Coming to Voice: An Analysis of Social Justice and Transformative Learning Approaches in English Language Curriculum Design

Lucy Burriss
SIT Graduate Institute

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COMING TO VOICE: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING APPROACHES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DESIGN

Lucy M Burriss

SIT Graduate Institute

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Advisor: Ryland White

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Student Name: Lucy M. Burriss
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ABSTRACT

Language is a tool for communication and an expression of cultural values, norms and beliefs. Teaching the English language is a global profession that carries social justice and ethical implications. The School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS), a program of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) offers an alternative and transformative English learning opportunity, which emphasizes self-reflection and strengthening interpersonal relationships to live a life of greater integrity and work towards social change. Yet, there are still social justice implications to consider in any program or initiative. This Training Course Linked Capstone (CLC) is an analysis of the reflective practitioner’s exploration of relevant literature regarding language and social justice and her integration of these theories into her design work for SENS. The reflective practitioner asks: *How am I as a trainer navigating social justice challenges in English language curriculum design?* This question will be examined through critical pedagogy, social justice education, participatory language learning approaches, research of language oppression, and analysis of the practitioner’s design work along with the overall SENS curriculum. Along with a personal account of the impact of design work on the reflective practitioner, the CLC identifies areas of growth and opportunities for strengthening transformative language learning programs.

*Keywords: English language teaching, language, social justice education, engaged pedagogy*
IDENTIFYING THE CLC AND TRAINER BACKGROUND

My interest in learning and interpersonal exchanges through education began during my elementary school education. As a child of elementary school teachers, I was exposed early on to the stories of education as a transformative tool as well as the limitations of the education system. By transformative I mean the use of education to change one’s situation in society or to change one’s perspective about society and one’s ability to enact positive change. At a young age I was also fascinated with the world through the stories shared by my cousins who either traveled abroad or had heritage from Central America. As a result I, often pursued opportunities or jobs that combined global issues, cross-cultural exchanges and education. The past five years, I predominantly worked as an English teacher or advisor working with international students, immigrants or refugees. Working with immigrant students influenced my belief in the connection between education and advocacy, education and social engagement, education and power. I saw these connections in the classroom as students became more confident in their use of English, connected across cultures and found joy in learning.

Situating the CLC

As an English language teacher, I have experience developing content-based curriculum to a variety of ages, nationalities and English language levels thanks to opportunities to teach English or coordinate English language programming. I came to enjoy language teaching for the opportunity to guide people as they learn to communicate and connect in new ways, and for the opportunity to be an advisor, supporter, encourager and advocate.
Learning at SIT Graduate Institute

I was attracted to the training courses offered at SIT because I wanted to develop my skills in curriculum design and I wanted to understand further how to engage learners in a more experiential and socially conscious way. Through Training Design for Experiential Learning (TDEL), I developed my skills in facilitation and training design, increased my knowledge about experiential learning, adult education theory, learning styles, managing group dynamics, learning processes, and co-creating effective learning environments. Through Training of Trainers (TOT), I explored my identity and how it presents itself in a learning community, learned more concretely about engaged pedagogy and social justice frameworks and how to integrate them into a learning environment. In addition, TOT, encouraged me to consider the way I approach English language teaching and how to co-create a more participatory and student-centered classroom that works to address issues of social inequality and injustice.

Both TDEL and TOT have provided several areas of personal growth and movement. Upon reflecting on the most impactful areas, I kept returning to the framework of engaged pedagogy of Paulo Freire and bell hooks along with frameworks for social justice education. The three most impactful areas for me within these frameworks are: self-actualization, brave space, and “right doing”. Freire refers to the idea of self-actualization as “unfinishedness” (1998) and goes on to say, “I like being human because in my unfinishedness I know that I am conditioned” (1998). I am continuing to learn how I have been taught and what I have been taught. For example, what is the nature of the classroom environment and who created it? In TDEL we discussed the difference between comfort and safety within a learning environment. We explored how to identify the differences and how to cultivate a safe space. In TOT we took the conversation deeper to differentiate between a safe space and a brave space. “Brave space” refers
to the argument that, “authentic learning about social justice often requires the very qualities of risk, difficulty, and controversy that are defined as incompatible with safety” (Arao, 2013). In order for dominant ideology to be subverted and for all participants to feel compelled to resistance and rebellion, they must be challenged. A brave space provides for an opportunity for all participants to express their most authentic selves and to be able to show their real emotions. This space must be created through a collaborative process of co-creation where the learners and the teacher are both responsible for developing and maintaining it. In order to achieve this, I have to model it within myself. I have to actually practice what I believe; I have to be committed to “right doing”. By “right doing” I am referring to Freire’s words, “Whoever is engaged in "right thinking" knows only too well that words not given body (made flesh) have little or no value. Right thinking is right doing” (1998). It’s not enough for me to be committed to self-actualization; I must also show outwardly what I profess inwardly. As a conscious reflective language practitioner, this Training CLC is an opportunity to integrate and reflect on my process of self-actualization, co-creation of a brave learning environment, and choices as an English language teacher.

**Guiding Principles as a Trainer**

- Training is a method for building community through inter and intrapersonal questioning.
- Training is a way to build community through inter and intrapersonal exploration using “restless questioning”.
- Training is “restless questioning” in relation to self and the local or global community.
- Training is a tool for change that examines inter and intrapersonal dynamics through “restless questioning”.

As I attempted to write down my guiding principles, I realized that I wasn’t entirely sure how I wanted to phrase it. I wrote the same idea in several different ways because I believe that training can be a method, way, tool, and a “restless questioning”. The three essential principles are community, inter and intrapersonal development and questioning as a means to develop the first two. In order for change to occur within ourselves, in an organization, a business, a school, throughout the world, I believe that we must be engaged in exploring ourselves in relation to others. We can do this through training that brings people together and builds community through interactive lessons and activities.

**Practicum Description**

This is an analysis and trainer self-reflection on a unique three-month intensive residential program at the School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS). This program combines language learning with course content exploring racial and ethnic oppression, economic and gender inequality and the increasing damage and difficulties as a result of climate change. The course also integrates counseling, listening practices, meditation, and other sources of inspiration for personal growth and change. The aim of the course is to:

a) help cultivate in students an awareness of the emerging global crisis and its various manifestations, to b) assist them to develop an integrated ethical vision that draws inspiration and lessons from the example of others, and c) that provides tools that will encourage their leadership and readiness to act for personal and social transformation. (Mayer, 2017)

Since one ultimate aim of the course is to encourage participants’ leadership for social transformation, how we engage as a learning community is essential in creating that readiness. The key pedagogical stances and commitments in the course are a useful guide for exploring
aspects of those relationships. The three key commitments are: 1. Human Experience is Inherently Embodied and Students are Embodied Subjects. 2. All Participants in the Classroom are Highly Intelligent. 3. The Role of Meditation and Paired Listening Practices (Mayer, 2017). In the curriculum, the first commitment takes shape in the form of field trips, workshops, genuine expressions of feeling, and focus on exploring our lived experiences. The second commitment is related to appreciating the knowledge and intelligence of all participants. The third commitment meant that we regularly integrated meditation in the classroom and held weekly paired listening workshops with an opportunity to practice with students, volunteers and staff. Beyond a few field trips and workshops, the core structure of the program integrated these commitments into contextualized English courses Monday through Friday with class in the morning with the Director and class in the afternoon with me, as the Assistant Director. The integration of English language learning is an acknowledgement that English is a global tool for communication between grantees and sponsors, between aid workers and local communities, between corporations and clients, between learners and educators.

The structure of this paper is organized using a tree analogy inspired in part by a conflict analysis tool which uses the different parts of a tree to identify the root causes of a conflict and the outcomes of said conflict (Mason & Rychard, 2005). The roots in this paper signify the theoretical frameworks from which this analysis is based. The trunk is an analysis of the core features of the SENS program as they pertain to language and social justice. Finally, the leaves and fruit are the potential results of the design work and my own reflection on how these design features impacted me.
THE ROOTS

“Words impose themselves, take root in our memory against our will” ~bell hooks

Research Inspiration and Question

To recognize that we touch one another in language seems particularly difficult in a society that would have us believe that there is no dignity in the experience of passion, that to feel deeply is to be inferior, for within the dualism of Western metaphysical thought, ideas are always more important than language. To heal the splitting of the mind and body, we marginalized and oppressed people attempt to recover ourselves and our experiences in language. (hooks, 1994, p. 175)

This quote from bell hooks encompasses what I feel about language and far surpasses what I can articulate about my relationship to language. bell hooks writes that “we are touched by language”, which, to me, implies that we can be touched by language in ways that perpetuate oppression, while at the same time in ways that liberate or provide a space of healing from oppression. It reminds me of times that I have felt touched by language; both in a way that isolates me from the world and in a way that opens me up to live more deeply, in solidarity and harmony with the world. Through my experience as an English language teacher, I have become increasingly interested in ways to teach the English language—in its many forms and manifestations—as a place of recovery and healing. Stories, music, and poetry have been used as tools for individual or collective healing across many different communities. hooks reminds me of the social justice challenge inherent in teaching a language that has been used as a tool of domination. Language is a tool for communication, but it is also a way to process, conceptualize and make meaning from the world around us. Thus, teaching the English language comes with a myriad of considerations, beyond structure and form. The words I choose to teach, the way I
model speaking, the texts I choose to share—everything is the language. The status of the English language has created a global culture where many people must learn English to be able to participate in aspects of society AND where many people desire to learn it without question or hesitation. This complexity has brought me to constantly question social justice implications that come with the role and position of the teacher and in particular the unique challenges of an English language teacher both in the U.S. and globally. This Training CLC is a reflective analysis of my experience in the SENS program designing curriculum and an analysis of relevant theory and literature pertaining to social justice and engaged pedagogy. For the purposes of this analysis I will be considering the following question: *How am I as a trainer navigating social justice challenges in English language curriculum design?*

Through an analysis of critical pedagogy, social justice education, transformative learning, language pedagogy, and my own experience designing lessons for the School of English for Engaged Social Service I will explore best practices for addressing social justice challenges in curriculum design. In addition, what are the connections between critical pedagogy, social justice education and transformative learning? These three approaches and systems speak to the emancipatory, revolutionary, and empowering potential of education. As a lifelong learner and someone who believes in the power of education to create possibilities for individual change that spirals outwards; how does language influence the change potential? While learning a second language, we are constantly being faced with a challenge to not only use the new structures and forms to communicate, but also learning how to communicate our identity and our sense of self through the new language. This challenge requires deep self-analysis and self-awareness which are necessary for transformation to occur. In my own experience as a learner, I have often felt deeply moved by language. Both by the words that peers and teachers use and in
what their words express. Language moves me to consider different perspectives and to check my own biases. Thus, what do social justice education, critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory have to say about the influence of language and where do these theories intersect, diverge and what would it look like to integrate them into a critical-transformative-social justice-language learning course.

