

Educational Tools

🌀 Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is based on the idea that language constructs the lenses we use to make sense of the world. Therefore, it prompts learners to unpack those lenses (their assumptions and how those were constructed) and their implications. The table below shows a representation of the differences between 3 types of reading (the word and the world) in terms of questions prompted:

Traditional Reading	Critical Reading	Critical Literacy
<p>Types of questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Does the text represent the truth? 🌀 Is it fact or opinion? 🌀 Is it biased or neutral? 🌀 Is it well-written/clear? 🌀 Who is the author and what level of authority/legitimacy does he/she represent? 🌀 What does the author say? 	<p>Types of questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 What is the context? 🌀 To whom is the text addressed? 🌀 What is the intention of the author? 🌀 What is the position of the author (his/her political agenda)? 🌀 What is the author trying to say and how is he/she trying to convince/manipulate the reader? 🌀 What claims are not substantiated? 🌀 Why has the text been written in this way? 	<p>Types of questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 How can this statement be interpreted differently in different contexts? 🌀 What could be the assumptions behind the statements? What are the implications of these assumptions? 🌀 What could be shaping the author's understanding of reality? 🌀 Who decides (what is real, can be known or needs to be done) in this context? In whose name and for whose benefit? 🌀 What are the limitations and contradictions of this perspective? 🌀 Whose interests could be represented in this statement?
<p>Focus: content, authority and legitimacy of the speaker and the text.</p>	<p>Focus: context, intentions, style of communication.</p>	<p>Focus: assumptions, knowledge production, power, representation and implications.</p>
<p>Strategy: de-codification</p>	<p>Strategy: interpretation</p>	<p>Strategy: critique</p>
<p>Aim: to develop an understanding of the content and/or to establish the truth-value of the text.</p>	<p>Aim: to develop critical reflection (ability to perceive intentions and reasons).</p>	<p>Aim: to develop reflexivity (ability to perceive how assumptions are constructed).</p>
<p>Language: is fixed, transparent and gives us access to reality.</p>	<p>Language: is fixed and translates reality.</p>	<p>Language: is ideological and constructs reality.</p>
<p>Reality: exists and is easily accessed through sensory perceptions and objective thinking.</p>	<p>Reality: exists and is accessible, but it is often translated into false representations.</p>	<p>Reality: exists, but is inaccessible (in absolute terms) – we have only partial interpretations constructed in language.</p>
<p>Knowledge: universal, cumulative, linear, right vs wrong, fact vs opinion, neutral vs biased.</p>	<p>Knowledge: false versus true interpretation of reality.</p>	<p>Knowledge: always partial, context dependent (contingent), complex and dynamic.</p>

Adapted and expanded from: Gina CERVETTI, Michael J. PARDALES, James S. DAMICO, A Tale of Differences: Comparing the Traditions, Perspectives, and Educational Goals of Critical Reading and Critical Literacy, www.readingonline.com, 2001

Critical versus 'soft' global citizenship education

Use the table below as a stimulus for discussion:

Can you think of other sets of assumptions in relation to global citizenship education?

What affects your choice of approach in this area?

Can you think of circumstances that require a soft rather than a critical approach and vice-versa?

What would be the practical implications of adopting a soft or a critical approach to global citizenship education?

How do you imagine a 'global citizen' (it might be useful to think about it in terms of autonomy/conformity, self/other regardness, vertical/horizontal relationships, ideals/drives in life, notions of self/other).

	Soft Global Citizenship Education	Critical Global Citizenship Education
Problem	Poverty, helplessness	Inequality, injustice
Nature of the problem	Lack of 'development', education, resources, skills, culture, technology, etc.	Complex structures, systems, assumptions, power relations and attitudes that create and maintain exploitation and enforced disempowerment and tend to eliminate difference.
Justification for positions of privilege	'Development', 'history', education, harder work, better organisation, better use of resources, technology.	Benefit from and control over unjust and violent systems and structures.
Basis for caring	Common humanity/being good/sharing and caring. Responsibility FOR the other (or to teach the other).	Justice/complicity in harm. Responsibility TOWARDS the other (or to learn/decide with the other) – accountability.
Grounds for acting	Humanitarian/moral (based on normative principles for thought and action).	Political/ethical (based on normative principles for relationships).
What needs to change	Structures, institutions and individuals that are a barrier to development.	Structures, (belief) systems, institutions, assumptions, cultures, individuals, relationships.
What for	So that everyone achieves development, harmony, tolerance and equality.	So that injustices are addressed, more equal grounds for dialogue are created, and people can have more autonomy to define their own development.
What individuals can do	Support campaigns to change structures, donate time, expertise and resources.	Analyse own position/context and participate in changing structures, assumptions, identities, attitudes and power relations in their contexts.
How does change happen	From the outside to the inside (imposed change).	From the inside to the outside (negotiated change).
Goal of global citizenship education	Empower individuals to act (or become active citizens) according to what has been defined for them as a good life or ideal world.	Empower individuals: to reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures and contexts, to imagine different futures and to take responsibility for their decisions and actions.
Potential benefits of Global Citizenship Education	Greater awareness of some of the problems, support for campaigns, greater motivation to help/do something, feel good factor.	Independent/critical thinking and more informed, responsible and ethical action.
Potential problems	Feeling of self-importance or self-righteousness and/or cultural supremacy, reinforcement of colonial assumptions and relations, reinforcement of privilege, partial alienation, uncritical action.	Guilt, internal conflict and paralysis, critical disengagement, feeling of helplessness.