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**ENGAGING DIFFERENCES:
LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND CRITICAL LITERACY
PEDAGOGY IN THE CLASSROOM**

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WLLCRI001

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ABBREVIATIONS

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement – CAPS

Department of Basic Education – DoBE

First Additional Language – FAL

Forest Park Secondary School – FPSS

Home Language – HL

Language of Learning and Teaching – LoLT

Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis – PDA

White South African English – WSAE

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University of Cape Town

DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ABSTRACT

This study developed out of my own experiences as a high school English teacher and my engagements with the intertwined issues of language and diversity in the classroom. The study foregrounds the nature of students' and teachers' engagements with linguistic diversity and the role of the teacher in critical literacy. In South Africa there is very little classroom based research which shows how students and teachers are engaging with issues of diversity, power and inequality post-apartheid. This research focuses on how my students and I interact with issues of linguistic diversity in an English Home Language, Grade 8 classroom context using critical literacy pedagogy as the means by which to engage with these issues.

The theoretical framework for the study draws on poststructuralist theories of language and discourse (Kress, 1989; Foucault, 1989; Weedon, 1997) which argue that language is a discursive practice through which individuals are multiply constructed and positioned (Davies and Harré, 1990). Bourdieu (1977) highlights the power dynamics of language by suggesting the legitimate language is the form of language most valued within a particular context. Critical literacy (Janks, 2010) frames engagements with language theoretically by focusing on how language contributes to constructing the social world and by focusing on the power dynamics of its construction.

These theoretical resources formed the basis for my construction of a five lesson intervention in which my Grade 8 students and I were participants. Data was collected by means of digital video recordings of lessons and from students' journals in which they completed written tasks. The data was selected and transcribed and then analysed using the principles of Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (PDA).

The findings of the study suggest that students' perceptions of English are framed by particular ideologies of language. Engagements with linguistic diversity in the classroom are imbued with entrenched discourses of whiteness which inform both the students' and teacher's interactions in the social world. In addition, the study foregrounds the difficulties I experienced as a teacher using critical literacy. I argue that the teacher's role within this framework is under-theorised and

is as complex and significant as that of the students. Ultimately entrenched discourses make it difficult to disrupt the perpetuation of unequal social relations within the classroom space.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I feel that language and power should be used equally and positively so that no boddy (sic) is discriminated against for any reason ... although I speak English well; it is a great pity that more African languages are not taught as it would bring the people of the country much closer to each other. (Kyle¹)

1.1 Introduction

Kyle's statement above reflects the complex and conflicted position English occupies in South Africa's post-apartheid educational context. Socio-economic and political factors influenced by our apartheid and colonial past have served to entrench the hegemony of English without addressing the consequences of its dominant status. Despite the Language in Education Policy's (1997) attempts to support equality for all eleven official languages in South Africa, there remains inequality in educational access between African language and English language speakers; with power heavily weighted on the side of English (Prinsloo, in press). Research has indicated that many learners do not gain access to English (Janks, 2004; Fleisch, 2008) at schools in South Africa and simultaneously, however presumably unintentionally, African languages and, to a certain extent, Afrikaans are devalued. The movement towards schooling in English has gained momentum particularly amongst black South African learners and parents alike and researchers such as Granville et al (1998), de Klerk (2002) and Kamwangamalu (2003) have documented this shift. This shift has largely associated access to English with access to quality South African schooling, often in privileged white contexts, where the most prestigious varieties and ways of using English are reproduced (McKinney, 2007).

The high status position of the 'ethnolinguistic repertoire' (Benor, 2010: 160) known as 'White South African English' (WSAE) (Mesthrie, 2010: 5) serves to link language use in South Africa to racialised social inequality. The classroom becomes a site for reproduction of this inequality. Therefore, learners and teachers in South African classrooms encounter and engage with language difference and the hegemony of English in differing ways. There is a definite need to address language difference in post-apartheid, linguistically diverse South African classroom contexts in ways that develop awareness of the hegemony of English as well as an understanding

¹ All names of participants and the school are pseudonyms in order to protect their identities.

of how it reproduces unequal social relations in order to create the potential for subversion of language inequality.

1.2 Rationale and Research Questions

My experience as a secondary school teacher of English Home Language (HL)² in a post-apartheid school context has shown the classroom to be a linguistically, racially and culturally diverse space. These differences influence the construction of social and academic spaces and position learners and teachers within those spaces. I feel that there is a lack of engagement with the issues of the dominance of English, language difference and linguistic diversity in the classroom and often language difference is positioned as problem. In my experience in a predominantly monolingual, English high school context I find that there is a tendency for English to consume and almost nullify difference. Previously white, English school contexts are not exclusively sites of monolingual English practice as there are learners and teachers within these contexts who draw on differing ethnolinguistic repertoires (Benor, 2010: 160) which are not acknowledged as resources. English is constructed in particular ways and conceals its normativity within these classroom spaces. This has the effect of marginalising engagement with and devaluing differing forms of language use in school contexts. Therefore, addressing the issues of linguistic diversity is an important lived reality of the South African, post-apartheid classroom context. Janks (2004: 36) argues that it is critical, given the global hegemony of English, that English teachers make their learners aware of the power dynamics of the language as well as in teaching the language itself.

To date, there seem to have been few attempts in a South African context, and by a local high school teacher, to conduct an investigation into how high school learners and teachers actually engage with language difference in their classrooms. While there has been research on the sociological aspects of racial integration and its effect on language in schools (e.g. Carrim and

² In the new National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) the Department of Basic Education (2011) defines Home Language as ‘language proficiency that reflects the basic interpersonal communication skills required in social situations and the cognitive academic skills essential for learning across the curriculum. Emphasis is placed on the teaching of the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills at this language level. This level also provides learners with a literary, aesthetic and imaginative ability that will provide them with the ability to recreate, imagine, and empower their understandings of the world they live in. However, the emphasis and the weighting for listening and speaking from Grades 7 onwards are lower than those of the reading and writing skills.’

Soudien, 1999, Soudien, 2004, McKinney 2010), there is little on classroom practices. Ferreira and Janks (2007) have conducted research in high school English and Art classes on multimodal approaches to engaging with diversity in the classroom. Ferreira (2008) has also researched multimodality and diversity in English and History classes. Janks (2010; 1993) has focused on engagement with diversity in the classroom but her focus has been primarily on pedagogical modelling and materials development. Also, McKinney's (2005) study reflecting on critical pedagogical practices incorporates documentation of first-year university learners' resistance to critical pedagogy.

This study seeks to make a contribution to the field of critical literacy teaching by analysing the effects of a critical literacy approach in a South African secondary school English classroom. There is a need to learn more about how to engage with this kind of pedagogy in South Africa as we negotiate the legacy of our apartheid past in post-apartheid educational contexts. The study aims to determine how critical literacy works in one instance of practice and what its strengths and limitations might be. The pedagogical strategies employed could also serve as examples of an attempt to address issues of language use and difference in a particular South African high school English HL classroom. The outcomes of the study could also indicate ways forward for practitioners in the high school classroom to engage with language issues with their learners.

My interest is in how the classroom can be used as a site where critical pedagogical practices can be utilized as a framework to problematise the dominant positioning of English and to engage with issues of language difference as one of the steps towards transformation. I am also interested in how critical literacy can be used to highlight the power dynamics of language practices and the problematics of language difference and English hegemony and attempt to destabilise established attitudes and beliefs about the nature of English. While this engagement ultimately has the potential to catalyse new subject positions which position the learners and the teacher differently in relation to their own language use, that was not the goal of this research.

My research question is two-fold:

Firstly, how do my learners and I, as the teacher, engage with and make meaning of the hegemony of English and linguistic diversity in a predominantly white, English HL school and classroom context?

Secondly, how does the use of a critical literacy framework make it possible for the teacher and learners to engage with the hegemony of English and linguistic diversity?

I answer these questions by conducting qualitative research in my own classroom in an ex-Model C school³ in Cape Town, Forest Park Secondary School (FPSS). The participants are learners in a Grade 8 class and me, their teacher. My position as both teacher and researcher in this study is acknowledged as a challenging one and I discuss this positioning further in Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design.

1.3 Conclusion

This study explores the engagements of Grade 8 learners and a teacher in a South African classroom with issues of language use, language difference and the hegemony of English by setting up discussion of these issues within a critical literacy framework. I establish the dominant discourses about language participants produce, and analyse how these work to position learners and teacher; as well as how these positions challenge meaningful engagement with language issues. I then analyse and reflect on the practices of critical literacy and the challenges and successes of engaging with language issues through this lens.

³ The term Model C is now essentially used to refer to any school that was designated as white during apartheid. N McKinney (2010: 205) states that 'All previously white designated schools were converted to Model C in 1992, which made them semi-private with the state paying teachers' salaries and the school community.'

1.4 Chapter Outline

CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Rationale

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter I outline poststructuralist theories of language and discourses to conceptualise the notion of linguistic ideologies central to my research. I also present the critical literacy framework and investigate potential challenges in its practice.

CHAPTER 3: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter I introduce the context of the research as well as the research participants and my positioning as teacher/researcher. I discuss the research design and the methodology of the data collection as well as how the data was analysed.

CHAPTER 4: 'Fitting' English: Linguistic Ideologies and Discourses of Language in the Classroom

This is the first data analysis chapter and I analyse samples of moments where linguistic ideologies and discourses of language surface in the classroom. I focus on how these discourses construct particular subject positions and, in turn, how these position participants within the classroom space. I discuss the impact of these positions on the construction of the social space of the classroom.

CHAPTER 5: The Pedagogical Imperative: Analyzing the Uncomfortable Moments

In this second data analysis chapter I focus on significant pedagogical moments which foreground the dilemmas, successes or problematics of engaging with difference through the lens of critical literacy in my classroom. I focus on the multiple ways in which the participants are positioned and student resistance to the pedagogy.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

In this chapter I reflect on the findings of the study as well as the contributions to further research within the field of critical literacy.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The claim that language itself can be a source of inequality distorts the role of language. Language itself leads neither to equality nor inequality, but instead is a tool to further them. The important question is: how is language used to structure social relations. (Tollefson, 1991: 183)

2.1 Introduction

The South African linguistic landscape is one of complex diversity which has become imbued with issues of power. One of the imperatives of post-apartheid schooling is to engage with linguistic diversity which, as discussed in Chapter 1, is the primary aim of this study. I argue that language in South Africa is linked to social inequality, and in this study I sought to describe the nature of English Home Language (HL) learners' engagements with the use of English in South Africa, especially their perceptions and experiences of their own language use, languages that differed from their own and how they make sense of these differences. Thereafter, I sought to explore how these ideas could be pedagogically mediated—how to teach about these ideas in meaningful ways that enabled learners to learn more about themselves, each other and how language and inequality play out in South African society.

2.2 Discourses about Language

Weedon's (1997) theorising of a feminist poststructuralist conception of language provides one of the theoretical frameworks for this study. Feminist poststructuralism suggests that language is the site where multiple subject positions are delineated, formed and disputed (Weedon, 1997: 21). Speakers draw on available discourses to discursively construct the social world. In poststructuralist terms, this means that language constructs what Weedon (1997: 21) calls 'socially produced subjectivity'. Therefore, language does not express a distinctive, unitary idea of the self as a singular entity but instead it contributes to forming a person's subjectivity in ways that are particular to social contexts (Weedon, 1997: 21). Weedon (1997: 22) asserts that in feminist poststructuralism, it is taken for granted that 'meaning is constituted within language and is not guaranteed by the subject who speaks it'.

Davies and Harré (1990: 47) extend Weedon's (1997) poststructuralist theorising of language and use the term positioning to explain the 'discursive production of a diversity of selves'. They suggest that an individual materialises through social interactions and is not a fixed, unitary entity but is 'constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate' (Davies and Harré, 1990: 46). A position is what Davies and Harré (1990: 46) term 'a vantage point', which encompasses 'both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire'. As positioning is a discursive practice:

There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. However, it would be a mistake to assume that, in either case, positioning is necessarily intentional. (Davies and Harré, 1990: 48)

Positions are multiple and individuals can take up a variety of positions, even within a single discursive event, depending on the social context and the participants (Davies and Harré, 1990: 46). Davies and Harré (1990: 62) distinguish between a subject position which is a 'possibility in known forms of talk' and a position which is 'what is created in and through talk'.

Positioning is a result of differing and multiple discourses taken up by participants in discursive practices that contribute to the production of social meanings within a particular context (Davies and Harré, 1990: 45). Kress (1989: 4), drawing on Foucault (1989), asserts that the notion of discourses provides a link between language use and social theories and attempts to bring together the two constructs in a way that emphasises their interconnectedness. Kress' (1989) notion of discourses is therefore central to this study. He defines discourses as

...systematically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution...A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. (Kress, 1989: 7)

Discourses operate within the greater social milieu and speakers can draw on particular discourses in order to construct relations of power within a context (Kress, 1989: 7). Participants negotiate social spaces through linguistic practices. This negotiation can also encompass a contention for power where speakers use discourses to attempt to assert power over other discourses or 'colonise' other discourses and therefore social spaces (Kress, 1989: 7).

Similarly to Davies and Harré (1990), Kress (1989: 37) suggests discourses construct subject positions. He defines subject positions as ‘sets of statements which describe and prescribe a range of options one may take up’ (Kress, 1989: 37). Linguistic practices, and what is possible in linguistic practices, are determined by discourses—reified social experiences—and participants in discursive events take up specific positions within discourses and in relation to them. Blommaert (2005: 2) states that ‘language is an ingredient of power processes resulting in, and sustained by, forms of inequality...’ and that analysis of discourses surfaces the broader contexts of the power relations operational within a particular space. Subject positions exist on a continuum of power relations relevant in that particular space. Subject positions within discourses are not binary: either powerful or powerless, but are constructed in complex ways. A subject can position themselves or be positioned as simultaneously powerful or less powerful as well as inhabit multiple subject positions in different moments.

Pennycook (1994: 128), too, suggests that discourses are important because they show

...how meaning is produced not at the will of a unitary humanist subject, not as a quality of a linguistic system, and not as determined by socio-economic relations, but rather through a range of power/knowledge systems that organize texts, create conditions of possibility for different language acts, and are embedded in social institutions.

Pennycook(1994) suggests here that discourses are entrenched in what we take for granted as normalised knowledge and that subjects are not necessarily conscious of taking up a particular, constructed position and therefore do not understand the implications of that position within a particular context. Discourses then, effectively organize our social meanings and our being in the world and are reciprocally reinscribed and created. Speaking subjects draw on discourses, albeit potentially unwittingly, to construct, and reinscribe centres of power.

2.3 Linguistic Ideologies

The study focuses on critical engagements with linguistic diversity in the classroom especially relevant in our multilingual South African context. I found that my learners and I took up particular ways of thinking and beliefs about language. McGroarty (2008: 98) calls these perceptions and beliefs about language, linguistic ideologies. McGroarty (2008: 98) cites

Spolsky when she defines linguistic ideologies as ‘the belief systems that determine language attitudes, judgements, and, ultimately behaviour’ that ‘have both personal and societal valence’. Blackledge and Pavlenko (2002: 131) argue further that ‘language ideologies are used as gate keeping practices to create, maintain and reinforce boundaries between people in a broad range of contexts...’. There are three linguistic ideologies in South Africa that are relevant to this research.

2.3.1 Hegemony of English in South Africa

In attempting to redress inequalities in education as a result of apartheid, the Language in Education Policy of 1997 asserted the right of the individual to choose their language of learning and teaching. The policy attempted to value all languages in South Africa by making provision for learners to gain access to learn in their particular home languages. The policy, however, does not seem to acknowledge the sociolinguistic dominance of English, which results in English being the preferred language of learning and teaching (LoLT) across diverse language groups. The recent introduction of a new curriculum document, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2011), CAPS, attempts to acknowledge this domination more overtly by accelerating literacy learning in the First Additional Language (FAL) from Grades 2 and 3 (DoBE, 2011: 8). The time allocated in the CAPS to FAL across grades, has increased markedly and continues to increase from Foundation Phase into Senior Phase. These changes appear to assume English as the predominant FAL in order to give all language groups equal access to the dominant language. However, it can be argued that the new iteration of the curriculum is not significantly addressing the hegemony of English, but merely reinforcing it even more overtly.

The Language in Education Policy (1997) constructs languages as ‘subjects’ which implies a necessary pedagogical formalising with accompanying materials and resources in order to support its instruction (Granville et al, 1998: 260). While Afrikaans has also lost power, it remains to a large extent, similarly privileged in terms of resources.

South African parents and learners alike are prioritising the learning of English over their home languages (Granville et al, 1998: 257; de Klerk, 2002; Kamwangamalu, 2003). The degree of

choice regarding the LoLT in the Language in Education Policy (1997) catalysed a movement towards English as the preferred language of learning and teaching (Granville et al, 1998: 257; Probyn, 2005: 157). The global economic value associated with English is one of the reasons for the marginalisation of African languages (Kamwangamalu, 2003; Probyn 2005). However, the Language in Education Policy (1997) does not make provision for the dominance of English and this seems to contribute to devaluing, particularly, African languages in South African educational linguistic repertoires. As Blackledge and Pavlenko (2002: 125) argue, drawing on a linguistic ideology perspective: '[v]ery often, multilingual societies which apparently tolerate or promote heterogeneity in fact undervalue or appear to ignore the linguistic diversity of their populace'.

2.3.2 Legitimate Language

The hegemony of English in South Africa results in the classroom being a space where English is regarded as normative. However, what counts as normative 'English' will differ according to schooling contexts (*cf.* Prinsloo, in press). What counts as 'English' in this context of an ex-Model C, previously white, and suburban English speaking school is an assumed set of taken-for-granted, standardised practices of speaking, writing and interacting in a particular kind of 'English' that learners and teachers in a classroom space take up and reproduce. Hegemony and normativity imply the workings of power. Bourdieu (1977), most notably, addresses the power dynamics of language use. Bourdieu's (1977: 646) notion of 'legitimate language' explains the power dynamics of language found inherently in hegemonic linguistic ideologies. He suggests that 'linguistic competence' by adherence to the laws of grammar of the standardised variety of a language is replaced by the notion that what is linguistically acceptable in a particular context is the form of language use that has more power (Bourdieu, 1977: 646). Bourdieu (1977: 646) continues to redefine language competence as embedded in

...relations of symbolic power, [which] replaces the question of the meaning of speech with the question of value and power of speech...in place of specifically linguistic competence, it puts symbolic capital, which is inseparable from the speaker's position in the social structure.

Linguistic production is dependent on the dynamics of power between two speakers in a particular social setting (Bourdieu, 1977: 648). According to Bourdieu, language is ultimately

‘an instrument of power’ (Bourdieu, 1977: 648). The notion of power in language is aligned with the legitimate language as this becomes the most influential language; as a person speaks not only to make meaning, but to be believed, obeyed, respected and distinguished (Bourdieu, 1977: 648). The most valued language which is the most appropriate to a particular context, and that wields the most power in that particular context, becomes the legitimate language as it is the form of linguistic production that as Bourdieu points out ‘imposes its reception’ (Bourdieu, 1977: 648).