**Theory**

**Critical Pedagogy**

The goal of critical pedagogy in the classroom is liberation and the process is through guiding students to become more critical of their ideas, education, society and power (Downey, 2016). Freire (1968) refers to the process of people becoming more critical of the world, “conscientization” or becoming conscious. The ultimate goal is that through critical pedagogy and conscientization, people will transform themselves and, ultimately, society. In writing about the necessity of conscientization, Freire (1998) talks of conscientization as being a part of our “unfinishedness” as humans. Conscientization is becoming aware of that “unfinishedness” (p. 31). In order to liberate ourselves from the systems that either oppress us or direct the way of life, we must be receptive to the fact that we are “unfinished”. We are never fully formed beings, we continue to learn, to grow, to experience new ways of being and knowing.

As a teacher operating through critical pedagogy I am interested in the process of conscientization for myself. In the context of language teaching, what am I doing as a teacher to awaken myself to the unjust systems that I participate in? How do I bring my own self-awareness process into the classroom, while at the same time support the awakening of the students? As a trainer I must be involved in exploring my own ignorance. The classroom should not just be a place where only students are empowered, but where teachers are also empowered by
interactions with students (hooks, 1994). Through the design process, where do I acknowledge and consider the potential impact of a discussion or topic on myself?

**Social Justice Education**

Critical pedagogy is a method of teaching that seeks to help us develop a critical lens in order to transform our inner and outer conditioning. Social justice is defined by Bell (2016) as a goal and a process. The goal is for people from different social identity groups to be able to equitably participate in society and the process for reaching this goal should be participatory and inclusive. For me, social justice is about equitable access to knowledge creation and sharing. Social justice should include an examination of our systems and who they are serving. Social justice education provides a framework for overtly addressing unjust systems and a guide for analyzing our identity development. The framework of social justice education typically includes a model or analysis of oppression, self-reflection practices and a call to action. Social justice education, if it connects theory, reflection and action is critical pedagogy (Landreman & MacDonald-Dennis, 2013). Social justice education is buoyed and supported by effective facilitation, which should include skills in managing group dynamics, communication, empathy and knowing how to apply all these elements into the classroom (Landreman & MacDonald-Dennis, 2013). While this paper is not focused on facilitation, the planning and design process should reflect an analysis of how to concretely apply these skills. Another framework for facilitators of social justice education that Landreman (2013) and her colleagues suggest includes: knowing learners and ourselves and designing outcomes-based activities. When these competencies are combined they “allow educators to create transformative learning experiences through an integrative process that incorporates cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal domains of learning—all necessary for holistic growth” (Landreman &
Essential to the effectiveness of social justice education is the co-creation of an inclusive learning environment. For facilitators and learners to strive towards holistic growth, trust is essential. Trusting interpersonal relationships can be developed through “positive social interactions between [facilitators] and learners (Tuitt, 2006). Another way to engender trust is to show participants that we care about them as learners, we value their experiences and perspectives (Amstutz, 1999)” (Landreman & MacDonald-Dennis, 2013, p. 28). Through trusting interpersonal interactions, practitioner self-reflection, an understanding of learners, outcomes-based activities, and co-facilitation we can create the possibility of transformative learning. Social justice education that includes holistic methodology—involving our hearts, minds and bodies—has the potential to encourage inner and outer transformation.

**Transformative Learning**

The term, “transformative learning theory” was developed in part by Jack Mezirow in the 1970s. According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning is “the essence of adult education…to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others” (p. 11). This autonomous thinking comes about when we are confronted with our own assumptions and beliefs. According to his theory, transformative learning “is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world” (p. 5). These assumptions, concepts, values and feelings have come to us through our social interactions, whether from religion, community upbringing, national discourse or otherwise. We understand the world as social beings and through our culturally, religiously, and nationally shaped lens.
In order to facilitate transformative learning, educators are to help learners become aware of their own assumptions, to provide opportunities to practice recognizing frames of reference and using imagination to redefine problems, and to help students participate in discourse. Mezirow states that, “discourse is necessary to validate what and how one understands, or to arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief. In this sense, learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to making meaning” (1997, p. 10). In order for us to be confronted with our own assumptions, we must be in dialogue with other people. To be in dialogue with others, we use language. The language we use and how we use it has profound implications for the nature of our transformation.

**Inquiry Process and Ethical Considerations**

In pursuing my Training CLC, I will describe and evaluate my experience designing curriculum for the SENS program using my lesson plans, notes from classes, and the overall curriculum design of the SENS program. Additionally, I will review selected literature to support and illuminate my reflective analysis from the SENS program.

Using my reflections and analysis of my lesson plans and the overall curriculum design I will highlight certain questions, challenges and opportunities I faced when integrating social justice frameworks into the SENS program. I will then review the literature I have selected to search for answers or reflections on the questions, challenges and opportunities I addressed in my own experience. The literature will serve as a means to analyze what I experienced in the SENS program, while at the same time my observations from the SENS program will serve to illustrate gaps in relevant literature.

Since I am not directly interviewing or referencing specific student experiences, the ethical challenges in this inquiry are minimal. I am more interested in the integration of different
practices into curriculum design and reflecting on my own competencies as a trainer in my attitudes and awareness related to language and power. However, I do acknowledge that there are ethical challenges to consider. First of all, the nature of my inquiry is focused on my experience grappling with curriculum design and the integration of social justice frameworks pertaining to language. As such, my reflection is narrow in scope. I must be careful not to extrapolate too many conclusions from my own limited experience. To account for this, my paper will include a thorough investigation of available literature and an analysis of how different theorists can be used together to create an integrative holistic English language curriculum. Additionally, this Capstone highlights the ethical challenges of teaching the English language. Therefore, I will be cognizant of how I use my language to describe, interpret and evaluate my design and recognize ways that my language even in writing this paper could perpetuate systems of oppression. Even the language I use to write about and analyze the power of language is steeped in my Western way of conceptualizing the world. Words such as “dominant” and “dominated” or words like “standard speech” and “accent”, illustrate the unquestioned and unchallenged hegemony of the English language. My identity as an English speaking White North American inevitably impacts how I evaluate the use of language.

**THE TRUNK**

**The Power of Language**

Language is at the core and heart of the human experience. It is not only what makes us unique among our fellow beings on our planet, but it is arguably the single most important tool that we use in maintaining human societies. It is, in fact, the glue that holds virtually everything else we do together. (Reagan & Osborn, 2001, p. xi)
This quote from Reagan and Osborn is a powerful statement about the pervasiveness of human language. It seeps into all aspects of our lives, it pervades our thoughts, our actions, the structures of our daily lives and society. To be sure, there are certain phenomena that language cannot quite express, and yet we experience and create it. New words and concepts are constantly being created, molded and formed. First of all, what do I mean by language? According to the Department of Linguistics at The Ohio State University (2007), language is a system of communication, which includes nine design features:

1. mode of communication: messages are transmitted and received
2. semanticity: all signals in a communication system have a meaning or function
3. pragmatic function: the communication serves a useful purpose
4. interchangeability: individuals both transmit and receive messages
5. cultural transmission: certain aspects of language can only be acquired through communication with users of the system
6. arbitrariness: the meaning of a word is not always apparent from the form of the word and the form is not always dictated by the meaning
7. discreteness: putting pieces, sounds, and gestures together in different ways to make more meaning
8. displacement: the ability to communicate about things, actions, and ideas that are not present when we are communicating
9. productivity: the capacity for new messages to be created, because there is no fixed way to combine sounds, symbols or gestures.

To be honest, I struggle to find a way to define language that encompasses the complexity, especially when considering the social justice implication. The above definition
comes from the linguistics discipline and is inclusive of the many ways in which humans communicate. In addition, “While there are many kinds of communication systems in the world…only communication systems that display these nine design features can be called a “language”” (2007, p. 17).

According to Freire (1998), as humans emerged from “the basic life-support structure, intervening creatively in the world, they invented language to be able to give a name to things that resulted from its intervention, ‘grasping’ intellectuality and being able to communicate what had been ‘grasped’” (p. 33). The invention of language to name, to bring to voice what we experience and understand, is an incredible and complex aspect of the human spirit. The difficulty is that humans who have more power are able to spread their “intellectuality” or what they have “grasped” more widely. For example, the expression “bring to voice” excludes those who use visual-gestural languages, like American Sign Language (ASL), to communicate. As a reflective practitioner, I’m constantly learning about ways in which I exclude and the ways in which my privileged identities make me unaware of language that is exclusionary or oppressive.

In society, the position of dominant groups and those of marginalized groups are normalized and maintained, in part through language (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016). Language is used to defend the status quo, to keep it place, to keep it unquestioned. In the same way that language can be used to keep the status quo in place, it can also be used to challenge it. Hilary Janks, a professor of Applied English Language Studies, calls the use of language to bring about change and to challenge the norms: “critical language awareness” (2003, p. 2).

Janks (2003) also writes that when we use language, we have to decide what words to use, how to structure our words, how to combine information or ideas, whether to be definitive or tentative. All these choices, she argues are social choices. Language has both the power to
express what we know and communicate our understanding while at the same time maintaining
dominant culture and ideology. In this paper, I am primarily focusing on oral and written
language used to communicate knowledge, feelings, thoughts and ideas. By excluding visual-
gestural languages, I’m further contributing to the concept that written and oral language is the
norm. While this paper predominantly analyzes the power of the English language over other
languages, the complexity of social justice and language goes beyond the power of English.

**Integrating Social Justice Education and Transformative Learning Approaches**

Considering the above definitions of language and the challenges when considering the
power of language, my experience at SENS allowed for a creative and alternative community
where I could explore these considerations. SENS is a course for learning English as a tool for
leadership, self-cultivation, and social transformation (Mayer, 2017). One of the major themes of
the course that we explore is social inequality in its many forms, including the inequality created
and sustained by Western imperialism. As such the opportunities for integrating social justice
frameworks into curriculum were varied.

