

**An analysis of dominant discourses in Grade 8
English Home Language textbooks**

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ABSTRACT

Post-Apartheid South Africa has heralded a period of intense curriculum reform, explicitly aimed at fostering social transformation and a shift from the uncritical rote-learning which dominated Apartheid-era schooling. There have been three major curriculum shifts since 1994 and each change has required the production of new textbooks for every single school subject, usually within highly limited time-frames.

This study focuses on textbooks produced for the most recent iteration of the Language curriculum, that is, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, commonly known as CAPS. The study draws on poststructuralist theory on discourse, in particular Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to engage in close, critical analysis of the dominant discourses in two grade 8 English home language learner textbooks. The textbooks are examined in terms of how social issues are depicted; the notions of English education; the extent to which they promote a critical approach to language and literacy learning as outlined in the curriculum and the ways in which learners are constructed as subject. The analysis of different levels of discourse evident in the texts and text-based tasks demonstrates that the orientations to reading that are offered are focussed largely on the surface meaning of the texts.

While social issues related to contemporary South African and global topics are evident in the choice of content, the texts often perpetuate fairly conservative ideologies, either through their content, the exercises that follow or through the silences implicit in the selection of excerpts. Many of the text-based exercises are decontextualized, cognitively

undemanding and learners are often steered towards particular answers, leaving very limited space for critical engagement. The thesis ends with a consideration of the implications of this analysis for teaching and learning.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Rationale

This study is an analysis of two grade 8 English home language learner textbooks. In the South African educational context with its prescribed curriculum and limited access to print, textbooks have always carried considerable weight. If the power and influence of language textbooks were ever in any doubt, one need only look at the effect that textbooks had, in ideological, social and political terms, in Apartheid South Africa. At that time, the learning of language and the textbooks that facilitated this were the products of a political and economic structure and the accompanying mechanisms of reproduction of existing power relations at that time. The efficacy of the textbook in facilitating these ideologies was quite evident, as demonstrated in the exclusionary practices enacted within social systems on the basis of, inter alia, race, authenticity and language.

1.2 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

Post-Apartheid South Africa has heralded a period of intense curriculum reform, explicitly aimed at fostering social transformation and a shift from the uncritical rote-learning which dominated Apartheid-era schooling. There have been three major curriculum shifts since 1994 and each change has required the production of new textbooks for every

single school subject, usually within highly limited time-frames. This study focuses on textbooks produced for the most recent iteration of the Language curriculum, that is the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, commonly known as CAPS Department of Education (2011). In reaction to the failure of the previous outcomes-based (OBE) approaches to curricula, the CAPS curriculum has adopted a far more prescriptive approach to content and textbooks have been selected on the basis of their conformity to the structure and content of the curriculum. Some analysts have argued that this level of prescription has been an attempt to “teacher-proof” the curriculum because of a lack of faith in teachers’ content knowledge. This approach has arguably, dramatically increased the power of textbooks (Bertram, 2014).

For the purposes of this dissertation, the term “curriculum” broadly refers to academic content taught in a school. The concept of “curriculum” typically signifies the knowledge and skills learners are expected to learn, which includes the “standards” or “objectives” learners are required to meet. In a sense, the curriculum is a collection of policies and mandates whose spectrum is in many ways that of the socio-political. This is made clear in the strong foregrounding that CAPS curriculum is located in a free, democratic society:

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 serves the purposes of equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country. (Education, 2011, p. 4)

As was the case with previous versions of post-Apartheid curricula, the CAPS curriculum has been strongly framed in terms of access, social

transformation, human rights and social justice. The curriculum principles foreground a critical approach to content and context as is evident in the following excerpt:

- Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;
- Active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths;
- High knowledge and high skills: the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved at each grade are specified and set high, achievable standards in all subjects;
- Progression: content and context of each grade shows progression from simple to complex;
- Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 is sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors;
- Valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution; and credibility, quality and efficiency: providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries. (Education, 2011, pp. 4-5)

This emphasis on socially-situated learning has particular significance for curricular content, making the choice of content of texts significant.

1.3 The Approach to English Education

There is no longer a distinct curriculum for English as a subject. The language curriculum documents are identical in content across the eleven official languages. Kapp & Arend (2011 pp. 2-3) argue that “this signals a political shift in that it de-emphasises the strong discourses associated with the teaching of particular languages in Apartheid South Africa” where language was often conflated with ethnicity/race. The CAPS curriculum constructs language as a resource for access to knowledge and

critical awareness. It is described as a “tool for thought and communication” and it is expected that learners will be enabled to use language “for critical and creative thinking; for expressing their opinions on ethical issues and values; for interacting critically with a wide range of texts; for challenging the perspectives, values and power relations embedded in the texts; and for reading texts for various purposes, such as enjoyment, research and critique”. (Education, 2011, pp. 8-9). Cultural diversity is described as a resource: “Language can serve as the medium through which cultural diversity and social relations are expressed and constructed and can progressively be broadened and refined” (Department of Education, 2011, pp. 8-9).

This approach represents a shift from the predominantly uncritical, cultural reproduction approaches to literature and decontextualised grammar-based approaches to language that characterised Apartheid-era curricula Prinsloo (2006); Kapp & Arend (2011). The language curriculum advocates an integrated approach to language and literacy teaching, using communicative language teaching, text-based (genre) and process approaches.

In contrast to the previous versions of the language curriculum, the CAPS documents spell out the formal features of texts and grammatical features in micro-detail. While the preamble principles emphasise critical language approaches (as cited above), the actual curriculum documents provide little guidance as to how to foster such awareness and confines critical language awareness to grammar. Notions of context are obscured in the presentation of textual features. While Process and Genre approaches to writing have considerable merit, they have origins in very different theoretical paradigms and contexts with significant differences

in their assumptions about language learning and pedagogy (see Ivanic, 2004 for a full explanation). No guidance is provided about how to negotiate the potentially incommensurate (genre and process) approaches to writing (Dixon & Dornbrack, 2014).

These potential contradictions are of crucial importance in relation to English. English is the home language of only 9.6% of the entire South African population (South African Statistics, 2012). Nevertheless, the public prevalence of English in South African society, is a point not lost on learners or their parents/guardians. It is common for both parties to perceive English as a gateway to tertiary education and/or better employment opportunities, both domestically and abroad Deumert (2010) The consequence of this situation is that increasingly large numbers of speakers for whom English is second or third language and who come from print-impooverished backgrounds are choosing to attend schools where English is taught as a home language despite the fact that the official policy recommends home language or bilingual instruction Kapp (2012; McKinney 2013). This situation is particularly the case at the beginning of high school (grade 8) when many learners change from schools which offer English as a First Additional Language to English as a Home Language.

Given this context, it seems crucial to examine how textbooks represent contemporary social issues, how they have approached English education; how they have negotiated the tensions in the curriculum with regard to critical language awareness and how they have positioned their young readers, given the diversity of language, race, culture and gender that characterise English Home language classes.

1.4 Research Questions

Research Questions:

In the light of the rationale above, my main research question is:
What are the dominant discourses in CAPS English Home
Language grade 8 textbooks?

My sub-questions are:

- How are social issues depicted in English Education textbooks?
- What notions of English education are evident in English Education textbooks?
- To what extent do the textbooks promote a critical approach to language and literacy learning as outlined in the curriculum?
- How do the textbooks work to construct the learner as subject?

My dissertation draws on key post-structuralist theorists on discourse and literacy Gee (1990); Fairclough (1989); Janks (1997) and uses the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Norman Fairclough to address these questions. The notion of discourse I am using comes from that emphasised by Foucault (1981) and as defined by Gee (1990).

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced my question and explained the rationale for my study on textbooks in contemporary South Africa. The study aims to identify and understand the dominant discourses in Grade 8 English Home language textbooks. In chapter 2, I outline my theoretical framework, focusing on the concept of discourse. In chapter 3, I outline my use of CDA to demonstrate how I will examine texts in a critical, systematic manner so as to identify the dominant discourses present therein, as well as how they affect the texts. Chapters 4 and 5 will form the bulk of the dissertation, as it will be in these chapters that the analysis and discussion of discourses through the lens of CDA will take place. In Chapter 6, I will present my argument regarding the significance of critical reading and more specifically with regard to facilitating a critical language awareness.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK and LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

One of the prime markers of nearly every current constructionist account [regarding social and cultural theory] is the importance attached to language and discourse. The reference, however, is not to language as a neutral system of signs that express something that exists independently of language, but language as a system by which reality is actively and

collectively constructed. Strong versions of this argument insist that everything we know is discursively constituted, that conversations are the fundamental human reality in and through which our everyday world is constructed, sustained, or transformed. (Sampson, 1998, p. 23)

James Gee (1990, p.3) defines discourses as:

Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific *groups of people*, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of certain sort, bikers of a certain sort, business people of a certain sort, churches of a certain sort, and so on through a very long list. They are always and everywhere *social*. Language, as well as literacy, is always and everywhere integrated with and relative to *social practices* constituting particular Discourses. (Gee, 1990, p. 3)

From Gee and Sampson's quotes above, certain elements are emphasized. Language is not disinterested or neutral, nor does it exist in a state that is independent or external to those who use it. Instead, language is actively and collectively constructed and it is this construction which sustains and/or transforms our world. The concept of discourse allows us to see language as socially located and inextricably linked to our ways of thinking, believing and acting. This understanding is central to theoretical framework outlined below.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Notion of Discourse

One of the cornerstones of this research is the notion of discourse, particularly as defined by Gee (1990) who uses the term Discourse (with an upper-case “D”) to emphasize that discourse is bigger than language. Each context, environment or milieu engages in a discourse that is particular to said context. Discourses are also connected to specific subject matters or activities within that context. Importantly, each Discourse requires certain ways of using language. Gee also makes an important point regarding the manner in which Discourse is connected to a particular social group’s way of “being in the world” (Gee, 1996, pp. 131-139), which relates both to the notions of identity and belonging. This is an idea first introduced by Heidegger (2010) Similarly, Heidegger saw our “being-in-the-world” as a direct result of the seemingly random nature by which we are “thrown” into the world Heidegger (2010). Gee argues that Discourses create subject positions for individuals. While many poststructuralist theorists agree with this position, later work has produced less totalising accounts which argue that while discourses are powerful, they are not necessarily over-determining (Norton, 2000).

Gee further specifies that each of us are members of a variety of different Discourses, and that each Discourse represents one of several different identities. These identities (or subject positions) do not necessarily represent consistent and compatible beliefs and values, and indeed, this inconsistency is more often than not the case. As a result, there is a conflict between the different identities all of which together, represent the single individual.

In English language education, humanism posits the idea of an essential, fixed subject (the learner). The learner, from this perspective, exhibits inherent, logical characteristics such as motivation, the presence or lack

of which can be used to better explain success or failure in the classroom, for example. However, in this dissertation, the overarching model is poststructuralist theory. This directly challenges the idea of humanism, and instead theorizes that subjects are in fact non-unitary, fluid and in some cases even fragmented, dependant to some extent, on their particular material and historical contexts (Hall, 1996).

Bakhtin (1986) argues that the idea of the “the listener” or “understander”, such as would be present in the classroom between teacher and learner for example, are “fictions”. This he claims, is due to the misunderstood notion of language, which is in actual fact, a complex and multifaceted process. Bahktin conceives of language in the form of individual, concrete “utterances” (both oral and written) produced within speech genres and various practices of human activity. “Utterances” reflect thematic content, style and compositional structure. These aspects are inseparably linked to the whole of the utterance and determined by the specific nature and the particular sphere of communication. Language according to Bakhtin, enters life through concrete utterances (which manifest language) and life enters language through concrete utterances as well. Any form of understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another. He points out that “when a listener/reader perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning), he/she takes an active, participatory response to what is in fact, a dialogic process” (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 61-62). This is an important and necessary point which demonstrates CDA’s approach to texts, such as the roles taken by learners to textbooks.

Learning materials (particularly textbooks) have a direct impact on pedagogy, and for this reason, must foster in learners the practice of

critique in their acquisition of other discourses. Gee (1990) makes the significant argument that within the context of the school:

There is no such thing as “reading” or “writing”, only reading or writing *something* (a text of a certain type) in a certain way with certain values, while at least appearing to think and feel in certain ways. We read and write only within a certain Discourse, never outside all of them. (Gee, 1990, p. 4)

This conception sees literacy as always being socially situated, and yet schooling often treats literacy as a generic concept. Therefore, when examining extracts from textbooks and the discourses therein, the question surrounding the appropriate or “right discourse” comes to the fore as well as how this [the right discourse] is acquired? For (Gee, 1996, pp. 139-140), as for others such as (Fairclough, 1992), the “right discourse” is not something that can be taught, rather it would be more accurate to say that the individual acquires various different discourses. While describing a discourse as “right” is in itself misplaced, it is feasible to speak of an appropriate discourse. This occurs through apprenticeship and meta-levels of attainment through which the individual acquires the discourse. Since discourses constitute, amongst other things, ways of thinking and perceiving, this has direct implications for English Language learning.