This is pertinent to understanding the domination of English in the South African linguistic market where the value and capital of the ‘ethnolinguistic repertoire’ (Benor 2010) of White South African English (WSAE) (McKinney: 2007: 8; Mesthrie, 2010: 5) is acknowledged and possessing competence in prestige forms of ‘English’ as linguistic capital acts as a potential point of entry to higher class strata and economic wealth. Benor (2010: 160) has introduced the term ‘ethnolinguistic repertoire’ (which is salient in a definition of the discursive practices analysed in Chapters 4 and 5) to describe a ‘fluid set of linguistic resources that members of an ethnic group may use variably as they index their ethnic identities’ (Benor, 2010: 160). The hegemonic nature of the repertoires of WSAE causes other ethnolinguistic repertoires of English and other languages to be marginalised and devalued in many social contexts. The dominance of the legitimate language results in a normalisation of that particular language (Bourdieu, 1977: 652). Other languages are valued in relation to the dominant, legitimate language. Prinsloo (in press: 29) points out that what counts as ‘English’ differs in different contexts and is simultaneously ‘diverse and specific’. The legitimate language brings with it discourses that underpin its production. These discourses dominate the South African linguistic milieu and become a yardstick against which African languages in particular are measured and relegated a lesser position on the hierarchical scale.

The 1990s saw the end of apartheid and the ‘racial’ desegregation of schools (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 153). Soudien (2004: 89) explains that ‘children of colour have moved in large numbers towards the English-speaking sector of the former white school system’. As a result of the changed political and social climates in South Africa, approaches to the diverse linguistic groups of the peoples of our country changed and so have the nature of our classroom

environments (Soudien, 2004: 89). 'Children of colour' who attend previously white English schools do not necessarily reproduce and construct the ethnolinguistic repertoire of WSAE valued in that context. The value placed on WSAE in the context of post-apartheid South Africa asserts its hegemony as the legitimate language. WSAE acts as a stratifier and imposes a hierarchical system upon the social and educational landscape of South Africa as not everyone has access to the more powerful contexts where these prestigious forms of WSAE are reproduced.

2.3.3 Language as an Indicator of 'Race' and Social Inequality

The tendency for South Africans to categorise 'racially' as a result of the way that we speak points to the normativity of the ethnolinguistic repertoire of WSAE. McKinney (2007: 8) suggests that sociolinguistic research into varieties of English in South Africa has highlighted the 'impact of the colonial past and apartheid ideology of 'racial' classification on language use'. Omi and Winant (1994: 55) provide the most enduring definition of 'race' as 'a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.' This definition acknowledges 'race' as an ideological construct which highlights the power dynamics associated with 'racial' positioning, particularly relevant for our South African context. In this study I find Omi and Winant's (1994) definition important as it seeks to nullify attempts to see 'race' as invisible and negative and instead reframes 'race' as a very real 'dimension of human representation' which we need to examine in terms of how it contributes to structuring the social world (Omi and Winant, 1994: 55).

If language is a social construct which produces its subjects discursively and marks particular discourses associated with the social contexts of its speakers, then WSAE could be said to be imbued with the reproduction of a particularly white South African subjectivity which reproduces particular norms of whiteness which exclude those outside of its norms (McKinney, 2007: 9). These subjectivities are reproduced through the repetition of discourses that aid in its construction. Unequal linguistic power relations ascribe and reinscribe the lack of access to powerful ethnolinguistic repertoires of 'English'. Learners who are outside or on the fringes of

these repertoires and who attempt to reproduce these legitimate forms of WSAE are marginalised. Soudien (2004: 96) explains that less dominant groups

... are expected both to give up their own identities and cultures and critically, to acknowledge the superiority of the culture, and by implication, the identities of the groups into whose social context they are moving.

Assimilation seems to be common practice in desegregated South African schools where the dominant culture in previously 'white' schools remains largely in place and learners previously excluded are expected to adapt and fit in (Soudien, 2004: 89; McKinney, 2010). As discussed above, the linguistic hegemony of a particular repertoire of 'white' ways of speaking English is acknowledged in ex-Model C, previously 'white', and suburban English speaking schools as the primary linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977: 651; Granville et al, 1998: 259). Speakers who do not speak the valued WSAE but who are placed in ex-Model C, previously 'white', and suburban English speaking schools have to reconstruct their subject positionings in order to negate their marginalisation within these contexts.

2.4 'Racialised' Discourses

Melissa Steyn and Don Foster's (2008) work on the construction of a particularly 'white' South African way of being highlights the discourses of 'whiteness' reproduced in language. They contend that the discourses of 'whiteness' in South Africa are caught up in maintaining a powerful position for 'whites' within the post-apartheid, social framework (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 26). The discourses of 'whiteness' in South Africa are subtle and take privilege for granted (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 26). 'White' discourses advocate what Steyn and Foster (2008: 29) call 'colour-blindness' that deny or ignore 'racial' difference. If 'race' is ignored, then the power relations between 'races' become problematically constructed as invisibly equal as 'racial' construction is not neutral and has privileged 'white' 'racial' subjectivities (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 29). Racism becomes defined only in terms of what Steyn and Foster (2008: 31) call 'overt acts of blatant discrimination, vicious oppression or hate crimes' in 'white' discourses. The notion that advantage, and the reproduction of this advantage, is also fundamentally discriminatory is ignored (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 31). 'White' discourses also purport what Steyn and Foster (2008: 33) call the 'conscience of the nation' which assume that 'whites' know

what is best for South Africa and that when they are in control things are better. Steyn and Foster (2008: 40) also suggest that there is frequently a sense that 'white' South Africans are in control of the transformation occurring in South Africa and that they are the 'rightful' originators of this transformation.

These discourses seem to parade as common sense and Steyn and Foster (2008: 36) assert that 'it is extremely difficult to change the terms of an argument once these have been established'. However they are deeply subversive and represent what Steyn and Foster (2008: 45) call an 'unwillingness to connect with the reality of the "other"' despite the fact that they represent themselves as normalised. According to Carrim and Soudien (1999: 162) these discourses contribute significantly towards positioning 'black' learners as less powerful.

McKinney (2007: 216) points out that the construction of difference in 'racial' terms is just as widespread in post-apartheid South Africa as it was prior to the 1994 democratic elections. Governmental structures have continued to use apartheid classifications of 'race' and as such these conceptions of 'race' and 'racialised' language continue to be propagated (McKinney, 2007: 216). Furthermore, McKinney (2007: 216) suggests that social inequality in South Africa is thought of largely along definitive 'racial' lines. While this is most definitely necessary in order to remedy the apartheid legacy, ultimately, the 'racial' constructs of apartheid that saw 'race' as being clearly defined into four categories does not allow for more complex conceptualisations of 'race' that will move beyond apartheid ideologies and constructions of 'race' (McKinney, 2007: 216).

Carrim and Soudien (1999: 155) also posit an argument for non-essentialist definitions of 'race' focussing on the heterogeneity of experiences of 'blackness'. Homogenous definitions of 'race', however, cannot be ignored as their conceptualisation has had powerful effects on South Africa and continues to construct 'racialised' subjectivities (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 161). Without an active agenda foregrounding heterogenous definitions of 'racial' subjectivities, the school instead becomes a site for the reproduction of homogenous definitions of 'race' (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 161). Carrim and Soudien (1999: 169) argue instead for a 'de-essentialized' notion of 'race' which will allow for multiple ways of seeing 'race' and the multiple ways people

experience their 'race', how they situate themselves in relation to it and other discourses that constitute their being. This would allow the concept of difference, particularly in relation to 'race', to be understood as layered and complex (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 170). Post-apartheid classrooms, therefore, have the potential to address the disruption of normative discourses on language and 'race'.

2.5 Pedagogical Perspectives

2.5.1 Critical literacy

Education in prestigious ethnolinguistic repertoires of English and therefore knowledge of these varieties means potential access to higher economic status for those previously excluded (Probyn, 2005: 156). Access to these prestigious varieties is problematic as learners need to gain access to the dominant and high-status forms of 'English', however, this in turn moves them further away from their own languages and expands the power of the dominant language (Janks, 2000:176).

Janks (2000:176), citing Lodge, calls this problematic the 'access paradox'. Access to high-status forms of English is meant to empower less powerful language groups; however, this can have the opposite effect of simultaneously disempowering them, especially when they do not get full access to English. Issues of language in South Africa are, then, permeated by power relations. Language teaching implies that learners are 'literate'; a term which is highly contested. Literacy is more than the ability to read and write but is a fundamentally social practice as processes of reading and writing are practically constituted in diverse ways in diverse contexts as they serve particular explicit or implicit purposes (Street, 1984: 30; Janks, 2010: 2). The practice of learning language can never be a neutral one as it is informed by the contexts of its use: it is a fundamentally 'social practice' (Janks, 2010: 2). This presents a problematic and political dimension for language teachers grappling with teaching diverse linguistic groups in their classrooms.

In response to these complexities of teaching, a diverse student group encountered by language teachers, Janks (2010) suggests critical literacy as a framework for teaching language and literacy. Janks (2000: 175) defines critical literacy education as ‘particularly concerned with teaching learners to understand and manage the relationship between language and power.’ Critical literacy seeks to address and inform teachers’ engagements with the diversity of languages in our classrooms and the pedagogical choices we make in the linguistic education of our learners. This pedagogy serves as an important theoretical resource for my study as it addresses issues of linguistic diversity with an understanding of the South African educational context and its acknowledgement of the entrenched, hegemonic nature of prestigious varieties of English in South Africa.

In critical literacy, Janks (2010: 12) uses the term ‘critical’ to highlight relations of power in language. This critical pedagogy seeks to ‘uncover the social interests at work, to ascertain what is at stake in textual and social practices’ and to investigate ‘naturalised assumptions’ (Janks, 2010: 12-13). The relationship between what Janks (2010: 22) calls ‘language, meaning and power’ is explored through the fusion of different ‘orientations to literacy’ in pedagogical strategies. There are four ‘orientations to literacy’ (Janks, 2010):

- Domination points to power inherent in and surrounding textual production and the text itself and how it can perpetuate unequal societal relationships.
- Access refers to learners gaining access to the powerful or dominant language resources without devaluing differing but equally important linguistic resources.
- Diversity affirms the need for learners to engage with a wide variety of texts and practices drawn from different perceptions of the world.
- Design builds on diversity by not only emphasising student engagement with a variety of texts and ways of seeing the world but also being able to contest their meanings and, especially, to produce their own meanings and reconstruct existing discourses.

The four orientations work together to show how the relationship between language and power functions when engaging with particular texts in a classroom context (Janks, 2010: 22). Each of these orientations is crucially interdependent on the other as, if one of the orientations is ignored, it creates an imbalance in the pedagogical framework (Janks, 2010: 27).

Janks (2010) describes the orientations to literacy model as a cornerstone of critical literacy and it provides an effective heuristic for the design of practical classroom activities which centre discussions on how power works in language. I was able to use critical literacy as a framework for the construction of the lesson plans I used in this study in order to frame my own methodology. A more detailed discussion of how I applied critical literacy will follow in Chapter 3. Drawing on Bourdieu, Janks (2010: 12) suggests that educational systems simultaneously teach disempowered linguistic groups to (mis)recognise the legitimate language whilst denying them access to it. She affirms that ‘what is needed is language education that reverses this—that gives mastery of English, together with a critical view of its status as a global language’ (Janks, 2010: 12).

2.5.2 Problematising Critical Literacy in Practice

...if you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that your knowledge of me, the world, and the ‘Right thing to do’ will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others and if I can do the same then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which learners of difference can thrive. (Ellsworth, 1989: 324)

Janks (2010) theorised critical literacy partly in response to Multicultural Education. Multicultural Education arose out of the context of immigration in Britain and North America and contributed to the facilitation of assimilationist discourses for minority cultural groups to assimilate into the dominant culture. Critical literacy, however, attempts to raise issues of power embedded in multicultural educational contexts that are highly relevant in our own post-colonial, South African context. Modgil et al (1986: 5) cite Katz’s definition of Multicultural Education as ‘preparation for the social, political and economic realities that individuals experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters...’. The ‘preparation’ for ‘realities’ seems to reinforce the idea that there is a normative boundary that the cultural ‘other’ stands outside of (Janks, 2010:16). As well as teaching the cultural ‘other’ what to do in the dominant society, Multicultural Education teaches appreciation of different cultures to the cultural and linguistic dominants (Modgil et al, 1986: 7). This has a negative effect of essentialising culture creating the opportunity for more stereotypes.

In theorising critical literacy Janks (2010) offers a redress to the shortcomings of Multicultural Education and to provide a framework that addresses issues facing particularly South African contexts. The orientations to literacy appear to structure a pedagogical movement of 'knowledge', a transformativity, of knowing how power works in language towards learners being competent to create their own texts which reflect new-found awareness of these power relations in order to subvert them. The orientations to literacy are effective in raising the awareness that there are power relations at work in language. However, they appear to lack tools to deal with the challenge to entrenched discourses of language or to address the implications of the normativity ascribed to prestigious forms of WSAE. Janks (2010: 211) asserts that it is impossible to tackle what she calls 'non-rational investments' we bring to a text when we read it. Janks (2010: 212) states equivocally that what is missing from the model is 'the territory beyond reason', the subtle psychological motivations that contribute to our perceptions, understandings and investments in the text and in dominant discourses.

Janks (2010: 212) raises this issue of awareness and notes that although the pedagogical model can achieve its purpose of educating learners to recognise and critique power structures in texts, this does not directly result in transformation of learners' perceptions. This Janks (2010) ascribes to the model being primarily socio-cultural and wholly independent from psychological engagements with texts that are just as relevant. She maintains, importantly, that

...when texts or tasks touch something that is 'sacred' to a student, critical analysis is extremely threatening. I came to define as sacred, meanings that were constitutive of learners' identities, meanings that if challenged, attacked what one teacher described as 'the fibre of their belief'. (2010: 221)

These unconscious identifications and desires that construct the 'fibre of belief' unsettle the rational responses demanded by the model (Janks, 2010: 222). Power is intertwined with identification and desire; power is a method by which we identify and relate with others and a way in which desires are obtained (Janks, 2010: 222). When a more powerful subject position is challenged and is perceived as threatened, conflict arises out of this perceived threat (Janks, 2010: 222). Janks (2010: 222) suggests this is as a result of the threat to a desire or more powerful subject position. She asserts that change can only take place if it is desired; thus

learners gaining access to new knowledge and different ways of thinking does not mean that change has occurred (Janks, 2010: 222).

Therefore the model is useful as a means of constructing pedagogical strategies that will attempt to give access to new discourses and mediate reproduction of these. However, the taking up of new subject positions in relation to new discourses of language is not guaranteed and is a much more complex process which is outside of the model's range. This study sought to engage with potential transformation through the learners' experiences of linguistic diversity through critical literacy though not to cause it directly; there are no guarantees that change would (or would not) result from doing this kind of work. The engagements with linguistic diversity cause encounters with latent 'fibres of belief' which Janks (2010: 222) suggests are non-rational investments that are brought into the classroom. She suggests that as a result of the unpredictability of these non-rational investments 'the teacher cannot predict which text will erupt in class' (Janks, 2010: 222).

The model also does not address the role of the teacher in critical literacy. Inasmuch as the learners possess assumptions so does the teacher. The model seems to position the teacher as possessing knowledge of all potential repertoires raised by the work. However, this is not the case as critical literacy can be as much of a challenge to the teacher as to the learners. I argue that the challenges faced by the teacher in doing this kind of work are just as disruptive as those encountered by the learners, albeit in differing ways. These spaces in the interstices of the model, while raising the problematics of doing critical literacy work in the classroom, are as equally important to this study as the model itself and the analysis of the data must account for them.

Ellsworth (1989: 298) suggests, too, that critical pedagogy relies too heavily on assumptions that, in practice, only serve to reinforce unequal and oppressive systems of difference. She argues that critical pedagogy is too reliant on forms of classroom discourse that should be helpful in discussing difference, but, because we do not examine the assumptions underlying these discourses, they can serve to reinscribe the differences they seek to deconstruct (Ellsworth, 1989: 298). Ellsworth (1989: 300) states that the agenda of critical pedagogy needs to be more explicit to avoid oversimplifying the complexities of engagements with difference and to avoid

perpetuating oppressive discourses. She suggests reframing classroom practices to build an environment that will support diversity and engagements around it (Ellsworth, 1989: 324).

Student resistance also becomes a factor in critical literacy. McKinney (2005) has written on her own problematised position as a teacher within a critical pedagogy framework and how she encountered her students' resistance in a South African first-year university South African Literature course. She explains that student resistance was as a result of multiple and complex factors such as students' feeling positioned in and interpellated by uncomfortable or undesirable discourses and the challenge critical pedagogy presents to particular discourses and subject positions. As discussed above, the pedagogical imperative to make learners aware of different discourses and power dynamics does not necessarily result in ready acceptance or change. However, it is the uncomfortable moments that McKinney (2005), asserts result in critical reflection on practice. These moments can be a catalyst for change in pedagogical strategy that 'create the kind of discursive space that is non-threatening and supportive of learners' expressing their views, while at the same time attempting to encourage shifts in perspectives.' (2005: 389).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn on poststructuralist theories of discourse and positioning to delineate language as anchored in discursive practices. I have argued that learnt social meanings evidenced in discursive practices are central to this study's engagement with language differences. I have framed these learnt social meanings as discourses, drawing on Foucault's (1989) definition expanded on by Kress (1989), Pennycook (1994) and Blommaert (2005). I have also attempted to explain that the taking up of particular discourses exposes linguistic ideologies and to show how these ideologies contribute to the ways in which language is contextualised, constructed and produced in a particularly South African context.

I have also drawn on Janks' (2010) 'orientations to literacy' model as part of a critical literacy. The model provides a theoretical framework for the construction of the classroom pedagogy. The discursive nature of critical literacy attempts to provide a context for investigation of how power works through language and the interactive and reflexive positionings taken up in

response to powerful discourses (Davies and Harré, 1989: 48). In outlining critical literacy, I have also paid attention to some of the challenges in implementing this strategy that are relevant for this particular study. In the following chapter I will discuss the methodology and research design used to collect data on the engagements of Grade 8 learners with issues of language and language difference in a particular South African classroom.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research project is a qualitative study which uses my English HL classroom as its research site. A qualitative approach focuses on meanings constructed through the analysis of 'words and images' collected through observation and seeks to 'provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena' (Silverman, 2000: 8); in this study the social phenomena are teaching and learning about language and power in the South African context. In this chapter I discuss my research design and methodology, data collection, data analysis and the context of my research and participants.

3.2 General Overview

My purpose was to describe and analyse the engagements of my learners and myself with English hegemony, language use and linguistic diversity in South Africa using critical literacy and to reflect on the potential limitations and successes of this pedagogical approach to mediate these engagements. As such, I chose to use practitioner research approach in the research design.

Burton and Bartlett (2005: 44) define practitioner research as being 'carried out by teachers and other education professionals...into aspects of their work.' They suggest it is a fundamentally reflective practice which has 'a view to improving that practice for the benefit of others' (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 44). In this study I effectively become the researcher through the reflective process of analysing the immediate context and dynamics of my critical literacy practice.