My role was to integrate the themes of the course (leadership, social inequality, climate
change) into my lessons and to support the course content delivered by the Director. As a
practitioner I knew this was a unique opportunity to develop curriculum using my learning from
SIT Training courses. In particular the goals of the program seemed to align with engaged
pedagogy of Paulo Freire and bell hooks. I was interested in cultivating my own style of
facilitation that could bring equilibrium to the learning community and help me feel more
confident as a practitioner. My background as an English language teacher made it so that many
of my lesson plans would inevitably include communicative activities. Since one of the aims of
the course was to address social inequality and the origins of social inequality, I became
interested in how to model this in my lesson planning especially considering my position as a white Westerner. While at first I was primarily concerned with how to teach the English language in a way that does not perpetuate the use of language as a tool of oppression either through explicitly discussing this proclivity or through participatory/democratic classroom activities, I noticed something unique about the SENS program especially about what language we used to communicate with each other. I observed three elements about the use of language that contributed to the transformative learning community:

- The power and influence of English as a medium for instruction and communication.
- The power of voice: Who speaks? Who doesn’t speak? What is the role of silence?
- The power of words: How do we speak? What do our words express?

I will address these three elements through an analysis of relevant literature, the SENS curriculum, and my own lesson plans.

*The Power and Influence of English*

The spread of English language accompanied colonization and geopolitical influence of Great Britain. In the U.S., the power of English spread through English leaders and policies. bell hooks (1994) describes how Standard English is “the language of conquest and domination; in the United States, it is the mask which hides the loss of so many tongues, all those sounds of diverse, native communities we will never hear” (p. 168). English consumed the mother tongues of native communities, slaves and other new immigrants through force. The erasure of indigenous languages in North America exemplifies a history of deliberate cultural and linguistic genocide (Freire, 1968). According to Ferguson, the director of CAL in Washington, “When the
need for global communication came to exceed the limits set by language barriers, the spread of English accelerated, transforming existing patterns of international communication (Ferguson 1983: ix)” (Phillipson, 1992).

While there are many forms that imperialism takes, some more forceful and violent than others, linguistic imperialism is unique in that it is present in all types of imperialism. The power that the English language yields across all societal sectors can be described as linguicism—“ideologies and structures where language is the means for effecting or maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 55). Language is both a functional tool and a carrier of our values. We communicate our understanding, beliefs, and truths through language. As a function and as a structure, the implications of language teaching are deeper than the form we model and communicate.

Teaching English might seem like a fairly innocuous profession and yet it carries with it so many assumptions about not only promoting the “proper way to speak” through Standard English instruction, but also the perpetuation of English speaking countries’ politics and values as the norm. While the whole English Language Teaching profession is not inherently a tool for oppression and domination, it can be hegemonic if it upholds the values of dominant groups and if it legitimizes the superiority of English as being a social fact. So what can be done? To challenge hegemonic powers, to create opportunities for lasting social change, these systems no matter how innocuous or innocent must be critically analyzed. How do we bring these social justice concerns to the classroom, to the teachers? How do I as a language teacher incorporate learning activities and practices that don’t promote hegemonic values and ideals? For example, how do I help students practice language that helps them communicate with others, but doesn’t perpetuate or promote a “standard” or “proper” form.
We can create a space where students can learn the language for their own personal and professional goals while also bolstering, appreciating and encouraging their local and linguistic knowledge. We can also offer multiple opportunities and ways for students to use and produce language beyond standard and unimaginative conversations. Additionally, we can incorporate critical pedagogy into the classroom so that students analyze for what and why they are learning to speak English.

There are many unique challenges in addressing issues of language and power in an English classroom. It can be difficult to directly address issues related to power dynamics when the instructor not only holds a position of power as a teacher, but also speaks the language fluently and thus can express more. In particular, it can be difficult to subvert Standard English expectations when students are trying to understand a myriad of accents. It is difficult to provide opportunities to speak in native tongues when students are from many different communities and do not share a common language. It can also be challenging when the facilitators or teachers (myself included) are native English speakers and speak with Standard English accents.

Auerbach (2003) and other language educators have proposed several different approaches to address issues of power in the classroom. One of the approaches that some educators advocate for is: “voices of power”, which teaches learners to “analyze and use powerful discourses in their own interests. Acquiring the discourses of power is seen as a tool for acquiring power” (p. 4). From this approach, power comes from being able to critically analyze and use the language on one’s own terms and for one’s own purposes.

**Transformative Learning: Language Learning is Risky**

The process of language learning is unique in that it is both a practical skill and a form of self-expression. When the classroom itself involves real opportunities to practice speech,
students are immediately involved in a process that is both practical and potentially emancipatory. Language learning involves risk-taking, because students are asked to express themselves in a new language in front of other students and the teacher. Risk-taking involves developing your sense of self and having the confidence of self-expression. Language learning, in particular, offers opportunities to develop self-concept and self-expression because students are grappling with the language and its rules while trying to represent themselves and express themselves in the classroom (Foster, 1997). The development of self through second-language learning and the self-expression and self-concept necessary to communicate in a new language allows for an opportunity for empowerment and transformation to occur.

**Practicum Experience and Summary of Curriculum Design**

In the SENS program during the first month of the course we attended field trips to visit Buddhist leaders across Thailand. The first leader we visited was Venerable Dhammananda Bhikkuni (Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh), Thailand’s first fully ordained Theravada Buddhist monk (INEB Institute, 2017). Venerable Dhammananda is the Abbess of Wat Songdhammakalyani, an all-female monastery founded by her mother in 1960 (Songdhammakalyani Monastery, 2014). When we visited her, Venerable Dhammananda talked about the importance of education and access to education, especially for women. When one student asked what the requirements were for women to become a monk in her monastery, Venerable Dhammananda said that she requires that women have completed at least high school and that English is a tool for accessing further educational opportunities. I remember that many students, and I myself, were taken aback by this answer. Her rational is that since female monks are not recognized in Thailand, it’s necessary for them to be able to communicate clearly in the face of discrimination. In my own experience teaching English and participating in a variety of programs and workshops, I have met plenty of
strong female leaders who didn’t complete high school. Several students in the SENS program were expressing a similar disease with the assumption that formal education automatically leads to stronger more articulate people.

At the end of our trip we visited Ajan Sulak, a leader of socially engaged Buddhism in Thailand and the founder of the International Network of Socially Engaged Buddhism. In his talk with us, Ajan Sulak stated that learning English is a way to communicate with oppressive powers. He talked about how Thailand was never colonized, yet has been influenced by capitalist structures from the West. Oftentimes, Thai politics are controlled by foreign aid and international diplomacy. Ajan Sulak encouraged students to learn English so that they could advocate for their needs with INGOs or foreign aid workers. His position was to “speak truth to power”. If anything, the English language can be used as a tool for empowerment and resistance. These perspectives echo the approaches laid out by Auerbach (2003); that in learning to speak a language of power we can use this power to garner or access power for ourselves.

One of the first themes we explored upon our return from the first field trip, was the origin of social inequality. The Director and I agreed that we should first address the power and position of language. What can you access with the language you speak? What opportunities are open to you based on your linguistic abilities? Considering as many of the students already had a desire to learn English, we asked them to talk about why they were learning English or when and why they spoke English.

On a larger scale, the promotion of English language teaching can dictate the societal norms of a place. On a personal level, bell hooks discusses the power of language as a weapon. She writes, “I know that it is not the English language that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a
weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize” (1994, p. 168). The English language has been used to create territories, to shame, humiliate and colonize entire societies. These actions are scaled down to the individual. People are shamed through the English language either for speaking another language, or for living, dressing, looking a certain way. But language we define, we create. We can take language and change its structure and form. We can create whole words to describe how we want to be described. We can create poetry to paint a picture of what we experience and feel.

As a trainer and social justice educator in an English language course, it is sometimes conceptually difficult for me to imagine how to soften its power while I am both teaching and speaking English. In my own lesson planning, I attempted to address this by structuring a few lessons around the power of language. In the SENS program, I distinctly remember having a conversation about names. Social justice educators are encouraged to follow the evolution of terminology related to different social groups and appreciate the importance of being able to name oneself. The act of naming oneself is essential to identity formation and pride in how you identify yourself (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016). In an international English learning program, where English is the common language spoken, it can be challenging to avoid relying on Western terminology. For example, in the SENS program, some students would introduce themselves based on nationality or based on English translations or versions of their ethnic identity or community. Some students offered an English nickname during the interviews we held before the course. Others asked us to refer to them by their last name because they said or thought it was easier to pronounce. I remember feeling frustrated by this. I did not want to insist that we use their given names, and I wanted to encourage their choice in deciding how we would call them.
In my own lesson plans I incorporated a few lessons on the act of naming. In this lesson students shared the meaning of their name and the origins of their name. Afterwards we read a chapter from the book, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. In this chapter the main character, Esperanza poetically describes her relationship to her name. She talks of the meaning of her name, her feelings about her name, and the connection between her name, her identity and her family. In class I had the students read different sections in small groups and then present a creative summary of their section through poetry, singing, acting or drawing. This was followed by a discussion about the connection between our names and identity formation. The objective was for students to eventually reflect on their own relationship to their names. While I’m not sure if this objective was met, a challenge for me in the design process is anticipating the attitudes of students. Will they have considered these questions before? Are these questions even relevant to them? How do I connect the personal reflections to the larger structural issues at play? And ultimately, how do I account for all of these considerations in the lesson design itself? If I were to do this lesson again, I think I would first do research on naming traditions from the respective communities my students are from. That way I have some prior knowledge to build into structured activities. I might then be able to ask more specific questions that relate to students potential experience. I could have also tried to probe more into what students felt and thought about their name or have them think of a time when they felt discriminated against because of their name. Upon reflecting about this activity, I remembered that several of the students are from an ethnic community that has been historically oppressed by the country they live in. In order to get a passport, they are forced to change their names to accommodate the national language. I learned about this a few weeks later when I went to Thai immigration with them. It occurred to me that perhaps they didn’t share this experience of their names being changed
because they weren’t comfortable? Or perhaps they hadn’t analyzed the implications? Or perhaps they couldn’t express how they felt?

In addition to addressing the importance of naming, the SENS program also included a few weeks on attitudes towards learning and an exploration of language learning. During the first week we asked all the students to first introduce themselves in their native languages. The students were to give a several minute introduction with no translation. The idea was for students to feel empowered through their knowledge and through the use of a language that they have a natural command of. It also affirmed that English is the medium of instruction, but not the most important language in the room. Afterwards we reflected on the experience of hearing students speak in their natural languages. As a class we observed how students spoke with a different tone of voice - a richer and deeper tone. We also observed that students carried themselves in a different way. They appeared more relaxed and more confident. At times it was awkward, especially in cases where nobody in the room could understand the language being spoken. After everyone shared, the Director asked how we all learned our native languages so well. Many of us smiled and laughed. It seemed absurd to even consider this thought. Yet it affirmed that language is deeply tied to our cultural and familial contexts. It is an integral part of our identities.