Gee (2004) considers how specific empirical analyses of form-function correlations themselves draw a parallel with specific social practices that help constitute the very nature of such practices.

This is relevant to learning, as learning is a type of social interaction in which knowledge is distributed across people, their tools and

technologies, dispersed at various sites, and stored in links among people, their minds and bodies and specific affinity groups. This is important when considering the classroom, the interactions in it and the materials utilised (Gee, 2004, p. 19).

2.2.2 Textbooks and Discourses

The textbook is the subject central to this research. A “textbook” generally refers to a volume or collection of a diversity of texts, usually assembled for the purposes of learning in the context of a specific subject/discipline. However, the noun “textbook” is also commonly used as an adjective. The reason for mentioning this is to demonstrate the measure of authority that the textbook still retains. To say that something was carried out in a “textbook-fashion”, refers to an action performed in an impeccable manner. Textbooks are generally situated within the media of “text” or the broad genre of “academic literature”. The practice of utilizing school textbooks does not follow the same process usually applicable to other books, i.e. textbooks are not simply read. Instead, learners have to participate in a dynamic fashion with the texts in a textbook. To proceed through a school textbook, necessarily entails that the learner engages actively with the contents. These are made up of applications, often times containing graphics/illustrations and also those which give rise to writing, inviting discussion, orals and further reading.

Language textbooks employ a range of different genres: poetry, short stories, excerpts from novels, magazine articles, newspaper articles, advertisements, excerpts from plays and TV and movie scripts. The

content is not simply a collection of generic and neutral material for the purposes of pedagogy and learning. Textbooks are always located within discourse and although they are teaching tools, they require particular levels of language and literacy proficiency, and of necessity assume commonly-held cultural norms and values and ways of reading and writing. Bakhtin, and other scholars who share his theoretical perspective on language, would acknowledge that words can have semantic content, what might be referred to as “their dictionary meaning”, and that sentences can have stable grammatical form. The difference with Bhaktin’s (1999) theory is that once a word, phrase or sentence is uttered or written, it assumes meaning that is inherently social in nature (Hicks, 1996, p. 3).

Learners, in this case Grade 8, need to make sense of the texts with which they work. These texts are influenced by societal discourses and this, to an extent, affects the process of “sense- and/or meaning-making”. The texts with which learners work, are the end-products of other, more dominant discourses. Together with these discourses, the texts exert influence on the learners.

Textbooks are, and traditionally have been endowed with a great deal of authority, among both learners and teachers alike. They remain central in terms of providing the resources from which learners draw, as well as providing guidance in terms of how this information can be used. These resources serve the dual purpose of providing information for understanding and/or meaning-making, as well as the means for acquiring the linguistic/application skills of language.

In keeping with their degree of influence, textbooks also carry a measure of responsibility. This is the direct result of their impact within the pedagogical environment. While they can provide invaluable skills and impart essential information, textbooks also inevitably expose their users to the influence of societal discourses. This means they necessarily engage the process of constructing and reconstructing their subjects [learners] (Janks, 2009; Norton, 2000). An important note is that meaning is made from all the texts, whether these are extracts from literary pieces such as novels, or whether the texts consist of instructions for grammar usage. Additionally, in the process of working through the textbook, one of the main tasks is that the learner [re]produce the text. This is most often done with the intention of promoting understanding and/or meaning-making. However, this [re]production of text also necessarily entails a [re]production of the discourses represented in said text. Hence, the earlier reference to “construct and reconstruct”. The subjectivity behind each text, as well as that inherent to the learner him/herself, essentially means that the process of construction of the subject is repeated, or put differently, many different readings of texts take place throughout the engagement process. This is a particularly relevant point with regard to textbooks, since these are characterised as compilations of diverse texts. Fairclough (1989) points out that texts are never interpreted in isolation, and always exist in relation to other texts. These relations indicate a ubiquitous “dialogic” that exists between different texts, which is referred to as intertextuality. Texts can and do borrow from other genres. Some genres or “discourse types” have colonized others, advertising being an obvious example. (Wallace, 1992, pp. 67-68)

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), different sections of textbooks in this study deal with diverse issues. Historically

speaking, various issues apply to practices (and literacies) which, in the past, had not represented relevant aspects of teen or societal life. A relevant, and topical example is that of digital media and social networking. This is significant, as it demonstrates how the English Language textbook is historically-situated, an aspect commonly not associated with humanism, but certainly with poststructuralism.

Poststructuralism argues that language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, thus being both a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power. One of the primary voices in this theory was the philosopher Michel Foucault. In an attempt to view Foucault's (1981) socio-political theory more clearly, his political works would all seem to have two things in common: firstly, their emphasis on the historical perspective, studying social phenomena in their historical contexts, as well as focusing on the way they have changed throughout history. Secondly, the use of a discursive methodology, where the study of texts, particularly academic texts, provided the raw material for his analyses. As such, the general socio-political significance of Foucault's thought across its various turns is to understand how the historical formation of discourses have shaped the political thinking and political institutions we have today. By emphasizing the aspects of historicity and discourse, Foucault distanced himself from the predominant 1960's notions of structuralism. The primary method of poststructuralism primary would today fall under the umbrella-term of critical theory. Not only did Foucault (1981) question the validity of the model presented by structuralism which argued that human culture could be understood by means of structure (i.e. that which is modelled on de Saussure's (1998) influential work on linguistics), but he also interrogated the notion of binary oppositions in language. Foucault paid especial attention to the

notion of power and how the practices of it were evident in history, such as the myriad of constraints surrounding sexuality and the binaries of mental illness. Foucault argued that discourses necessarily represented power, with different hierarchies of discourses, such as presented in his “The Order of Discourse” (Foucault, 1981). This was significant as it demonstrated that there is no such thing as the disinterested discourse or language.

2.2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The primary methodology of this research will be Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly as formulated by Fairclough (1989). CDA is indebted both for its origins and influences to other disciplines and schools of thought that influenced the paradigm and shaped the practice thereof. One significant influence is that of linguistic theory, an approach which draws from social theory and contributions from figures such as (Althusser, 1970; Foucault, 1981; Bourdieu, 1984), all of whom examine ideologies and power relations from within the context of discourse.

In terms of CDA itself, material is abundant, even if (as was the case in this research) one is to align oneself with one particular school of thought within the broader discipline that is Critical Discourse Analysis, namely that of Norman Fairclough (1989; 1992; 2001). In a sense, his work is treated as a primary text in this research, as it directly informs not only the methodology of the study, but also the theoretical approach taken to the respective analyses as well. Fairclough examines different aspects of language and discourse as evident in texts and relevant to English Language education. Although language and text are closely related,

Fairclough differentiates between the two. He characterizes text as a product rather than a process. To be more precise, he distinguishes text as the product of discursive interaction. Discourse is the whole process of social interaction of which text is just a part. This process includes the processes of production of which the text is a product, and the processes of interpretation for which the text is a resource. It is important to note that text analysis is only a part of discourse analysis, which also includes analysis of productive and interpretative processes. This analytic process has been central to this dissertation.

The formal aspects of a text can be regarded from the perspective of discourse analysis as traces of the productive process, as well as cues in the process of interpretation (Fairclough, 2001, pp. ix-x).

2.2.4 Digital Media

The advent and subsequent popularity of digital media has come to affect our daily lives in the past decade. Virtually instant communication, access to all manner of media, as well as most forms of information are now possible to any learner in possession of a cellphone (Prinsloo & Walton, 2008). This point is brought to bear on several occasions in the textbooks. Here, it also demonstrates that textbooks are historically-located. Digital technologies and the media which they have given rise to, are consistent topics around which essays, articles, reports and discussions in the textbooks are centred. The advent of digital media and rapid advancement thereof represent an important issue in contemporary textbooks. One of the primary discursive reasons for this is the emphasis on the “knowledge

economy” of neo-liberalism. The progression of digital technologies equates itself with a host of dominant discourses. These advance the economic ideal of perpetual consumerism and the mechanism of brand-name promotion that fuels it (this constitutes a prime example of a dominant discourse reproducing itself through maintaining respective power relations). Modern digital media not only affords language a new medium through which it can further itself, but has also given language and discourse a far broader and more powerful platform.

Textbooks give credence to the power of this new modality. At the turn of the millennium there was a certain framework which could feasibly constitute the social environment of the learner. Now, 15 years later, that framework has enlarged exponentially. Whereas influences from abroad were once quite limited, there now exist few such limitations. Where teenagers were once simply the passive receivers of what was on offer in terms of the media, entertainment and information on an international scale, they are now active participants. The topic of digital media and social networking is relevant to this study because it opens the gates to a vast, new and ever-changing complexity of social discourses and identities. Through the practices of social networking, the learner is able to take part in these discourses, and their influence emanates from numerous different sources. The link and significance of digital media to contemporary textbooks is that textbooks acknowledge and express the importance of social media within their pages. Textbooks have recognized both the influence and weight of digital media and their new literacies and practices, particularly with regard to discourses (Gee, 1990; Prinsloo & Walton, 2008).

2.3 The Literature Review

This section of the chapter will delve more specifically into the literature that was used for this research. This was utilised not only to construct and reinforce the orientation to texts and the process of CDA employed in this research, but also to enhance the information that arose as a result of the analysis process.

Two pivotal aspects of CDA are language and power. Although these interconnected facets can be traced anywhere within the analysis process through the practice of CDA, they are more commonly associated with the social conditions of production and interpretation. It is at this point where the work of Hilary Janks is relevant (Janks, 2009). She emphasizes that while power is often directly oppressive, the workings of power are frequently more subtle. Put differently, in order to be effective, power needs to become coercion, whereby [consent] becomes manufactured. Coercion is often naturalised, precisely for the purpose of making it invisible and thereby all the more effective. The most effective way of acquiring consent is when it need not be given. This is relevant to the selections of the texts for English school textbooks, wherein ideological apparatuses such as those produced by dominant practices and institutions are naturalised and transformed into [common sense] assumptions. Critical reading and literacy, which are consequences of the practice of CDA, also have the potential to be emancipatory projects for learners with regard to the influences of texts in textbooks. Janks (2002) demonstrates this by pointing out that meaning systems are implicated in reproducing domination. Any form of domination creates a problematic imbalance. “Genre theory without creativity runs the risk of reifying existing genres, just as deconstruction without reconstruction or design

reduces human agency” (Janks, 2009, pp. 38-39). An example of dominant influence used by Janks (2002) is the topical issue of “political-correctness”. This is at times a direct, and at others a quite insidious method of discursive policing. It is an endeavour to organize and maintain the field of the sayable as well as ways of saying. The term is commonly used pejoratively by conservatives as a form of resistance against the transformation of dominant discourses. However, it can be utilized just as effectively by the left to silence opposition. The significant aspect of this form of censorship is that it produces self-monitoring and self-censorship (Janks, 2002, p. 13).

Adam Jaworski & Nikolas Coupland (1999) describe discourse as language use that is relative to social, political and cultural formations. In other words, language reflects the social order, but also shapes the social order, as well as shaping individuals’ interaction within society. This is important, because it not only emphasizes the influence of the secondary texts selected for textbooks, but it also justifies the validity of applying CDA for this research. Discourse analysis goes far beyond the critical description of language in use.

2.4 Research on Textbooks in South Africa

A significant source of information in the context of South African Education has been Carolyn McKinney’s work on textbooks. She focusses on textbooks that are provided to the diversity of cultures, languages and ethnic backgrounds that constitute contemporary South African learners. Her work comprises a broad approach, including both qualitative and quantitative analysis regarding questions of whether

textbooks for learners are appropriate, representative and most importantly, whether they facilitate integration and transformation in education in contemporary South Africa. Progress has been made since the days of Christian National Education, but it has been slow and the conclusions from her research raise many questions. Why are textbooks that contain sexist and racist themes and depictions still being distributed? Why, despite the presence of a wide textbook “selection” are the selections of textbooks still left to the discretion of publishing sales representatives, provincial officials and heads of learning areas? (McKinney, 2005).

