

Critical perspectives in intercultural language learning

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Intercultural language teaching and learning is one manifestation of the critical turn in language education. Its critical dimension is characterised by a strong emphasis on self-reflexivity in both teaching and learning, and by a transformational agenda for language education (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Within language education, the critical project requires that the focus of language learning is to develop social actors capable of using language repertoires in ways that provide for agency both over language (in the choices they make about how to use their language resources) and through language (in the social possibilities they realise for themselves through their language repertoires). Within such a view of education, critical reflection comes to play an important role. To consider language education in such a way requires reconceptualising some of the fundamental starting assumptions of language education, which provides a basis for creating new emphases in both theory and practice. This presentation begins by examining the nature of this reconceptualisation and then examines the consequences of such reconceptualising for teaching and learning. It examines one particular area of language – pragmatics – to exemplify the forms of learning involved in this manifestation of the critical turn in language education. Finally, it examines the role of reflection in learning pragmatics and its contribution to developing a critical perspective on language and culture.

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