between reflexivity and criticality in the service of praxis, i.e., the "constant reciprocal relation between theory and practice" (p.3); and

c) the centrality of "social responsibility and social transformation" to the work of applied linguists (p.6).

These elements can be seen at work in our TESOL and IC areas of practice. Let us illustrate this with the first CAL element. For example, since the mid-1980s, TESOL methodologists have turned a sceptical eye towards 'best' practice and universally-applicable methodology (the pursuit of which remains strong in many educational discourses) and have, instead, argued that context-sensitive understandings are a sine qua non for methodology appropriate for the particular context concerned (see, for example, Bowers & Widdowson, 1986; Holliday, 1994; Bax, 1995; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). Similarly, there is a growing body of scholarship (as this volume evidences) which considers the contribution of IC discourses to both sustaining and potentially challenging essentialised, reductivist, and culturalist thinking about 'the Other' (e.g., Holliday, 1999, 2010, 2013; Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2004; Piller, 2011). Coherent with these critical traditions, the researcher education course also encourages students to interrogate the possible puzzles for their pilot study, to view them from multiple-perspectives, and to question the assumptions underpinning them.

We could similarly identify the reflective-practitioner and social transformative elements in both TESOL and IC literatures and research endeavours but, instead, we now want to focus on a current driver for our ongoing thinking about criticality. In their feedback on both the researcher education provision and the programme approach more generally, some of the MA IC students have raised doubts about the value of, for example, problematising a large culture approach when much of the literature and research with which they engage seems to

unquestioningly adopt this approach, and when (they fear) many potential employers do so also. Bearing this feedback in mind, we have been reflecting on the critical aspects of our IC pedagogy. Do we go far enough towards the third element we have identified in CAL? Do our students, as part of the problematising of givens and reflecting on their practice(s) and experiences, see the potential for social responsibility and social transformation? Do they recognise their agency in this regard? Are they able to envisage a course of action (the What) with a clear, socially-responsible rationale (the Why) underpinning it? It is to consider such challenges more seriously that we next revisit our ecological-framed thinking.

The conceptual element

We have been working, for some time, with an ecological conceptualisation of the researcher development of Doctoral (Stelma, 2011; Stelma, Fay & Zhou, 2014) and Masters students (Stelma & Fay, 2014). Here, we are particularly concerned with how this ecological thinking may help us explain (for ourselves as well as for our students) the value of the critical-edge to our researcher education and teaching about interculturality. Moreover, might it become more valued by our students if they can articulate (for themselves and for others, including us) why they plan to initiate particular actions in their immediate IC-focused academic-research activities and, more broadly, in their future intercultural practice?

Our thinking is grounded in the ecological interdependence, or mutual relationship, between an individual (or group) and their environment (Gibson, 1979; Reed, 1996). That mutuality determines the action possibilities (or affordances for action) for individuals in the world. More precisely, action possibilities are shaped by individuals' perception of the world, including their perception of their own position and relationships to others in the world. On this ecological grounding, our existing work, focused on researcher development, adds the concept of *intentionality*, and in this chapter we extend this further to include an understanding of intercultural action by researchers informed by a critical stance (such as that proposed by CAL).

Following Dennett (1987) and Malle, Moses and Baldwin (2001), we understand the concept of *intentionality* akin to the ordinary meaning of 'being purposeful'. To that basic understanding, the ecological perspective adds the sense that the intentionality of an individual, or a group of individuals, emerges either suddenly or gradually through action in the world (Young, DePalma & Garrett, 2002). Although much of an individual's action in the world is spontaneous – and, hence, an individual may perceive the affordances in their environment with limited or no conscious consideration – nonetheless, this ecological perspective, as framed by intentionality, assumes that the human drive to action is inherently purposeful (Tomasello et al., 2005; Papadopoulou, 2012). Thus, sooner or later, those actions in the world will be shaped by

the individual's more deliberate perception of possible affordances in their environment. We believe this is particularly pertinent in the context of researcher education; the credibility and trustworthiness of research hinges on the intentional and critical action of the researcher, as well as the extent to which a researcher is able to make transparent how this intentionality and criticality has informed their actions. For developing researchers, then, it is crucial that their activity gravitates towards more selective perception of action possibilities, and that their decisions are made with critical awareness of their emerging researcher (and professional and intercultural) purposes.