Although McKinney’s work differs from this study in that it focuses on uneven representation of issues such as gender, race and socio-economic diversity, her work raises many important issues. The significance of McKinney’s work for this study lies in the fact that she immediately addresses the problems that are commonly the result of a lack of critical literacy. In this case, dominant discourses can oppress and marginalize certain individuals or groups in a myriad of ways, and reproduce these practices, since they remain critically unchallenged. Critical literacy is not a practice of simple scepticism, rather it should urge learners into questioning the very fundamentals of power existent in texts. Similarly, Govender’s (2011) work on English education points out that without this approach, it becomes all too easy for readers to become drawn into the text’s embedded values (Govender, 2011, p. 58).

In this chapter, I have identified the key points of my theoretical framework. The concepts of poststructuralism, language and discourse are central to the view of the texts which constitute the passages of the

textbooks. As is evident, there is a close alignment between this theoretical approach and the use of CDA as a tool for analysis.

Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my research design. I will describe the respective textbooks, as well as the manner in which the selection of material was made. I will describe the process of data analysis and how this followed from the theoretical framework set out in the previous chapter.

3.2 Selection of Textbooks

I chose “English Home Language published by Macmillan” and “English for Success published by Oxford University Press”. There were several reasons for selecting these texts. Both Oxford University Press as well as Macmillan represent prominent publishing houses in the domains of educational literature. They have garnered a reputation for quality, both in terms of representation of the curriculum and in terms of thorough content. Both of these textbooks are also widely used by different schools. A critical analysis of textbooks required that the textbooks be of high quality, rather than to critique textbooks already perceived as comparatively mediocre and by implication thus already under criticism.

I chose to analyse Grade 8 as I felt that this particular level of education is a representative medium. It signifies an important point for most South African government schools, when learners make the transition to high school. The textbooks reflect practices that take place, generally speaking, within the context of classroom, teacher and learners. This presents the opportunity to ascertain what kind of language practices are being taught to the learner, and whether these practices coincide with those advocated by the curriculum. The learners have reached a level of academic experience and maturity to cope with texts that contain depth and meaning. They can manage ideas comprised of social and/or political issues. At the same time, they are not at the end of their schooling years, where it is often too late and difficult to change how they have been taught or how/what they have learned. As mentioned in chapter 1, grade 8 is also significant in terms of the racial and linguistic diversity of students who study English Home Language at high school level.

In the interests of working towards presenting research that is both reliable and valid, the textbooks will be examined in the context of other texts, i.e. both the relevance and suitability of the textbooks will be understood via intertextuality Fairclough (1992). The context of intertextuality includes other texts within the textbook, as well texts that exist completely outside of it, for example the CAPS documentation and the teacher's guide. The analyses of the school textbooks will be presented in two separate chapters in order to facilitate qualitative comparison. These associations are the dynamics that make up the methodology of this dissertation.

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In chapter 2, I provided the rationale for my focus on the notion of discourses. Below, I outline how I have used the model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as outlined by (Fairclough, 1989). (*Figure 1.*) on p.32 is an illustration which depicts Fairclough's working model of CDA and the three frameworks thereof, all of which function within the context of one another.

Social conditions of production

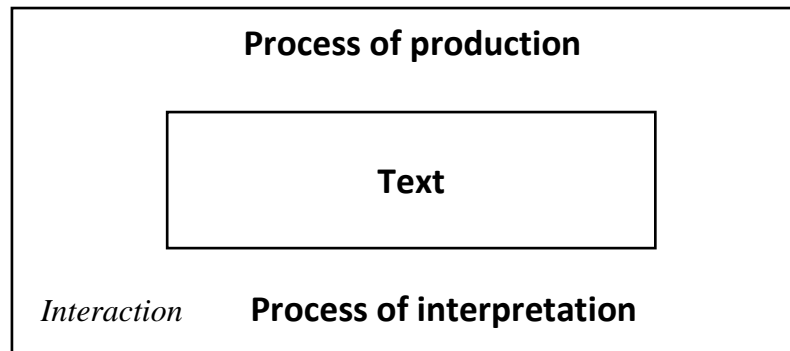


Figure 1.

The overarching framework is that of the social conditions of production and interpretation. This frame represents the dominant societal discourses and is thus the most powerful and most pervasive. These larger, dominant discourses surround and produce the texts as they appear in the respective English Language textbooks. Fairclough's view of "discourse as social practice" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 22) is also particularly relevant for the purposes of examining discourse as a mode of political and ideological practice. Discourses work to establish, sustain and change power relations between different collective entities, such as socio-economic classes, communities and political groups. Discourses also serve to constitute, naturalize and change meanings from which diverse positions in power relations originate.

The social conditions of production and interpretation represent the socio-historical framework as well as the prominent power relations that exist between social, institutional and political superstructures in society. The dominant discourses are pervasive to the extent that few aspects of contemporary society can remain completely unaffected by them, either directly or indirectly. Much of the influence inherent in the dominant discourses is subtle, even at times insidious in nature. This occurs when the ideologies and systems therein are normalized. Finally, one of their most distinguishing traits is the ability to reproduce and sustain existing relations of power. Thus, in the context of CDA, this framework warrants social analysis. In other words, the relevant interrogative pronoun in this case, is “what”.

The second frame represents the processes of production and interpretation. This, as suggested by the name, refers to the processes by which the object is produced and received. The primary issues/questions at this point include determining what parties are involved and which parties are addressing others? How is this issue historically located? Is there a particular occasion in question? What are the relations underlying this communication? Who is being heard/read and who is listening/reading? The situation itself also requires careful attention. What subjects were involved? What were the contents of the interaction? What was the modality or register of the language? How did the language, as well as discourse affect the outcome of the interaction? The processes of production and interpretation thus pivot primarily on the question of “who”, as the emphasis for this framework is processing analysis.

Thirdly and lastly, is the text itself. This can be seen as the manufactured product, brought about by the interactions of the previous two frames.

Text is actually one of several manufactured products, however the aim of this dissertation is to examine the end-product as text. As discussed in chapter 2:

CDA involves beyond relating form and function in language, specific empirical analyses of how such form-function correlations [themselves] correlate with specific [social practices] that help constitute the very nature of such practices (Gee, 2004, p. 19).

In this regard, the main adverb is “how”. How is language used as a representation of the world? What use is made of modality, tone, register, agency and pronouns? Is there cohesion to the employed narrative? How are readers/learners positioned/constructed by the linguistic features of the text? Is there a pattern to this process? How does the overall construction of the text, that is, logical reasoning, sequencing, visual representation and patterns of interaction, work to affect the reception thereof? Significantly, does the text contain internal contradictions and are there silences? Thus, the emphasis in the final frame is on close textual analysis (Janks, 2009).

Primarily, CDA represents an analytic process of investigation into how language and discourse work, as well as to what ends. It is mindful of the fact that there is no such thing as disinterested language/discourse, and therefore understands that discourses have social consequences, which can be beneficial or detrimental to the individual, or even have effects that lie somewhere in between. Therefore, CDA seems appropriate as a tool for analysing school textbooks.

Various theorists acted as influences on the development of CDA. As discussed in Chapter 2, Foucault (1981) demonstrates that discourse and power are inextricably linked. Since language is an inherent and significant part of discourse, I want to specify it as party to this triumvirate (i.e. that of language, power and discourse). The principal aim of the research design is to identify and analyse these three factors surrounding and embedded within the texts of the respective English Language textbooks.

On the one hand, discourses can be described as practices that proceed in a long-term fashion to restructure both the socio-political and sociolinguistic order. On the other, there are additional processes which affect and shape every instance of discourse. For this reason, it is important to view discourse from an interdisciplinary approach. By way of illustration, we can consider the texts/passages of the textbook. By “passages” I am here making a generic reference to excerpts from novels, magazine articles, poetry, etc. that formed the basis of subsequent speaking, listening, reading and writing exercises. Through the lens of CDA, it is possible to discern certain discursive aspects of texts. For (Fairclough, 2001), the stage of explanation in analysis is to view discourses as part of social processes and/or practices. This means looking at how discourses are determined by social structures and what effect reproductive processes can have on those structures, either sustaining or altering them. Essentially, when it comes to the process of explanation, the social ideologies and practices under examination are those of social struggle and thus ultimately, of power. Therefore, social discourses do not affect the creation of the text in a unidirectional manner. Instead, there are other disciplines, practices, institutions and

even events which act upon the discourse itself. It is this constant, dynamic interaction that constitutes the complex nature of discourses.

3.4 The Process of Analysis

To some extent, the significance of discourse lies in questioning how academic knowledge is assumed to be constituted. The importance of examining discourse has coincided with new emphasis on the question of what we know and, epistemologically speaking, what it means to know (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). It is this “knowledge” that is examined in the data/material which came from the two examined textbooks. This examination revealed differences, not only with regard to their content, but also in their approach and treatment of specific aspects of the content.

In order to identify the dominant discourses in the textbooks, I focussed my CDA analysis on the selection of passages used in each. The utility-value of these passages was often directly related to their profundity. This is not a reference to whether the excerpts were longer and/or more detailed, but rather it refers to the meanings/meaning-making contained within the passages. Examples are poetry or advertisements, which might not have been particularly voluminous, but nonetheless contained good potential for practices of interpretation and meaning-making. In each case, I specifically focussed on how social issues were addressed in the text and how the reader was positioned. I then examined the passages in conjunction with the subsequent language exercises in order to assess their approach to English Education, and in particular, the extent to which the textbooks promote a critical approach to language and literacy

learning as outlined in the curriculum. Another crucial aspect was how the passages and the discourses they represented, position the learner.

The more linguistic, or technical sections of the textbooks did not always provide the most generative foundations for studying knowledge-making processes and their social implications (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). Texts concerned with the processes of grammar, vocabulary and other linguistic applications of English Language education made up a majority of each section of the textbooks. Considering that the data material are English Language textbooks, this stands to reason. Some technical texts were closely affiliated to the passages (such as in the case of comprehensions, discussions, etc.), while others utilized the passages solely for the purposes of grammatical and vocabulary learning. Upon approaching each new section or passage, the CDA methodology process, as described in the previous section (3.3), was applied.

Working on the basis of intertextuality, I proceeded with constant comparison Glaser (1965), within each textbook and across the two textbooks in order to establish general patterns and make note of exceptions. One uncommon aspect of my application of CDA, was that I was beginning my analysis with the text [within the textbook], in other words, the end-product of CDA. From this perspective therefore, it was necessary to work backwards, that is, by closely examining the passage, I could discover traces or signs which would point me to larger, more expansive frameworks, such as those of the processes of production and interpretation, and finally to those of the dominant social conditions of production and interpretation. CDA as a methodology follows logical sequencing in its process of deduction. In my case, I had the

manufactured product and therefore had to make use of inductive reasoning to ascertain the origins/influences.

CDA is an investigative methodology. For this reason, analysis of the texts gave rise to a diversity of social, economic, political- or rights-oriented issues. This was important, as it helped frame the context in which the text itself came about. It also helped demonstrate whether the text was representative of the CAPS curriculum (i.e. whether it was serving the purposes of integration and necessary transformation) or whether it was simply reproducing and sustaining older, harmful norms and conventions. An important notion within the practice of the dominant discourses is that of constraint. The latter works to determine how production, distribution and consumption of resources will take place, in the sense that people are enabled to act on condition that they do so within the constraints of types of practices or discourses. Discourses and practices are not controlled by other random, independent types of discourses and practices, but rather by interdependent “orders”, such as the “orders of discourse” and “social orders” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 29). These will determine what resources are drawn upon and the manner/order in which this is done.

Aside from focussing on the workings of the discourses themselves, it was also necessary to examine the “what”, “where” and “why” of these discourses. This was done due to the necessity of ascertaining their inherent structure, content, as well as to locate their actual positions in the textbook. I needed to identify what kind of discourse I was examining and what it represented. In terms of the location, I was concerned with trying to establish whether the particular type of discourse was repeated, and if so, whether there was a pattern or emphasis to this repetition?

Finally, I was also watchful for the use of silences. For the most part, these analyses ultimately pointed to the dominant discourses and their practices of power. I utilized the teachers' guides to assess my understanding of the approach to English Education and the conceptualisation of the learner.

3.5 Conclusion

One of the central purposes/motivations for the relevant methodology is succinctly summed up by Cope & Kalantzis (2000)

Literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes understanding and competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment, such as visual images and their relationship to the written word ... (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 9)

Freebody (2003) makes the argument that any text represents “a purposeful distortion of reality”, and points out that all texts “look from somewhere (visually, conceptually, motivationally and ideologically” (Freebody, 2003, p. 177). This is an important point for the methodology of this dissertation, because by using CDA, as well as a comparative analysis between the textbooks, all situated within the common ground of the CAPS curriculum, my aim was to demonstrate how each design ensemble has departed from a particular position and as a result has offered learners different versions of the language curriculum and texts that offer perspectives on the local, the international as well as those

which connect the local to the international (Khuboni, et al., 2013, p. 246).