Practitioner research frames my dual role of teacher/researcher as I investigate and reflect on my own pedagogical work through asking questions about the 'purposes and nature' of language learning in South Africa (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 43). Robinson and Lai (2006: 4) suggest that practitioner research also 'takes into account the complexities' of teachers' contexts.

Practitioner research also takes into account 'feelings and perceptions' and 'admitting different perspectives' in this reflection process and acknowledges the ideological paradigm of its nature (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 18). McKinney (2005) draws on Anderson's concept of 'critical

reflexivity' to explain the researcher's positioning in practitioner research. Anderson (1989: 255) explains critical reflexivity as a

dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informants' commonsense constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study.

I take up this 'self-reflective' approach by examining the discourses of language, especially those which Anderson (1989: 255) calls 'commonsense constructs' which I construct as being normative discourses within this particular classroom space. I also engage with my own pedagogical approach in terms of how my own 'constructs' or discourses play a role in constructing the social space of the classroom and pedagogy. As this study investigates engagements with language issues in South Africa, it is part of reflection on educational issues formed by 'structural and historical forces' (Anderson, 1989: 255). My own positioning, then, seeks to hold these reflections in tension through my analysis and maintain a balance between reflective interpretation and theory (McKinney, 2005: 378). Therefore, the study catalyses reflection on particular language issues that impact the social world of the classroom space through the practical pedagogical agenda of critical literacy. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I offer a contribution towards engaging with the dynamics of teaching critical literacy in practice.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection took place during a five lesson intervention over seven FPSS timetabled English HL periods of approximately forty-five minutes each. The five lesson intervention was planned around sociolinguistic issues to catalyse discussions on the hegemony of English, language use and language differences in South Africa. The lessons took place during a normal school day in the scheduled lesson time for English HL. The data was collected using the following strategies:

- Student journals for the recording of written work and assignments.
- A digital video recording of each lesson.
- My own field notes.

The series took place over two weeks commencing on 13 May 2011 and ending on 23 May 2011. A few days before the commencement of the data collection I gave each student an A5 exercise book, which I called their journal. I explained that this was going to be their designated book in which they could respond to the lessons and tasks ahead. The digital video camera was also met with excitement and was positioned at the back of the classroom in order to capture both student and teacher talk and action. I felt, at the beginning, that the presence of the camera would inhibit responses (including my own); however, the novelty of being on camera wore off by the start of the second lesson.

Before beginning the data collection, I set up the lesson ‘rules’ and explained that I would be using an even more dialogical teaching style than I had used before. I explained that in the lessons we would be doing a lot of talking and listening to what others had to say. I also explained that there were not necessarily ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers to questions we would discuss but I wanted to know what the learners thought. My observations and reflections were noted in my field notes which were added to each day as required.

The five lessons were designed drawing on critical literacy (Janks, 1993, Orlek, 1993; Janks, 2010). My intention was to scaffold (Dixon-Krauss, 1996) a progression of increasing engagement with language issues as the learners’ familiarity with them increased. Each lesson was designed to address a particular objective. The objectives of the lessons were as follows⁴:

- Lesson 1: provide information about the history and spread of English globally, why English is powerful and how the power of English has implications for us now in South Africa.
- Lesson 2: discuss how language affects our identities and helps to position us in relation to others.
- Lesson 3: build on learners’ understandings of the concept of their identities, what power is and where their individual and group identities position them in terms of their language use and power.
- Lesson 4: understand how power works through identities and how our use of language within these identities helps to construct power relations.

⁴ See Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials for detailed lesson plans

- Lesson 5: engage with language issues in South Africa, how these have touched or shaped their own experiences and what they think about them.
- Final Assignment: written essay of 250-300 words.

I prepared more material in the lesson plans than I was ultimately able to teach in the time available. However, I made selections of these materials and taught what I felt were the most important to achieve the aims of the study.

The lessons featured a combination of activities such as teacher talk, class discussion, group discussion, individual written reflection as well as individual and group feedback and role play. Tasks were of varying lengths and required individual, as well as group, writing and speaking. The tasks were structured to facilitate the writing of the final assignment as a homework task after the final lesson.

The materials were drawn from a variety of critical literacy sources, most importantly Hilary Janks (1993) and Janet Orlek's (1993) materials from the *Critical Language Awareness Series*⁵. These texts were designed specifically for the language classroom for the purpose of doing critical literacy work. As well as being decontextualised enough to use them in conjunction with other, more current resources, they also provided a foundation around which I could construct the lesson series. Janks' (1993) and Orlek's (1993) worksheets provided questions such as those used in Lesson 1, for example, 'Think about English in South Africa. How many Englishes are there in South Africa? Who speaks them? What do you think are the differences between these Englishes? How do you think these differences came about?' I also used Kopano Matlwa's (2007) novel, *Coconut*⁶, which tells the story from the perspectives of two black South African teenage girls negotiating their identities in post-apartheid South Africa, in my own design for the final written assignment. I chose the novel as it brought together the sociolinguistic issues we had focused on in the lesson series, namely, English hegemony, language use and identity, and 'racial' positioning.

⁵ The series is comprised of 6 workbooks for South African learners, each presenting a different sociolinguistic focus area. I used Orlek's book *Languages in South Africa* as well as Jank's books *Language and Position* and *Language, Identity and Power*. The series was published by Hodder and Stoughton in association with Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg.

⁶ Matlwa, K. (2007) *Coconut*. Auckland Park: Jacana Media.

The lessons required learners to do a lot of writing in their journals and there were learners who did not complete all the written tasks. My perception is that, as the tasks were not for formal assessment⁷, some learners felt justified if there were gaps in their journal work; although this was not the majority. Due to the prescriptive nature of the DoBE's programme of assessment and the standardized, pre-planning of these tasks, I could not include the mark for the final written assignment in the term mark. Despite this, the final assignment was the most completed of all the tasks with only two learners not handing in their journals.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study uses a poststructuralist theorising of language and discourse to present and analyse the learners' and teacher's responses to and engagements with language issues using selected materials in a lesson sequence I designed using critical literacy materials and methodology. I collected a large amount of data from the digital video recordings as well as the student journals and, therefore, I needed to select specific data for transcription. The selection process began with watching the digital video recordings and reading the student journals carefully multiple times. I began by looking for themes (e.g. repeated ideas of what language is), patterns (e.g. how the teacher responded) or uncomfortable or awkward moments (e.g. where learners did not respond as I expected). These moments emerged as the most significant data and were transcribed.

The spoken data selected from the video recordings were transcribed according to the following conventions:

Name:	Indicates the speaker
Hardloop [run (Afrikaans)]	Indicates an Afrikaans word with the English translation in square brackets.

⁷ The Programme of Assessment is prescribed by the DoBE for each grade and prescribes the type of tasks to be completed in each term as well as their assessment weighting. Marks for Terms 1, 2 and 3 are not cumulative but are based on the programme of assessment weightings for that term only and end of term reports reflect only the marks for the term, except for Term 4 which is a cumulative year mark according to DoBE requirements.

<i>(Laughter)</i>	Italics inside brackets indicate the transcriber's notes for mentioning additional important information, for example, actions, gestures or speaker's tone.
.?,	Punctuation conventions have been used for ease of reading in order to show my interpretation of the spoken words.
[pause]	Indicates a break in speech longer than 2 seconds.
//	Indicates multiple speakers overlapping speech.
(...)	Indicates a gap in the data.
<u>Underline</u>	Indicates emphasis on a particular word or phrase.

I was then able to 'code' the data by categorising it thematically 'to be used as evidence for interpretations' (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999: 94). The process of coding the data resulted in its categorisation according to two recurring themes namely, i) the expression of linguistic ideologies by learners and teacher and ii) how I engaged pedagogically with these linguistic ideologies evident in salient pedagogical moments. Recurring linguistic ideologies that emerged were those regarding the invisible nature of the hegemony of a particular type of English, its subsequent normativity and 'racialised' discourses of language. The critical literacy moments sought to investigate engagements with these linguistic ideologies.

The data selected was then analysed according to the principles of Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (PDA) defined by Baxter (2008: 60) as 'an effective methodology for explaining 'what is happening right now, on the ground, in this very conversation' which exemplifies the nature of classroom talk. PDA aims to provide a heuristic for investigating 'samples of text and talk in context' which 'makes sense of the complexities and ambiguities of classroom discourse' (Baxter, 2008: 69). Important for a study informed by critical literacy is the attention PDA gives to power relations in discourse. As Baxter explains, PDA emphasises 'the ways in which speakers (teachers, learners, non-teaching assistants) constantly shift between positions of powerfulness or powerlessness within competing cultural and educational discourses' and shows '...diverse subject positions, viewpoints, voices and fragmented messages' (Baxter: 2008:69). The video recording provided extensive data of classroom discourse such as lesson structure, peer and teacher interactions, and ways of talking (Edwards and Westgate, 1987; Cazden, 1988; Auerbach, 2000).

I used a PDA approach to uncover multiple voices, moving individualities and diverse accounts of reality that are in competition to be recognized and attended (Baxter: 2008: 78). PDA lends depth to the analysis as it allows for more than one way of engaging with the data: an examination both of what is said and not said and what power relations are at work in this particular set of data. I analysed the data in terms of participants' engagement with the themes of linguistic ideologies and how I engaged with them in critical pedagogical moments in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.5 Research Site and Participants

The study was carried out at a community, co-educational school in suburban Cape Town, Forest Park Secondary School (FPSS). The study used twenty-nine learners in a particular Grade 8 class from FPSS as its participants as well as me as the teacher. Within the context of the school, the class was regarded as being of mixed academic ability as well as hard-working. The class was co-educational (as opposed to the other Grade 8 class that I taught). Although I am aware that 'race' is a changing social construct, I use apartheid 'racial' categories as these particular 'racial' constructions still dominate discussions of 'race' in South Africa (McKinney, 2007: 7). Priya and Sarin, could be 'racially' constructed as 'Indian', Ndiliswa, as 'black' and Brad, as 'coloured'. Twenty-five members of the class could be constructed as 'white'. All the learners, except for Sam, spoke English as their HL and had been schooled in English since pre-school. Ndiliswa reports speaking isiXhosa and English at home. Sam reports speaking Afrikaans and some English at home and had been schooled in Afrikaans until Grade 7 but had chosen to transition to English as the LoLT in Grade 8. In terms of social class, the learners can be regarded as middle class.

My position as the teacher/researcher could be constructed as an English HL, 'white', middle-class and university educated female, which also positions me within the study. In South Africa, especially, 'whiteness' has what Steyn (2001:49) calls an 'ideological heritage'. Frankenberg (1993: 1) talks about this heritage of 'whiteness' as 'racially' privileged, as a very particular societal positioning, and as having definite 'cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed'. As such, I bring to consciousness my positioning as a 'white', English HL teacher

within this study. As Frankenberg (1993: 1) points out, it is important to be aware of the ‘neutral’ nature of ‘whiteness’ as it is significant in shaping our social world.

In addition, as the teacher, I am favourably positioned to conduct practitioner-type research (McKinney, 2005: 375). However, being both teacher and researcher in this study was very challenging for me and I acknowledge my position as simultaneously successful and problematic. I had an established relationship with my learners in contrast with the positioning of an ‘outside’ researcher. My learners were well-versed in my already familiar, fairly democratic and dialogical pedagogical style and we had had opportunities to cultivate mutual respect which enabled enthusiastic responses to the lessons. My own conflicted positioning emerged in response to the traditional, expected role of the teacher as the most powerful bearer of knowledge guiding learners towards educational growth. As a researcher I wanted to subvert this ‘traditional’ role by encouraging learners to respond according to their own thoughts and not reproduce meanings they thought I expected. I also found it difficult to ‘balance’ what McKinney (2005: 376) calls ‘the tensions between my ‘democratic’ teaching style, and my moral or ethical views’; the teacher/researcher conflict highlights the problem of when to take up a ‘teaching’ role. This echoes the limits of critical literacy outlined in Chapter 2 in which the role of the teacher remains largely unproblematised.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Before conducting this research ethical approval was sought from the University of Cape Town, School of Education and subsequently granted. I sent a letter of consent⁸ to the school principal and the governing body, providing a broad outline of the project and its methodology, asking for permission to conduct the research, which was granted. Thereafter, I discussed the project with the class in order to invite learners’ participation. This was greeted quite favourably and there was an element of learners feeling special to have been chosen to be part of my project. Thereafter, the parents of each student received an information sheet outlining the project and

⁸ See Appendix B: Consent Letters Item 1: School Letter

consent was obtained from all parents⁹. Two parents did not give consent for their child to be digitally video recorded and as a result they do not appear in any of the visual footage.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented my research design and methodology, as well as an outline of the research context, participants, data collection and data analysis. The poststructuralist approach to language in this study is also taken up in the data analysis in order to analyse the different speakers and subject positions of the participants. My subject position as teacher and researcher is complex and I argue that this is important for the nature of the research, seeking knowledge of the dynamics of critical literacy in practice in a Grade 8, high school classroom. I argue that this allowed for a range of meanings to be constructed whilst still anchoring the study in a sound theoretical and methodological approach. This is reflected in the analysis of the data in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁹ See Appendix B: Consent Forms Item 2: Parent Letter

CHAPTER 4: ‘FITTING’ ENGLISH: LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Um...it's, it's not like we ourselves are fitting into the language, the language is more fitting into us. (Jane¹⁰)

4.1 Introduction

The learners' responses to language issues framed by the critical literacy (Janks, 1993; Orlek, 1993; Janks, 2010) lessons outlined in Chapter 3 surface discourses about language which reflect their perceptions about language and, ultimately, how language is valued and, what types of language are valued in this context. The learners' awareness of what languages and ethnolinguistic repertoires they, and others, speak becomes heightened (Benor, 2010). In this chapter I argue that the ethnolinguistic repertoire of English, WSAE, becomes the legitimate language in this classroom (Mesthrie, 2010; Bourdieu, 1977). The normativity of WSAE contributes to the construction and reproduction of linguistic ideologies within this classroom space (McGroarty, 2008). I suggest that these discourses are at times divisive and marginalising and often prevent discussion of language differences in the classroom (Bourdieu 1977). I suggest that in the learners' taking up of these linguistic ideologies, particular subject positionings are also produced, which result in complex engagements with language differences. I analyse samples of engagements with language that surface particular discourses of language and how WSAE as a construct produces 'racialised' discourses of language that reproduce norms of 'whiteness' (McKinney, 2007: 9).

4.2 English as the 'Legitimate Language'

4.2.1 Language Policies

In Lesson 4, the learners were asked to draw up a language policy or set of language guidelines for their school for display and discussion. Learners were given examples of the types of issues¹¹ to consider.

¹⁰ All names of participants and the school are pseudonyms in order to protect their identities.

Group 2: Peter, Phillip and Kyle

Guidelines & Policy

The school should have a policy where.....

- pupils may have the choice of what should be their 1st and 2nd language.
- pupils may not be discriminated because of their language.
- the school invests the same amount of money in books in each language.
- each pupil should be able to speak English.¹²

Group 3: No names given

Language and Education

- English should¹³ be taught as a 1st language because it's a universal language
- English story books, fluent English teachers e.t.c.
- Formal English should be written in the classroom and slang should not be accepted English. Generally, most people understand it.
- Afrikaans and the African languages that is spoken in your area should be taught as a secondary languages in S.A. schools.
- Children who have different home language to English should be put on a very basic English course in school¹⁴.
- In school assemblies you should speak a formal English. In an SRC¹⁵ you should not have to speak a formal English, but your own slang.
- Libraries should have a wide variety of books of all languages.

Group 2's response that 'each pupil should be able to speak English' and Group 3's statement that it 'should be taught as a 1st language because it's a universal language' centre English as the legitimate language here. Group 3 place value on 'formal English' while 'slang' is less valued. As speakers of the legitimate language they value other languages against the norm of English and decide the amount of linguistic capital conferred on less dominant varieties (Bourdieu, 1977). 'Slang' may still be used in certain less formal contexts such as an 'SRC' meeting, however, not in assembly or in the classroom. This follows Bourdieu's (1977: 655) notion of acceptability of language which 'is not in the situation but in the relation between a situation and a habitus which is itself the product of the whole history of its relationship with a particular

¹¹See Lesson 4 for the attached Worksheet: Language and Education (Orlek, 1993: 22) in Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials which provided learners with examples of issues to consider.

¹²Emphasis my own

¹³Learners' work has been reproduced as it was written and as such errors in spelling and grammar have not been corrected.

¹⁴Emphasis my own

¹⁵Student Representative Council, officially called an RCL – Representative Council of Learners

system of selective reinforcements'. Effectively, competent speaking subjects know when it is appropriate to select the corresponding, appropriate language.

For these two groups, languages other than English seem to hold the least value as 'Afrikaans and the African languages should be taught as a secondary languages'. Other languages seem reduced to constructs of enrichment. 'Libraries should have a wide variety of books of all languages' and 'the school invests the same amount of money in books in each language' renders them devoid of power within a classroom context. These seemingly utopian ideals are qualified by the idea that everyone should speak English: 'English should be taught as a 1st language because it's a universal language' and 'each pupil should be able to speak English'. While access to English in schools is pragmatic, there is a hierarchy of valued languages here. English appears to be most valued whereas Afrikaans is named but holds a secondary position to English. IsiXhosa¹⁶ is not even named and the blanket term 'African languages' is ascribed to languages that are not English or Afrikaans.

Group 2's policy reflects the opposite of the status quo and how they feel language should be regarded. It seems as if learners do not have a choice as to their '1st or 2nd language' nor does the school spend the same amount of money on books in each language. They might even be acknowledging that they feel learners are being discriminated against in terms of language as their previous points iterate. However, their last point still asserts the dominance of English and the need for learners to speak it.

In terms of these policies, it is 'normal' to speak English and other languages are positioned as distinct from this normalised English, thereby reinscribing English hegemony. The learners position themselves within this powerful discourse; seemingly as language insiders. They allow for their own position as powerful language speakers to decide when it is acceptable to change the legitimate language to the 'lesser' variety of 'slang', although the legitimate language is not changed to 'Afrikaans and the African languages' but another repertoire of English. Bourdieu (1977: 652) suggests that particular linguistic capital dominates a linguistic market, and the

¹⁶IsiXhosa is the 2nd Additional Language taught at FPSS.

dominant legitimate language is the norm against which other languages are valued. In this case English becomes the norm against which ‘Afrikaans and the African languages’ are valued.

The following language policy set up by Group 4 also reinforces the hegemony of English in a slightly different way:

Group 4: Kate, Emma, Alex and James
Forest Park Secondary School Language Policy

- As many languages as possible so we can interact with the people from different countries. E.g. isiXhosa, Afrikaans and English
- The library should have books in different languages so we can have a bigger vocabulary.
- School should encourage other languages by making announcements in different languages.
- All text books should be written in English as it easier to study as it is our home language.
- People must be allowed to speak any language they want to at school because their language might be in their culture¹⁷.

