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Emancipation not indoctrination

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Title:

Emancipation not Indoctrination: Critical Pedagogy in ELT

Abstract

In the context of neoliberal corporate globalization, English tends to be regarded as a commodity that can benefit both individuals and national economies by increasing capacities for international communication. English Language Teaching (ELT), therefore, is often perceived as a means to a different - financially motivated - end.

However, by defining English in economic terms we are promoting a pedagogy that indoctrinates learners into the world as it currently exists, and giving them the skills to serve the needs of those who currently hold power within existing structures. This entails an uncritical acceptance of inequalities and injustices, and the promotion of values that reinforce hegemony.

In this talk, I draw on the work of Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux and other critical pedagogues to explore alternative approaches to ELT. Rather than using English as a means of complying with existing power structures, I propose that ELT should be used to critically engage with those structures, allowing learners to identify examples of social injustice and take steps to redress imbalances. This leads to a model of ELT that is not only socially responsible but is also far more congruent with widely accepted principles of language acquisition.