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 4.1 Introduction

The texts are those of two Grade 8 English Home Language textbooks, and these are analysed within the context of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The textbooks are examined according to the main questions outlined in Chapter 1.

The procedure by which the texts will be analysed will be by implementing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as set out by Fairclough (1989, 1992) as discussed in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 3. The emphasis falls upon analysing content, the manner in which the texts are presented and treated, and importantly, how specific issues are represented throughout the textbook as a whole.

The influence of CAPS is significant. Although the authors may have had specific notions with regards to how the material could be selected and submitted, the structure and nature of the content was, by and large directed by the principles of CAPS. The textbooks thus cannot be treated as though they are the exclusive productions of their respective authors. Instead, they are also the end-products of other, more powerful and dominant discourses. The textbooks are in fact, products of numerous different influences. CAPS serves to shape and structure the texts, but in turn, it too is reflected by the text it shapes as well as being affected by other, more dominant discourses. This is in keeping with the ubiquitous language/power dynamic, whereby CAPS constructs/influences the texts used in the textbook. In a similar fashion, the texts are also shaped by societal discourses which reflect the nature of the principles of CAPS. Finally, CAPS itself is directly influenced by the dominant discourses of South African society.

4.2 Analysis of the dominant discourses in the Macmillan textbook

The textbook analysed in this chapter is “English Home Language Grade 8 Learner’s Book” by S. Kerr and J. Unterslak (2011). The content is divided up into chapters called “Themes”. These are entitled in the following manner: Theme 1: Brand me; Theme 2: Trapped in the Net; Theme 5: Please call me; etc. Each theme comprises aspects such as “Classroom Activity’s” in which texts are read and followed by questions. The texts stem from a variety of genres, including poetry, extracts from short stories and novels, magazine articles, newspaper reports and essays. “Wordbanks” are another feature of each theme and comprise vocabulary learning using words taken from, or relevant to the provided texts.

The analysis of the textbook focuses on two main issues. The first is that of examining the text under the lens of CDA. The results of these analyses are then discussed in relation to conceptions of English Education in CAPS. At all times, the approach to analysing the texts follows the reasoning that discourses and practices are not controlled by other random, independent types of discourses and practices, but rather by interdependent “orders”, such as the “orders of discourse” and “social orders” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 29).

In section 1, I analyse how the textbook discusses key societal issues by conducting a critical discourse analysis of the way in which it deals with

the issues of gender, poverty and inequality, as well as digital literacy. In each case, I describe the overall representation of the issue in the textbook and then present a detailed critical discourse analysis of the text and the exercises that are based on that text. In section 2, I analyse the representation of literacy, how the textbook approaches the issue, the perspective/s incorporated with literacy and the pedagogical treatment of literacy. A broad example would be the question of how the textbook encapsulates literacy? Is it predominantly focussed on print, or does it include several different media?

4.3 Issues

4.3.1 Representation of Gender

With regard to the issue of gender, the statements of the curriculum are quite unequivocal. The issue of gender is most commonly linked to the problem of gender inequality. Like most issues dealing with domination and other social inequalities, this constitutes an issue of power (van Dijk, 2001). In accordance with The Constitution of The Republic of South Africa and the Curriculum, in terms of which it is modelled, gender can never serve as an obstacle to self-fulfilment or meaningful participation in society as a citizen of a free country. The emphasis is on equality and the fostering thereof. In the absence of parity as a foundation for education, many of the other principles of CAPS cannot function properly.

In general, the Macmillan textbook associates specific traits, particularly with regard to emotion (as in the poem “Poem for my mother” p.81), with the feminine. Female characters depicted in extracts from plays, poems,

short stories and novels are typically melodramatic, (as in the poem, “Thank-you letter” p.117), unreasonable, (as in the play “A Lesson Learnt” p.58-61) with a tendency towards the outlandish. This is coupled to instances where they are represented as vulnerable and dependent on their male counterparts. An example of outlandish behaviour is demonstrated in Classroom Activity 5 of Theme 8. It is a magazine article entitled “Feed me now: women who love being fat”, taken from The Telegraph 2010.

4.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of the representation of women in “Feed me now: Women who love being fat”

(see Appendix 1 & 2)

As is common in this medium, the title of this magazine article also serves as a pronouncement on the article’s subject and sets the stage for the message of the article. To briefly summarize, the subject of the article is a woman by the name of Lucy. She is a “teacher, mother of two and a warm, funny and articulate [personality]”. Lucy is also a self-described “gainer”, i.e. an already obese person who has no interest in losing weight but on the contrary, actively strives to gain more. To a degree, she once may have exercised some measure of control with regards to her eating habits, but not anymore.

“Essentially, I’m a foodie, but in the past I probably held back. Now if I want something I just eat it.” (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

An initial reading of the article in the textbook reveals that its subjects are exclusively female. Although there are men who fit the same description used with Lucy, the former are conspicuous as a distinct silence in terms of the text. In a society preoccupied with losing weight and thin, lean bodies, Lucy and more significantly her attitude, come across as unique. The latter is demonstrated below:

“I’ve never had any interest in being slim,” she says. “I know that we’re all supposed to aspire to a size zero.” (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

The above quote is significant for two reasons: firstly, the latter half demonstrates that Lucy is cognisant of the values of greater society concerning the female body; and secondly, in the first half, Lucy states that she has never had any “interest” in being slim. The use of the noun “interest” indicates that she is not simply reacting against societal norms, but rather has different priorities altogether.

“If it wasn’t for the Internet,” Lucy says, “I’d still think I was the only person in the world who felt differently about weight.” (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

The above demonstrates that Lucy, contrary to an afore-mentioned observation, is in fact not unique. She is part of a sub-culture of like-minded people who maintain contact at various sites on the Web, keep each other informed of their current weight and even swap recipes for high-calorie foods. Lucy subscribes to, and visits blogs and sites that are hosted and supported by individuals such as herself.

And who would blame her? Magazine covers and billboards always tell us that female beauty comes in size eight or under, and without cellulite or stretch marks. For anyone overweight each day brings a new diet that will help them shed kilos. An obese

woman may be mocked, despised or pitied. No one would imagine for a moment that she had eaten her way there by choice. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

When viewed through the CDA processes of production and interpretation, i.e. the processes by which the object (namely Lucy) is produced and received, there is what at first appears to be a certain discordance in the text, as will be demonstrated using the above quote. With the first sentence, the author distances herself from conventional media and its stereotypical notions of womanhood and beauty by invoking solidarity with her readership through use of the pronoun “us”. In doing so, she dissociates herself from complicity with the media’s idealized view of women and its own culpability in socialising women into negative self-images and behaviour such as obsessive dieting. This is buttressed by the initial rhetorical question “And who would blame her?” In conjunction, these sentences portray a narrative empathy with the plight of “fat” women, constructing them as victims of media representation which panders to the “ideal” female body, rendering all else mediocre.

Having established a critical opinion of the view of popular media, the author switches her position to that of a professional within the media. The subsequent two sentences create heightened narrative effect and authorial distance from “obese” women by using high modality, “No one would imagine for a moment that she had eaten her way there by choice”. The verb phrase “eaten her way there” is a severe indictment of Lucy, likening her lifestyle to that of something that “eats its way” from point A to B. Nevertheless, the use of language simultaneously retains identification with the reader through the use of the indefinite pronoun “no-one” and then adds in the modality of scandal, “And yet some do”.

The sense of the other is actively constructed through the use of pronouns, high modality and dramatic narrative effect. Importantly, this serves to reinforce the stereotype by emphasising difference and sensationalising the phenomenon which is the conscious decision to be fat. In this way, the author constructs a narrative wherein she shows empathy to the plight of women in the face of an unforgiving media, yet paradoxically still considers the mind-set and subsequent physical state of individuals such as Lucy to be unacceptable. The constructed image of Lucy is not as a woman who is obese and unashamed of it, but rather as a freak who likes gaining weight. In the following quote, the author deliberately locates Lucy within the realm of sensationalism by associating her with other, more radical individuals:

The American gainer Donna Simpson has raised its [gaining] profile by announcing her intention to reach just over 350 kilos, which would make her the world's fattest woman (in March she weighed in at 267 kilos.) (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

CDA's processes of production and interpretation Fairclough (1989) manufacture the text in which the association of the feminine with obesity is framed in the language of exclusion. This interpretation of Lucy does not occur in isolation. The judgement is affected by a host of other influences. These range from digital media, film, TV, fashion, newspapers and of course, other magazines. The processes of production and interpretation are themselves the subject of even more powerful and pervasive influences, namely the social conditions of production and interpretation. At this level, the dominant representation of human aesthetics is manufactured. Individuals who possess certain physical traits are held up as the paragon of human physical beauty. While this is so, the messages embedded within the text are not as straightforward. Certainly

billboards, advertisements and magazine covers are awash with this dominant ideal, namely that of the young, slim and beautiful. Not only that, but this ideal disseminates into its immediate habitat, e.g. in advertising a beautiful woman standing near a product, such as a car, makes that product desirable by proxy. However, that constitutes only one (albeit significant) part of the socio-historic conditions regarding the human form. Another dominant discourse relevant to the human body involves pronouncements and/or judgements.

It is pointed out in the text that attitudes towards the body have changed and indeed, are diverse in different parts of the world:

Lesley Terry, a researcher at the University of Saskatchewan, in Canada, has made a study of gainers. “If you look through history, fat used to be – and still is in many cultures – considered beautiful,” Terry says. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

Part of contemporary dominant discourse in the West denotes that it is no longer “acceptable” or “politically-correct” to simply judge people on the perceived merits (or de-merits) of their bodies. Hence, the subtle, yet not indiscernible interplay of collusions in the article, i.e. the author’s positioning and re-positioning of herself and her attitudes before her readership.

Despite this, the text is embedded with the notion of a divide between the concepts of beauty and unsightliness based solely on physical attributes. The problem is further amplified by a distinct silence on the issue of obesity and male unattractiveness. The passage appears to be a unidirectional scrutiny of Lucy as subject. However, in reality she is

involved in a dialogue with the media, as well as the societal discourses which influence the media. Lucy is located in a Western cultural context where the ideals for the female body are diametrically opposed to her own. She, as is pointed out in the text, enacts practices which serve to counter those of the dominant discourses. As much as there are those individuals who alter their bodies in pursuit of the ideals of the dominant discourses, Lucy also alters hers in rejection of these societal norms.

Far more typical [gainers] are women like Lucy who live perfectly ordinary lives – yet feel a secret thrill each time the scales register a rise or their clothes feel a bit too tight. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 137)

The dominant discourses operate against the values of Lucy and other “gainers”. In a similar, if opposing fashion, Lucy goes against the values of greater societal discourses. The action is thus bi-directional. The structure of the article is quite distinct. Lucy the obese woman, who doesn’t strive to be slim nor take measures to that end, and who eats what she wants, is foregrounded as the startling subject of the article. The background taken up by the pervasive dominant discourse where beauty in women is necessarily associated with being slim, exercising and being vigilant about what you eat. The article ends with a presentation of the health implications, foregrounding the notion of an “obesity epidemic” linked to various diseases. There are no accompanying photos or illustrations for the article.

Essentially, this is an example of tabloid journalism, which makes use of high modality, superlatives and affective narrative to create an air of urgency or scandal. This is also evident in other texts such as in Classroom Activity 3 of Theme 4, which has an article from the New

York Daily News 2012, entitled “Poisonous caterpillars may “ruin” London’s Olympic Games; hairs can cause spectator vomiting and dizziness”. In the latter, the author uses hyperbole and a modality of urgency/threat to solicit readership and mask the fact that the respective article actually has little in the way of content/narrative. This raises the question as to how this kind of passage should be approached in the context of Grade 8 language education? The curriculum provides us with the following:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
 - Collect, analyse organise and critically evaluate information.
 - Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation
- (Department of Education, 2011, p. 5)

As will be evinced in the questions that follow, the textbook concerns itself with treating the respective text, as well as several others, in specific, usually straightforward ways. Sometimes the accompanying questions focus on recalling factual information from within the text itself. In other instances, the text is used as material for grammar learning. Only in relatively few cases do the questions regarding the texts prompt a critical and creative reading of the relevant texts.

4.3.3 Textbook Questions

(see Appendix 2)

The questions that accompany the text are almost exclusively focussed on eliciting the “facts” of the text or on correctness of the vocabulary. In total, there are 13 questions, 3 of which are divided into 2 sub-questions, and 1 divided into 3 sub-questions. Out of the 13 questions, 7 (not including the sub-questions) of these require that the learner search for the “correct” answer located within the text and write it down. These questions often take the form of listing characteristics, stating “facts” or describing attitudes/beliefs. In many cases, the provision of a few examples is necessary (Kerr & Unterslak, 2013).