In my own lesson planning, I designed and facilitated a series of lessons on the power of language. I first began by reading some facts about how many people speak the English language. Students had to think about whether the facts were true or false. Then I read a few quotes from a New York Times article, “Across Cultures, English is the Word” and students had to agree or disagree with the assertions made by the author. For example, one quote from the article is “to be educated means to know English.” This fostered a mini-debate on the meaning of education. Next I had students do a pair dictation of three different quotes about language from
bell hooks. The quotes from bell hooks were describing how language can be a tool to oppress, resist and to transform or create something new. After this I presented about the three perspectives of language and power presented by Auerbach. At this point in my lesson, I think I lost participants. Their eyes glazed over. Perhaps they were not used to me lecturing, perhaps they were tired from class earlier in the day, perhaps they weren’t interested in the content, perhaps it wasn’t relevant, or perhaps they didn’t understand either the concepts or the vocabulary or both. I ended the class with a group activity where each group answered the question: Why are you learning English? Students wrote up their answers on flipchart paper and did a gallery walk where they walked around and read the answers. One representative stayed to explain from each group. Many commonalities came up. For example, all three groups wrote about using English to get or share information or resources. Each group also wrote about being able to communicate globally to work on social issues across cultures and countries. One student wrote about using English so they can access news other than the national news outlets. They talked of how media and information is censored and monitored by the national government, so it is often difficult to know the real situation. Thus, being able to read English means you can access international news outlets that might have a different perspective or information. This activity allowed for all students to speak and participate and brought a lot of lively energy in the room. I had intended to do this before the lecture about language and power, but made a decision to bring in some theory first, to balance out my tendency to begin classes with games or group activities. However, I think this activity could have served itself better in the beginning and the theory could have brought deeper reflections to why students said they were learning English.
At the end of the lesson I asked students to silently write what they thought language was. Then they had to share it while I wrote it down on the board. It became a collective poem that we read and reread together.

Language is
Power
An extra mouth
A connector between speaker and listener
A bridge you can cross over a gap
A tool for communication with other people to understand what happened and what do you want
Like a delivery man
A window to the mind
An identity—who we are
A spirit of the community (who speak the same language)
A way to communicate with other things
One of the heritages of human history
One of the most beautiful things for a race or group of people
An art of every culture and tradition
A product of human intelligence

We read it all together, then students read lines in popcorn style, just offering up their voice when another student was finished speaking.

While the aim of that lesson plan was to offer a model of analyzing language and power in the classroom and to get students talking about their own attitudes towards language, I think I did not spend enough time thinking about how I would facilitate the lecture part of my lesson. I didn’t consider how I would check student comprehension. Ultimately, I was so blinded by my own convictions about language and power that I didn’t think about how to scaffold my lesson towards offering a framework. I perhaps should have started with student input and group activity—to have them think of a time when they felt burdened or confined by language.

In designing a lesson plan I often struggled with self-doubt. I spent hours late into the night planning and re-planning a lesson. I was often self-conscious because I constantly felt like my own knowledge wasn’t deep enough for me to facilitate and plan certain lessons. I wanted to
get students to discuss, debate and talk about their challenges, but I as a facilitator and designer was unable to find my own voice. I was not confident in integrating lectures into my plans so I often leaned into my comfort designing participatory activities. As a learner and personally, I have always been reticent about speaking up or sharing my opinion. I think it comes from a place of not wanting to make a mistake or not wanting to sound stupid. It comes from a fear of being disliked. This pattern presented itself in my learning at SIT as well. However, through Training Design I learned about different learning styles and was able to find a name and a framework for my experience. As an imaginative learner I prefer to process information by observing others and exploring my own feelings and emotions about a topic. It was a relief to learn from classmates that I am not alone. It was a relief to be in a learning community where we discussed how to bring out the knowledge and experience of all participants. As a teacher, this pattern or preference for observation and feeling became even more apparent in SENS. How do I lean into my preference with confidence while still challenging myself to incorporate other styles into my teaching and learning? A more balanced instructor invites participation from more learners and contributes to democratic and co-created classroom knowledge.

**Power of Voice**

“And our tongues have become dry the wilderness has dried out our tongues and we have forgotten speech.” —Irena Klepfisz (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 54)

In a program founded on principles of community-building, alternative and transformative learning and with a framework that addresses that the suppression of voice or lack of voice has contributed to and amplified global inequality, it is essential to explore how the theme of voice presents itself in the classroom. The power of voice, of being able to share not only our stories but our authentic, raw, unfiltered selves with others encourages the inner
transformation necessary for liberation and social change. The suppression of voices either physically, through policy or law, or through patterns of ignoring, not listening is a legacy familiar to all societies and countries. This legacy either erases entire languages or suppresses individual freedom or rights. In the classroom this can be modeled by monitoring teacher, trainer or instructor talk time. As Freire notes, “Sometimes the teacher has the role of leading or the role of speaking, but the teacher has the duty to come from speaking to into speaking with, for example” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 180). As teachers we often have the role of leading, lecturing, explaining, modeling, and inquiring. In social justice education or critical pedagogy we must analyze whether we are speaking to or speaking with. Truly understanding the needs and problems of our participants and students can help us learn to speak with. Through sharing stories, listening to one another, we can create a space where language is used to empower, connect and empathize instead of disempowering and disconnecting.

As instructors, the way in which we share and use our voice is important to address, along with how we are speaking. Is our speech comprehensible? Is it inclusive of the many experiences in the room? Is it accessible to the way in which our participants speak? As educators sometimes our language is alienating because it has not considered the context of the students or participants. We must examine the structural conditions of the thought and language of our participants, in order to work effectively and in order to work towards social justice (Freire, 1968). Beyond analyzing and understanding the structural conditions we must think practically about how to speak. bell hooks talks of considering, “In our everyday lives we speak differently to diverse audiences. We communicate best by choosing that way of speaking that is informed by the particularity and uniqueness of whom we are speaking to and with” (hooks, 1994, p. 11). As a language teacher I have often thought of how to speak and what to say so that I
am understood. For example, if I use too many English idioms or cultural references without explanation, my entire lesson might be incomprehensible to my students. This practice has resulted in me questioning and considering what I say and why I say it. The result according to bell hooks is that, “Shifting how we think about language and how we use it necessarily alters how we know what we know” (hooks, 1994, p. 174). If we are constantly assessing why and how to say what we want to say, we can come to not only appreciate but also accept multiple ways of knowing.

**Transformative Learning: Communication and Discourse**

In order to facilitate transformative learning, educators are to help learners become aware of their own assumptions, to provide opportunities to practice recognizing frames of reference and using imagination to redefine problems, and to help students participate in discourse. Mezirow states that, “discourse is necessary to validate what and how one understands, or to arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief. In this sense, learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to making meaning” (1997, p. 10). In order for us to be confronted with our own assumptions, we must be in dialogue with other people. I learned this first hand while studying at SIT. In all of my classes we had opportunities to share about our experiences and our opinions about social justice in the classroom, in society and globally. My peers at SIT often shared stories that made me reflect on my own beliefs. Being in dialogue with others brought me to a deeper understanding of myself.

In the SENS program, students are learning English while also discussing major societal difficulties and crises of our time. For some students, this is the first time they are being confronted with the structural influences that produce or create the social conditions they experience or observe. One unique aspect of this particular course is that students and staff live
together at an eco-village, Wongsanit Ashram, one and a half hours from Bangkok. This provides for opportunities to discuss and engage in discourse both in and outside of the classroom.

**Sharing Stories**

One method of discourse is through sharing stories. While it is important as a teacher to reflect on how we are speaking, it’s also essential to create a space and opportunity for other voices to come into the room. At what point do you invite participants to speak? In the traditional banking model of education, the teacher dispenses knowledge and the students repeat or produce knowledge directly from the information provided by the teacher. In language or adult education classrooms, one approach to balance the voices and access to power based on identity is defined by Auerbach (2003) as, the “many voices” approach, which states, “forcing people to adopt or acquire the language/literacy/discourses of the dominant culture is forcing them to accept domination” (p. 3). To address this belief or this reality, teachers are encouraged to use learner experiences and ways of knowing in the classroom. One concrete way to do this is to have learners produce their own texts, perhaps in their own language. The argument here is that power will then emerge from “the multiplicity of voices” (p. 3), that in valuing local ways of knowing, local languages and cultural knowledge a learning space will be empowering. In social justice education, to share the power of knowledge construction, facilitators can invite participants to talk about personal experiences. For truly inclusive and transformative processes, facilitators must “respect and affirm participant experiences. Showing students openness, compassion, and empathy is essential to an environment where participants feel they can take risks” (Landreman & MacDonald-Dennis, 2013, p. 29). A co-created safe space might encourage all students to share their experiences, but in order to truly address social justice,

We have come to believe, as argued by Boostrom (1998), that we cannot foster
critical dialogue regarding social justice by turning the classroom into a “safe space”, a place in which teachers rule out conflict… We have to be brave [emphasis added] because along the way we are going to be “vulnerable and exposed”; we are going to encounter images that are “alienating and shocking”. We are going to be very unsafe. (Arao, 2013, p. 407)

If we are truly able to come to voice, to share our stories authentically and vulnerably, then we can be free to speak of other topics (hooks, 1994). In the SENS program we focused a lot of time on slowly sharing our stories. The hope was that ultimately students would feel themselves opening up and become more receptive to developing strategies for social change.

One way we did this was through co-counseling listening pairs. Co-counseling comes from a practice called “Re-evaluation Counseling”, a practice where people share equal time listening and speaking for relating helpfully to one another and for us as individuals to have an opportunity to explore our patterns or even the origins of hurtful patterns (Jackins 1981). Every Wednesday the Director led a workshop on co-counseling. We would practice sharing equal time with a partner. Oftentimes there would be a theme to the conversations or a guiding question related to the course content. For example, when we were talking about colonialism and race, the question was to think of your earliest memory about race or about difference.

In my own lesson plans, I always tried to connect my lesson to their personal lives. Using the problem-posing model of Freire, I tried to provide for time in which students could share about their personal connection to a theme or idea. This activity spanned two weeks. The idea was to practice using language in a more creative and emotional way. I used the poem “For my People” by Margaret Walker to explore issues of race, oppression, human solidarity and resistance. First I played a recording of the poet reading her poem. We talked about voice,
emphasis and portraying emotion through rhythm, beat, pacing, punctuation, pauses and the sound of words. Students then created their own poems by first thinking of a group of people that they are a part of, either their nationality, race, tribe, ethnicity, profession etc. After several drafts, students presented their poems. During the process of creating the poems, performing them and even after we often created other versions of the poem for enjoyment. The line, “for my people who are” became a mantra, and a way to share our collective experience as it happened.