English is constructed as powerful much more overtly in this policy. The learners assert that English is ‘our home language’ in contrast with ‘their language...their culture’ (my emphasis). This binary delineation of powerful ‘us’ and less empowered ‘them’ constructs the space as English and ‘them’ as ‘othered’ and outside of those discourses. The ‘us’ and ‘them’ construction also suggests ‘racialised’ positioning. There is an assumption of ‘sameness’ here that constructs a norm (Janks, 2010: 106); that everyone in this context speaks English, ‘us’. However, the fifth bullet indicates that there are learners at school who do speak other languages, but they are outside of ‘us’ and are marked as culturally different, ‘their culture’ (my emphasis), which suggests ‘they’ as ‘black’ learners and ‘us’ as ‘white’ learners.

This group also suggests that there is a need for learners to be exposed to other languages, just as they suggest there is a need to ‘interact with the people from different countries’. This echoes the powerful subject positioning of the previous groups as dominant English speakers. There is an ‘othering’ of people who ‘we(my emphasis) can interact with’ as outside their experiences. The group states that the ‘people from different countries’ are IsiXhosa, Afrikaans and English. None of these languages are from other countries—could this also indicate how distanced the learners feel from these languages: that they are from another country? English is included as

¹⁷Emphasis my own

outside the country perhaps suggesting alternative ethnolinguistic repertoires spoken in other countries. These assertions also seem to suggest a static concept of language that Prinsloo (in press: 22) calls a 'bounded entity' which suggests English is normative in this context. This hegemonic positioning of English fundamentally reinscribes English as powerful and speakers of this language as superior.

The learners also use personal pronouns like 'we' and 'our' when they refer to English suggesting it is a possession and therefore they position themselves as owning the legitimate language. This makes them powerful in comparison with speakers of other languages. The use of personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'our' also suggest the homogenous group context and an assumption that all members of the group are positioned in the same way: as speakers of English.

Only Group 1 did not reproduce the normalised, hegemonic construct of English:

Group 1: Priya, Barbara, Robert and Sheldon

Guidelines

- 1) Make a bilingual school
- 2) The children must be given the choice to be taught in their preferred /home language.
- 3) The library must have more books in different languages.
- 4) Announcements must be done in all official (English, Afrikaans, Xhosa) languages.
- 5) There must be textbooks for each subject printed in different languages.
- 6) There must be at least three teachers for each language that subjects are being taught in.
- 7) We have three different assemblies; one for English; Afrikaans and African languages
- 8) Circulars must be printed and emailed in Afrikaans, English and African languages
- 9) Three coaches for a sport. One in English, Afrikaans and African languages so people understand what to do.
- 10) Posters around the school to be put up in different languages.
- 11) Exam papers are to be set in the language they are taught in excluding language subjects.
- 12) More presentations to be done in Xhosa and Afrikaans.
- 13) Have language clubs where people learn more about other people's languages.

This group appear to consider and place value on languages other than English and show an awareness of the powerful status of English. Even though two of their points, 2 and 3, echo Groups 2, 3 and 4, they present a more egalitarian language policy in comparison with the other groups. They make suggestions as to how languages can be integrated into school activities which will serve to 'dethrone' English from its position of power. There is a willingness to learn about the languages of others through language clubs, which articulates and recognises language

differences (albeit in ‘bordered’ ways) but also acknowledges that languages convey culture too and are worthy of study. However, the desire is to ‘learn more about other people’s languages’ (my emphasis) and not the languages themselves. This does mask a dominant power position, however, it is also a move towards a new inclusivity. The acknowledgment of their power position is only implicitly recognised. The group identify that the status quo places much emphasis on English as they call for ‘more presentations to be done in Xhosa and Afrikaans’ which means not many are done. The focus is put on offering suggestions to change this status quo, such as assemblies in different languages and teachers who speak different languages.

Through asserting English as powerful and valuing other languages against its invisible normativity, its powerful position is constructed. In constructing a powerful position for English, the speakers reproducing it construct a powerful social positioning for themselves within this classroom context (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, English as the legitimate language positions differing languages as dominated and less powerful and, in turn, positions the speakers of these linguistic resources in a less powerful position in the social world of this classroom context (Bourdieu, 1977). The hegemonic positioning of English appears to deny it as a complex construct thereby oversimplifying and reducing language difference. Although we had discussed different ‘varieties’ of English, these do not feature in the policies as they were beyond the scope of the task which sought to cover only differences in language.

Therefore, engagements around language issues reveal ideologies of language and discourses that construct and position the learners as speakers of English which, I argue, are accepted as normative in this classroom. The learners assume that this normativity and invisibility of English ‘fits’ them, as Jane’s comment at the beginning of the chapter suggests that language is not part of the reproduction and formation of identity. However, from a poststructuralist perspective, discourses of language and linguistic ideologies instead construct the learners and the classroom in particular ways (Weedon, 1997). Therefore, language is used as a means for the reproduction of these discourses and does ‘fit’ into the learners in particular ways that their discourses about language construct and reproduce.

4.3 Legitimate Language and ‘Racial’ Positioning

In this section I argue that it is not just English, but a particular ethnolinguistic repertoire of English, that is the legitimate language in the classroom and that this leads to ‘racial’ positioning in ways that reproduce unequal social relations. The tendency in South Africa to categorize ‘racially’ according to the way we speak has been discussed in Chapter 2 (McKinney, 2007: 8). I argue here that ‘race’ becomes signified in terms of differences in ethnolinguistic repertoires and language use, and that language becomes a proxy for talking about ‘racial’ difference. McKinney (2007:7) explains that ‘race’ ‘continues to have significant effects in the understandings that people and groups have of each other and the relationships they construct with one another as a result.’

Therefore, even though the learners did not live under the apartheid regime and were only born after its destruction, their lived experience as South Africans now means that ‘race’ is still a dominant, if unspoken and seemingly invisible, categorization they encounter (McKinney, 2007: 7). The hegemonic nature of English and its reproduction by all members of the class led to assumptions that all members of the class were equally socially positioned. However, language differences come to mark out ‘racial’ differences and signify unequal social relations and complex subject positions.

4.3.1 Kyle and Brad

Kyle articulates links between ‘race’ and language from a position of ‘whiteness’ in his final essay written in his journal, a response to the quotations from *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa¹⁸ (2007). The learners had to comment on two extracts from the novel and respond in terms of what the characters think about language and power, how they felt about what the characters think and what their opinions were about the issues around language and power raised in each extract.

¹⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 3, *Coconut* is a first-person narrative chronicling the lives of two ‘black’ South African teenage girls negotiating their identities in post-apartheid South Africa. See Lesson 5 in Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials for detailed task.

Some people speak and pronounce the English words so well that it is often difficult to realise that a person is from the African culture group or language...I feel that language and power should be used equally and positively so that no bobby is discriminated against for any reason eg. colour; 'racial' factors; ect. (Kyle)

'African culture group' indicates a euphemism for signifying a 'black' South African subject position. Kyle's discourse constructs a person from the 'African culture group' as speaking a less dominant variety of English and therefore acknowledges 'black' ethnolinguistic repertoires of English as less powerful (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 162). However, the fact that they speak English so 'well' (again a valuing against a norm of English) offers them acceptance into the 'white' dominant power group both linguistically and socially. There is an assumption here that 'well' is embodied by 'white' people and not the 'African culture group'. Therefore, 'white' pronunciation, and in turn, 'whiteness', become markers of 'good' English. The social construction of 'black' in these terms is one who does not speak English 'well'. English language proficiency is valued against an invisible norm and so positions 'black' as less powerful (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 162).

Brad's positioning echoes Soudien's (2004) outlining of assimilation practices in previously white schools. Brad's 'racial' positioning becomes linked to the production of ethnolinguistic repertoires. Brad articulates this as he describes his arrival at FPSS at the beginning of the year to begin Grade 8. He did know some of the learners but there were many who were not from his previous school and who did not know him. In the final lesson, we were discussing an extract from Kopano Matlwa's (2007) novel *Coconut* and her description of how people judge others on the basis of their 'accent'¹⁹. Brad's reaction to the text was quite emphatic:

Teacher: (*Reading the end of the text*) trust me, accent matters and don't let some fool convince you otherwise."

(*Class is very quiet*)

Brad: (...)

Teacher: Sorry?

Brad [at once]: It does matter [*angry*].

Teacher: Why do you think it matters?

Brad: Because first time I met Robert and all of them, Ma'am, so I had like a 'coloured' accent so they probably thought I was like a gangster and that, Ma'am, that smoked and all of that [*not looking at the class*].

Lesson 7: Monday 23 May 2011

¹⁹ See Lesson 5 in Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials for the excerpts from the novel.

Brad's narrative reflects a reflexive and interactive positioning (Harré and Davies, 1990: 48) in relation to his 'racial' positioning on entry to the school. He felt positioned as 'coloured' by 'Robert and them', who it is assumed are positioned as 'white'. He felt as if he was judged as he was 'coloured and because he had a 'coloured accent', so 'Robert and them' assumed he was a 'gangster'. In doing so he positions himself as having a 'coloured accent' and reacts against the positioning he feels. He seemed to feel very strongly about this positioning as he relayed the narrative. The 'racial' stereotype here constructs 'coloured' as being an undesirable 'racial' position whereas 'Robert and them', positioned as 'white', are positioned as the more desirable and legitimised 'racial' stereotype. What is significant is that Brad identifies his 'accent as an important signifier of his 'racial' positioning as 'coloured'.

Brad felt he was made aware of his positioning outside the powerful ethnolinguistic repertoire of WSAE and in order to gain entrance to that group he might have had to rework his own less powerful position signified by his 'coloured accent' accordingly. He appears to have felt that he was not 'normal' in his new environment and in order to assert his belonging he had to adopt normalised conventions that would assure his inclusion in the dominant group. While Brad's accent may continue to be characterised as 'coloured', in my perception, it seemed to take on aspects of a 'white' ethnolinguistic repertoire.

I do not think Brad changed his accent over night; however, it does appear that he might have changed specific words that he used and deemed those undesirable for his new context at high school where he felt he needed to be positioned differently and more desirably. Brad elaborated by explaining that he still had friends to whom he spoke in his 'coloured accent' and that in particular contexts it was still acceptable for him to speak this way. However, at FPSS, he had to continue to change aspects of his ethnolinguistic repertoire in order to maintain his status as part of the dominant group. His decision to do this reflects a multiple subjectivity (Davies and Harré, 1990) and one that is aware of the dynamics of power: one that must adapt and change in order to gain acceptance. Part of his final journal entry where learners were asked to comment on the excerpts from *Coconut*(Matlwa, 2007) reveals this:

ESSAY

In paragraph 3:

I think the speaker feels that accents are important and tell a story about what kind of person you are. She feels that people you meet will have more power language wise because they can now decide what person you are. I agree with what she says about your accent telling a story about yourself. I realise people also judge you if you have a certain accent. I think English is English people shouldn't be treated differently because of their accent. An accent should make you unique.

What is clear is that Brad does feel judged by others at his new school on the basis of his 'accent'. He feels that he is positioned powerlessly as he says that 'people you meet will have more power language wise because they can now decide what kind of person you are.' Therefore, for Brad, it seems as if your ethnolinguistic repertoire determines what kind of person you are and for him, his positioning as 'coloured', was deemed undesirable which translates into his undesirability. He feels as if he was treated differently and that he was judged. He says that your 'accent should make you unique' which shows he does not agree with this type of positioning, however, he appears to feel, from his own experience, there is not much to be done about it. His concern is that people judge others on the basis of their 'accent' and categorize them as a certain type of person. Therefore, though he does gain access to the dominant group of powerful WSAE speakers. He is aware that this is a fraught position: it is laden with power dynamics and that, if anything, language is a marker of 'racial' belonging, be it desirable or undesirable. The more desirable the variety, the more power the speaker wields in this school context.

Therefore, the concept of what it means to speak English well and who speaks English well in this context are constructed in terms of the ethnolinguistic repertoire of English, White South African English (WSAE). WSAE is positioned as the legitimate language in this context and frames engagements with language differences and use. The tacit assumption that everyone in the class speaks the same kind of English makes WSAE normative. The normalisation of WSAE as the legitimate language obscures its power and constructs differing ethnolinguistic repertoires of English as less powerful.

Brad's perception of the need to adapt features of a differing ethnolinguistic repertoire of English, his 'coloured accent', is evidence of the power that WSAE wields in this context.

Brad's experience is not a homogenous positioning (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 155). Brad acknowledges the shifts he has to make in his ethnolinguistic repertoire in order to be included in this context and he also acknowledges contexts where WSAE is less powerful. He maintains his links to these contexts and reproduces differing linguistic capital in each market in order to achieve an included position in each context (Bourdieu, 1977).

4.3.2 The Role Plays

'Racial' positioning according to differences in repertoires of English also emerged in Lesson 3 after discussions about how power works in language. The learners were placed in groups and asked to role play either a situation where they felt they gained power because they could speak a particular language or a situation where there was a lack of power or disadvantage because of the language spoken²⁰. The first group of learners used a school situation:

- Hayden:** In this story uh, Ndiliswa is going to be the hockey coach, Brad's the A-team uh, mixed team captain thing and Sarah's the, jeez man (*irritated with the class' talking and quiets them down before continuing*), Sarah's the vice-captain and I'm the new boy from the Free State that doesn't understand any English and is trying to make new friends playing hockey.
- Teacher:** Ok.
(// Other learners in the class mumbling and giggling)
- Hayden:** (...) I'm new, ok (*group laughs at him*)
- Ndiliswa(to Hayden):** Go **hardloop** [run (Afrikaans)] around the field. (*Hayden runs to the door*)
(// Learners in class giggling)
- Brad:** Do you see how that guy plays, do you see how he plays? He's awful, he can't even pass. Look, he holds the hockey stick like this. (*Brad demonstrates*) He holds the hockey stick like this.
- Sarah:** No man, he holds it upside down. (*Sarah demonstrates*)
- Brad:** How'd he even make the A-team? He's like, he's so unfit [pause] he's like, aai (*turns back on Hayden and throws up his hands in frustration as Hayden runs up alongside the group*).
- Hayden:** **Wat sé jy? Wat sé jy nou vir my?** [What are you saying? What are you saying to me now? (Afrikaans)]
- Brad:** (...)
- Hayden:** **Probeerom in Afrikaans met my te praat.** [Try and speak to me in Afrikaans. (Afrikaans)]

²⁰ See Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials Lesson 3 for the instructions for the task.

Brad(*rudely*): This guy... Kick him off the team. (*to Hayden*) Sorry, I can't understand

Hayden: (*throws down hockey stick and walks off*)

Brad: Right Ma'am? (*indicates the end of the role play*)

Teacher: Ok. (*nodding her head*)

Teacher(*to Hayden*): So because you couldn't speak the same language as them, you quit the team?

Hayden: Ja.

Lesson 3: Thursday 19 May 2011

This group presents a parody of the privilege of WSAE and the marginalisation of Afrikaans. They seem to have represented what the task required: a moment where a student could have felt disempowered as a result of the language they speak. The group's role play indicates how the group excluded the Afrikaans speaking, new boy because he could not speak English.

The exclusion arose out of the Afrikaans student's disempowerment. He was not allowed into the dominant power group of English speakers on his hockey team because he could not converse with them effectively. As a result he decided/was forced to leave the team. The student's language difference and subsequent disempowerment led to even more disadvantage as he lost out on being a member of the team. The arrogance of the English speakers is evident and their exclusivity based on language is made clear in the characters' disregard of the Afrikaans speaking student. They seem to judge him as an unworthy hockey player based on the language he speaks and Brad even mocks his grip of the hockey stick. They are condescending towards his language too. Ndiliswa's character cannot speak Afrikaans very well and she uses one word she knows to attempt to communicate, 'hardloop' but it is inserted into her English speech as a token word as if she doesn't really want to use it but the ignorance of the new boy forces her to do so. Her character's feeble attempt at speaking Afrikaans to communicate with Hayden's character indicates the exact opposite—a desire to communicate with him as little as possible.

Hayden, as the Afrikaans student, is disempowered as he is not given many opportunities to speak. He has two Afrikaans lines in the role play and when he does speak he is labelled as persona non grata in his team and he is under no illusions as to why this would be: he is Afrikaans. Hayden's line indicates an attempt to regain his power (in his 'Wat sé jy nou vir my') and an attempt to understand the team. However, the language he speaks is the immediate

barrier to his inclusion in the group, which he attempts to force. He can never gain entrance to this group as they have already categorised him and stereotyped him as an inept hockey player on the basis of his language. His 'whiteness' is not seemingly at issue here however, the linguistic differences are enough to cause a barrier. Brad, who I have shown earlier in the data articulate his struggles with language as a marker of culture and 'race' in his essay, takes the lead in this group.

The group seem to articulate the power dynamics of the situation in a nuanced way. They show how language difference can empower some and disempower others in contexts where one language is valued over another and how that leads to a stereotyped and entrenched exclusion of the speaker.

Stereotyped and entrenched disempowerment is foregrounded in the second group's role play. This role play relied more overtly on 'racial' and cultural stereotyping to show power relations at work through language. The role play centred on a game show where Ben played the game show host and the other characters were contestants:

Ben (*laughing, blushing, turning around*): Ok (*trying to control laughter*), I'm the, I'm the game show host but I speak in an Indian accent and then (*pointing to Stephen*) he's very slow, he's a bit [pause] (*pointing to Sean*) and he, where do you come from again? (*addresses Sean and laughs almost uncontrollably, class laughs*)

Sean (*in a 'black' South African 'accent'*): The um, the rural [pause]

Class: (*laughs*) // 'the rural'

Ben (*'Indian accent'*): And she (*pointing to Fearne*) speaks perfect English and has the upper hand over these two. Ok, welcome to the game show!

Class: (*laughs*).

Ben (*'Indian accent'*): I have three questions for these contestants. (*laughs hysterically*)

Teacher (*unimpressed*): Ja. [pause]

(*Class laughing hysterically*)

Ben (*'Indian accent'*): My question is what is the greatest [pause] (*hysterical laughter*) what is the greatest curry in the world?

Class: //(laughing)

Stephen: Uhhhh [pause]

Class: //(laughing)

Ben: No, too slow, too slow!
Sean (*'black' South African 'accent'*): Eish, Eish²¹, uh, we only have **mielie pap** [corn porridge (Afrikaans)] there in the shack²².
Ben: That's still not the answer. (*to Fearne*) What is the answer?
Fearne [*enunciating*]: It's Nando's Peri-Peri²³!
Ben: Well done, you got it right, ok.
Group continues the role play. The class laughs throughout hysterically.
At the end of the role play group moves to sit down but teacher brings them back.
Teacher: I want to ask you guys a question, why did you choose, why do you have the Indian accents?
Ben (*still laughing*): I don't know.
Teacher: Because actually you are more powerful than Fearne or she is more powerful than them because she won, right? So why did you choose the Indian accent?
Various learners //To make it sound better //Because it's funny
Teacher (repeats answers): To make it sound better. Because it's funny

Lesson 3: Thursday 19 May 2011

This group's presentation is different from the previous group's parody of exclusion. This role play relies on discourses of 'race', taboo and 'humour' in order to construct its meaning to show disempowerment. The characters are clearly 'racially' constructed and their 'race' is articulated through their individual ethnolinguistic repertoires. The discourses and stereotypes associated with each 'race' are constructed through their dialogue and 'accents'. Ben's character reproduces an 'Indian' 'racial' stereotype of amiable host constructed by his parodying of a South African 'Indian accent'. Sean's character reproduces a stereotyped construction of a 'black' South African English speaker as not being able to speak English very well. Stephen's character appears to be constructed as slower than the other contestants and perhaps mentally challenged. This suggests an equating of non-prestige repertoires of English with a disability through a character that the group designates as 'slow' and who is discounted. The implication is that there is a correlation between intellectual disability and non-prestige English 'accents'. Fearne's character is the 'white' WSAE speaker who enunciates her dialogue clearly.

