

Freire's and Macedo's Literacy and Critical Pedagogy

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View of Literacy

- Literacy should not be viewed as “simply the development of skills aimed at acquiring the dominant standard language.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 193)
- Literacy is a “political action.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 192)
- Based on “cultural production and reproduction.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 193)
 - Cultural production – producing, meditating, and confirming over daily experiences
 - Cultural reproduction – collective experiences that work only in relation to the dominant groups rather than the oppressed groups that are subject to their laws and policies

Examples

- Ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa
 - Work on opposing high illiteracy rate common in Portuguese colonies
 - Africans taught to deny their cultural roots, history, and language.
 - Taught that their culture was “savage.”
 - This anti-democratic form of school that instilled colonial ideology that those colonized individuals had become “white” and were superior to other “African peasants” that were not educated. (Schultz, 2001, p. 194)
- Educators are now trying to incorporate African history and culture in their lessons, but the main obstacle is the language and that Portuguese is still the dominant language used by Africans in these colonized areas.

Approaches to Literacy

- Freire and Macedo state that there are four approaches to literacy:
 - Academic Approach
 - Utilitarian Approach
 - Cognitive Development Approach
 - Romantic Approach

Academic Approach to Literacy

- This particular refers to the “classical definitions of the well-educated man—thoroughly grounded in the classics, articulate in spoken and written expression, actively engaged in intellectual pursuits.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 195)
 - Mainly involves the studying of classical languages, Greek and Latin, and classical works
- This approach was usually only practiced by members of the elite class.
- Paid little attention to life experience, history, and the language of the students.

Utilitarian Approach to Literary

- Emphasizes mechanical learning, while sacrificing critical analysis.
- Worked to suffice the basic demand of the industrialized society of literate workers.
- Wanted to supply learners with direct access to jobs and increase the level of productivity
 - Main cause was to better the economy

Cognitive Development Approach to Literacy

- Whereas Academic and Utilitarian approaches emphasize mastery and treat reader as objects, cognitive approach wants reader to engage in interaction with the outside, objective world.
- This allows readers to be able to move easily from simple to more complex reading.
- John Dewey was influenced by this process.
- It allows readers to critique and analyze the information that arises from the text with complexity.

Romantic Approach to Literacy

- Wants reader to view reading as a “joyful” fulfilling experience.
- Focuses on the “construction of meaning.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 197)
- Ignores the “cultural capital” or differing financial situation of the readers and assumes that all people have the same access to reading
- It often “reproduces the cultural capital of the dominant class.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 198)
- It is rather unrealistic that the working class would come to find joy and satisfaction in reading on its own.

Results of Theories

- All fail to address the role of language.
- Ignore the way in which language confirms or refutes histories and experiences of those who use language.
- None focus on the individual and self determination of the reader.

Role of Language in Literacy

- Primary language of student should be used as a basis for learning.
- Language allows the students to “reconstruct their history and culture.” (Schultz, 2001, p. 198)
- Giroux states that the a student’s voice is important because it allows them to be “heard” and “define themselves as active authors
 - Gives students a sense of self-appreciation and “empowerment.”
 - Allows someone to be able to tell a story “in one’s own words.”

Conclusion

- Emancipatory literacy program will no longer subordinate the student and will allow the student to resist dominance by the standard language.
- English should not be viewed as a superior language in regard to bilingual students.
- Language should not be related to mechanical methods of reading, but rather critical analysis of the text.
- Allows the oppressed to reaffirm their reality and “reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices” that are often deprived of them by the dominant class.

References

- Schultz, F. (2000). *SOURCES: Notable Selections in Education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Dushkin.