**Co-creating supportive and trusting environments**

Co-creation as a process of collaboration between teachers and learners is essential for acknowledging and equalizing the power dynamics in a classroom. Co-creation can be a challenging concept to analyze, especially coming from one practitioner’s perspective. There were times during the SENS program that I found myself wondering where the “co” was in design and decision-making. During the SENS program, the staff made some scheduling and logistics decisions, without consulting the students. In one particular case, one student approached me and expressed dissatisfaction and discontent because they were not given a chance to voice their opinion. This resulted in this student feeling distrust towards the staff.

While some aspects of co-creation are yet to be explored for the SENS program, there was a prevailing feeling of connection and support. I think we effectively co-created a trusting and supportive learning environment through co-counseling and through our experience of living together at the Ashram. Co-creation not only balances power dynamics in a classroom but also develops a trust between participant and participant and between the facilitator and participants that further balances the power within the classroom and allows for transformation (Amstutz as cited in Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016). Inviting participants to be a part of knowledge construction by sharing personal experiences can develop trust. Vaccaro (2013) writes, “Beyond
mere acknowledgement of participant comments, inclusive educators respect and affirm participant experiences. Showing students openness, compassion, and empathy is essential to an environment where participants feel they can take risks” (p. 29). (Vaccaro, 2013) By responding with genuine warmth and gratitude for what learners have shared or by allowing space for other students to acknowledge the bravery and the risk taken by other students, the power and access to language can be more equalized.

In my own classes, I tried to co-create through collaborative or collective activities. In the beginning of my lessons I always had a collective circle activity, either a quick language production activity where students were asking and answering questions. Sometimes we danced or sang songs. Eventually, I started to ask students to facilitate a warm-up activity. Many of the students were community leaders, facilitators and teachers with a wealth of group activities to share. I started doing this so that students would have more agency in the classroom. We could learn to trust each other when taking risks. Sometimes these student-led activities went on longer than necessary or the facilitator didn’t explain the activity well, leading to frustration and confusion. For me, I began to feel much more comfortable knowing that I could explore other ways of facilitating besides lecturing and modeling language activities. I felt that the students began to trust me more and came to see me as a supportive and encouraging peer. Examples of this sentiment can be seen in the evaluations of some students:

- “Lucy was friendly with all the students throughout. She knows and could feel each and everyone of us. I never felt like she’s an Asst. Director of the course. She is more like a friend to us.”
- “Understanding to others. Creating ideas to learn for students. Ready to learn from others.”
• “Lucy is a natural facilitator, she tends to each and every details. She let’s us think and teach less. Which I really like.”

• “And her being such as her voice, action, and her feeling that I can be touched.”

I began to integrate other collective activities into my lesson plans. For example, on a few occasions we wrote collective poems or created mind-maps or brainstorms as a whole group. These collective activities allowed for a space where all students could participate with varying levels of engagement. For example, some students practiced leading activities, some students encouraged others to participate, and other students played a vital role in bringing interest and enthusiasm to the activity at hand. We slowly built trust in the classroom through listening pairs and collective activities. Since the SENS program is a residential program, we continued to build trust while eating meals, walking to the market, and through late-night conversations in the library. Despite feeling overwhelmed sometimes and insecure about lessons for the next day, I tried to immerse myself in the experience of living at the Ashram. For three months there was no separation between work, social life, and personal routines. This intensive and immersive experience built a trusting and supportive community beyond the classroom activities. The nature of this trust was also developed through our use of language, specifically through how we listened to one another and used time inside and outside of the classroom for developing our listening skills.

**The role and importance of silence and listening**

It might seem counterintuitive to suggest that silence contributes to the power of voice, but silence and the art of listening are essential for being able to receive the words being spoken. Silence offers a time of reflection. Silence offers a pause during a tense or stressful moment.
Silence offers depth and breadth of thought. Freire (1998) writes about the importance of silence in communication:

On the one hand, it affords me space while listening to the verbal communication of another person and allows me to enter into the internal rhythm of the speaker’s thought and experience that rhythm as language. On the other hand, silence makes it possible for the speaker who is really committed to the experience of communication rather than to the simple transmission of information to hear the question, the doubt, the creativity of the person who is listening. (p. 84)

Silence allows the listener to truly take in the full spectrum of what the speaker is saying. In listening deeply, in allowing for adequate time for listening without interruption, while minimizing our need to filter and consume information, we can learn to really understand one another—to communicate with real feeling and empathy. In the SENS program we practice listening by using listening pairs, where all participants (facilitators included) spend time openly sharing experiences and feelings with equal sharing and listening time.

In talking about silence, bell hooks (1994) suggests that we can learn from spaces of silence where we are listening to another tongue. She writes,

That in the patient act of listening to another tongue we may subvert that culture of capitalist frenzy and consumption that demands all desire must be satisfied immediately, or we may disrupt the cultural imperialism that suggests one is worthy of being heard only if one speaks in Standard English. (p. 174)

Besides creating space for the listener to fully grasp what the speaker is saying, silence allows for more truthful and intentional speech. In silence, we are open and receptive to the truth of what we want to say. When we speak we often evade the truth to benefit our own interests and
our own concept of reality (Palmer, 1983). Through practicing silence, Palmer (1983) has learned several useful things that have me thinking about my own experience in SENS. First of all, in silence he learned that often his words were used to take up space instead of open up the space. Secondly, that in silence we can ask question to invite students to think more deeply about their experiences and to listen more fully to their peers. Finally, words are so often divisive and exclusive. In silence, we are more likely to feel the unity and relatedness between us and others. It is then easier to speak and hear words of truth.

Buddhist traditions also have pertinent perspectives on the power of silence. In Buddhist meditation practice, “when we have the opportunity to be in silence, we can look deeply and smile at the flowers, the grass, the bushes, the trees, the birds and our fellow human beings” (Hanh, 1997). Silence can be centering, calming, and it can bring us back to our natural compassionate and appreciative nature. In the SENS program this can be seen in the meditation practice we would do in classes before the start of the morning class. In the ritual of burning sage after or before different transitions either in the content of the course or with returning to the Ashram from field trips. We also practiced this in the form of co-counseling, which offered a time to listen to each other. It seems strange to emphasize silence in a language class. It makes sense to emphasize listening. There were plenty of opportunities for students to listen to different language productions (music, poetry, presentations, lectures, movies). But silence in a language class is harder to explain or justify. But we all need a time to pause. Silence offers a pause, a chance to integrate some of the learning into ourselves. It offers a time to reflect on something that happened, to reflect on our thinking, to consider what is important to say. If students and teachers are in silence together at the same time, it can bring equilibrium to the power dynamics.
If we explore the nature of the silence and settle into this silence, the words or the message that we speak, write or express can hold more weight.

**Power of Words**

“Words are blades of grass pushing past the obstacles, sprouting on the page; the spirit of the words moving in the body is as concrete as flesh and as palpable; the hunger to create is as substantial as fingers and hand” ~Gloria Anzaldua (1987 p. 71)

Many of us in the SENS program are visionaries, social activists, teachers, and healers. These roles and identities contribute to a passionate and creative learning environment, where all participants are engaged in self-expression through visual art, religion, writing, or through community projects. During the SENS program I was often moved by the words that participants used to describe an experience, an image and a feeling.

Words represent and encompass much more than the letters that contain them. Through words we can express love, appreciation just as effectively as we can express hatred and lack of understanding. The way we use language hurts and becomes “a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize” (hooks, 1994, p. 168). A physical weapon might cause temporary or lasting physical damage, but a word stays in our mind, festers, gnaws, eats away at our sense of self, our self-worth. The word is not only necessary for speech and dialogue, according to Freire (1968) within the word are two seemingly opposing forces: reflection and action. When we speak, if one is sacrificed, the other suffers. For example if we say one thing and do the opposite, we create a world of distrust, confusion and bring imbalance to the world. However, if our actions are in congruence with our words we have the power to “transform the world” (1968). What is truthful speech? In Buddhism, the concept of “Right Speech” is a guideline and rule for practitioners to follow. The Buddhist order of Interbeing, started by Vietnamese Buddhist leader, Thich Nhat
Hanh (1997), includes two precepts (of fourteen) that are explicitly about speech. The Eighth Precept: Harmony in the Community states, “Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small” (p. 18). The Ninth Precept: Mindful Speech states,

Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things of which you are not sure. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety. (p. 19)

Our words can cause rifts and divisions within ourselves and within a community. Through these precepts we can use our words constructively and truthfully to speak out against oppression and we can use our words to create more peaceful, loving and supportive communities.

**Transformative Learning: Interpersonal Relationships and Support**

Mezirow speaks of support as a practice by educators for their students and as essential for fostering transformative learning. This support should not be about comfort, but about helping students “sustain the courage needed (e.g. living with the discomfort) and recognizing their own narrative while at the edge of their learning (Berger 2004: 347)” (as cited in Taylor, 2007). Support can also be seen as validation of experiences and feelings. This can also build empathy between students and teachers as participants are given the space to share their life experiences, which provides more clarity and understanding (Taylor, 2007). Support has to be developed through cultivating trusting, empathetic relationships. Eisen has indicated seven relational qualities of important to transformative learning: “trust, non-evaluative feedback,
nonhierarchical status, voluntary participation and partner selection, shared goals and authenticity” (as cited in Taylor, 2007). All of these relational qualities are important for building a safe space where students feel open and vulnerable to share work towards transformation.

Many times during the SENS program, I felt a certain joy, connection and support. As a group we explored and learned about deeply challenging social issues in which governments and businesses work together to grow, build, produce and consume, which leaves entire societies and groups of people in destitute and often seemingly inescapable vicious cycles. While we worked through these realities, we as a class dealt with a shifting group. In this program we invite tutor volunteers to come help in the learning process. This year, one tutor was only able to stay for a month, another tutor left after a month and a half for commitments back home and finally another tutor left unexpectedly due to a remark from another group member.