²¹Eish has multiple meanings in South African English, however, here it indicates an exclamation of disappointment.

²²A makeshift house

²³Nandos is a brand of fast food selling Portuguese-style chicken.

The 'humour' is in the unexpected and taboo of a 'white' boy talking 'like' an 'Indian' which surfaces 'racial' stereotypes. Ben's character draws on the cultural stereotype of an 'Indian' man asking questions about curry which is a stereotypical Western construct of Indian food. The humour positions Ben and Sean's characters outside of the normalised perception of what it means to be a WSAE speaker in this context. The 'humour' 'others' these characters and constructs them based on a perception of what it means to be a speaker of 'Indian' or 'black' ethnolinguistic repertoires of English. This has the effect of disempowering their characters and positioning 'black' as the butt of derisive humour (Freud, 1908: 150).

Sean's character, the 'black' South African English speaker, is constructed as someone who not only does not speak English 'well' but who is also poor. He repeats the same phrase 'the rural' a number of times until Ben's character interrupts him. His character is constructed around a particular 'racialised' discourse that asserts that a 'black' person (who, in this case, speaks English only partially) eats 'mielie pap' and lives in 'a shack' which indicates his character as poor showing social inequality in South Africa is thought of along 'racial' lines (McKinney, 2007: 7). The group also appear to construct the characters by placing value on 'racialised' subject positions on a sliding scale of disempowerment. The 'Indian' speaker is less disempowered than the 'black' speaker, whereas the mentally challenged speaker is the most disempowered. The subject positioning of the 'white' WSAE speaker is at the pinnacle of the 'racial' and linguistic hierarchy, which is taken for granted as a normative position.

The class asserts that these ethnolinguistic repertoires were chosen 'Because it's funny', implying that the 'humour' was enough to silence disagreement with its transgressional nature. There does not seem to be evidence that the transgression was conscious despite Ben's discomfit at the beginning of the role play. The unconsciousness of the transgression further inscribes the invisibility of privilege of 'white' ways of speaking. The transgressive humour becomes a means of what Freud (1908: 150) explains as 'surmounting restrictions'; being able to say the 'unsayable' (Janks, 2010: 216) by laughing at different ethnolinguistic repertoires and 'racial' constructions. The group invites the class to partake of the humour and they are aware that they are united in laughing at the 'accents' of the characters, which the group constructs as disempowered and the class acknowledges as such (Freud, 1908: 150). Ben, Sean and Stephen's

characters have been constructed as objects of ridicule (Freud, 1908: 150) and the word 'funny' suggests that Ben and Sean's characters are constructed outside the norms of 'whiteness' the discourses of WSAE have produced and this transgression of the 'norm' causes 'humour'. Stephen's character is constructed as the most disempowered and therefore an object of ridicule (Freud, 1908: 150). The laughter is perhaps a reflection of the unvoiced acknowledgement that this positioning is taboo and that the transgressive nature of the subject positioning of the characters is not acceptable and uncomfortable. Ben's blushing and physical restlessness at the beginning of the role play and, in fact, throughout the presentation indicates that he did find something about the portrayal of his character unsettling or taboo. The laughter becomes simultaneously an acknowledgement of the 'racialised' stereotyping of the different subject positions and an externalization of the discomfort felt at this positioning. The laughter 'legitimises' the stereotyping and reinforces the invisible position of the origins of the laughter itself.

The locus of the ethnolinguistic repertoires outside the normalised discourses of what it means to speak English 'well' positions Ben, Sean and Stephen's characters as disempowered subjects and positions the 'white' WSAE speaker as most powerful. Fearne's character gets all the answers right and her character is the one that speaks WSAE clearly and 'well'. The characters' construction reflects cultural stereotypes based on the perceptions of the 'normalised' WSAE speakers. This is presented as 'commonsense' and through the laughter, which signifies disempowerment, shows an 'unwillingness to connect to the reality of the 'other'' (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 45). Therefore the discourses of 'race' taken up here reproduce homogenous definitions of 'race' and do not allow for layered and complex definitions of 'racial' positionings (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 170).

This discourse of 'whiteness' further assumes the class is 'racially' and culturally homogenous when it is not. This ignores the 'racial' positioning of four members of the class, constructs the power relations between 'race's as invisible and so privileges 'white' subjectivities (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 31). Priya, Sarin and Ndiliswa were notably silent during this role play, effectively silencing their multiple subject positions as well as constructing the classroom space as a 'white' space. The way the group set up the role play appeared to give power to the 'white' WSAE

speaker as she gave all the right answers. However, Ben, as the host with the Indian ‘accent’, and therefore in command of the entire role play, seemed to play the character with the most powerful role but whose ‘accent’, along with the ‘black’ English speaker, was less empowered as he spoke a less prestigious ethnolinguistic repertoire of English. My own reaction to this role play was that there was something deeply unsettling about the construction of the characters. The ‘racial’ stereotyping discourses that were drawn marginalised members of the class.

The problematic in this presentation is that the subject positions ascribed to the characters are as a result of the ‘racialised’ and culturally stereotyped discourses that construct them in disempowered ways. The laughter adds to the construction of this normativity. Therefore, discourses of ‘race’, taboo and ‘humour’ work together in this role play. Fearne’s character, the WSAE speaker is the most empowered. Ben’s ‘Indian accent’, even though his character is in a powerful position as the game show host, is not valued. Sean’s character, the ‘black’ English speaker, is likewise an object of ridicule. While Stephen’s character is the most disempowered and completely disregarded throughout the role play.

4.4 Conclusion

The ideologies of language, legitimate language and ‘racialised’ discourses have obscured and disempowered complex subject positions and constructed ‘white’ subject positions that are normalised and powerful in this classroom space. In the class, all the learners seem to be positioned as WSAE speakers, even though they are not. Differences are rendered invisible. As a result, this dominant ethnolinguistic repertoire, masquerades as a unifier by reinforcing its norms. Differing languages and ethnolinguistic repertoires are however present in this apparently homogenous class. But the pretence of homogeneity has the effect of making engagements with language difference seem negative and therefore to be avoided. The homogenising effects of WSAE deny the multiple subject positions constructed through language (Weedon, 1997) and that are only visible in their silence or in ‘humour’ where they are constructed by a ‘white’ subject position as outside the norm. This homogenising discourse could be seen, then, to attempt to effectively erase language difference. If difference is erased or obscured, engagement with it becomes problematised, superficial and rendered almost

impossible. There is a need to make difference visible and surface it before there can be engagement with it. However, both of these processes are challenging for the teacher and the learners. I found that surfacing discussions of language difference in the classroom problematic. In the following chapter I analyse the pedagogical implications of, and difficult moments raised by, critical literacy.

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CHAPTER 5: THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPERATIVE: FOCUSING ON THE UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my critical reflection on significant pedagogical moments that foreground dilemmas, successes or problematics of engaging with language differences shaping learners' understandings of the world in my classroom (Janks, 2010: 22). I found that raising awareness of the power dynamics and complexities of differences in language use and ethnolinguistic repertoires often resulted in uncomfortable pedagogical moments. My critical reflections on issues raised by this pedagogy, while at times uncomfortable, awkward and challenging, forced engagement with the limits and possibilities of doing critical literacy work with language differences in my context.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the positioning of the teacher in critical literacy is largely unproblematised. I felt that as a teacher who engages in this type of pedagogical work it was not merely challenging for my learners, as I too, had to examine discourses I held as normative in an analysis of my own practice. In this chapter I analyse moments when, as a result of the pedagogical strategy, normative constructions of the social world are challenged (Janks, 2010: 221). Moments of resistance, as well as interactive and reflexive positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990: 48), evidence responses I could not anticipate as well as issues that touch on the 'fibre of belief' structuring the social world of my learners (Janks, 2010: 221).

5.2 Problematics of Positioning

Critical literacy investigates the power dynamics of language and as such attempts to raise awareness of positions constructed in terms of power (Janks, 2010: 22). Positioning results in the production of social meanings through dialogical practices (Davies and Harré, 1990: 45). In this section I reflect on specific instances of positioning. I argue that, in terms of power, these positionings are as a result of the taking up of particular discourses which contribute to the construction of the social space. Although critical literacy opens up spaces for critical reflection

on positioning and the subversion of normative power relations, what happens in these spaces cannot be predetermined (Janks, 2010: 222).

5.2.1 Positioning the teacher

In Lesson 1 the class discussion touched on ‘accent’ and ethnolinguistic repertoires of English by providing a brief overview of how these came to exist and by listening to some examples²⁴.

Jane, in response to the new, dialogical approach to lessons, takes on a powerful subject position in the dialogue below:

- Jane:** Ma’am do you have an accent?
Teacher: Do I have an accent?
Jane: You sound like you have a type of accent.
Susie (scoffing): She has a South African accent.
Jane: No, it’s like posh.
Teacher (smiling): Well, don’t you have an accent?
Jane: No, compared to everyone else your voice is more posh.
Teacher: Why do you think that would be though, Jane?
Jane: Because you’re good at English.

Lesson 1: Friday 13 May 2011

Jane asks me directly if I have an accent and my response, ‘Do I have an accent?’ asks her to decide what type of ‘accent’ she thought I have. Her questioning of my accent indicates that she is gaining knowledge of the new dialogical strategies and how they work. Typically, teachers solicit information and evaluate answers (Allwright and Bailey, 1991: 98); Jane subverts this role and takes up a differing subject position. My response ‘permits’ her to evaluate my accent and ‘allows’ this to be said. The power relations between teacher and student are counterbalanced here as she uses her knowledge to evaluate a normalised authority figure. I do not reject her questioning but accept and encourage it by asking her to elaborate.

Jane’s description of my ‘accent’ as ‘posh’ is a critical evaluation made possible by my continued acceptance of her questioning. My continued acceptance of the questionings supports Jane’s agency, acknowledges it as valid and I use it as a pedagogical tool in order to affirm her further knowledge. I position her powerfully by giving up a certain amount of my own power

²⁴‘Accents’ were sourced from IDEA – International Dialects of English Archive which can be accessed on <http://web.ku.edu/~idea/index.htm>.

through allowing her questions. If I had rejected the questioning and assumed a dominant role, a teacher who should not be questioned or evaluated by learners, the inquiry would have lost its pedagogical significance. Even though power is still asymmetrically weighted towards me, the comment also positions me authoritatively. My powerful position in relation to the other members of the class is linked partly to my role as teacher but becomes signified in terms of my apparent reproduction of the ethnolinguistic repertoire of WSAE. The explanation that my accent is more 'posh' because I am 'good at English' equates my 'subject knowledge' with my WSAE ethnolinguistic repertoire. This positions me powerfully, and apparently in a higher social class, indicating privilege. Therefore, the dialogical space opens up and traditional relations of power are shifted in this moment. Jane's comment embodies an awareness of the power constructed around WSAE and acknowledgement of the diversity in ethnolinguistic repertoires as she marks out her WSAE as different from mine.

5.2.2 Positioning Ndiliswa

In another moment in Lesson 2, I attempt to position Ndiliswa as different. The discussion centred on ethnolinguistic repertoires and the class struggled to grasp the notion of 'Englishes'. I attempted to contextualise their knowledge by drawing on a South African example and discussing languages indigenous to South Africa. I endeavoured to draw on a conversation that I had had with Ndiliswa the previous week²⁵. However, my positioning of Ndiliswa at first appeared to have a negative effect on her willingness to participate in the discussions around language and catalysed my own critical reflections on why I had positioned her in this way.

Teacher: So the English that you speak in Kwazulu Natal [pause] I don't know? Ndiliswa. [pause] If you speak, you were talking the other day about going to the Eastern Cape and they speak a different kind of Xhosa. If you go to, is it the same in KZN²⁶?

(Ndiliswa shakes her head)

Teacher: Or is Zulu, Zulu?

(Ndiliswa nods her head)

²⁵ isiXhosa speaking learners in another of my Grade 8 classes discussed ethnolinguistic repertoires the previous week in relation to a lesson on register. They spoke about how on a family visit to the Eastern Cape (traditionally predominantly isiXhosa speaking) they felt marginalised as relatives felt the repertoire of isiXhosa they spoke was too urbanised. They, in turn felt that their relatives in the Eastern Cape spoke an archaic repertoire of isiXhosa. I was aware that Ndiliswa could speak isiXhosa and so we did have a discussion about the same issue in the week prior to this lesson in a lesson on register with her class.

²⁶ KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is a predominantly isiZulu speaking province of South Africa.

Teacher: Or would they also mix it a bit do you think?
Ndiliswa: I don't know ma'am.
Teacher: Not sure. How would, which English do we speak? Or do you speak (*addressing the class, taking the focus off Ndiliswa*)? That was the question. Which English do you speak? Capetonian English?

Lesson 2: Monday 16 May 2011

My positioning of Ndiliswa by asking her about 'Xhosa' and if that could apply to 'Zulu' in KZN is complex. My initial thought is to position her positively, as being knowledgeable about 'Zulu', knowledge that no one else in the class would have. However, this is based on an assumption I have here about her knowledge of 'Zulu', an assumption informed by her 'racial' and ethnolinguistic positioning as the only 'black', 'isiXhosa' speaker in the class. Instead of empowering her, my questions have the reverse effect of positioning her as 'other' than the rest of the class which produces a very uncomfortable moment for both her and me. She responds with silence, indicating only a negative with a shake of her head and a much distanced, 'I don't know ma'am'. Immediately, I felt uncomfortable, knowing I had positioned her according to my own discourses of 'whiteness'; the same discourses that I wanted to destabilise in doing this work.

Ndiliswa rejects my interactive positioning of her and my questioning, though well-intended, falls very short of opening a discussion and instead effectively shuts it down. Therefore, despite my attempt to use a similar dialogical strategy to that used in the previous lesson, the outcomes were quite different. In the previous moment, Jane's evaluations were based on the invisible positioning of discourses of 'whiteness' as powerful, which I affirmed as normalised. In this moment, even though I attempt to position 'blackness' as powerful within this context, the normativity of 'whiteness' is established. Therefore, my positioning of Ndiliswa, based on my own discourses of 'whiteness', reinscribe its hegemonic status and mark out her 'othered' positioning in an 'essentialized' and 'boundaried' way (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 169; Prinsloo, in press: 22). This denies her complex subject positioning and informs her resistance to being positioned as 'black' in a 'white' space.

Pedagogically, asking pertinent questions that seek to add value and aid critical engagement appears seemingly sound (Cazden, 1988:100), however, the assumptions underlying this

exchange—what was not said but implied—at once shut down critical discussion of difference. It was I who needed to critically re-evaluate my own assumptions if I wanted to do this work and provide a space for my learners and I to learn how to deal with difference. This moment forced me to confront how I construct my learners according to my own normative discourses and how these need to be challenged in order to effectively engage with difference in the classroom (Milner, 2003).

I am not in possession of the necessary discourses for mediating this dialogical space that will result in this moment being less uncomfortable. This interaction could be regarded as one that Janks (2010: 211) says touches on the ‘fibre of belief’ of both Ndiliswa and I. While critical literacy has the potential to open up dialogical spaces, mediation of those spaces relies on the resources available to the teacher. The real learning here is my own and takes place after the pedagogical event through critical reflection and self-evaluation on the discourses of language which influence our interactions in complex and nuanced ways.

Four days and two lessons later, in Lesson 3, there was a class discussion around a text written by NgugiwaThiong’o²⁷. waThiong’o relayed his narrative about the loss of his home language as a means of learning and how he had to learn English at school in order to be successful in that context. This text gives voice to differing positions and the learners seemed to relate well to it. In the intervening days I reflected on my positioning of Ndiliswa and re-evaluated my pedagogical strategy. The following interaction shows Ndiliswa offering her own story of being a multilingual speaker in a monolingual environment.

- Hayden:** Ma’am, I don’t know what their language is called...he uses some big English words.
- Teacher:** He does use some big English words. What does that tell us about him?
- Hayden:** He is actually educated in English.
- Teacher:** Ja, ja he was and it sounds like he is a linguist, someone who is lucky he can actually...he is lucky he can use English.
- Susie:** He learnt English very young so that he can be very fluent in that language.
- Hayden:** It’s not that, I don’t know Ma’am, it’s not that you’re speaking completely differently it’s easy to forget who you are, because if he grew up with his own language it’s not that easy to forget.
- Teacher:** You won’t forget it, you won’t forget your culture.

²⁷ See Lesson 3 for the attached Worksheet: You Without Your Languages (Janks, 1993: 8) in Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials for the text and questions.

- Hayden:** You will probably still speak it at home, I mean.
- Teacher:** You will probably still speak it at home, yes, but when he has to go out into the world and where he has to speak English then he, his own language is not valued. Yes? (*indicating Ndiliswa*).
- Ndiliswa:** Ma'am, I grew up speaking mainly English, well actually, when I was small I grew up speaking only Xhosa but then I went to preschool and then my preschool was in English so like I was at preschool most of the day so most of the time I was speaking English when I was in Grade 6 and I was in an English school so like it's so, so [pause] if you learn, if you learn like your home language when you small and you grow up speaking a different language [pause] then, like it's, I don't know, just difficult for me to..you, you,...I don't know, I don't know how to explain it but like umm [pause] I get English and Xhosa confused like I've mainly spoken English.
- Teacher:** Ja, and what do you speak with your parents?
- Ndiliswa:** I speak Xhosa or English.
- Teacher:** Ok, do you think it has an effect on you as a person? Do you think that's, that's changed something for you?
- Ndiliswa:** Ja.
- Teacher:** What do you think it's changed?
- Ndiliswa:** Well, I don't know, I don't know
- Lesson 4: Friday 20 May 2011*

Ndiliswa takes up a speaking position in her narrative above without prompting or questions from me or others in the class. She articulates having complex feelings about her positioning within the class and school context as she battles to articulate them clearly. Her multiple positioning reflects Hall (1996: 448) when he says that 'we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position'. However, pedagogically, along with the other work and discussion of difference that took place in the intervening lessons, the choice to use waThiongo's story appears to have been a catalyst for her to share her own language history and experiences. Ndiliswa's response suggests she is not feeling uncomfortably positioned as was the case in the extract analysed above. The subject position I take up is one of questioning, however, it is not from a place of 'white' dominance, but rather is supported by my position as the teacher opening up the dialogical space.