For the greater part, these questions operate on a denotative, cognitively undemanding level. The answers to questions are direct and located in the text. There are very few questions that require higher order thinking such as inference, text construction, comparison, point of view and explanation. An exception to these are questions 10(b) and 11. These invite a more critical discussion, rather than the simple presentation of an answer, as well as accompanying arguments, based on an interpretation of information, to support their opinion.

There are instances where the answers or point of view in the teacher’s workbook do not correlate with the information given in the text (Kerr & Unterslak, 2013). For example, the answer for question 6 is, “In the past, fat people were regarded as beautiful. Today, in the West, thin is beautiful and fat people are regarded by some as disgusting and unattractive.” (Compare this to the answer provided below in the treatment of question 6) Another example is the answer to question 10 a), “People argue that we do many things that are not good for our health, such as drinking and

smoking. Eating too much is therefore just another one of those things we do, which we know we should not.” (See the treatment below of question 10.) Also, question 3 appears to be asking for an explanation, but upon reading the answer in the teacher’s workbook, it actually only requires description. Thus, while CAPS emphasizes the importance of text-based analysis that draws attention to the features of the genre, situates texts in their contexts and engages critically with how language reflects and constructs people, this is not evident in the questions. It is clear from the teacher’s workbook that aspects such as critical and creative reading of texts and the engagement of meaning-making are not given priority.

1. Using the context of the words, explain the meanings of
 - a. “aspire” and “devastated” (paragraph 2)
 - b. “obese” and “despised” (paragraph 4)

These are vocabulary exercises using the given verbs and adjectives within specified contexts.

2. Give four facts about Lucy.

This is a general and easy question. The most probable first answer being “fat” or “obese”.

3. Why has Lucy gained ten kilograms?

The initial and simple answer is that she eats too much and has therefore gained weight. However, that is actually the answer as to [how] Lucy has gained weight. [Why] Lucy has gained weight is because she is a gainer and seeks to do so.

4. List the diseases to which obesity is linked?

A factual question, as well as health warning to learners.

5. Describe how Lucy feels about being overweight?

This is not a difficult question, but one which does necessitate proper contextualization, i.e. Lucy feels a thrill at gaining weight and enjoys eating what she wants. At the same time, she is aware of the health risks, as well as the social stigma attached to her particular lifestyle.

6. State the differences between the way in which fat people used to be seen and the image of beauty in western society today?

This appears to be a factual question, taken from the text. In fact, it is decontextualized and lacks specificity in that the text mentions the view of fat women in other cultures such as Africa, not other western cultures.

7. a) What does Lucy's statement "in the past I probably held back" tell you about how she behaved in the past?
b) What reasons for Lucy's past behaviour are provided in the article?

Questions (a) and (b) are directly related. The answer requires a closer reading of the text that constructs its central character, Lucy. This is particularly necessary since the development of Lucy does not occur in a simple, sequential pattern, but instead with instances of who she is now, broken up by glimpses of the past.

8. Judging from the words “warm” and “funny” how does the interviewer view Lucy?

From a Grade 8 perspective, an answer saying that the interviewer finds her to be friendly with a good sense of humour, would be quite acceptable. However, as has been discussed in the analysis above, the situation is more complex. Essentially for the author, Lucy constitutes a worthwhile subject. Her attitude and resulting lifestyle pit her in direct contrast to the socio-historical conditions which govern perceptions of the female body. In all likelihood, Lucy is a “warm” and “funny” person. Even if she isn’t, it is more advantageous for the author’s purposes to build a sense of proximity and sympathy with her character in the beginning. The readership will thus form a favourable initial impression of the author and will be less likely to question the harsh scrutiny and judgement with which she treats Lucy as the article progresses.

9. Lucy describes herself as “slightly chubby” This may be considered a euphemism (a more pleasant way of saying something unpleasant). Give other euphemisms for “fat” or “obese”.

Grammar/vocabulary question.

10. a) Outline people’s arguments to justify weight gain (paragraph 8).
b) In your opinion, are these arguments valid? Give a reason for your answer.

Question (a) decontextualizes the motivations behind weight gaining by specifying that the material of paragraph 8 be used as the answer. In essence, paragraph 8 validates weight-gaining as a lifestyle by arguing

that many other people engage in similarly hazardous lifestyles, such as smoking, drinking and extreme sports. While this is technically not a false statement, to argue that one is a “gainer” simply because other people also live hazardous lifestyles is to present no argument at all. This serves to stage the answer to question (b) and once more, through decontextualization, several key points within the text are deliberately overlooked. The teacher’s workbook fails to point this out.

11. Do you empathise with Lucy? Explain.

A good question, but also the most difficult in the comprehension.

Learners may or may not be aware of the discordances within the text, for example, how the author positions and re-positions herself (and thereby her readership) as well as her own inscrutable attitude towards her as subject [Lucy]. However, at a fundamental level, most Grade 8 learners will experience some measure of difficulty deciding whether Lucy’s lifestyle is defensible or not. The final verdict will come as a direct result of the dynamic that exists between power and language. Fairclough has identified a feature he defines as “synthetic personalisation”. He describes it as “a compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people “handled” en masse as an individual.” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 62) The readers, or in this case learners, are thus positioned en masse by the text. Thus, empathy or the lack thereof with regard to Lucy, will come as a result of an engagement of the message of the text and personally-held norms and values held separate to it. An honest assessment is only possible by engaging the text as a whole, and hence the difficulty of the question.

12. Adverbs tell us more about verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. Some adverbs answer the question *where*.

- a) Where is “here” (paragraph 3)?
- b) If something is buried “underground” where is it? Now look at how “underground” is used in paragraph 6, and explain its meaning in context. Is the use of “underground” here literal or figurative?
- c) Other verbs answer the question *How often*? Scan the article for the words “never” and “always” and explain how these adverbs tell us how often something happens. Where should adverbs of frequency be placed in a sentence? Think carefully about the word order.

Grammatical question, largely focussed around the use of adverbs. This includes adverbs relating to frequency, as well as the literal and figurative use of adverbs, such as made use of with the term “underground”.

13. Discuss how the figurative use of “thrown in our faces” (paragraph 7) shows the interviewer’s attitude to the messages of the media. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 138)

An initial answer will probably side with this remark by the interviewer, blaming the media for putting too much emphasis on certain ideas of beauty, while not conceding to the point that everyone is different. As was discussed in the preceding CDA section, the interviewer makes deliberate use of popular feelings about the media and its preoccupation with beautiful bodies to unify with, and thereby gain the confidence of her readership. Her observations concerning the media are certainly not unfounded, yet there is the irony that the interviewer is herself, working in the capacity of a professional in media.

4.4 Representation of Digital Media in the textbook

Digital media is a frequent theme throughout the textbook (used in 9 separate texts). For example, “Do social networking sites do more harm than good?” p.24-25; “My friend unfriended me!” p.32; “Social networking is a Teenager’s Most Dangerous Game” p.40-41; “Learn the lingo – a guide for parents whose children use social media platforms” and several others. For the most part, as is evinced from the tenor of the titles, digital media is portrayed in a negative light. This is particularly so in the case of social networking. Texts repeatedly emphasise the dangers of practicing digital social networking and advocate stricter controls over the use thereof. These measures run the gamut from having parents/teachers oversee all teen activity on the internet to, as is demonstrated in the following article, the notion of children/teens being banned from all social media activity altogether. Not only does this fail to address the problem of potential risk present in social media, it simply vetoes the use of it, instead of opting for education concerning the use of social media. As the latter impedes any constructive approach, it denies learners the tools to engage with the risks inherent to social media.

4.4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis of the representation of digital media in “Social Networking is a Teenager’s Most Dangerous Game.”

(see Appendix 3, 4 & 5)

The passage is found in Classroom Activity 2 of Theme 3. The text is an essay entitled “Social Networking is a Teenager’s Most Dangerous

Game”, written by a 16-year-old New Zealander named Michael Moore-Jones.

In brief, the essay comprises a collection of “threats” and “dangers” which surround the practices of social media or networking, concluding with an entreaty to ban children from using them altogether.

In the essay, separate themes are brought together in no discernible order. There is the distinct use of superlatives (15 overall) and imperatives (5 overall) which lend to the essay the tone of a polemic, rather than an essay argued around facts. This impression is reinforced by repetitive use of 2nd person pronouns:

Bad decisions or a moment’s lack of judgement can have effects that haunt **you** for the rest of [bold added] **your** life. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 40)

Evident also is the use of high modality statements, as well as 3rd person plural pronouns:

Because [bold added]so many teenagers are **completely unaware of the dangers**, **they walk right into the trap**. The **only way** for realisation to occur is for **the worst to happen to them personally**, or to a friend. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 40)

When taking into account the fact that Moore-Jones is a teen, his processes of interpreting the practices of social networking and the subsequent production thereof in the form of his essay, appear at odds with his demographic (i.e. his age and the accompanying culture centred on digital media).

An interesting aside at this point, are the illustrations which accompany the text in the essay. Michael Moore-Jones, a teenager from New Zealand, is depicted as black. The illustration is of Moore-Jones, sitting smiling at a desk with desktop pc, a tablet as well as a cellphone. His t-shirt has “Super Teen” imprinted on it. The accompanying illustration is somewhat undefined. It not improbable that a black teenager from New Zealand may write an essay such as this, even if the English name of Michael Moore-Jones, does seem somewhat at odds with the illustration. Then again, the image may not be representative at all, but rather generic.

While the accompanying illustration may be unclear, there is no reason to question the authenticity of the author. Having said that, it seems rather incongruous that a 16-year-old living in a first-world country, would be urging parents to ban children (which would thereby include himself) from using social networking sites. Most texts are hybrids, i.e. they draw on more than one discourse. (Janks, 1997, p. 335) However, when examining the modality of Moore-Jones’ essay, it seems that his essay lacks the afore-mentioned hybridity. His audience is specific, in that it speaks for the institution of the school, i.e. parents and teachers, and not his peers.

Parents must be fully aware of the dangers posed to their children. Despite the unpopularity that would eventuate from it, banning children from using social networking sites is the most effective prevention method. If done by the government, illegalising the use of social networking sites to under 18’s would wipe out the danger altogether. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 41)

That there exist certain risks in social networking is not an invalid statement. However, the extent of these risks and more particularly, the

essay's recommended management of them are completely divergent from the statements in CAPS. Social networking represents a global interest in both a figurative and literal sense. Prohibiting the use of social networking would simply serve to limit learners' education and subsequent skills.

The curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives (Department of Education, 2011, pp. 4-5).

Banning social networking would also serve to void two highly significant approaches to learning as stipulated by CAPS.

1. Active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths.
2. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information (Department of Education, 2011, pp. 4-5).

Most importantly perhaps, is the issue of responsibility. Engaging social networking and become skilled at assessing and managing possible threats would constitute learning. Avoiding this practice not only fails to provide any learning, but also skirts an important statement in CAPS:

Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others (Department of Education, 2011, pp. 4-5).

At this point, the second illustration accompanying the passage is significant. It shows a protest march, complete with people waving placards and even someone with a megaphone. Individuals have their fists

raised and mouths open in remonstrance. As with the first illustration, this does not depict a completely improbable event. However, the illustrations, which are of mediocre quality, do not concur with the context of an essay written by a teenager living in New Zealand. On the contrary, it seems as though effort has been made through the illustrations to “Africanize” the passage. It is made clear at the onset of the essay that neither the origins, nor the context of the passage are African. Why take steps to depict otherwise?

The conflicting elements of Moore-Jones’ essay are further revealed in statements such as the following:

For teenagers, the risk is even greater, caused by lack of experience and a sense of invincibility. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 40)

as well as:

Despite the unpopularity that would eventuate from it, banning children from using social networking sites is the most effective prevention method. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 41)

The incongruence of Moore-Jones’ argument is evident. If lack of experience is a problem, surely banning children from social networking sites would not offer a solution? The essay also shows instances of claims made, but not substantiated by evidence.

They [networking sites] increase stress levels, cause tension, lead to arguments and even break-ups, serve as a distraction from important things, and can even cause depression and lead to suicide. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 40)

and:

If thought about logically, it is easy to realise that the damage caused to teenagers by social networking sites could far outweigh damage caused by alcohol, or even drugs. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 41)

Blommaert (2005: 29) argues that:

Dominant discourses are powerful because they operate as discourse-as-social-practice, the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate.