This particular case was incredibly difficult and the tutor’s decision to leave was a combination of many different reasons. Throughout the program this volunteer had made demands on staff related to accommodations, scheduling of workshops and sometimes struggled to work with students in a collaborative and productive manner. Ultimately the tutor left because a staff member told them that their behavior would give a bad name to their home country. I was unaware of this conversation until I noticed that this tutor had become more withdrawn and looked visibly upset. Despite my own personal challenges working with this tutor I approached them and tried to listen without interrupting and without imposing my own internal assumptions about what had transpired. The tutor wished to leave without saying goodbye to the students and did not want to accept an apology from the staff member who had hurt them. Additionally, as part of the program we would offer appreciation and gratitude to workshop facilitators before they left. The Director invited this tutor to take part in this tradition and they refused. The
students were confused and many felt guilty—wondering if their actions had caused the tutor to leave. At the time I was frustrated that the tutor didn’t want to engage with the other participants and found his actions to be narrow-minded and selfish. Oftentimes this tutor would speak or contribute before the students had a chance to think about their response. They often had difficulty understanding student needs and responding to them during class or in tutoring sessions. Months after the fact, I’m wondering if the tutor’s unwillingness to accept an apology or to listen to appreciations was just their own patterns getting in the way or if there was an element of co-creation that they didn’t feel a part of from the beginning. I wonder if we could have included the tutor in a discussion about their particular goals for the program or created some kind of document outlining expectations and responsibilities. Ideally we would have done a volunteer training a few days before the start of the program, but didn’t have time this year because we were still recruiting students and confirming funding up until the start date.

To mitigate the comings and goings during the program and to attempt to maintain and cohesive and supportive group, we emphasized expressions of gratitude, appreciation and even love (with a focus on specificity). As a trainer and participant, I found this to be particularly powerful and I truly believe as a learning community we were able to understand each other more deeply. After this tutor left, as a community we met together and talked in listening pairs about what we were thinking and feeling. In the end, I think these “sudden partings” became a valuable opportunity for the learning community to reassess our commitments to each other and strengthen our ability to listen to each other.

*Speak Truth to Power*

Another perspective about addressing power and language, influenced by Paulo Freire’s work, states that language learning should be used to analyze and change systems of oppression.
As written by Auerbach (2003), “The premise is that education needs to make the social organization of power (not just the language of power) explicit” (p. 4). Language learning in this approach is structured around the struggles that participants face and developing the language skills to address these social issues. The third approach acknowledges the power and potential conflict of both the first two perspectives. The first approach being related to offering opportunities for all students to share their stories and make their voices heard and the second approach advocating for learning English to be able to wield the power it holds. However, as the third approach asserts, affirming many voices and learning to use the dominant voice can inform each other and also conflict with the purposes of both. Auerbach raises the question, “who benefits from particular uses of language and approaches to language education?” (p. 4). What will an approach solely focused on raising the voices of students really accomplish? What will an approach that empowers students to use English simply because it might afford them different opportunities really do? For the purposes of the SENS program, students are using the language to communicate and reflect on their relationship to their communities and their thoughts about how they as individuals can contribute to social change. In the design process, any choice I make about language approaches carries with it my own attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about language. In SENS many students were already quite vocal about systems of inequality in their communities or countries. Many were familiar with using their language as a tool to speak up about injustice. In fact, we met several Thai activists and leaders who risked and sacrificed a lot when they spoke the truth.

As the trainer, I often reflected on my own relationship to my voice and the words I use. How often have I spoken up about an unjust situation, not just in conversation but to the perpetrator or perpetrators of oppression? How often have I used the power of my words to
advocate for change? I think that an area of discomfort for me was being an advocate of speaking truth to power and incorporating activities where students reflect on their experiences speaking truth to power, when I myself have little courage or experience to do so. This reflection reminds me of my privileged identities. As a white middle-class person growing up in a predominantly white middle-class community, I have often not directly experienced direct acts of injustice from either individuals or systems of power. This position of privilege has often led me to stay in my comfort zone, offering listening and empathy but not always advocating with my voice. At SIT, these tendencies were brought to light several times as I continued to consider what it means to be an ally. I started to reflect on my feelings of guilt and shame associated with my privileged identities and the sense of distress and sadness I feel at images or stories of suffering. Joanna Macy (2014) writes of the pain we feel for the world “as natural to us as the food and air we draw upon to fashion who we are. It is inseparable from the currents of matter, energy and information that flow through us and sustain us as interconnected open systems. We are not closed off from the world but integral components of it, like cells in a larger body” (p. 21). This quote resonates with me and expresses my experience learning and growing through the SENS program. I believe that the SENS community understood this collective pain. As a trainer I am still considering how to integrate more social action into my reflective practice, to speak truth to power beyond writing, voting, discussions, listening, and social media posts.

**Nonviolent Communication**

We have already spoken of the oppressive power of language. Yet, so often we avoid speaking positive and genuine words from the heart. Expressing love or affection through words is reserved for family, friends, or lovers, but often absent from the classroom. In academic pursuits, words of encouragement are sometimes shallow compliments, meant to placate
participants and build a sense of safety and false trust. The practice of Nonviolent Communication offers a useful analysis of the way in which we can use words for compassion. Nonviolent Communication refers to our natural state of compassion when we remove the trappings of violence from our hearts and bodies. The practice of Nonviolent Communication is an approach to speaking and listening where we give from the heart and allows us to connect to ourselves and others (Rosenberg, 2005). One way of using words for compassion is by expressing appreciation. The model for expressing real appreciation is to first, talk of the actions done by someone else that contributed to our well-being. Secondly, to address the specific needs of ours that have been fulfilled, and finally the “pleasureful” feelings that resulted from the fulfillment of those needs (Rosenberg, 2005).

In SENS we emphasized using appreciative language. Often in the beginning of class we would stand in a circle and each share one thing we were grateful for. First we would practice the possible sentence structures for talking about gratitude: I’m grateful for…. I’m grateful to … for…. I’m grateful because… We also often would mingle around and ask each other “What’s new and good?” Even though we lived together and spent much of our time together, it encouraged all of us to think about and appreciate the little things in our lives that seem commonplace. Eventually the expressions of gratitude extended to our interpersonal relationships as we spent much of our time together, we came to see our friendships as precious and unique.

Words can be used in many ways, so we often incorporated multiple sources of language including music, poetry, prose, movies, news articles and video clips. Music and poetry use words to express the inexpressible. Poetry, music and other forms of art have long been used to expose suffering, to give a voice to the voiceless, to resist oppression. Many of our students
either wrote poetry in English or their native languages, journaled, sang, drew, or painted. As a class and as a community we created a new language. Through our three months together we shared experiences, emotions, and knowledge that is unique to our collective learning community. This can be seen in the inside jokes, the expressions and poetry we created.

From my experience through the SENS program I observed how language can be used as a tool to access information and opportunities. We used English as a medium to connect with one another, share stories and learn from social activists and leaders across Thailand. We also used language to analyze systems of oppression and shared frameworks and practices for speaking truth to power. Finally, we used language to build community through co-creation of new language in the form of poetry, songs, and through sharing stories from our collective experience.

**THE LEAVES AND THE FRUIT**

**Healing the Mind-Body Split**

Through my experience in the SENS program, my emotions were often always right on the surface. My experience was the feeling of your throat constricting when you are trying to stop yourself from crying or when you’re preparing to speak the truth that you’ve hidden and buried deep in the pit of your stomach. Even as I write this, I feel my throat constricting. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), beautifully encapsulates this feeling when talking about her own writing: “Daily, I take my throat in my hands and squeeze until the cries pour out, my larynx and soul sore from the constant struggle” (p. 72). I felt this way throughout the SENS program. Sometimes I was exhausted from constantly examining the origins of my emotions, decisions, actions or thoughts. I was often exhausted from living in such close contact with twenty other people. There was nowhere for me to hide and no other option but for me to be myself. To cry
when I felt like crying, to say whatever weird thought or idea was on my mind. It felt like beginning to come to voice. There were still many things that I didn’t express. The opportunity to express emotions is important for the process of transformative learning. This is for two reasons:

First, the process of critical reflection, as described by Mezirow as central to transformative learning, essentially calls into question and invites exploration of alternative ways of being-in-the-world. As learners make explicit and reflect on their assumptions, the process may be accompanied by various emotions, such as guilt, fear, shame, a sense of loss, or general anxiety…When we take seriously the responsibility of developing a more conscious relationship with the unconscious dimensions of our being, we enter into a profoundly transformative, life-changing process. (Dirkx 2006, p. 19)

As a trainer, I felt that I was just as much involved in this process of transformation as the learners. When we come to explore the connection between our mind, body and heart, we begin to see all the ways in which we have limited ourselves, conformed ourselves to oppressive or hegemonic ways of being. Freire (1990) speaks to this when he says, “For me there is a certain sensualism in writing and reading—and in teaching, in knowing. I cannot separate them. Knowing for me is not a neutral act, not only from the political point of view, but from the point of view of my body, my sensual body. It is full of feelings, of emotions, of tastes” (p. 23). In our society we are always compartmentalizing our lives. This is my work life, my social life, my hobbies, and my family. Often these realms are separate. Even in a microscale we compartmentalize actions. Reading, writing, teaching, knowing. We only consider the way our
brain produces or stores this knowledge, but how about our body, where do we store and how do we express our knowledge in our bodies, in our hearts.

**Language use for inner transformation and interrelationship**

Interrelationship
by Thich Nhat Hanh

> You are me, and I am you.  
> Isn’t it obvious that we “inter-are”?  
> You cultivate the flower in yourself,  
> so that I will be beautiful.  
> I transform the garbage in myself,  
> so that you will not have to suffer.  
> I support you;  
> you support me.  
> I am in this world to offer you peace;  
> you are in this world to bring me joy.

Throughout the course I kept coming back to the idea of “interrelationship” as written by Thich Nhat Hanh. There is a certain caring, support, and interconnectedness that goes beyond honest discourse. I am left wondering about a deep commitment and belief in interconnectedness and how each participant supported and connected with others in their own way to hold space for our learning community.

As a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, a fiddlehead transforms into a fern, a tadpole transforms into a frog, a seed transforms into a flower. In nature, transformation is possible only through proper nutrients, water, sunlight, air and support from other organisms. These transformations occur through great effort and are necessary for the growth and development of other organisms. For personal and social transformation to occur, we must also have proper support and nourishment from others and our environment. As Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, our personal actions and transformations are inextricably tied to others. A recognition and belief in our interrelationship and interconnectedness can help build the support necessary to transform.
The purpose of my considerations around language use is to explore what concrete activities can be integrated into a language-learning classroom to foster the support and love necessary for personal and social transformation. In adult education classes in the U.S., there is a lot of discussion about differentiated learning to accommodate all the different learning needs and varying levels of English in the classroom. In some cases this looks like self-guided work or pair work. Sometimes with different students doing entirely different things. In my own teaching I have been resisting an entire division and separation of my classes. In a practical way it is a lot of extra planning on my part, but from a collective, critical learning perspective, to me, it creates an environment where students are only learning for their own interests and goals. They are only accountable to themselves and aren’t exposed to an opportunity to empathize, to truly listen to their classmates and understand that we are all interconnected.