I set up the discussion by engaging with Hayden's highlighting of waThiongo's complex positioning of having to learn 'English' and its discourses whilst retaining his culture even though his language and culture are not valued. I emphasise waThiongo's position as a speaker

of multiple languages and the complexities of this position which I did not do in the previous interaction. I am unsure as to what catalysed Ndiliswa's response; however, it is strongly linked to her identification with waThiong'o's positioning. I use questioning in this moment, 'Do you think that's, that's changed something for you?' to attempt to assist Ndiliswa to articulate her complex feelings about her positioning and acknowledge them without demanding an answer as I did in the previous moment. In not demanding an answer, I subverted my own positioning as a possessor of all knowledge repertoires. In not assuming I knew how to respond to Ndiliswa's complex position, there is an acknowledgement that I am aware of the complexity of her experience and do not assume that I know how to solve it or fully explain it.

In my prior interaction with Hayden I took up a more explanatory teacher role as neither he nor I have personal experience of the complexity of Ndiliswa's positioning and it is a moment of empathy expressing a desire to understand waThiong'o's position. However, when Ndiliswa began to speak I felt it was evident that her position was different from Hayden's in that she gave voice to her own experience which linked directly with the experience reflected by the text and her voice echoed the complexity of her position. I asked her questions that sought to support her to work through her own complex position, thereby positioning her as powerful in this moment. Although I still direct the discussion, my positioning is less powerful here. Ndiliswa did not have the 'right answer', and I did not expect one, and so the moment was not uncomfortable. In this moment of sharing her experience she positions herself by highlighting both her 'Xhosaness' and her 'Englishness', not in an 'essentialized', 'boundaried' way, but as a complex position (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 169; Prinsloo, in press: 22). The 'de-essentialized' recognition of 'blackness' as heterogenous opened spaces for Ndiliswa and the rest of the class to see 'race' constructed through multiple, layered and complex experience (Carrim and Soudien, 1999: 170).

The success of this moment might also have been facilitated by a chronological break as there were four days between these interactions that afforded reflection and evaluation. However, the critical literacy approach set up the space for destabilising normalised subject positions and critical reflection on these created new spaces where difficult moments and challenging discourses could be negotiated.

5.3 Resistance

5.3.1 Resistance to Discourses of Critical Literacy

At times I experienced resistance to the dialogical nature of critical literacy (Janks, 1993; Orlek, 1993) from learners whose expectation that answers would be affirmed as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ was unfulfilled and thus destabilised. The ‘answer’ was not just given but talked through. The idea that the questions were thought-provoking and the discussions that we had in connection with them were more important than a ‘correct’ answer was difficult to grasp at first and many learners still wanted the ‘right’ answer. I argue that some of the learners are entrenched in particular patterns of classroom discourse that convey the ‘illusion that learning is actually occurring’ (Cazden, 1988: 48) and that learners take time to adjust to changes in classroom discourses that seek to change these patterns. The unfamiliar discursive format suggests to learners that learning is not happening; however new formats are necessary and need to be varied depending on the pedagogical purpose (Cazden, 1988: 50).

In Lesson 1 I began with a history of ‘English’ leading to an exploration of the power dynamics of its global spread and how these lead to the production of a range of ethnolinguistic repertoires. For this Grade 8 class this was new knowledge and so had to be taught in order to lay a foundation for discussions to follow. On the first day the learners were given homework tasks to complete in their journals with questions about sociolinguistic contexts in South Africa. The extract below comes from our class discussion of the first set of homework questions that were completed in the journals:

Teacher: Alright, thank you (*settling the class*). Ok, Ben, let’s start with you. Your first question was ‘How many Englishes are there in South Africa and who speaks them?’ Remember that the answers, before we get going, remember that the answers for the questions are for you to think about them. Ok? So I want to know what you think about it, it’s not necessarily for you to have ‘Yes’ this is a right answer or ‘No’ this is a wrong answer, ok, it’s for us ’cause remember on Friday we were talking about how English became English, ok, and what English in the world looks like, right, and why it is that way and then obviously English in the world affects English in South Africa as well, ok. The questions were focused around how are we dealing with English in South Africa, what does our

- English look like? Ok, Ben! How many Englishes are there in South Africa? Who speaks them? What did you say?
- Ben:** I said that, uh, I thought it was like the accents.
- Teacher:** That's fine. What did you say?
- Ben:** I said it was different accents from Johannesburg, PE²⁸, Durban and Cape Town.
- Teacher:** Alright, so there's different accents, yes.
- Ben:** And then people from Joburg²⁹ obviously speak the accent.
- Teacher:** Ok.
- Ben:** And then PE, Durban and Cape Town.
- Teacher:** Ok, so you're calling, are you calling different English according to the accent of the person who speaks it?
- Ben:** (*nods affirmatively*)
- Teacher:** Ok, alright. Anyone else want to add to what he said? Susie?
- Susie:** I didn't understand it Ma'am so I was like
- Aidan:** Joh³⁰! That's a new one.
- Hayden:** Ja, that is a new one.
(*Class laughter*)
- Teacher:** You didn't understand it? Sarah? (*responding to Sarah's raised hand*)
- Sarah (softly):** Like the different types of Englishes and languages in South Africa are mixed with English.
- Teacher:** Ok, that's good. Did you hear what Sarah said? It was a good answer. Just repeat it Sarah.
- Sarah:** English and all the different languages in South Africa are mixed with English.
- Teacher:** Ok. So we have different languages in South Africa. Remember on Friday I played you all the different accents or all the different people in the world speaking the different accents, remember? And you guys had a good laugh at some of them. (*// Class giggles*) Ok, so if we talk about different Englishes in South Africa it means that there are people [pause] I mean how many official languages do we have in South Africa?
- Class (quickly):** Eleven!
- Teacher:** Eleven official languages so everybody if you speak a different language not everybody speaks English as their first language so perhaps a different English is someone who is speaking English but their home language isn't English. Yes, Aidan?
- Aidan:** So how many Englishes are there?

Lesson 2: Monday 16 May 2011

The learners brought their journal answers to class expecting to discuss the 'right' answers as that is what is expected with homework and that answers are 'confined within the limits of what

²⁸Port Elizabeth

²⁹Johannesburg

³⁰Exclamation of surprise

the teacher treats...as being relevant and correct' (Edwards and Westgate, 1987: 44). In the extract above, I attempted to change my pedagogical strategy from formalised teaching in the previous lesson to a more dialogical approach as the content of the lesson, namely the answering of questions, seemed to demand (Cazden, 1988: 50). This is the first lesson where I attempt to initiate class discussion and I dominate in the turn-taking in order to model the approach (Cazden, 1988; Allwright and Bailey, 1991; Auerbach, 2000).

At first, even though I contextualise the questions and explain that the answers were points of discussion, Ben's hesitancy is evident in, 'I said that, uh, I thought it was like the accents' with the use of 'uh', 'I thought' and 'like' indicating that he feels his answer is incorrect. I attempt to coax out his answer by assuring him that it is not about being correct, 'That's fine. What did you say?' I attempt to use the answer as a starting point for the discussion and try not to affirm the answer as right or wrong. I also repeat or rephrase Ben's answer, 'Ok, so you're calling, are you calling different 'Englishes' according to the accent of the person who speaks it?' This strategy indicates my valuing of his contribution. In order to build the discussion I ask Susie to attempt an answer, however, she expresses frustration that she does not understand the question. Sarah volunteers her answer and I respond with 'It was a good answer' which is affirming a 'right' answer. I did this in order to attempt to elicit and prompt further discussion. However, this is evidence of my learned patterns of classroom discourse that evaluate student answers but in so doing, constrain them as I am still looking for an answer I feel is 'relevant and correct' (Edwards and Westgate, 1987: 44). When I battle to elicit answers, I resort to learned patterns of classroom discourse, which had the adverse effect of affirming classroom discourse practices I had hoped to destabilise. This shows the difficulties, not just for the learners, but also for me in changing pedagogical strategy.

The whole class responds when I ask them a question to which they know the definitive answer, that there are eleven official languages in South Africa. However, there is very little engagement in discussion of the journal homework questions by the majority of the class. This I understood as resistance to the lack of a definitive answer to the questions and evidence of the attempt to destabilise familiar patterns of classroom discourse. Aidan's final remark, 'So how many Englishes are there?' is indicative of his resistance to or lack of understanding of the dialogical

nature of the approach as even after my explanations and attempts to make the strategy explicit, he still requests the ‘right’ answer. This indicates that both the learners and I find it challenging adapting to this type of pedagogy.

Incidentally, Aidan was one of only two learners who did not hand in their journal at the end of the lesson series as I requested. The culture of the class shifted over the course of the lesson series and became a lot more dialogical. Aidan participated in the discussions quite vocally as seen in his comments in further data extracts; however, he did not do the work of writing and documenting his thoughts in his journal. Allwright and Bailey (1991: 145) suggest that ‘some learners’ level of observable verbal interaction in classrooms may be related to their own opinions about how they learn’. Therefore, his response indicates a resistance in that he appears to disregard discussion as serious pedagogical practice and because the journal was not part of his formal assessment he disregarded it entirely. While I could have made the changes in pedagogy even more explicit to learners, ultimately, entrenched classroom discourses take time to overcome and new ways of constructing knowledge need to be built.

5.3.2 Resistant discourses of ‘whiteness’

As discussed in Chapter 4, discourses of ‘whiteness’ are positioned as normative in this classroom space. As critical literacy attempts to catalyse engagements with power structures, ‘whiteness’ as a centre of power in this space becomes highlighted (Janks, 2010). In this section I argue that challenges, ‘threats’ or attempts to destabilise discourses of ‘whiteness’, direct or otherwise, meet with resistance in ways that attempt to reinscribe its normativity and invisibility (Steyn, 2001; Steyn and Foster, 2008) and, ultimately, result in resistance to critical literacy. I found it difficult to engage with the resistance and the uncomfortable moments highlight the difficulties I found in the tension between what McKinney (2005: 376) calls a “‘democratic’ teaching style, and my moral or ethical views’ which are not easily resolved.

5.3.2.1 The Role Plays

The pedagogical imperative in the role plays in Lesson 3 was to surface difference in a different kind of way from merely conducting a class discussion. The class was asked to role play a situation where they felt they had gained advantage or power because of the language they spoke. The role plays seemed to afford the opportunity for the ‘unsayable’ to become ‘sayable’ (Janks, 2010: 216) in that particular moment: positioning ‘blackness’ as disempowered. I felt deeply unsettled by one particular role play and I felt that a reflective discussion on this was needed. In the extract that follows the learners take up positions or roles based on ‘racial’ stereotypes; these were analysed in detail in Chapter 4:

- Ben** (*laughing, blushing, turning around*): Ok (*trying to control laughter*), I’m the, I’m the game show host but I speak in an Indian accent and then (*pointing to Stephen*) he’s very slow, he’s a bit [pause] (*pointing to Sean*) and he, where do you come from again? (*addresses Sean and laughs almost uncontrollably, class laughs*)
- Sean** (*in a ‘black’ South African ‘accent’*): The um, the rural [pause]
- Class:** (*laughs*) // ‘the rural’
- Ben** (*‘Indian accent’*): And she (*pointing to Fearne*) speaks perfect English and has the upper hand over these two. Ok, welcome to the game show!
- Class:** (*laughs*).
- Ben** (*‘Indian accent’*): I have three questions for these contestants. (*laughs hysterically*)
- Teacher** (*unimpressed*): Ja. [pause]
- (Class laughing hysterically)*
- Ben** (*‘Indian accent’*): My question is what is the greatest [pause] (*hysterical laughter*) what is the greatest curry in the world?
- Class:** //(laughing)
- Stephen:** Uhhhh [pause]
- Class:** //(laughing)
- Ben:** No, too slow, too slow!
- Sean** (*‘black’ South African ‘accent’*): Eish, Eish³¹, uh, we only have **mielie pap** [corn porridge (Afrikaans)] there in the shack³².
- Ben:** That’s still not the answer. (*to Fearne*) What is the answer?

³¹Eish has multiple meanings in South African English, however, here it indicates an exclamation of ‘disappointment’.

³²A makeshift house

Fearne [*enunciating*]: It's Nando's Peri-Peri³³!

Ben: Well done, you got it right, ok.

Group continues the role play. The class laughs throughout hysterically.

At the end of the role play group moves to sit down but teacher brings them back.

Teacher: I want to ask you guys a question, why did you choose, why do you have the Indian accents?

Ben (*still laughing*): I don't know.

Teacher: Because actually you are more powerful than Fearne or she is more powerful than them because she won, right? So why did you choose the Indian accent?

Various learners //To make it sound better //Because it's funny

Teacher (repeats answers): To make it sound better, Because it's funny

Lesson 3: Thursday 19 May 2011

The problematic here is that the reflection on the role play that I attempt to elicit is effectively dismissed by the learners' regard of the 'humour' as commonsense, 'Because it's funny'. Janks (2010: 219) quotes Thompson on the purpose of jokes as 'recounting the way that the world appears and in reinforcing through laughter which profits at another's expense, the apparent order of things.' The 'apparent order of things' (Janks, 2010: 219) here reflects a normativity of 'whiteness' and positions 'blackness' as disempowered. However, when I question Ben on his use of the 'Indianaccent', his, 'I don't know', suggests that the joke is happening 'below the level of consciousness' (Janks, 2010: 214) which means that neither he, nor the class, are fully aware of what is 'funny'. My insistence on calling attention to the power interests at work, by suggesting that power is complex as Ben's character is both empowered and disempowered in particular moments, forces a 'critical deconstruction' and effectively attempts to end the joke (Janks, 2010: 219). The discussion seemingly shuts down as the learners resist my analysis and the attempt to destabilise normative 'racial' positioning as they are enjoying the joke (Janks, 2010:219). I am not able to expose the power relations at work in the 'humour' perhaps because I do not ask the right questions (Janks, 2010: 220). Also, I felt deeply uncomfortable with this role play and needed to work through my own 'offended' response in order to make meaning of the moment in a way that would mediate a discussion and not contribute to shutting it down.

³³*Nandos* is a brand of fast food selling Portuguese-style chicken.

Even though I was not able to engage the class in a dialogical critical analysis above, moments later, when the class had quietened down after the excitement of the role plays, the following exchange took place:

- Teacher:** It doesn't matter where you are, people are set up depending on what variety of English you speak, what variety of English you speak, you are more powerful than someone else, ok. If I was your English teacher but I couldn't speak English properly, (*//class laughter*), ja, you're already laughing. Then, as soon as you laugh at somebody, alright, what does laughter do?
- Class:** Brings you down!
- Teacher:** Breaks you down a bit, ja, brings you down.
- Hayden:** But it depends if you're laughing with the uh, with the act.
- Teacher:** If you're laughing with the act? Ja, but what do you find the humour in?
- Various members of the class:** The accent.
- Teacher:** The accent, ja, because it's not the variety that you know or that you are familiar with so therefore it creates a bit of humour. Which I think, I don't know, I think maybe is a little disempowering a bit, I don't know?
- Unidentified Student:** Sometimes [pause]
(*Class very noisy*)
Lesson 3: Thursday 19 May 2011

In this extract I take up a more powerful position than in the prior interaction and I continue to engage with what I felt was my responsibility, to address the 'racial' and linguistic stereotyping and accompanying power positions enacted in the role play. I take the opportunity of the learners' silence and begin by speaking 'at' the class and do not invite their engagement till the end of my first speaking turn. This enables me to take up a more powerful, authoritative subject position. The learners respond to this by receptively answering my question, 'Then, as soon as you laugh at somebody, alright, what does laughter do?' which invites their 'critical deconstruction' (Janks, 2010: 219) of the events that had just taken place. I am also able to engage critically with Hayden's comment, 'It depends if you're laughing with the act' as I ask the class to specifically identify the source of the humour in the preceding role play. The student who responds with 'Sometimes' indicates understanding that laughing at someone's 'accent' is a disempowering act. Therefore, the pedagogical strategy here is much less dialogical and becomes leading as I open the space to discuss how power operated in the role play. My differing, more empowered, subject position in this moment allows me to open this space of

negotiation when perhaps a more egalitarian dialogic might not have been as successful. This moment seemed an appropriate one for me to take up the subject position of ‘knower’ in order to facilitate what I felt was my ethical responsibility in doing critical literacy work (McKinney: 2005). The ways in which the difficult moments can be pedagogically mediated depend on the context of the particular moment and I needed to adapt my approach to classroom discourse in order to negotiate the space.

5.3.2.2 Top Dogs

I did not always find success in mediating resistance. This is evidenced in a class discussion of power in Lesson 4³⁴. I felt that my dual position as teacher/researcher was problematic here as I became very self-conscious of my own positioning and discourses. The discussion was about ‘top dogs’, that is, who was most powerful in different contexts. The discussion moved toward who was top dog in South Africa and some said Jacob Zuma³⁵ and others Helen Zille³⁶. Ben begins this extract by presenting an argument advocating Helen Zille as top dog:

- Ben:** I was at the cricket game in 2008, you know when IPL³⁷ was here.
Teacher: Yes.
Ben: And um, Jacob Zuma and Helen Zille were there presenting some award to the guy who runs the cricket and um, when they said when they announced their names it was like everybody shouted and screamed for the DA³⁸ but when the ANC³⁹ came on it was like (*Ben class claps*)
Hayden: I saw that. Ma’am but when Zuma were giving the speech the whole stadium was quiet but then when they said ‘Helen’ the whole crowd started shouting.
Teacher: Started shouting, ja. So you could see who’s top dog.
(*Muffled comments from the class*)
Aidan: But Ma’am it’s a racial thing.
Teacher: Why is it a racial thing?
Susie: It is!
Aidan: Because all the (...) vote for Zuma.

³⁴ See Lesson 4 for the attached Worksheet: Naming Groups as Dominant or Subordinate (Janks, 1993: 12) in Appendix A: Lesson Plans and Materials.

³⁵Jacob Zuma is the current President of South Africa.

³⁶Helen Zille is the current leader of the opposition party, the Democratic Alliance and the premier of the Western Cape Province in which the school is located.

³⁷The Indian Premier League(IPL) is an annual cricket tournament usually held in India. However, due to political unrest in India that year, the tournament was held in South Africa in 2008.

³⁸Democratic Alliance

³⁹African National Congress, ruling party in South Africa.

Ndiliswa (*quietly*): No they don't.

(The class begins talking at once and shouting, some in disagreement with Aidan)

Teacher: Sorry, no, I cannot hear Aidan.

Aidan: White people want Helen Zille to be in power so it's kind of like a racial thing.

Susie: It's not so much a racial issue for white people, white people just want what's best for South Africa no offense like obviously more educated people but then the uneducated people [pause]

(// class express outrage and wide disagreement)

Susie: they lived in Apartheid, it's not being racist, it's a fact.

Hayden: How do you know?

Susie: They so stuck with Apartheid and the ANC and the ANC freed them and everything that they stick with it.

(The class is very quiet)

Hayden: Ma'am, no offence but I think she just put you on your place.

Teacher: Who?

Hayden: Susie

Teacher: Put who on their place? I didn't say anything.

Susie: Yes, exactly.

Hayden: It looked like you wanted to Ma'am.