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and Google+, have become household names. On average across all ages, in February 2005, only 8% of all internet users used social networking. This is in contrast to an average of 73% in September 2013 (Pew, 2013). The dominance of social networking consists in the fact that these are practices which are constantly in use, and reproduced, on a global scale.

Moore-Jones' article is not singular in the textbook. As has already been demonstrated, the subject matter itself is not uncommon. Another factor which links this text to many others is the manner in which it is written. Passages in the textbook tend to exhibit similar qualities of high modality, striking detail, sensationalist tone and simplistic narrative. Mostly, these passages strive for affect, rather than the production of text containing meaning-making content that can be derived from creativity, or meaning as a product from reason grounded upon facts. As will be discussed in section 4.8 (p.72), there also seems to be a link between these texts and the origins from which they were sourced.

There is no comprehension after the text, but instead there are class group activities. The post-reading activity consists of the following:

(see Appendix 5)

Choose a new scribe who will write down the ideas generated by the group and report back to the class. You must be able to summarize the main points of the text. You must also evaluate what the writer has expressed in this article – do you agree with what he says or do you feel that he is not completely correct in some of his statements? What conclusions can you draw from this article? Which are the facts in the article, and which are opinions? Have you identified any manipulative language? (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 42)

Here is demonstrated a much more effective method of engaging with, and making meaning of the content of the text. The instructions and questions also suggest a method of approaching and systematically examining a text, by first summarizing the main points, evaluating ideas and/or arguments made, formulating assessments and drawing conclusions. By these means, learners can become aware of the details and comprehend the essential messages within the text. These methods could possibly avail learners of the opportunity to express whether they would prefer to be allowed access to social networking in line with progressive learning thereof, as opposed to simply being banned from it until they reach a certain age, whereupon they can utilise it regardless of the fact that they do not possess the skills to do so safely.

4.5 Representation of socio-political issues

Socio-Political themes such as poverty, social inequality, race, crime and even problems within the social milieu of the school make up the bulk of the themes within the Macmillan textbook, being presented in 14 passages: “My Name” p.51-52; “SAHRC keeps an eye on xenophobia reports” p.86; “Raising the Stakes” p.110-111; “The Waste Land” p.145-147; “Your small fist” p.156-157 and “Child labour: the tobacco industry’s smoking gun” p.190-191. In the South African context, as is probably true of numerous countries, political problems of the past and the present, and their social ramifications are not easily separated. In addition to focussing on the meaning of particular discourses, there also exists the significance between power relationships as is demonstrated in the work of Foucault (1978). These are expressed through language and behaviour, and the dynamic that exists between language and power. The Foucauldian method analyses how the social world, expressed through language, is influenced and constructed by various sources of power. As such, this approach is not far removed from social constructivism, as the researcher tries to understand how our society is being shaped (or constructed) by language, which in turn reflects existing power relationships. As a result, the political state of affairs does not simply work in a linear fashion to affect the social, as the social works to reflect and shape the political as well.

With socio-political themes, the textbook presents several texts which offer rich material regarding socio-political issues. At times however, the presentation and/or accompanying treatment of said text, e.g. in the form of comprehension, fails to utilise the material to its full potential, as will be demonstrated later in more detail. Often, the problem is one of

meaning-making, or the problematization thereof, brought on by decontextualization. Either the text is well presented, but the discussion, reading or inquiry thereof seems to be lacking, or the text itself is presented in such a limited way that no insightful meaning can be derived.

4.6 Critical Discourse Analysis of the representation of poverty/inequality in “A Modest Proposal”

(see Appendix 6)

For the purposes of providing a context, here follows a brief description of the essay, of which the passage is an excerpt. Swift’s “proposal”, written in 18th century Ireland and which he “motivates” from an economic standpoint, is that infants/young children from impoverished families be used as a food source, thereby simultaneously alleviating the liability they represented both to their families and society as a whole, and providing an added food source. This policy, he wrote, would serve to make these children assets to the public.

Received amidst much outrage and moral indignation, as well as some acclaim, this scathingly satirical attack on the ruling classes of Ireland, and to a degree, those of England and North America, remains a relevant socio-political tract to this day (Cody, 2000).

The reason for the above description is due to the nature of the excerpt in the textbook, or more particularly its length. It is very brief. Including the title (31 words), and two footnotes (30 words), the extract comprises only

116 words. The original essay comprises between 3500 and 4000 words, depending on the edition. (Swift, 2015) The excerpt is taken midstream Swift's essay and is essentially one sentence long. Throughout, it maintains the modality of casual conversation, such as would be appropriate to a social gathering.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 168)

The mention of “a very knowing American” as well as “in London” is part of Swift's multi-pronged attack on the English, the Americans and his native Irish, for what he saw as the unacceptable social conditions that existed in Ireland at the time. (Cody, 2000) This state was one of glaring divisions based primarily on socio-economic status, hence his proposal's referral “for Preventing the Children of [Poor] People from being a Burden on their Parents or Country.” In adopting and retaining this modality, Swift sought to make his “Modest Proposal” all the more shocking, as in the passage that follows, he continues to describe using children as food in the department of someone discussing recipes.

...whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 168)

The excerpt is ended with two footnotes; the first describing that a fricassee is a meat dish, cooked in its own stock, or a wine and stock mixture, and then thickened with cream; and the second, that a ragout is a slow-cooked stew with meat and vegetables. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p.

168) The footnotes are not part of the original text and are provided for the purposes of vocabulary learning.

Beginning with “A Modest Proposal” as the product/text of CDA, Swift’s interpretation as well as his motivation (production) of the text becomes clear and this is also significant for a critical reading of the text. When moving into the level of the dominant discourses, the author ironically foregrounds infants and children of the poor and working classes as an unfair liability to wealthy and upper classes of Irish society. As a resolution to this problem, he satirically provides the solution, namely his “modest proposal”. Swift’s essay is not a simple reaction, but rather an ethical confrontation with the dominant discourses, constituted by the nobility of his day. His argument runs alongside the principles in CAPS. In both, the central notion is against inequality and for transformation wherever the former exists.

However, given the excerpt provided in the textbook, very little of the above analysis is valid or even possible. The excerpt is random and provides little more than a fleeting impression, and there is no context from which to draw any supporting meaning. Simply put, the excerpt fails to provide sufficient data necessary to locate the text or its meaning. It is suspended and decontextualized.

The only apparent function seems to be that of serving as material for the five questions that follow. One of the possible reasons for the brevity of the excerpt could be to incite learners to ask questions of their own. These could be of the nature of: *Who? What? Why?* They [questions] could be posed in the following manner: “Who is being addressed in this article?”;

“What problem is being referred to?” and “Why was this essay necessary?”

In an attempt to ascertain what the purpose of Classroom Activity 5 of Theme 10 is, it is necessary to examine the five questions that accompany the excerpt:

1. Sum up the direct or literal meaning of the text. What is the writer actually saying?

Without recourse to the essay, or at least more of it, there is little more to mention than that there is a literal description of recipes for cooking infants/young children, which apparently are a fine food source.

2. Does the writer really mean what he says? Explain the implied meaning of the text.

There is no reason, implied or otherwise, to question whether the writer means what he says. There is no further data to support the idea that the text has anything more than a literal meaning.

3. Distinguish between facts and opinions. Say whether the sentence: *I have been assured ...* is a fact or an opinion and explain your choice.

“I have been assured” would be an opinion, as it constitutes information accepted by way of someone’s word, whereas for example, “It is a well-established fact”, would be factual, based upon verifiable source/evidence.

4. Identify the purpose and the target group. Give reasons for your answer.

Within the context of the essay as a whole, the purpose is clearly to draw attention to the plight of the poor and working classes in Ireland. The target are the upper classes and nobility who use their elevated socio-economic status to exploit the poor. Within the constraints of the excerpt however, neither of these issues can be justifiably answered, as there is not enough supporting evidence.

5. Write down three questions you would like to ask the author. Pay attention to the form of each question.

Open-ended exercise. Possibly these questions would be for supplementary information in order to better locate the excerpt within the essay.

The limitations posed by the textbook's presentation of "A Modest Proposal" present a double loss. The first, are the issues of poverty and inequality raised in CAPS, both of which have long been problems in South Africa and are important in and around education. The second loss, is in terms of language education itself. Apart from the message it seeks to convey, "A Modest Proposal" constitutes an essential text for language education. In it, Swift demonstrates how creativity and critical thinking can be used together in a manner that still, some 300 years later, proves to be extraordinarily effective and just as relevant. This is evident in CAPS, which foregrounds the need to develop creative and critical thinking.

4.7 The representation of Literacy and Education in the magazine article, "Can't read, won't read"

(see Appendix 7, 8, 9 & 10)

Here follows an examination of an article which appears at the beginning of the textbook. While the broader subject of “education” could be used to describe the theme of said article, it is possibly more accurate to designate it to the issue of literacy. This article has been singled out because its assumptions highlight a crucial distinction between the notions of illiteracy, literacy and what could loosely be termed “practicing literacy”. By the latter, I am referring to the idea of people who read more than they need to, whether for purposes of enjoyment, education or simple interest. “Practicing literacy” also implies the existence of its opposite, namely individuals who are literate, but do not read any more than is absolutely necessary.

The following is an adapted article entitled “Can’t read, won’t read” by Marianne Thamm from the magazine “Fair Lady”. It centres on two prominent individuals who, by their own admission and choice, deliberately do not read more than is necessary. Being famous, the two characters are also wealthy, successful and certainly literate. The two figures in question are Victoria Beckham, also once known as Posh Spice from the girl-band “The Spice Girls”, and ex-US president George W. Bush.

So, Posh Spice has admitted in an interview that she’s never read a book.
Are we surprised? (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 9)

The inference on Victoria Beckham as being someone lacking intellectual depth is underscored by the rhetorical question “Are we surprised?”

She hasn't even paged through her autobiography, titled *Learning to Fly*. For all she knows it could be a recycled Celine Dion songbook. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 9)

The two afore-mentioned quotes, can be characterized by their pronounced modality: "So, Posh Spice has admitted in an interview that she's never read a book. Are we surprised?" The use of the pronoun "we" and the satirical tone, "She hasn't even paged through her autobiography, *Learning to Fly* ("Fly" being a popular Celine Dion song) serve to create a sense of solidarity between the author and her readership. The framework of CDA's processes of production and interpretation demonstrate how the personality of Victoria Beckham is constructed, including the strong inferences regarding her intellectual proficiency. Evidence for the view on her mental capacity comes in the form of accounts such as "has admitted in an interview that she's never read a book" and "She hasn't even paged through her autobiography," and are used to manufacture the text. The latter produces a background in which reading for pleasure is associated with intellectual prowess, and in a similar, if opposing vein, not engaging in reading nor having the desire to do so, is cause to question intellectual competence.

The author then turns her gaze onto the South African public.

The truth is, the vast majority of South Africans don't read. And I am not talking about those people who were denied an education and are illiterate. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 10)

The above claim is problematic. The author is making a statement concerning broad and somewhat vague subdivisions of South African society. Firstly, there is the claim to "truth", followed by the superlative

“vast majority of South Africans don’t read”. According to the author, the afore-mentioned “vast majority” are to be understood as not including “those people who were denied an education and are illiterate”. This statement, instead of helping quantify the author’s claim, serves only to make it more questionable. Is this reference specific only to people who were properly schooled? Does it assume that if you didn’t complete formal schooling that you are by default illiterate? If this refers only to literate South Africans who don’t read, can this denote “the vast majority of South Africans”? More apparent however, is the lack of evidence to support this assertion.

The text then moves onto the second figure in question, ex-US president George W. Bush.

Even George W. Bush once publicly admitted that he didn’t care much for reading. But in the meantime, someone’s clearly been brought in to smarten up the president’s image. His book list for this year’s five-week summer holiday on his Texas ranch reads as follows: *Salt: A World History* by Mark Kurlansky (484 pages), *Alexander 11: The Last Great Tsar* by Edvard Radzinsky, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* by John M. Barry. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 10)

As with Beckham, the above quotations show evidence of claims made but not substantiated. Phrases such as “George W. Bush once publicly admitted that he didn’t care much for reading” or “someone’s clearly been brought in to smarten up the president’s image” do not point to anything specific in the way of evidence at all. Instead, these serve only as allusions to Bush’s intellectual capacity. When looking at the scholarly

titles in the former president's book list for his summer holiday, juxtaposed with the quote regarding Bush's dislike of reading, it becomes clear how the subject [Bush] is produced and received. Embedded within the text are a system of values or principles by which the former US president, as well as Victoria Beckham are evaluated. Said values render the respective individuals to be of limited intellectual proficiency combined with a sense of idleness. Associated with this judgement, but not necessarily evidence for it, is the fact that neither care much for reading.