**Strengthening Transformative Language Learning**

To strengthen the depth of the SENS program, to continue to encourage and foster supportive learning communities through words and actions, I have a few thoughts:

- A thorough needs assessment before the course begins to explore student goals and student thoughts on what they would like to see integrated into the classroom, what themes are relevant to their contexts. The challenge in doing this is that often students aren’t confirmed until a week before the class. But I think this would encourage students to speak their mind from the beginning.

- A clearly designed framework or guide for feedback. A workshop or training on what feedback model we will use and opportunities for students to practice this.

- More workshops from outside facilitators. Some students suggested a workshop on deep listening or nonviolent communication to further develop these essential
skills. Different facilitation styles could also bring deeper participation from more students.

- Student-led workshops or activities. To continue to access the knowledge of learners, integrating more student-led workshops or activities could give students practical application of their learning and balance the sharing of power and information.

- More time for rest and integration of learning. Built in reflection time during each full day. Perhaps even for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Not extra work or homework, but self-directed reflection through journaling, meditation, walking, or exercise.

**Reflective Practitioner Role and Responsibilities**

What is the role of the language teacher when attempting to practice critical pedagogy and reflective practice? First of all, the language educator must understand the social and cultural context of the population she is teaching. This means understanding interpersonal interactions and power relations within the classroom, organization and society at large (Reagan & Osborn, 2001). From a social justice education perspective, educators must examine and know the most current and the various ways in which different groups seeking justice choose to self-name. Language is constantly changing and being called into question (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016).

Reflective practice of language educators should include effective application of skills in the classroom, assumptions in curriculum and strategies, and critical reflection on the moral and ethical implications of classroom practices not only for students but for language and education policy (Vann Manen 1977 as cited in (Canagarajah, 1999). I’m particularly interested in the examination of assumptions in curriculum design and in moral and ethical critical reflection.
Reflective practice invites a constant state of questioning. Questioning your decisions, the potential impact on students, the learning community, and society at large. Even small design or facilitation decisions can have a profound impact when combined with other actions.

Beyond examining the curriculum and exploring the possibilities for impacting the classroom community and implications for policy change, “to teach in varied communities not only our paradigms must shift but also the way we think, write, speak. The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself” (hooks, 1994, p. 11). As language teachers this is even more pertinent. Whether working with immigrants in the U.S. or working internationally with folks from various backgrounds and countries, we must think about how we are thinking, writing, and speaking.

The nutrients necessary for me as a reflective practitioner to thrive in and contribute to the field of transformative language learning include: compassion, patience, open-mindedness, sense of humor, deep listening, humility, open voice, confidence, support, critical perspective, vision, balance, and the courage to live an “alternative lifestyle”. I’m still learning how to develop these qualities within myself.

Often, amongst friends, lovers, coworkers I feel like my throat is constricted. The words I want to say, the truth I want to speak is contained. It’s too intimate, too strange, too gross, and too idealistic to speak aloud. I started to feel a loosening of this constraint on my language when I took classes at SIT. I met classmates who felt similar desires, who wanted to live life in a way that allowed for this creativity of thought. In my practicum, this growth and freedom seemed to expand in some ways. In other ways, I’m still unable to articulate my experience in my practicum. Things are still unresolved in me. My journey to explore the relationship between the
words we speak, write, think, express and our human capacity to love, grow, and challenge continues.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Appendix A: Participant Informed Consent

Participant Informed Consent

Title of the Study: The challenges and opportunities addressing social justice in English language curriculum design
Researcher Name: Lucy Margaret Burriss

As you may know, I’m currently completing my Masters Degree in Intercultural Service, Leadership and Management at SIT Graduate Institute, in Brattleboro, Vermont U.S.A. In order to complete my degree, I will be writing a reflective analysis paper on my experience as Assistant Director for the School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS). As participants for the SENS program, I invite you to participate in my reflective analysis research. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand. If you decide to participate, please do one of the following:

1. sign this form and email it back to me as an attachment.
2. print this form, sign it, take a picture of it to send to me as an email attachment or as an instant message in Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat or Line
3. send me a message on Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat or Line with the following sentence: “I have read the consent form document sent by Lucy Burriss, I understand its contents and I agree to participate in this study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Purpose of the Study: In a unique language learning program where students were not only improving language abilities but also learning and reflecting on systems of violence and oppression, it is essential to explore the way in which language has been used as a tool of domination. In the SENS program we encouraged students to critically analyze the structures and systems around them, including language. As such, the purpose of this study is to analyze my skills as a trainer navigating the challenges of integrating social justice frameworks related to language in my curriculum design. Beyond my own skills, I will be exploring best practices and areas of growth within the field of English language teaching related to addressing the power of language.

Study Procedures: Your participation will be to provide resources to analyze the curriculum of the SENS program as it pertains to language use and social justice. Your participation will consist of written consent to use your written work (writing projects, curriculum materials, notes and reflections from classes) in my reflective analysis.

Potential Risks and Discomforts: There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and no penalties should you choose not to give consent to use your written work as part of the analysis.

Potential Benefits to Participants and/or to Society: There are no anticipated benefits to participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. This includes names, nationality, gender and any other identifiable characteristics. Information collected will be stored in my personal computer, which is locked with a passcode. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no identifiable information will be used.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty and you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

Researcher’s Contact Information: If you have any questions or want to receive more information about this study, please contact me at lucy.burriss@mail.sit.edu or my advisor at ryland.white@sit.edu. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board at irb@sit.edu or +1 (802) 258-3132 (USA).

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in this study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Participant’s signature ___________________________ Date ____________
Appendix B: Language and Power Figures from *The Change Agent*

**Language and Power — 3 Perspectives**

- **Many Voices**: Says power will emerge from a multiplicity of voices.
- **Voices of Power**: Says mastering language of power will get you access to power.
- **Social Change**: Says language should be used to analyze and change the conditions that oppress people.

**Questions**:

- Who gives orders or instructions?
- Whose voices are listened to and believed?
- Who speaks hesitantly?
- Who decides who speaks?
- Who interrupts?
- Who calls who by their first names? Who does not?
- Who speaks in his or her mother tongue?
- Who speaks? Who speaks the most?
- Who chooses the topics to speak about?
Appendix C: Sample Lesson Plans

Date: Tuesday, Jan. 16 (whole class)
Theme: Learning and language. How to make our minds free.
Topics: Identity and learning
Materials: “My Name” handout (print a few more copies)
Time: 2:00-3:30pm

Purpose: To begin a discussion about identity and aspects of identity in order to better understand one another and support each other.
Goals: Students will understand the essential meaning of the story, “My Name”. Students will present about their own names and what they think about their names and identities.
Objectives: Students will give small group presentations about one paragraph in “My Name” through art, acting or description. Students will practice new vocabulary in small group discussion and presentation. Students will reflect on their own names and present in small groups or pairs about what their names mean and how it relates to their sense of self.

Warm-up (5): Greeting while music is playing, stop when music stops and find the person closest to you to greet. Greet them as a friend you haven’t seen in a long time. Greet them like they are a stranger. Greet them like you are meeting Donald Trump etc.

Write your name in the air with your finger, with your knee, with your ear, with your nose, with your elbow, with your eyebrow, with your chin, with your arm. Write my name in the air with...

“My Name” Introduction and Context (5)
Yesterday and last week I introduced a story called “My Name”, this story ties into conversations about identity.

- It is a fictional story written by Sandra Cisneros (but some ideas are based on her own life), a Mexican-American author. About a 13-year-old girl named Esperanza with Mexican-American roots living in Chicago in the United States in a community of other Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. The story itself is about her life as a 13 year old and many of the themes are related to identity, names and language. In the United States, English is still the standard language of instruction in schools and the workplace, there is a lot of pressure to learn English and there is power in knowing English and powerlessness for many immigrant families if they don’t know English. (My context as an adult ed. teacher to immigrants).

- In this passage she is reflecting on her name and how she feels about herself in relation to her name.

- This piece is a little bit difficult because it includes metaphors. Does anyone know these words? They are phrases to show the meaning of something by using familiar words or objects in order to illustrate a feeling or unfamiliar concept. This is to give more powerful
meaning and feeling to a story, often you can find them in poetry. We in turn must interpret the meaning. The author wrote the story in short chapters like poems.

- For the purpose of this exercise I want to focus on new vocabulary and how she feels about her name. There are many other themes in the story, which we will get to later in the course.

**Play the recording of “My Name” (twice) (10)**

What words did you hear (write them on the board)? What do they mean?
What is her name?
Where is she from?
Does she like her name?
What does her name mean?
(Make a map of Esperanza’s name) collectively

**Reading “My Name” in groups (15):**
Hand out the story “My Name”, read through it once (students listen)
Divide the class into small groups (groups of 4, count off by 5), each group will focus on one paragraph and write down new words.
Each group will read their paragraph and then present the new vocabulary.
Each group will also present a summary of the meaning of their paragraph, according to their thoughts (through acting or through images)

**Conversation about Student Names (10):** Names and Naming (in concentric circles or fish bowl) -- answering questions about your name (answer the first question in pairs and then switch to another partner with a new question...teacher will read the questions one at a time)
What is your full name?
What does your name mean?
Who gave you your name, why?
What are your nicknames and why have you been given them?
Do you like your name?
Play with the sounds in your name. Repeat them several times. Do the sounds remind you of other words or of certain images?
Date: Tuesday, February 13  
Week 6; Class 22  
Topics: Race, Ethnicity and Colonialism  
Materials:  
Time: 2:00-3:30 (1.5 hours)

30 minutes… (in the center of the room on the floor)

Please sit next to me: Make an extra space on the floor next to me. Say: “________...will you please sit on my right? Continue until everyone has switched places.

Object Role-Play: I’m Lucy’s glasses and this weekend she went to the sauna twice.

Pronunciation (tongue twister): Thelma's thick thistles need therapy. The thoughtful mouse's mouth is something else. It's easy to stick it to thickets. (written down and placed around the room, play telephone)

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30 minutes…(in the U-shape)

For My People (finishing reading and talking about it...ask students to share and categorize more vocabulary and what the last stanza means)

➢ In pairs or small groups brainstorm all the verbs associated with Struggle and Perseverance
➢ Each group take a stanza and illustrate it through actions or a picture.
➢ What does she mean by bloody peace?
➢ What does her future look like? Who is the last stanza for?
➢ What is the tone of the last stanza, if you could describe the last stanza in one word...what would it be?
➢ What does she want for her people?