Lesson 4: Friday 20 May 2011

This discussion took place around the time of municipal elections in Cape Town. The suburb of Forest Park had been flooded with prominently displayed campaign posters and the media broadcast a glut of political discourses. These discourses evidenced here tie into broader political discourses operating in the country. Ben's narrative of his experience at the cricket game suggests that he is speaking from within his own space. His perception of South Africa and its politics is embodied in this cricket experience. The cricket audience, for Ben, comes to stand for the broader South African public. Even though there would have been many people at the cricket game, the supporters of cricket as a sport in South Africa are mainly 'white' and 'coloured'. If Ben had been to a soccer match at Soccer City in Johannesburg, where soccer supporters are predominantly 'black', and Jacob Zuma and Helen Zille had been there, their reception from the crowd would likely have been markedly different. However, Ben appears not to be aware that the Western Cape is the only province in South Africa where the Democratic Alliance is the ruling political party while the ANC holds all the other eight provinces. Therefore, Ben's narrative is reflective of the discourse of political power wielded by the Democratic Alliance at that cricket match.

Hayden identifies with Ben's story as evidenced through his taking up of Ben's narrative. At this point in the interaction I was beginning to feel uncomfortable as there seemed to be an expectation that I would affirm Helen Zille over Jacob Zuma. However, I knew the implication of this positioning: being complicit in reinscribing normative 'whiteness' rather than destabilising 'whiteness' within the space which was my aim. I thus could not affirm the learners' responses and so found the conversation difficult. I feared that I would not be able to facilitate it in a way that would allow me to keep critical discussion open while feeling that I should also be actively countering these discourses. My response to Hayden '...started shouting, ja. So you could see who's top dog', attempts to end the discussion democratically, acknowledging his position while not allowing my feelings to cloud their responses.

Aidan's statement, 'it's a racial thing' moves the discussion in precisely the direction I hoped it would not go: from discourses of politics to discourses of 'race'. Aidan's pronoun 'it' refers to the cricket crowd's valuing of Zille over Zuma. There is a tacit assumption that the crowd at the cricket is 'white'. His comment also appears to resonate with this as being a broader, general trend in South Africa that 'white' people support Zille whilst 'black' people support Zuma. Therefore, according to the discourse of 'whiteness' reproduced here, the president, who is 'black', is not really powerful.

My response to Aidan is a question inquiring why he feels this way. This questioning was part of my pedagogical strategy of acknowledging his opinion and perhaps attempting to engage critically with it. However, Susie interprets this, incorrectly, as a contradiction. She does not seem to understand the 'rules of engagement' of the critical pedagogy as she interprets my question to Aidan as a challenge. Aidan expands his previous statement by saying, 'Because all the (...) vote for Zuma.' This political discourse links particular 'races' to supporting particular political parties. The discourse sees difference in terms of a binary: ANC supporters are 'black' whereas DA supporters are 'white'; reflected above in the ANC's association with Jacob Zuma and 'blackness', and the DA's association with Helen Zille and 'whiteness'. This binary was denied by Ndiliswa and other members of the class and this binary discourse was not taken up by the majority of the class, indicated by the uproar with which Aidan's words were greeted. Clearly there were others, beside myself, who felt the impalpable 'wrongness' of what he said.

I ask Aidan to continue as he had not completed his turn; thereafter I intended to address the voices of disagreement. However, immediately after Aidan speaks Susie vehemently states a case invoking a common discourse of ‘whiteness’ as identified by Steyn and Foster (2008: 35) as ‘White Ululation’, which suggests that ‘white’ people know ‘what is best for South Africa’. This implies ‘whiteness’ is educated and the bearer of knowledge while ‘blackness’ is not. This discourse of ‘whiteness’ claims a position of superiority. Susie’s use of the phrase ‘no offense’ suggests she might acknowledge her position as a minority one. However, the veracity of her statements is asserted by the declaration that this is ‘a fact’ (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 35). The discourse is subversive as it reinscribes the position it claims not to support and justifies its position by asserting that it is the truth (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 35). No one else in the class, besides Hayden asking Susie, ‘How do you know?’ directly challenged the statements. Even Ndiliswa’s quiet, ‘No they don’t’ did not challenge it sufficiently. Evidently, the learners and I avoid engaging with this discourse as overtly ‘racial’, possibly as it is obscured behind a facade of common sense and apparent reason.

Presumably, then, this ‘racial’ discourse also suggests that ‘black’ people will only vote for the ANC because the party freed South Africa from apartheid, as Susie states, ‘They so stuck with Apartheid and the ANC and the ANC freed them and everything that they stick with it’. The use of the pronoun ‘They’ signifies a ‘black’ ‘racial’ positioning. ‘They’ constructs binary ‘racial’ positionings here as well as ‘othering’ a position that is not her own. ‘They’ are contrasted with an invisible ‘us’ with whom Susie positions herself—outside ‘they’. This discourse positions South African ‘whiteness’ as the norm in a way that renders it invisible, normative and almost unchallengeable.

This was a difficult and awkward moment for me. The discourses invoked by Aidan and Susie I felt were deeply contradictory to my own. The fear I felt at this point was grounded in what I perceived to be my inability to manage the discussion in a way that would open democratic discussion and value the opinions of the members of the class without allowing my own convictions to cloud it. I felt Susie’s vehemence positioned me at the front of a potential confrontation as I felt it undermined the democratic discussion I attempted to construct. I felt that at this point the discussion had become too heated and the space had been closed to critical

engagement. My fear was that any response I gave would trigger more repetition of these discourses from the learners and negatively position other learners in the class. I wanted to appreciate the learners' participation in the discussion without reinscribing 'whiteness'. I felt frustrated that I was unable to speak, which led to the discomfort of the moment. In this moment I did not know how to adapt my classroom discourse strategy to resolve these tensions, which silenced me.

The comment from Hayden directed towards me at the end of Susie's speech suggests that he could see I did not agree with what Susie had said although he did not recognize my problematised position. His comment surprised me as I did not feel in the least 'put on my place'. I was grappling with feeling silenced and a measure of fear that the discussion had become closed, however, I was listening to what Susie had said and was weighing up if the benefit of disagreeing with her at that particular moment would lead to further positive discussion. Hayden is correct when he says that it looked like I wanted to say something. However, my decision not to discuss the issue further resulted in an assumption that I had been proven wrong by Susie's argument. Susie interprets my silence here as an assertion of her being 'right' as she responds to my declaration that I did not say anything with, 'Yes, exactly', as if there was nothing that I, or anyone else, could say to that. In this moment she does silence me and thus takes up a dominant subject position displacing my own position of power.

This moment is heavily reliant upon political and 'racial' discourses that appear deeply entrenched in South Africa. What I could have done differently was perhaps to have invited the class to participate and apply critical analysis to the arguments Susie and Aidan rose, to elicit a counter argument. The lack of intervention in this challenging moment seemed to further reinscribe discourses of 'whiteness' as normative in the space and render opposing voices silent. The 'fibre of belief' (Janks, 2010: 221) here is entrenched discourses of 'whiteness'. The perceived threat to these discourses and the potential destabilising of their powerful, normative positioning results in an 'eruption' (Janks, 2010: 221) that fights to retain 'white' normativity and so obscures the power dynamics that critical literacy seeks to expose.

The dilemma of the class' silence is problematic as it signals neither agreement with Susie nor their complicity. They too are rendered silent by the forceful and seemingly 'right' argument Susie makes. Hayden's statement, 'Ma'am, no offence but I think she just put you on your place' shows he feels sufficiently convinced by this discourse of 'whiteness' as to think that I had been disempowered by Susie's argument. His use of the phrase, 'no offence', suggests that I might be upset by my 'defeat' but I would have to accept it. Hayden thus foregrounds the shift in power relations as Susie has silenced the teacher and the class. My dialogical strategy opened up spaces for discussion, allowing Susie to speak; however it also destabilised my normative position of power. This is not necessarily negative, however, in this instance, there is a negative consequence of handing over that power, which allowed discourses of 'whiteness' to be reinscribed and the perpetuation of positioning 'blackness' as disempowered.

5.4 Conclusion

The uncomfortable moments discussed in this chapter highlight 'non-rational' processes involved in doing critical literacy that problematise its practice (Janks, 2010: 221). All participants' underlying 'fibre of belief' (Janks, 2010: 221) permeate interactions around power and influence the construction of the social space. My position as teacher was a difficult one as I attempted to mediate not only the learners' engagements in the difficult moments but also my own 'fibre of belief' (Janks, 2010: 221). The ways in which I mediated these uncomfortable moments impacted on the ways in which the dialogical spaces were opened and how the learners and I were positioned within these spaces. Discourses of 'whiteness' offered most resistance to critical literacy practices, which threatened to destabilise its powerful positioning. The entrenched nature of discourses of 'whiteness', the methods whereby it masquerades as a normative construct, its silencing of counter discourses and the lack of intervention in order to destabilise it, reinscribe 'whiteness' within the classroom space and so it retains accepted normativity.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

...what we do as English teachers matters, for we indeed stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural and, political issues of our time. (Pennycook, 2000: 103)

6.1 Introduction

In this study I have used my own classroom context and positioning as a teacher to investigate engagements with the hegemony of English and linguistic diversity by my learners and I in a particular Grade 8, high school classroom. I aimed to investigate the implications of raising awareness of these language issues in terms of how they contribute to the construction of the social world of the classroom as well as the implications these language issues have for doing critical literacy work.

The theoretical framework for this study draws on poststructuralist theorising of language and discourse which positions language as significant in contributing to the construction of the social as well as multiple subjectivities (Weedon, 1997). These multiple subjectivities are ‘constituted and reconstituted through (...) various discursive practices’ (Davies and Harré, 1990: 46). Discourses shape the social world through discursive language practices by forming ‘the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1989: 49). In this study participants take up particular discourses of language, which position them in the social world of the classroom and contribute to the production of social meanings within that context (Davies and Harré, 1990: 45; McGroarty, 2008). Critical literacy (Janks, 2010) provided the means through which I engaged with the power dynamics of language use and examined linguistic ideologies as situated social practices.

6.2 Findings and Further Research

The overarching finding that emerged from my analysis was the unconscious, but entrenched, discourses of ‘whiteness’ in the classroom and how these were taken up. English becomes the legitimate language, the appropriate linguistic capital for negotiating the discursive spaces of the classroom (Bourdieu, 1977; Davies and Harré: 1990). Language, however, is associated with ‘racial’ positioning as speaking English ‘well’ often means reproducing ‘white’ ways of speaking

English (McKinney, 2007). Differing ethnolinguistic repertoires of English, particularly ‘black’ and ‘Indian’ repertoires, are positioned as disempowered which resulted in positioning ‘black’ as less powerful. The ‘white’ ethnolinguistic repertoire of English which becomes the legitimate language in the classroom is marked as WSAE (Mesthrie, 2010). WSAE contributes to the (re)production of a particularly ‘white’, South African subjectivity and was linked in complex ways with the production of broader discourses of ‘whiteness’ in which learners took up positions that reproduced ‘whiteness’ as normative (McKinney, 2007: 9). Therefore, in answer to my first research question: how do my learners and I, as the teacher, engage with and make meaning of the hegemony of English and linguistic diversity, I suggest that norms of ‘whiteness’ frame many of the engagements with language in this study in ways that perpetuate unequal social relations.

Norms of ‘whiteness’ contribute to the invisibility of difference which is in tension with the purpose of the study, which was to use critical literacy to open the discursive space to make difference, particularly linguistic diversity, visible. ‘White’ normativity resulted in ‘sameness’ (Janks, 2010: 106)—that all the learners and I reproduced the same ethnolinguistic repertoire WSAE— which rendered difference invisible. The assumption of ‘sameness’ (Janks, 2010: 106) meant discussing differences could be avoided as some moments when difference was discussed, were too uncomfortable and I encountered resistance to the opening of discursive spaces.

The resistance came primarily from the entrenched, unconscious discourses of ‘whiteness’ which were exposed in my attempt to create spaces for examining power relations. There was resistance to destabilising the hegemonic discourses of ‘whiteness’ which resulted in these maintaining a powerful positioning in the classroom space. Resistant discourses of ‘whiteness’ were constructed as inarguable ‘commonsense’, which effectively silenced counter discourses. Learners fought to keep these discourses and privilege invisible, not necessarily because they did not want their power exposed, but often because they were unaware of their power and so resisted my attempts to make this visible.

Critical literacy also exposed my own discourses of ‘whiteness’. Inasmuch as the learners took up particular discourses, so did I. The pedagogy catalysed critical reflection as I negotiated the

entrenched discourses of my positioning as a 'white' teacher (Milner, 2003), my assumptions about what it means to be 'black' and the positioning of multiple subjectivities. I was not in possession of all possible repertoires demanded by the pedagogy and in order to mediate this problematic, critical reflection became an integral part of my teaching process.

Some learners also resisted the pedagogy as they struggled to engage with the dialogical approach to lessons and, despite my explicit framing of the pedagogy, still wanted the 'right' answers. In order to attempt to counteract this, I too resorted to normative classroom discourse practices, which, in particular moments, contributed to the entrenchment of the discourse practices I had attempted to destabilise. For all of the learners, at some point during the lesson series, there was a section of written work that was incomplete. They may have completed all the written work had it been part of a formal assessment. This is one of the limitations of the study as I was bound by assessment norms at the school which affected the number of lessons I could devote to doing critical literacy work.

Therefore, the answer to my second research question: how does the use of critical literacy facilitate engagements with the hegemony of English and linguistic diversity? is interwoven with discourses of 'whiteness', resistance, normative practices and my own positioning. Critical literacy offered much potential to open dialogical spaces for discussions of power and difference. The surfacing of difference and discussing its significant role in engagement with language issues, however, became difficult due to the non-rational investments the learners and I held.

In doing critical literacy Janks (2010: 11) suggests that the English teacher has an 'additional responsibility' to their learners to expose the power relations of English. However, the teacher is often anchored in the normalised discourse practices of the social world of the school and so perpetuates these norms (Janks, 2010: 53). I found that my own space in critical literacy, juxtaposed with an 'additional responsibility' and 'normalised' practices, was complex. I facilitated the pedagogy in my classroom, yet I had to work through my own struggles as well as the struggles of my learners. I found that the complexity of the teacher's role is as important as the learners in critical literacy in managing their own responses as well as learners' learning.

Similar studies could be undertaken in similar contexts which investigate learners' and teachers' engagements with the hegemony of English, linguistic diversity and critical literacy. The pivotal role of the teacher in critical literacy suggests the value of conducting further practitioner research designed to develop the role of the teacher in doing critical literacy. Janks' (2010) theoretical framework for critical literacy could be built on, perhaps through action research approaches, in ways that would contribute to the development of materials and resources for classroom practice. A study of the developments of learners' and teachers' engagements with critical literacy over a period of time, perhaps over the course of learners' high school careers, would trace the long-term effects of doing critical literacy.

6.3 Contributions of the Study and Personal Reflection

The localised nature of the study makes the findings relevant in this classroom and not necessarily in differing school contexts. In the post-apartheid educational context of a 'racially' diverse classroom eighteen years into democracy, evidence of the reproduction of norms of 'whiteness' in ways that attempt to justify and expand 'white' privilege while positioning 'black' as less empowered (Steyn and Foster, 2008: 35) is disturbing. This suggests that discourses of 'whiteness' reproduced invisibly by 'white' language practices and taken up in the classroom space need to be addressed by doing this kind of pedagogy. There is a need to reframe 'race' in the classroom to provide new ways of talking about difference that take into account its complexities and make sense of multiple subjectivities.

The study also contributes to understanding the role of the teacher in doing critical literacy. The teacher is positioned as facilitator of critical literacy discourses. This assumes that the teacher has the individual resources needed to mediate engagements with power and the perpetuation of inequalities. However, teachers are challenged as much as learners in doing this work. The non-rational investments of both teachers and learners impact the positions they take up within those spaces. My study has contributed to highlighting some of these investments and the impact they have on the negotiation of the pedagogical space.

The process of teaching within a critical literacy framework is, ultimately, difficult and complex and requires critical reflection. My position as a teacher of critical literacy has developed through critically reflecting on my own practice. I felt the imperative as a 'white' South African teacher in a post-apartheid South African classroom to acknowledge the heritage of my 'whiteness' and engage in its reconstruction (Steyn, 2001: 170). As I reflect on the uncomfortable moments discussed in Chapter 5, I am more aware of how I could have overcome my own fears and hesitations and contributed to the potential successes of those moments. When I began the research process, I was very concerned with doing critical literacy 'right' in a way that would establish and meet my goals of social justice. However, now, I do not feel that critical literacy is something that can be taught 'right'. I am significantly more at ease with its discursive nature. I understand the need to work through moments of difficulty and that these are not necessarily threatening but necessary for the critical reflections I can use to encourage 'shifts in perspectives' in myself as well as my learners (McKinney, 2005: 389). Steyn (2001: 170) asserts that it is possible for 'white' South Africans to create 'a postcolonial South Africa, only if they themselves, their own identities, become postcolonial spaces'. It is my hope that in the process of this study I have engaged not only with linguistic diversity and critical literacy in my classroom but also begun a process of becoming a 'postcolonial space' (Steyn, 2001: 170).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LESSON PLANS AND MATERIALS

LESSON 1: SOCIOLINGUISTICS: POSITIONS OF ENGLISH GLOBALLY AND IN SOUTH AFRICA

LESSON OBJECTIVES

This lesson will provide information to the class about the history of English and why it has become so powerful. Learners need to be aware of the historical context in which English spread and how that context has implications for us now in South Africa. The class should begin to examine some of these implications in our context and understand that there are deeper threads underpinning English as a global language.

Activity 1:

I will present the maps showing the spread of English on the projector. We will examine the facts about how English developed and spread in Europe and the world. The discussion will then turn towards the different varieties of English in the world and why this is so. I will share some audio examples of different varieties of English and some different varieties of English in written form.

Effectively, the class should gain an idea of the timeline involved in the development of English as a language, how it spread and the current contexts of English. I will present some details about this and the class will then be given chance to ask questions. The class will receive a handout of a timeline of English to paste into their exercise books and be asked to fill in some missing details.

Activity 2:

Once I have completed teaching the development of English each group will be presented with 2 different questions that they will discuss and the groups will write down a proposed answer to each in their books. The groups will be given 15 minutes for discussion. Thereafter the groups will feedback to the class on their particular questions. The questions are intended to spark a critical response to the information that we have discussed and to get the class thinking about how this information affects us now in South Africa.

The 4 sets of questions:

1. Look at Shakespeare's English, which was used about 300 years ago. How has English changed since then?
2. Why do you think English spread more widely than most other languages?

3. Compare the slang you use today with the slang your parents used at your age. Think of some examples. Why do you think these have changed?
4. Can anyone stop WRITTEN English from changing? Why/why not?

5. What does the spread of English say about the power of England and America in the last 300 years?
6. What does this reveal about the power of English speakers versus those who don't?

7. Think about the word "Englishes". What do you think it means? Give some examples of Englishes from our own country.
8. Would you say then that there is such a thing as a pure language? Why/why not?

After the questions have been attempted we will listen to feedback from the groups. Thereafter, I will end the lesson by linking this to our current context as students of English in a South African context and asking how does this affect how powerful we are. If there is time this is an ideal question for reflecting on in their journals.