As based broadly in ecological thinking about a) mutuality (between an individual and their environment) and b) the affordances for action in the world perceived by that individual, it is the embrace of intentionality – or the purposeful selection from those possible affordances for action – that enables the further move to an ecological understanding of critical researcher action (and by extension, critically-edged intercultural action).

Returning now to the starting point – namely, our disciplinary roots in CAL (Pennycook, 2010; see above) – for our understandings of criticality, we can view the call to "problematize the givens" as a reflective, higher order intentionality. This particular reflective intention encourages us to look more closely at what may shape developing researchers' (and interculturalists-as-researchers') perception of action possibilities. It allows us to move beyond a simple contrast between affordances that give rise to more spontaneous activity and affordances that are aligned with some purpose. We begin to see affordances that are shaped by any number of different individual or social factors. For instance, affordances for action may be conventionalised through frequent and repeated action, may be preferred and/or advocated by sources of authority and by particular ideologies, may index momentarily fashionable activity, may be shaped by power relations in society, or may be motivated by individual proclivities. The recognition that individuals will, in most situations, have a set of possible affordances is a first step towards critical action, but it needs to be accompanied by an exploration of the genesis of those different affordances. That exploration represents the move to problematise the givens of the action possibilities for each individual in any specific situation.

To realise the emancipatory potential of this criticality-driven understanding of the affordances available to an individual, in this case the developing researcher (be they a TESOL practitioner or an interculturalists), the reflective process needs to inform actual action in the world. For the sake of illustration, in our researcher education, we see participants focussing on professional action (e.g. aiming to enhance one's own development), social action (e.g. wishing to advance the development of a group or institution in a particular direction), ideological action (e.g. intending to challenge inequality or centres of power in society), or indeed some more

complex combinations of these possibilities. If this action in the world is informed in this manner, by a criticality-driven understanding of the affordances available to the individual, we refer to it as critical action. We propose, then, that critical action in the case of both TESOL and IC research is guided by an awareness of the genesis of different affordances, and an informed selection of action possibilities that adhere to some professional, social, ideological or other intention for action in the world.

Finally, this line of thinking also explains why the reflective and reflexive aspects of our contextual ethos in particular, and of CAL more broadly, are so important. That is, affordances for action are constituted in the mutual relationship between an individual (or group) and the environment. Rather than being external to an individual, affordances arise when individuals with particular characteristics (skills, intentions and so on) act in environments with particular characteristics (resources, other people's intentions, and more). This integral role of the individual in shaping affordances means that any effective problematising of affordances must consider the shaping role of the individual herself. Thus, problematising the givens of affordances is inherently reflexive.

Criticality-in-and-for-practice: the case of 'Ralitza'

In this section, we take the case of one MA TESOL participant to briefly illustrate not just the development of intentionality in the immediate academic-research context but also the linkage to the professional arena beyond the Masters programme that students make. We have chosen one participant (who has agreed to be named 'Ralitza') from the MA TESOL programme rather than a participant from the newer MA IC programme because we have an existing corpus of analysed participant data from this TESOL constituency and we do not, as yet, have a corresponding corpus from the MA IC students. However, we believe that Ralitza's case illustrates the developing intentionality which is likely to be evident also in the researcher education provision for MA IC students.

As reported in Stelma and Fay, (2014), we collected and analysed naturalistic data from the researcher education course (including online forum contributions, participant reflections, and assignments) to help us address questions such as: To what extent do the participating teachers engage critically with the experiential and reflective processes encouraged by the course? Do they do so with an increasing sense of purposefulness? What kinds of purposeful action possibilities do they envisage for themselves - as practitioners becoming researchers perhaps, or as practitioner-researchers maybe? In this earlier study, we were looking for evidence of participants' balancing of various intentionalities (including those of doing research, of developing researcher competence, of developing as a teacher, and of learning more about

language education). But, as we return now to that data, and as exemplified by Ralitza, we can see some indications of action-oriented, change-seeking criticality.