ENERGIZE: Be Unique: stand in a circle. Say something unique about yourself. If it's true for someone else they have to sit down.
Using I have...I have been to Nepal, I have seen a snake, I have eaten insects

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Writing brainstorm: each day give a different word...students brainstorm for a few minutes about associations with that word. “people” “freedom” (spoken word associations)

What would you write For YOUR People? If you could write a poem to celebrate and acknowledge the struggle and strength of your people and community, what would you write?
➢ Pick a group of people that is important to you. Your community, religious community, friends, co-workers
➢ What do you spend your time doing? At least 6 verbs
➢ For my people who are...singing, dancing, eating, laughing etc.
   o planning
   o teaching
   o listening
   o evaluating
   o laughing

Think of the suffering and of the strength (Dukkha and strength)
write down the verbs. Share with a partner.
Now write phrases with those verbs.
(give example or template on the board)

Now make a few of the verbs into phrases. Everyone share their phrases. Practice pronunciation with a partner. Get help from others and tutor.

Discussion:
1. In your work, community etc...Is there someone trying to “fashion a better way” to hold space for a world that will “hold all the people”?
2. What’s possible in your communities? Who are your allies?
3. What actions are being taken in your community regarding ethnic or racial discrimination? In U.S. there are workshops on anti-racist training, advocacy groups for white allies
Date: Wednesday, February 28 2018  
Week 7; Class 28  
Topics: Colonialism and Economic Inequality  
Materials:  
Time: 2:00-3:30 (1.5 hours)

10 minutes...

Energize and Connect: pass the parcel (pass around a ball of paper with layers, play some music, when it stops the person who holds the parcel must do the action or answer the question from the parcel)  
Pronunciation: (listen to poem presentations)
Grammar Theme/Review: comparatives

10 minutes...  
Quotes about English Language; power/struggle/oppression...bell hooks, Homegoing, etc. Rupi Kaur; broken English. Whole group dictation (fill in the blanks)
- English as a way to oppress  
- English as a way to resist  
- English as a tool to use in order to do something...transform  
Read it aloud together  
HOW do you see English?  
How is English used in each of these different quotes  
What is the power of language?  

oppress | resist | transform

10 minutes...

1. Language and Power...Explain the three perspectives about language and power. (pg. 3-4 in The Change Agent)  
2. Present by writing on the board, key words about each perspective  
3. pg. 3 Unequal Rights to Use Language  
4. Which perspective speaks to you the most?

30 minutes...  
➢ Class Survey about English language...position and power Give example from Venerable Dhammananda and Ajan Sulak  
➢ Students discuss how they can use English as a tool. In small groups each person shares for 2-3 minutes
  o Then you write your ideas on whiteboard or poster paper  
  o Then we will visit each group to read the ideas and ask questions (no presenting from the group)
Appendix D: English Language True or False

**True/False:**

1. English is the official language in 35 countries (can you name a few?)

2. English is the world’s most commonly studied language (1.5 billion learners) (2015)

3. There are 527 million native speakers of English (2015)

4. English is spoken in some form by three times as many nonnative speakers as native speakers (2007)

5. The largest English-speaking nation in the world, the United States, has only about 20 percent of the world's English speakers. In Asia alone, an estimated 350 million people speak English, about the same as the combined English-speaking populations of Britain, the United States and Canada.

6. It has consolidated its dominance as the language of the Internet, where 80 percent of the world's electronically stored information is in English, according to David Graddol, a linguist and researcher.

**Agree or Disagree (from “Across cultures, English is the word” by Seth Mydans):**

1. “to be educated means to know English.”

2. The English language no longer "belongs" to its native speakers but to the world

3. "The people who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it," wrote the Indian author Salman Rushdie in an essay in 1991.

4. In our world today, we need a common language.

5. The need for a common language will be replaced by automatic or simultaneous interpreting.
Appendix E: bell hooks quotes dictation activity

A.

__________, ________, is not the speech of exile. It is the language of ________ and ________; in the United States, it is the ________ which hides the loss of so many ________, all those sounds of ________, ________ communities we will never hear, the speech of the Gullah, Yiddish, and so many other ________ tongues.

B.

__________, ________, English, ________, to speak the ________, tongue, was one way enslaved Africans began to ________, their ________ power within a context of ________. Possessing a ________ language, black folks could find again a way to ________, ________, and a means to create the ________ solidarity necessary to ________.

C.

For in the ________, usage of words, in the ________, placement of words, was a spirit of ________ that claimed language as a site of _________. Using English in a way that ________, usage and meaning, so that white ________ could often not understand black ________, made English into more than the ________ language.
Appendix F: How can you use English as a tool?

How can you use English as a tool? (for what?)

Group (3)

- To work for social issues in other countries
- To share information and resources
- To connect and network globally
- To get access to different news other than the “State” news
- To teach English at summer work/camp to use at Farmer Group Agri-discussion with technicians from foreign countries

How can you use English as a tool? (for what?)

Group (2)

- To communicate with international partners and donors
- To express/promote real situation and the problems of our community to all over the world
- To make friends with native speakers
- To get information resources
- Learning new knowledge (natural science) improve health condition

How can you use English as a tool? (for what?)

Group (1)

For...

- Communication
- Global networking
- learning/understanding
- Translation
- For research related work
- Collaboration
- Capacity building
- Opportunity (scholarship/program/seminar/etc.)
Appendix G: Dimensions of the Emerging Global Crisis

“Violence” and “Voice” were our shorthand way of indicating the close relationship between the crisis in the lack of voice—that is the difficulties in achieving stable, ethically grounded, participatory, and democratic forms of governance—and the use of violence and threats of violence, both occurring at many levels of the global order.

“Self” standing in the middle is indicative of two things. The first is that each of these structural sources of suffering, now appearing at crisis levels, have their interior and subjective manifestations as well. This is a reflection of deep commitments and understandings of socially engaged Buddhists, but also sociologists and anthropologists in the modern period. The second is the implication that part of the key for movement and change is for the self to take cognizance of its participation in the current crisis, and to decide to act to bring about change.

From Sketches of a Buddhist-inspired project in transformative learning by Theodore Mayer
Appendix H: “For My People”

For My People

BY MARGARET WALKER

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs
repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues
and jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an
unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an
unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years, to the
gone years and the now years and the maybe years,
washing ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending
hoeing plowing digging planting pruning patching
dragging along never gaining never reaping never
knowing and never understanding;

For my playmates in the clay and dust and sand of Alabama
backyards playing baptizing and preaching and doctor
and jail and soldier and school and mama and cooking
and playhouse and concert and store and hair and
Miss Choomby and company;

For the cramped bewildered years we went to school to learn
to know the reasons why and the answers to and the
people who and the places where and the days when, in
memory of the bitter hours when we discovered we
were black and poor and small and different and nobody
cared and nobody wondered and nobody understood;

For the boys and girls who grew in spite of these things to
be man and woman, to laugh and dance and sing and
play and drink their wine and religion and success, to
marry their playmates and bear children and then die
of consumption and anemia and lynching:

For my people thronging 47th Street in Chicago and Lenox

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/21850/for-my-people
Avenue in New York and Rampart Street in New Orleans, lost disinherit dispossessed and happy people filling the cabarets and taverns and other people’s pockets and needing bread and shoes and milk and land and money and something—something all our own;

For my people walking blindly spreading joy, losing time being lazy, sleeping when hungry, shouting when burdened, drinking when hopeless, tied, and shackled and tangled among ourselves by the unseen creatures who tower over us omnisciently and laugh;

For my people blundering and groping and floundering in the dark of churches and schools and clubs and societies, associations and councils and committees and conventions, distressed and disturbed and deceived and devoured by money-hungry glory-craving leeches, preyed on by facile force of state and fad and novelty, by false prophet and holy believer;

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way from confusion, from hypocrisy and misunderstanding, trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people, all the faces, all the adams and eves and their countless generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second generation full of courage issue forth; let a people loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now rise and take control.

Margaret Walker, “For My People” from This is My Century: New and Collected Poems. Copyright © 1989 by Margaret Walker. Reprinted by permission of University of Georgia Press.

Source: This is My Century: New and Collected Poems (University of Georgia Press, 1989)
Appendix I: Problem Posing Cycle

1. Identify the Problem
   a. What is happening?
   b. What is contributing to this situation?
   c. Why is this happening?
2. Research the Problem
   a. How does this relate to you?
   b. What does this problem make you think about?
   c. What else do we need to know?
3. Develop a Collective Plan of Action
   a. Why is this problem occurring?
   b. What can we do about it?/What is in our control?
   c. Brainstorm a list of possible solutions or alternatives
4. Implement the Collective Plan of Action
   a. In pairs or small groups, implement one of the alternative solutions
5. Evaluate the Action Plan
   a. What happened when you did your action plan?
   b. How did it go?
   c. What would you do differently? What would you do again?
   d. What is the impact?
   e. What are next steps?
Appendix J: Poems written by the SENS class
(with names omitted)

What is happening right now…
The sun is shining brightly.
The ant is looking for food.
[Redacted] is smiling.
Two butterflies are flying.
Two white butterflies were flying.
Two small flies took a rest on a leaf.
The trees were making a swishing sound.
I felt fresh air.
I heard the wind.
I noticed body rhythm.
I noticed my own breathing.
I felt uncomfortable in my body.
I remembered my childhood life.
I wanted to stay outside.
I noticed everyone noticing something.
I saw two clay dolls.
Now we are sitting in the classroom.

Language is
Power
An extra mouth
A connector between speaker and listener
A bridge you can cross over a gap
A tool for communication with other people to understand what happened and what do you want
Like a delivery man
A window to the mind
An identity-who we are
A spirit of the community (who speak the same language)
A way to communicate with other things
One of the heritages of human history
One of the most beautiful things for a race or group of people
An art of every culture and tradition
A product of human intelligence
I heard | I felt | I noticed | I observed | I smelled
I noticed my breathing
I heard Topsi typing
I heard birds singing songs outside
I heard the sounds of birds, airplanes, and vehicles
I heard the fan
I observed myself thinking about the future
I noticed I was thinking about my leader
I heard the clock ticking, the birds, airplane, Topsi typing (inside outside inside outside)
I felt sleepy
I heard the sound of breathing—the sound is like someone is crying
I heard nothing. I tried to think and understand myself. I felt caring, guilty
I couldn’t observe anything because I fell into many thoughts
I felt my own pulses…throb
I noticed my mind ran away
I only heard the clock ticking