Homework Questions: Journal

Think about English in South Africa.

1. How many Englishes are there in South Africa? Who speaks them?
2. What do you think are the differences between these Englishes? How do you think these differences came about?
3. Which English do you speak?
4. Whose English is used on radio, TV and in newspapers?
5. Which English has more status and power than others? Why?

LESSON 2: HOW LANGUAGE AFFECTS WHO WE ARE

LESSON OBJECTIVES

In this lesson the class should gain understanding that language affects our identities. This means that language affects who we are and helps to position us in relation to others in terms of culture, education and class etc.

First ask for feedback on the questions the class had to do for homework. Spend 5 – 10 minutes discussing and then link to the above objective.

Activity 1

Ask the class what defines us as individuals? That is, what elements contribute to making us individuals?

List items on the board. Students recreate their own identity wheel in their books. I will provide an example of conflicting identities and ask them to decide which of the identities we have discussed conflict. We will also then discuss which of these identities make us feel more powerful and what that means and why.

Explain that all of these things are important for constructing our identities as individuals but we are going to focus on how the language(s) we speak affect who we are.

Activity 2

Initiate an approximately 10 minute class discussion incorporating the following questions

1. Which language is your mother tongue or home language and if you have knowledge or hear any other language.
2. If you have more than one home language, which one is more important?
3. Why do you feel at home speaking your particular home language?

We know from yesterday's discussion that all people who speak your home language don't speak it the same way and the reasons for this.

Activity 3

Place the following on the projector: ***Napoleon said that if you speak three languages you are like three people.***

Ask each group to discuss and make notes on the following questions:

1. Do you think this quote is true or false?
2. Why do you think so?

Allow for group report back and class discussion of group responses.

Activity 4 (optional if time permits)

Now give each pair a language. They should imagine if they spoke this language at home how their life might be different. How would this affect what you think, who your friends are, how well you do at school, what you read and any other aspects of your life. Write a brief paragraph describing your life in your journal.

Ask for feedback from pairs and open to class discussion.

We can say that the languages we speak at home affect who we are and how we live. In other words language is a strong part of every person's identity.

Now explain homework assignment: Language map and provide e.g. photocopy.

Homework assignment: Language Map: What's in a name?

Names usually hold a lot of information about people, about their family, where they come from, their gender, religion, home language and so on. Some names indicate a person's age, whether she or he has brothers or sisters and even sometimes the beliefs and values of the person's parents.

Write a paragraph about your name. Remember to include the following information:

- Your first name and family name
- Do you have more than one name?
- Do you have a nickname?
- Who were you named after?
- Do you like your name? Why/why not?
- What information do your names carry about your family, your history and perhaps your future?

If you don't know much about your names why not and be sure to ask your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles what they know about you. Show e.g. of a language map.

LESSON 3: OUR IDENTITIES AND POWER

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The lesson objective is that the students begin to build on their understanding of the concept of their identities, what power is and where their individual and group identities position them in terms of their language and power.

Activity 1

Begin the lesson with asking for feedback on the language maps. Discuss and reinforce the idea that identity is multifaceted and that the language/s we speak are an integral part of making us who we are. Discuss and reinforce that the language/s we speak give us social identities that reveal power relations. Refer to lesson 1 where we discussed the role of English all over the world and how if we speak English or the type of English we speak positions us socially as either powerful or not. Students must understand the link between the language variety and how that makes us more or less powerful.

Activity 2

Introduce the role play. Explain that each group will receive one of two possible scenarios and they will have 5 minutes to prepare a short role play that will be presented to the class. All members of the group must participate.

YOU WITHOUT YOUR LANGUAGES

Read the passage below by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a famous Kenyan writer. In the passage, Ngugi remembers his early school experiences of English and his home tongue.

I was born into a large peasant family: father, four wives and about twenty-eight children. I also belonged, as we all did in those days, to a wider extended family and to the community as a whole.

We spoke Gikuyu as we worked in the fields. We spoke Gikuyu in and outside the home. I can vividly recall those evenings of storytelling around the fireside. It was mostly the grown-ups telling the children but everybody was interested and involved. We children would re-tell the stories the following day to other children who worked in the fields picking the flowers, tea-leaves or coffee beans of our European and African landlords ...

The home and the field were then our pre-primary school but what was important, for this discussion, is that the language of our evening teach-ins, the language of our immediate and wider community, and the language of our work in the fields were one.

And then I went to school ... For my first four years of school there was still harmony between the language of my formal education and that of the Limuru peasant community. The language of my education was still Gikuyu. The very first time I was ever given an ovation for my writing was over a composition in Gikuyu.

It was after the declaration of the state of emergency over Kenya in 1952 that all the schools ... were taken over by the colonial regime... The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture ... English became the language of my formal education. In Kenya, English became more than a language; it was *the* language, and all others had to bow before it in deference.

Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford.

The attitude to English was the opposite; any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause, the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education ...

The language was taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds.

What was the colonial system doing to us Kenyan children?

What were the consequences of, on the one hand, this systematic suppression of our languages and the literature they carried, and on the other hand the elevation of English and the literature it carried?

Slightly adapted from Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Decolonising the mind: the politics of language in African Literature

Role Play A

Think of a situation where one of you felt you gained advantage or power because you could speak a particular language. Role play the situation, showing who was there, what happened, which languages were used and how one of you gained power.

Role Play B

Think of a situation where one of you felt you were disadvantaged or where you felt you lost power because of the language you speak. Role play the situation, showing who was there, what happened, which languages were used and how one of you was disadvantaged.

Allow the groups 5 minutes to prepare and then begin. After the groups present discuss the following questions:

1. Which language was the most powerful in each situation? Why? Who benefitted most from the situation and why?
2. Which language had the least power in each situation? Why? Who benefitted least from the situation and why? How did these people feel? Could these people have done anything to give themselves more power in the situation?

Activity 3

Hand out copies of the extract from Decolonising the Mind: the politics of language in African literature by Ngugi waThiong'o. Explain that the passage is written by someone who experienced feeling like an outsider because of his language. Read the passage through and then ask the pairs to write down their answers to the following questions:

1. Why did English have more value at waThiong'o's school?
2. Why do you think the school punished children for using their home language?
3. What do you think are the effects on children of forbidding them to use their home language/s?
4. How does waThiong'o feel about his home language Gikuyu? What does he feel about English? Explain the reason/s for this contrast.

Thereafter have a short feedback session on the questions.

Then explain homework assignment.

Homework Assignment

Write a short paragraph in your journal in response to the following question:

After thinking about today's lesson how do you feel about your home language/s?

Explain why you feel this way. What are your attitudes towards the other languages you encounter at school? Explain why you feel this way.

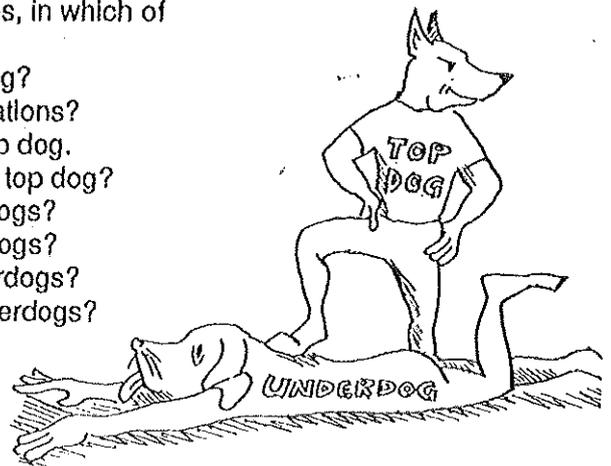
NAMING GROUPS AS DOMINANT OR SUBORDINATE

In order to discuss power differences between groups in society, it is useful to have some terminology. I will call groups that have power **dominant groups** or **top dogs** and groups who have less power than the dominant groups, **subordinate groups** or **underdogs**.

The expressions 'top dogs' and 'underdogs' come from the sport of dog fighting. The losing dog is called the underdog and the winner is called the top dog. These expressions may be used for people. I will use 'top dog' to refer to a person who belongs to a dominant group and I will use 'underdog' to refer to a person who belongs to an oppressed group. People are usually not top dogs or underdogs in all their different identities. For example, a Basotho may be oppressed at work on the grounds of his race, his language and his skills. In his community he may be dominant because of his gender, his literacy and his age.

In pairs think about your own lives:

1. Given that we all have many different identities, in which of your identities do you feel like a top dog?
2. In which identities do you feel like an underdog?
3. Who is the top dog in your family in most situations?
4. Name a situation in which someone else is top dog.
5. Among your friends is there competition to be top dog?
6. In your school how do students become top dogs?
7. In your school how do teachers become top dogs?
8. How do the top dogs you know treat the underdogs?
9. How do the top dogs you know talk to the underdogs?



Read the poem by Michael Rosen.

CHIVVY

Grown-ups say things like:
 Speak up.
 Don't talk with your mouth full
 Don't stare
 Don't point
 Don't pick your nose
 Sit up
 Say please
 Less noise
 Shut the door behind you
 Don't drag your feet
 Haven't you got a hankie?
 Take your hands out of your pockets
 Pull up your socks
 Stand up straight
 Say thank you
 Don't interrupt
 No one thinks you're funny
 Take your elbows off the table
 Can't you make up your own
 mind about anything?

How does the language used by the grown-ups in this poem show that they are the top dogs here?

How are your identities formed by the way adults use language when they speak to you? How are your identities formed by the way you use language when you speak to adults?

Now write your own poem and begin with the following first line: Students say things like... If you prefer you can write your own poem about grown-ups. Begin with Parents say things like... or Teachers or Politicians...

LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Now we will think about languages used in school – the medium of instruction (the language used to teach and learn, the language of the textbooks and exams: for example English or Afrikaans) and languages taught as subjects (for example Zulu). There have been many problems about medium of instruction in South Africa. As a result of the 1976 uprisings, most secondary schools use English as a medium of instruction. However, even though most people are happy with English, there are many difficulties for students and teachers in classrooms. Think about your school situation and your personal language needs in the classroom, in the schoolyard and for your future. Think about everything you feel about languages in South Africa – about language and your identity, about which languages have more power than others, about the varieties of language used outside school, about which languages can help you most in different situations, about the multilingual reality of South Africa. Think about the many issues we have discussed in the book so far.

GUIDELINES AND POLICY

In small groups draw up a set of guidelines for the use of languages in your school.

To help you do this, answer the questions around this box.

Some examples of what you may say:

English should be the medium of instruction

The library should have many more books in African languages.

Include any other issues that have not been raised.

What should be the role of English at school? What should be the role of home languages at school?

Which language/s should be the medium of instruction in the classroom? Why? What are the advantages of this MI? What are the disadvantages of this MI?

What do you need to help you succeed in the MI? Think about textbooks, libraries etc.

When you write in English, which variety should you use? Why? Explain carefully how your teachers should mark written English.

Which languages should be taught as subjects? Why? What do you need to help you use these languages better? Which variety of these languages should be accepted at school?

What should be the language of school assemblies? Why? What should be the language of SRC meetings? Why?

Should there be guidelines for languages used during breaktimes? Why/why not? If you think there should, draw up some guidelines.

Each group should put its policy on the wall. As a whole class discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each policy. Ask:

- Which students will benefit most from this policy?
- Which students will benefit least from this policy?
- How will I benefit from this policy?

Then combine all the strengths of the different policies into one final language policy that you can all accept. Keep a copy of the policy on the classroom wall and present your policy to the staff, the SRC, the PTSA for discussion.

LESSON 4: OUR IDENTITIES AND POWER: HOW POWER WORKS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

In this lesson the students should build on their understanding of how power works through identities and how our use of language within these identities helps to construct power relations: the powerful and the powerless.

Activity 1

Initiate a class discussion by referring to yesterday's role plays on power and how they were based on knowledge of language. Introduce the idea that power can take many forms. Make a list as a class of these forms of power and their contexts. Discuss which identities we have that are powerful and powerless, who is the top dog in your family, among your friends is their competition to be top dog, at our school how do students become top dogs, at our school how do teachers become top dogs, how do the top dogs you know talk to the underdogs?

Activity 2

Each group will be given a copy of the language policy section of Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. We will read through it together and discuss it by raising issues such as what kind of power relationships are at work in this document, to what extent the policy has actually been carried out, why/why not.

In their groups the students will now draw up their own language policy or set of language guidelines for our school. Students will be given an example and examples of the types of issues to consider. The policies will be displayed and discussed by the class by assessing who will benefit most and least from the policy and how they as individuals will benefit.

At this point the lesson will switch to our South African context and I would like to examine how these issues affect us directly in our country.

Homework Assignment: Journal

Do you make assumptions about people who speak another language from you at school?

Based on what you've learned so far and your own experiences, how true do you think these are? Why?

How do you think these impact on our school environment e.g. academics, sport or socially?

LESSON 5: SOUTH AFRICAN IDENTITIES

LESSON OBJECTIVES

This lesson objective seeks to stimulate each student to engage with language issues in South Africa, how these have touched or shaped their own experiences and what they think about them.

At this point the lesson will switch to our South African context and I would like to examine how these issues affect us directly in our country.

Activity 1

At this point I will show the video clips of a few South African adverts that play with ideas of language and identity.

Nandos advert

Romans Pizza advert

'The Coconuts' doing the Bhangra

I will provide the explicit critical analysis criteria that we have been using so far so we can do an analysis of the ads. As a class we will analyze the first clip together as a model and then the pairs will conduct their own analysis on the last two.

A class discussion will follow which will reveal the stereotypes and how the ads use language to reveal and conceal stereotypes and therefore relations of power.

Activity 2

Each group will be handed a worksheet with comments about their identity and languages in South Africa and they will be asked to discuss these and answer questions around it.

The groups will feedback what they have discussed.

Activity 3

This activity is to finalise the series of lessons and prepare the students for their final essay. I will hand out the essay topic and explain the context and a bit about the book, *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa, a context that they need in order to respond to the essay topic.

Homework Assignment: Response to *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa – essay of approximately 250 – 300 words

Read the following 3 extracts about language taken from the novel *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa.

- 1 *“It is because I am smart and speak perfect English. That is why people treat me differently. I knew from a very young age that Sepedi would not take me far...I did not care if I did not catch it.”*
- 2 *“What language do you speak at home, Ofilwe?” asked Mrs Kumalo, sounding a little bit mean again.
“English, Mrs Kumalo,” I responded, confused because I had raised my hand when the fattest one had read out ‘English’, but Mrs Kumalo had told me to put my hand down.
“No, Ofilwe, what language do you speak to your mother and father?” insisted Mrs Kumalo.
“English, Mrs Kumalo,” I tried again...As I walked away ... I heard the one who had not said a word until he did, say, “Just tick her under ‘Zulu’, it’s all the same.”*
- 3 *“People don’t realize how much their accent says about who they are, where they were born and most importantly what kind of people they associate with.... it is what you sound like that helps people to place you and determines how they’ll treat you. Trust me, accent matters. Don’t let some fool convince you otherwise.”*

Choose 2 of the above extracts and respond to them using the points below as a guide:

- What does the character think about language and power in each extract?
- How do you feel about what the character thinks? (agree/disagree – why?)
- What is your opinion about the issues around language and power raised in each extract?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

ITEM 1: SCHOOL LETTER

DATE

Dear Principal

Request for permission to conduct research at [removed]

As you are aware, I am currently completing my Masters in Education degree at the University of Cape Town. In order to fulfil my course requirements I am conducting a research project entitled: *Engaging differences: An investigation of critical literacy education practices applied in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom*. I would like permission to conduct this research in your school.

The overall aims of this research project are:

- To identify and document how a teacher and Grade 8's critically engage with language issues in a classroom
- To determine the implications of these engagements around language issues on teaching and learning

I have planned a series of 5 lessons that I will teach over the course of a normal school week. These lessons will explore the topic of language use in South Africa. These lessons will not in any way disrupt the normal school schedule and we will still cover and complete the required work for the term. Students will complete short assignments in class and for homework and they will hand in a written work assignment which will accompany my own journal and field notes. Apart from their written work, I would like to audio and/or video-record these lessons. These audio and/or video recordings will be transcribed. They will only be used to clarify anything I think I may have missed.

I will use the information from this study to write my thesis. This thesis will be read by my supervisor, co-supervisor and external examiners and later lodged in the university library where it can be read.

I will seek written permission from the parents and/or guardians of the class of students whom I wish to participate in this study. At no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identities of any of its staff and the identities of any learners be identified. The school and any research subjects referred to will be given pseudonyms. The school may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time. I will be happy to answer any questions relating to the proposed research project and to address the SGB if necessary.

I feel that it will be an educationally stimulating experience for the students and the study will also help them develop critical thinking skills so necessary for dealing with our

ITEM 2: PARENT LETTER

Researcher Name: Miss Cristan Williams

Name of the University: University of Cape Town-Humanities Graduate School. South Africa.

Dear Parent

I have been granted permission by the school to carry out educational research this term and your child's class has been selected to be a part of the research study I am conducting. The research forms part of my course requirements for my Masters Degree in Education at the University of Cape Town. I would like to invite your child (along with her/his classmates) to participate in this study. I would sincerely appreciate your child's participation.

This form outlines the purpose of my study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a parent or guardian of a participant.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

The purpose of this research is to fulfil a course requirement for my Masters Degree in Education at the University of Cape Town. South Africa.

I would like to explore how teachers and Grade 8's engage with language issues and their impact on teaching and learning. The title of my thesis is: *Engaging differences: An investigation of critical literacy education practices applied in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom.*

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION.

The methods to be used to collect information for this study are explained below:

I have planned a series of 5 lessons that I will teach over the course of a normal school week. These lessons will explore the topic of language use in South Africa. These lessons will not in any way disrupt the normal school schedule and we will still cover and complete the required work for the term. Your child will complete short assignments in class and for homework and they will hand in written work which will accompany my own journal and field notes. Apart from their written work, I would like to audio and/or video-record these lessons (with your permission). These audio and/or video recordings will be transcribed. They will only be used to clarify anything I think I may have missed.

You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time. .

I will use the information from this study to write my thesis. This thesis will be read by my supervisor, co-supervisor and external examiners and later lodged in the university library where it can be read.

I guarantee that the following conditions will be met.

1. Neither your child's name nor that of the school will be used at any point of information collection, or in the written report; instead, he or she and any other person and place names in the study will be given pseudonyms (where necessary) that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.
2. If you grant permission for your child to be audio and video taped, no audio-video tapes will be used for any purpose other than to do this study, and will not be played for any reason other than to do this study. At your discretion, these tapes will either be erased or destroyed.

3. Your consent for your child's participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw your child's participation at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice.
-

I feel that it will be an educationally stimulating experience for your child and will also help them develop critical thinking skills so necessary for dealing with our current curriculum. I look forward to your child's participation in the research project. Please do not hesitate to contact me at school if you have any queries or require further information.

Yours sincerely

Miss C Williams

Parent Consent Form: Participation in Please fill in and return this reply slip below by Friday 15 April 2011.

Please tick the appropriate box:

1. Do you grant permission for your child to participate in the research?

Yes No

2. Do you grant permission for your child to be recorded?

Yes No

Name of Child _____ Date _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____