At the start, Ralitza's slight *"apprehension"* regarding the course was mixed with enthusiasm for research which, in particular, might *"lead to evaluation of practices"* and might *"affect syllabus design and herald* [..] *change"*. Through reflection on her experience of her professional context, she sensed that *"perhaps it's time for a change"* and as she moved through the opening steps of the experiential research process described above, she identified a puzzle or challenge which she hoped might *"bring about a change in* [student] *attitudes"* and lead to an improvement in results. Her own reflections and her reflexive relationship with this context helped to shape her thinking about it and the challenge she had identified within it *("I am so certain, based on my experience* [here], *that it is* [x] *that* […] *teachers should consider of prime importance and a necessary start to any syllabus and I feel very strongly that it is* [y] *that I want to address in my study"*. By the end of the course, as she took stock of her course experience and what she had learned from it, she wrote:

> ... the writing up of the study ... felt different from any other assignments that I have done because of its scope, its unpredictability as the researcher is in the hands of the researched, the need for a sustained interest over time and the amount of thinking, and reflecting that research requires. A companion on the way was the log [the researcher journal], it alleviated my negative feelings, it questioned me constantly, it provided me with the next step in my action plan. Re-reading it now makes me re-live the whole process again and in this distancing in a way, perceptions, thoughts and feelings at a particular time take clearer shape and start to make sense in the bigger picture of the research.

Here, we can see her making sense of her researcher role (e.g., being in the hands of the researched) as well as valuing the critical, questioning space that the journal-prompted surfacing of her researcher thinking required. We can see her recognising, too, the clarity that comes through reflection-on-action (i.e., through reliving the experience again from a distance) thereby enabling the bigger picture to emerge. When we spoke with her some three years' later (in order to share our analysis of her researcher development journey and invite her comments on it), she noted how:

> [t]he ideas I put in my comments more than 3 years ago resonate so powerfully with how I view research even today. I re-read my comments with curiosity and surprise at the founding ideas of my becoming a researcher-practitioner … [the course] was the beginning of that journey.

These indications of a transformation-oriented criticality underpinning Ralitza's researcher purposefulness encourage us to believe that course does provide a space for TESOL

practitioners to envisage themselves as agentive, purposeful, and critically-oriented practitioner researchers.

Criticality in TESOL and in intercultural action

As noted above, our researcher education course has been extended for our intercultural students and we could now similarly focus on their development (we hope) of action-oriented, purposefulness in their researcher thinking. Thus, we might ask: In comparison to the critical action evident in Ralitza's practitioner-researcher intentionality, what kinds of intentionalities might our aspiring interculturalists develop and balance through their researcher development experiences? However, as that line of enquiry is still in its infancy, instead, here we begin considering if and how our intentionality lens might be helpful with regard, not just to academically-located, researcher thinking, but also to professional critical action (for TESOL practitioners) and intercultural action (for MA IC students as they move from academic study to the world of work). As our thinking is more developed with regard to the world of TESOL, we begin there as a stimulus for developing a vision for how a similar line of thinking might apply in teaching interculturality.

Critical action by TESOL practitioners

Returning to the opening discussion of the CAL understanding of the critical, we suggest that professionally-oriented and critically-edged purposefulness will be evident when a TESOL practitioner-researcher problematises the givens of their professional environment - for example, when they question how fit-for-purpose a foreign language teaching and learning paradigm is for an era of Englishes and English as a lingua franca, and when they probe the limitations of native-speaker models for English language competence. And such critical purposefulness will be evident, too, when that teacher embraces the constant interplay of theory and practice as mediated through their reflexive relationship with the theories and the professional possibilities in their context - for example, what might the available TESOL paradigms mean for a Mexican teacher of English working in a university in the Middle East as she reflects on her own identities, roles and practices in relation to the curricula of her institution, the needs of her students, and the language politics of the age?