The dominant discourses, as well as CAPS, advocate the practice of reading for pleasure or simply out of interest, as a worthy and productive practice that is also associated with developed degrees of intellectual acumen. Foregrounded against this, are the profiles of Victoria Beckham and George W. Bush, two highly public figures who, contrary to the values of societal discourses, do not value reading. This statement, regarding both characters of the text, may be true. Yet it remains unclear how this leads to the default conclusion that the afore-mentioned are in some way, obtuse.

Following the criticism of Beckham and Bush on these grounds, the author claims that "The vast majority of South Africans don't read." The inferred meaning from this claim is clear. In support of this, the following statistics are offered:

Out of a population of around 45 million, there are only about 500 000 active book buyers in the country. And if a writer manages to sell 3000 copies of a book, it is a bestseller..." (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, p. 10)

As evidence for the claim made above, this cannot be considered adequate. New book sales figures do not equate to total book readers, as this fails to take into account second-hand book sales, libraries, book clubs where books are shared and digital reading or reading online.

The next issue of significance is the text's positioning of the learner. Whilst there is no argument that reading is of fundamental importance (and not exclusively for language education) and must be encouraged under learners, the text's embedded notion of a divide between the intellectually proficient and the intellectually incompetent, on the basis of a single variable, is usually false and almost always damaging.

(see Appendix 9)

The questions that follow this article are unanimously grammatical exercises. There is no single question that deals with the preceding article in terms of meaning and/or meaning-making. Questions requiring any form of critical or creative reading of the text are conspicuously absent. At most, the questions utilize words or phrases from the text simply as material for the actual purposes of grammar.

1. Give synonyms for the following words found in the text.
2. Suggest antonyms for the following words found in the article.
3. Name and explain the use of punctuation marks in the following sentences:
4. A word has been written in bold font in the following sentences. What do these words have in common? What part of speech are they?
5. Remember adverbs tell us how an action is performed. Add adverbs of place and degree to the following sentences. You will need to find the verb and decide how it was performed.

6. Find examples of literal and figurative language in the passage. Give reasons for your choice. (Kerr & Unterslak, 2011, pp. 11-12)

The first, and most prevalent of these, is the priority given to grammar learning. The acquisition of grammatical knowledge is an important aspect of language learning. The essential nature of effective understanding and application of grammar is significant as the proper application of grammatical rules can serve to aid the understanding and use of any respective language. As far as pedagogical language is concerned, the rules and guidelines which inform the proper use and structure of language in reading, writing, listening and speech are quite stable and structured. This same rigour does not apply to more creative uses of language such as those found within the creative writing genre or dialectical practices of verbal language.

The textbook under scrutiny is one of language education and therefore, as with any textbook concerning language learning, grammar education is going to form a substantial part of the content. Furthermore, a separate part of the curriculum of language education includes set works, which form the foundation of work with literature. However, in the textbook there are instances, as already shown, where the work accompanying the texts are characterized by grammatical exercises. It follows that less time, space and energy is devoted to the comprehension, discussion, writing and the productive processes of meaning and meaning-making. While the learning of grammar is vital, this part of English language pedagogy cannot ensue at the expense of meaning, dialectical meaning-making and creativity. A balance between these two aspects of language learning is thus essential.

4.8 Sources of texts

The sourcing of appropriate texts can understandably be a difficult undertaking. In this, The Information Age, there exists a veritable deluge of texts on almost every topic. However, the sheer scope of this can actually problematize the search for texts appropriate to the Grade 8 textbook, rather than make it easier. The Macmillan textbook employs specific texts, such as newspaper and magazine articles, poems, novel and short story excerpts, plays, speeches, excerpts from film and television scripts and cartoons. The sources for these texts are quite wide-ranging. Several of these texts are derived from reputable and even esteemed sources: authors such as Alan Paton (“The Waste Land”, p.145-147); Jules Verne (“Twenty-thousand leagues under the sea”, p. 164-165). Poets such as Ogden Nash (“Confessions of a born spectator”, p.72-73 and Alice Walker (“Poem at Thirty-Nine”, p.170). A speech by Steve Jobs (“Steve Jobs: Stanford commencement address, June 2005”, p.231-233) and even an excerpt from a film script by David Cronenberg (“The Fly”, p.130-131).

In contrast to the above-mentioned examples, there are other texts whose origin is more obscure and in some cases this is reflected in the nature of texts. Where this is particularly noticeable is in some magazine and newspaper articles. As was mentioned earlier, in Classroom Activity 3, Theme 4, there is a newspaper article from New York Daily News 2012. It is entitled “Poisonous caterpillars may “ruin” London’s Olympic Games; hairs can cause spectator vomiting and dizziness”. There are other texts from sources, seem to treat their respective subject matter in a glib, superficial manner. Two examples are: “Learn the lingo – a guide for parents whose children use social media platforms” p.85 and “Parental

Guidance” p.243-244, both from Clicks Magazine, 2008; “Dependency on electronics” by littlenicky25 and “My dad and sport” by anonymous, p.76. It is likely that any one of these texts may have been relevant in their original contexts, but as learning material for Grade 8 Home Language they seemed to lack the necessary meaningful content. By the latter, I refer not only to material which lacks a degree of profundity and which is difficult to work with in a critical and creative manner, but also to material that is decontextualized and thus lacks both relevance and is not validated by the remainder of the text.

4.9 Conclusion

A final, but crucial point is the text’s positioning of the learner. Typically, the learner is constructed as the passive recipient and reproducer of the transmitted information/knowledge. As has already been discussed critical and creative reading of the text is typically not prompted by either the accompanying questions/discussion or writing prompts. Generally, learners are urged to read with and not against the text (Janks, 1997, pp. 330-331). With the notions of reading “with” or “against” the text, Janks refers to two broad literacy practices. Reading “with” the text is a reference to reading practices where (in this case) the learner does not question (or sometimes even acknowledge) the coercive powers of the text. Instead, the messages and/or arguments are collaborated with into common-sense assumptions by the learners. Reading “against” the text refers to a different, though not the diametrically opposite position. Here, it is acknowledged that no texts are disinterested. Each text is a version of reality and thereby a means to some end. These agendas are scrutinized and any attempt at naturalisation is treated with scepticism. Upon

examining the afore-mentioned questions/discussions, the common practice of discourse is the reproduction of the text content. Through the lens of CDA, texts, and the processes which give rise to their manufacture, are strongly influenced by the dominant societal discourses, CDA demonstrates that the end-result of discursive action is in fact a reproduction and dissemination of the text within the practices of English language learning.

CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Analysis of the dominant discourses in the

Oxford textbook

The textbook to be analysed in this chapter will be “English for Success Grade 8 Home Language” by I. Barnsley, B. Hathorn, K. Nortje and P. Rendel (2013). It is published by Oxford University Press and will at times simply be referred to as the “Oxford textbook”. In the methodology that was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the passages of the textbook will be analysed utilizing Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Fairclough (1989;1992). The material will also be examined in the context of the principles laid out in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as discussed in Chapter 4. General descriptions of the texts will begin with an examination of their format, for example, extracts from novels, short stories, reports, interviews, speeches and advertisements. More significantly however, will be the themes or issues that are contained within these passages. These will include questions surrounding gender, socio-political problems, issues of class and socio-economic differences and the media. Again, as was emphasized in Chapter 4, discourses and practices are not viewed as being controlled by other random, independent types of discourses and practices, but rather by interdependent “orders”, such as the “orders of discourse” and “social orders” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 29).

5.2 Issues

5.2.1 Representation of Gender in the Oxford University textbook

As a whole, the Oxford University textbook presents a more balanced outlook on issues of gender than its Macmillan counterpart. Although the following extract is singled out as not being a good example of this, the reality is that other texts such as “A betrayal” by Shelley Simms, p. 33-34; “Pygmalion” by George Bernard Shaw p. 129-131 all serve to empower and give voice to women, both young and old.

In the extract that follows however, the boundaries that are brought under scrutiny are precisely those of physical differences in gender. The presumption in the text is that males possess certain physical capabilities that females lack. It follows therefore, that while opportunities towards self-fulfilment should be accessible to all, the dominant idea of self-fulfilment is sometimes circumscribed by the individual’s gender.

Furthermore, as is demonstrated by the text, difference is not a quality to be celebrated, nor is it exclusively limited to the descriptions of the physical. Other characteristics, particularly those pertaining to the emotions are also at issue when regarding gender. Again, as was discussed in the Chapter 4, the male is associated with reason and emotional constancy. In the following excerpt, the female is equated with irrationality and emotional volatility.

5.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of the representation of women in “One Magic Moment”

(see Appendix 11, 12 & 13)

The extract entitled “One Magic Moment” is basically a short narrative concerning an informal game of cricket played amongst eight young teens, seven of whom are male (including the unnamed narrator). The extract starts off quite innocuously, but soon begins to unravel in terms of tensions between Sheralee (the young girl) and the seven other boys: Eddie, Brad, OB, Nadeem, Trevor, Yasaf and the narrator himself. Here is evidence of the framework of the social conditions of production and interpretation. The discourse-as-practice is that of the “male” sport of cricket and this is literally illustrated in a quantitative manner. Sheralee is foregrounded as the centre of attention, primarily because she is the only female and also because she occupies the position of bats[man] who in cricket, always occupies the focal point of the game. At this point and to an extent, Sheralee seems to be holding her own. In terms of the social conditions of interpretation, this is anomalous and is demonstrated as a source of dissatisfaction for Eddie:

“Come on, Brad,” he complained. “You can’t bowl underarm for someone this good. That’s not fair.” So Brad bowled his next ball overarm, gently still. And this time Sheralee missed completely. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 29)

Here, certain aspects of the social conditions surrounding cricket are immediately made apparent. While most of the boys share the dominant attitude towards Sheralee’s participation in the game as seen through CDA’s framework of the social conditions of production and interpretation, i.e. the dominant discourses, not all feel similarly. Brad and Trevor are happy to accommodate the fact that she may be less

familiar with cricket than the rest of the boys, however Eddie insists that if Sheralee wants to join the game, she be treated in the same manner as everyone else. Eddie and his brother, the narrator, represent influences in the text of the social conditions of production and interpretation. Here, the dominant discourses are quite rigid in their determination of which sports are appropriate for males and which for females. If a girl, such as Sheralee, wants to play a game that is traditionally regarded to be a male sport, she has to do so according to male standards. Brad, on the other hand, presents an ameliorated version of this attitude, or rather the framework of the processes of production and interpretation. He attempts to accommodate Sheralee and the possibility that she is not as adept at batting as the rest of the boys by bowling underhand. This is swiftly countered by Eddie who complains, “You can’t bowl underarm for someone this good. That’s not fair.”

The narrative follows a close scrutiny of Sheralee and particularly her reactions to various events that ensue as the game develops. Even at the beginning of the excerpt there is a preconceived notion that she is “strange” and the narrator seems quite eager for this feature of her character to unravel even further, as is demonstrated below:

I watched her pucker up under the sunblock. I watched her shoulders hunch up. Now the storm would erupt, I thought. Now they would see how strange she could be. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 29)

The use of the euphemism “strange” seems itself, rather vague and ambivalent. It seems that the adjective is used as a method of detachment, so that Sheralee need not be considered in the same manner as the rest of the players. At first, to the narrator’s surprise, there is no storm nor

emotional eruption and Sheralee prepares to face her next ball. She fails to strike it and it glances off her glove to be caught by Nadeem. Unsurprisingly, Eddie is happy with the result. Sheralee is not.

“Howzat! Out! Out! It was my brother Eddie yelling, sounding very pleased. Sheralee stared at him, frowning, flicking her plaits over her shoulders. She shook her head firmly. “No,” she said quietly: “It didn’t hit my bat at all. It only hit my glove. I can’t be out.” (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 29)

Here is evidence of the narrator and his brother Eddie’s, attitudes towards Sheralee. The former is waiting for an emotional reaction which will demonstrate her “strangeness”, while the latter seems to be attempting to provoke a response. Others, such as the afore-mentioned Brad, who is bowling and Trevor, who now approaches Sheralee in an attempt to explain the rules of being caught off the glove, present a more helpful approach towards her. In the case of this text, both Brad and Trevor seem to encapsulate the processes of production and interpretation. Their attitudes are influenced by the dominant discourses which are evident in Eddie, the narrator, as well as the other boys, yet their interpretation of these influences differ. They seem to want to play a game in which the differences between the boys and Sheralee can be reformed for the purposes of the context. Unfortunately, Trevor’s explanations do not suffice:

“It’s not fair!” said Sheralee. And then more loudly: “It’s not fair. I’m not out. That can’t be right. The ball hit my glove.” She was holding the bat high against her chest now, the way she had held her doll, defying anyone to take it from her. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 30)

In the above quote, the narrator reveals more of his attitude towards Sheralee. He infantilizes and undermines her protest with: “She was holding the bat high against her chest now, the way she had held her doll, defying anyone to take it from her.” In the text that follows, Sheralee’s character is further defined from the viewpoint of the narrator. Her speech is punctuated by being repetitive and juvenile: “It’s not fair! said Sheralee.” Then, the narrator’s long-awaited “eruption” finally ensues.