But, for the critical potential to be fully realised, we argue that teachers should also recognise the social responsibility they have, and therefore be willing to work towards informed and purposeful change whenever and wherever they glimpse an opportunity to make a difference - for example, to challenge the inequalities arising from native-speaker hiring policies by purposefully adopting an approach to teaching and learning which, building on the possible in

order to advocate the preferred, might provide experiences for students and colleagues which challenge the native/non-native assumptions they may have. Such an approach would seek to reshape their expectations in this regard. In determining the possible, the teachers will, we believe, find it useful to consider the genesis of each action possibility and, in turn, this may help them to make choices which are not only informed by these understandings of the possible, but which are shaped also by a more conscious balancing of the potentially competing intentionalities they face. For example, they may know the genesis of, and prefer a particular approach to teaching English in the Middle East, but they may also know the genesis of, and be realistic about, the need to implement the approach favoured by the local education ministry. In such a review of the action possibilities and of the differing intentionalities, critical action is at work.

Critical action by interculturalists

With regard to the above-mentioned student doubt about the value of the critical content of our MA IC programme, we are now realising that the full potential of the critical in our intercultural teaching – and the full value of the critical turn in IC pedagogy more widely – will be achieved when students do more than simply learn (about) the current, critical ways of understanding the intercultural - additionally, they should become more purposeful and move towards 'intercultural action'. Whereas we have been content to present them, for example, with opportunities to learn about and discuss critical perspectives on essentialism and otherisation, a more action-oriented criticality is required, one which takes the questioning, reflexive, and socially-engaged stance of CAL and adds a purposefulness to it. Students will, we believe, better see the value of the critically-edged content we offer them once they consider the geneses - and their own shaping influence on them - of the various possibilities for action (in their academic work and beyond) which arise from that course content. With an increased sense of purposefulness, they will be able to propose preferred courses of action (in their academic lives and beyond) and work towards enacting those they have selected.

In concrete terms, for these intercultural practitioners 'in the making', problematising the givens of their field (e.g., large culture thinking) is a starting point and not the end, and striving towards the habit of reflectively and reflexively thinking about their own shaping influence on the intercultural encounters under review (e.g., what might be the shaping influence of being Jewish when thinking about Gaza and discussing this context with others, either/both Jews and non-Jews?) is to be welcomed. But, for criticality to imbue their intercultural practice, they also need to begin advocating action and to seek to contribute to transformative change within a

sphere of action with which they have traction (e.g., when that Jewish commentator explicitly links their contribution to a community such as Jewish Voices for Peace).

Preparing for intercultural action: criticality in IC pedagogy
Our MA IC students are in an interdependent relationship with their programme environment and from that mutuality arises a set of action possibilities which may or not be actualised as possibilities depending on the students' perceptions of them and selection from them. The students come to us with action possibilities already shaped by the previous encounters with both intercultural study and intercultural encounters more widely. Typically, regardless of student background, these prior experiences tend to be less critically-positioned than those encouraged by the programme. Here, we can have an interface (between a prior sense of possibilities and a currently developing one) where students have the opportunity to reflect upon, and better understand the origins of, the differing sets of action possibilities. By so doing, they may be better placed to balance the intentionalities at play, and decide upon a particular course of action. This balancing, we would argue, demonstrates their increased purposefulness, and is a move towards critical action within an interculturally-framed arena for action.

Further, we work in an age of value-for-money evaluations of academic study, in part seen through the lens of employability. It is not surprising that students, throughout their period of study with us, look ahead to what the completed degree (with its focus on critical understandings of interculturality) will enable them to do. Often, the expectations of known and imagined employers in the contexts for their future work play a part in these considerations of future practice. Here, we have a second interface (between a currently developing set of action possibilities and a future set of known or imagined ones) where students once again have the opportunity to reflect upon, and better understand the origins of, the differing sets of action possibilities. As with the previous interface, any resulting consideration of the intentionalities at play, and decisions about preferred courses of action would demonstrate increased purposefulness and move towards critical action vis-à-vis interculturality.

As programme designers and tutors, we can position the intended student experience on the programme - and the intentionalities it seeks to open up - in relation to the prior and future intentionalities they may have. Thus, in an assignment which currently invites them to discuss what they have learned about critically-edged understandings of culture, we can more explicitly invite students to relate such understandings to what they have previously encountered and/or what they expect to encounter, and, as informed by this discussion of the relationships between often differing understandings of culture, begin to articulate their preferred course of action.

Similarly, when offering them extensive reading options from the differing streams of thinking (e.g. from psychology, anthropology, sociology, political science, linguistics, cultural studies, education, business studies, conflict resolution, international affairs, heritage industries, and so on) which flow into intercultural communication as a discipline, we might explicitly invite them to consider the action possibilities arising for them (in all the complexity) as they interact with these streams and make sense of them for their future practice. The hope would be that their reading would then be more purposeful and demonstrate critical action at work in the intercultural arena.

Earlier, we mentioned the interculturality in the programme itself arising from it being a joint initiative between two significantly different (in our institution at least) academic departments (namely, Arts, Languages & Cultures and Education). At present, we alert students to the fact that their engagement with staff, courses and organisational and regulatory cultures in the two departments may generate some ambiguity given the differing practices and values which may become evident in the process. For example, tutors in one disciplinary home expect a well-managed reflexive dimension to the writing submitted for assessment, whereas for tutors from other disciplines, such reflexive writing may be anathema. What are students to make of this apparent conflict of action possibilities? We are now considering building a much stronger academic literacies dimension into the programme with the hope that students will be able to recognise that there are differing set of action possibilities (vis-à-vis academic writing genres and conventions for example), to identify the genesis of the academic practices and values of these differing action possibilities, and to make informed decisions about which practices they want to adopt for particular occasions. In doing so, they will need to balance the intentionalities arising from their own preferences and previous academic experiences, those of the differing disciplines and tutors concerned, and those of the assessment process for which the work is being prepared.

Finally, the kind of critical action we now want to encourage in the intercultural arena occupied by our IC students, is one that embraces all aspects of the critical including all three of the CAL dimensions we discussed earlier. All too easily, our coverage has focused on the problematisation of the academic givens (e.g., understandings of culture) without connecting this reflexively to the same conceptual areas in the students' own experience, contexts and practice (i.e., the reflexive dimension). The reflexive element is often there in the discussions we invite in class and in the assignments, but this can be given a much sharper focus in our teaching by encouraging students to consider the origins of the action possibilities arising in and from those experiences, contexts and practices and then consciously balancing the possibly differing intentionalities at play so that they can arrive at a more purposeful choice of action. And, with

regard for the critical to serve the call to social responsibility and social transformation, again, our current approach is well-meaning but lacks the kind of thinking rigour provided both by a conscious balancing of the intentionalities arising in study with this those possible in context, and an explicit consideration of the differing sets of action possibilities arising from these intentionalities. In writing about (and indeed providing feedback on) the value of the critically-edged content we offer, students might be better served by a more rigorous frame for their thinking, one provided perhaps by this ecologically-framed understanding of purposefulness as part of critical action.

Concluding comments

Discussion of the critical turn in IC pedagogy is aided by both i) a clear sense of what is meant by 'critical' and ii) an understanding of the educational processes through which such criticality might be fostered and enacted. We hope that this chapter has made a contribution to both areas. First, our development (originally for a researcher education course but with wider applicability we believe) of an intentionality-framed rationale for the 'critical' grew out of a particular ethos of criticality with much in common with CAL. The three aspects of CAL that we dwelt upon provide a starting point, and the extension of the ecological thinking to critical action (and to critically-edged intercultural action) completed our contribution to the first area. Second, as illustrated by the case of Ralitza, and building on the experience we have of using the intentionality frame for the researcher education course, we have sought to better understand how our students (both teachers-as-students and students-as-interculturalists-in-the-making) might make sense of, and work towards, critical action. In this way, we have begun exploring how that frame might be applied to our intercultural teaching and how it might address student feedback about the limited value they see in the critical perspectives we encourage. This contribution to the second area is still work-in-progress but is already providing us with fresh ways of thinking about our intercultural teaching, or, to put it another way, we too are in the process of recognising the origins of the curriculum action possibilities available to us and beginning to reposition our teaching based on a more purposeful sense of what we have decided to do next as we respond to student feedback.

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