“Why are you doing this to me? I hate you! I hate you!” Her face under its sunblock screwed up in utter rage. She bared her teeth like some wild cornered animal, glaring around at the circle of guys who all watched in stunned amazement. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 30)

The afore-mentioned “stunned amazement” seems rather inconsistent, since Sheralee was branded as “strange” and her “eruption” was expected from the very beginning. Sheralee is constructed as a caricature of childishness and uninhibited emotion. The descriptions imply a lack of reason, an overbearing sense of self-entitlement, as well as a lack of all self-control. Her behaviour is likened to that of an animal: “She bared her teeth like some wild cornered animal”. She kicks at the stumps and bails, sending both flying. Her outburst turns violent, as she hurls the cricket bat at Nadeem, striking him directly on the chin and knocking him momentarily unconscious.

Sheralee was sobbing now, sobbing like some wild and desperate animal. Mrs Willis reached us. “Come, sweetheart, it’s all right,” she said, taking no notice of Nadeem lying there and gathering her sobbing daughter in her arms. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 30)

Again, Sheralee is equated to an animal, “sobbing like some wild and desperate animal.” This repetitive reference is significant as it precludes the need to consider Sheralee as a human being. Instead, her status is relegated to that of an irrational child, whose behaviour can be compared to that of a creature driven purely by its own interests. The boys watch Sheralee and her mother walk away and maturely only shake their heads in dismay. The following day they engage in a general discussion of Sheralee.

“She’s out of her mind!” Yasaf decided as he hammered the third wicket into the ground. “No wonder they don’t send her to school – she’d probably end up hurling desks at the teachers. She’s just totally around the bend.”

But Eddie disagreed – just as he had the day before. “No man, I’m telling you, she’s just a spoiled brat. Just your typical only child who expects to get her own way all the time.”

Nadeem smiled carefully. There was an ugly gash across his chin and the side of his face was still swollen. “She’s strange,” he said quietly. “She’s definitely not average.” (Barnsley, et al., 2013, pp. 30-31)

As mentioned earlier, Sheralee still clearly remains the focal point of the passage. She is foregrounded as a startling anomaly against a background that is made up of the dominant discourses which locate individuals in particular roles according to gender. In this case, the medium is sport. Males and one female are represented. The gender divide is not only evident, it is emphasized. The latter sends the message that in terms of sport, the difference between men and women is marked and the reason for this is simply because men and women are essentially, different. Men are better at sports than women due mainly to the fact that they are physically “the stronger sex”. Additionally, the text further suggests that

males are emotionally more stable and rational, i.e. “stronger”. These inferences resonate into very distinct implications concerning the social divide between the sexes.

Through the narrator (who is male), the boys have ample space for voice. Sheralee’s voice on the other hand, is limited to that which the narrator chooses to relate and because of this, the nature of her character remains one-sided. For this reason, questions relating to Sheralee are not satisfactorily dealt with. This differential treatment of males and females in the text seems to leave the passage somewhat decontextualized.

Another aspect of the latter argument stems from the fact that certain aspects of these discourses have changed over time, for example, women are now playing sports which were originally seen as exclusively male pursuits, such as rugby, soccer and cricket. At the same time however, the dominant discourses of society advocate the idea that women are simply not as well equipped physically (and in the case of the text, emotionally), to play sports at the same standard as men. Hence, a dominant idea is that the intermingling of both genders within the same sporting activity does not constitute a [serious] endeavour.

While the validity of this statement is questionable, the real issue is the end-product or text. The males are sketched as a background of even-handed, seemingly good-natured boys. Sheralee on the other hand, is thrust into the foreground as an unstable, unreasonable little girl. Not only does she lack the temperament for the game amongst males, she is athletically inept, too. The latter causes her to lose at batting and this then instigates her irrational and violent outburst. This is underscored when her mother, an adult amongst children, comes onto the field. She ignores the injured Nadeem, whom Sheralee has just quite seriously injured with

a cricket bat, and concentrates on comforting her daughter. There is further significance with regard to the manner in which Mrs Willis is represented in the text. Her actions and inactions, both serve to frame her within the same context as that of her daughter. Mrs Willis comforts her Sheralee, who has just unjustifiably taken her anger out on and hurt Nadeem, the latter whom she casually ignores. The broader inference here is that female irrationality is present regardless of age.

In terms of context, both Sheralee and her mother stand out as foreign to the immediate setting. Both responded inappropriately, in their own way, to the game and the ensuing situation. The background from which they stand out is made up exclusively of males, all of whom were simply playing the game “according to the rules”, as it were. The subtle inference of the text is that the boys are essentially blameless. Players such as Brad and Trevor, are shown to have been misguided in their attempts to accommodate Sheralee in the game. The narrator and his brother Eddie, are vindicated in their beliefs that Sheralee is “strange” and of the former’s prediction of her impending emotional outburst.

Importantly, the message in the text clearly does not coincide with that in the curriculum. Whereas the latter promotes a sense of egalitarianism and the dissolution of old boundaries present in issues such as race, ethnicity, gender and language, this passage works to reinforce said boundaries. The title itself seems a strange choice. “One Magic Moment” is the heading given to an extract wherein one girl amongst seven boys, [over]reacts to a situation in a game of cricket, leaving her looking inept and nonsensical and her male counterparts irreproachable. This occurs despite the fact that some of the boys (including the narrator) were in fact,

colluding to provoke this reaction to vindicate preconceived ideas they held of the her.

(see Appendix 12)

Apart from the various issues mentioned above, the respective text must also be examined from the perspective of English Language education. The extract is well composed, the characters are believable and effectively created and the narrative is easy to follow, but not simplistic. All of this serves to create a text that is rich with meaning. As has been described in the analysis above, this meaning-making occurs on several different levels. In the post-reading questions that follow, many of the questions emphasise a closer reading of the text and the characters therein. The questions are as follows:

- 1) The narrator clearly knows more about Sheralee's past than the others.
 - a) List clues from the story that support this statement.
 - b) What is the likely relationship between Sheralee and the narrator?
How do you know this?

In English Language education, meaning or the critical and/or creative making thereof, can justifiably be considered one of the primary objectives. Following this, it is not difficult to understand that in the practice of language learning, learners will be exploring different aspects of meaning, many of which will be provocative and thereby necessitate being looked at critically.

- 2) Analysing the conflict between characters is a good way of finding out more about them.

- a) Explain how Sheralee's behaviour is totally different from that of the other characters?
- b) What emotion does she inspire in Eddie and Nadeem in paragraphs 9 and 10? Why do you say this?

The post-reading comprehension of the text poses questions whose answers encourage creative and individual responses from the learners. In addition, these answers are required to be verified by the text itself. What many of the questions seem to be lacking however, is the prompting toward a critical reading of the text.

5.3 Representation of the socio-political in the Oxford University textbook

When comparing the Oxford University textbook to its Macmillan complement, two elements become clear. First of all, the former devotes more time and effort to this particular issue, and secondly, the Oxford University Press textbook treats various socio-political issues with a philosophy that is quite consistent in terms of arguments and ethics. This is especially evident in the first chapter, where speeches form the bulk of the texts. The first is a speech from Dr Martin Luther King Jr. made during the Apartheid era concerning the plight of so many South Africans (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 17). The second is from Nelson Mandela on the future that he foresaw and hoped for in a new, free South Africa (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 19), and the third is from Robert F. Kennedy during a visit to South Africa, where he met with leaders from both sides of the South African political spectrum and spoke of progressive socio-political change (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 22).

5.3.1 Representation of socio-political issues

What follows is an interview with Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh at the Global Truce 2012 Student Launch in London. Please note that there are two separate parts of Mpofu-Walsh's interview. Due to space restraints this analysis deals only with the first.

5.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of Interview with Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh

(see Appendix 14 & 15)

Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh is a student at the University of Cape Town. Not only is he a rapper and an ambassador of the One Young World Summit, but he has also started his own business, Grow2Lead. What follows is an interview with Mpofu-Walsh at the Global Truce 2012 Launch in London. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 93)

The interview commences with Mpofu-Walsh introducing both himself and the various organizations he represents. The interviewer asks Sizwe why it is important for him to be present at the Global Truce 2012 Student Launch.

Sizwe: Well, I think it's important because peace is important and a lot of cynics always say, "Why strive for peace?" and my response is, "Why? Why not try?" and I'm committed to trying, now and in the future.
(Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 93)

For the purposes of approaching the passage within the frameworks of CDA, the various questions and Mpfu-Walsh's responses can be identified as text. The fact that he is attending the Global Truce Student Launch suggests that Sizwe's notion of "peace" is generic. His first answer shows him already alluding to the popular opinion, or in this case, that of the framework of societal conditions of production and interpretation. Here, he distinguishes between two ideologies. Those whom he labels as "cynics", i.e. groups or individuals who have supposedly resigned themselves to the idea that generic "peace" is not a feasible notion and that some measure of conflict, to a greater or lesser extent, will always be present in human society, and those (like himself) who feel that "peace" is not only worth striving for, but is also a real possibility.

Interviewer: And why particularly do you think it's important for students from around the world to come together as one instead?

Sizwe: Well, I think students are a group of people who haven't been dirtied by the real world so to speak and so we're still particularly idealistic and this gives us an energy, to inspire change, and we've done that in the past, we're doing that at present and I believe we'll do that in the future. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, pp. 93-94)

In this answer, Sizwe reveals certain aspects of his politics and the motivations behind them. The processes of production and interpretation reveal the interaction between the pessimistic attitudes and [mistakes] of older generations and the more positive and lucid views of the younger generations, i.e. those advocated by Sizwe, and followed by his generation and younger. The older generations and their accompanying worldviews are interpreted as constituting the ideologies of the dominant

discourse. These establish the background in which Sizwe's socio-political viewpoints are foregrounded.

What is interesting in this particular answer, is Sizwe's use of semantics: "students are a group of people who haven't been **dirtyed** by the **real world**." His intention with this phrase seems to be one of justifying why students and the younger generation are better suited to campaigning for world peace than the preceding generations who have been "dirtyed by the real world." The use of the terms "dirtyed" and "real world" are ambiguous and open to two very different interpretations. "Dirtyed" can refer to being corrupted, warped or the distortion of one's worldview, which is possibly the intended meaning by Sizwe. The charge of the previous generation having fallen victim to "the real world" is a perplexing statement. Is he proposing that due to the collective hardships and sufferings of their era, the older generations possess a sullied view of the future, which is both the source of their cynicism and the reason why they are unable to effectively strive for peace? By the same token, are the younger generation better suited to this cause, because they remain unaffected by the harsh nature and realities of the world? In effect, Sizwe's solution opens up more difficulties than it provides answers. According to his statement, the preceding generation is unfit to envision the idea of peace as their life-experiences have somehow jaded them to the possibilities thereof. The youth, or more specifically Sizwe's generation on the other hand, are more "idealistic". This argument is made, seemingly without the awareness that the use of this adjective undermines, rather than bolsters Sizwe's position. Life-experience is in effect, argued to be inferior to youthful idealism. The suggestion is that experience serves to impede one's thinking, whilst youth opens horizons. Sizwe's argument is directed at the audience of the youth. This is

understandable and even optimistic, since he acts as a representative of youth organizations. What is more questionable however, is the cost of his message, namely the denigration of those of who came before him.

Interviewer: And what message do you think that will take out to the rest of the world?

Sizwe: Well, I often think its young people who lead by example and get older generations to realize the mistakes that they've made. So I think it will send out a message to older generations, but hopefully it will send out a message to students who are younger than university students to say that the generation which is coming, which is going to lead the world, is one that we can trust and that we can put our faith in. (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 94)

Sizwe's reply is condescending and suggestive of ageism. His argument, when traced by CDA's processes of production and interpretation, is historically based. Sizwe's language makes a distinct division between "the generation which is coming" and "the older generation", to whom Sizwe refers to as the age group who have made "mistakes", both literally, i.e. in socio-historical terms, in terms of their pessimistic perceptions/expectations of contemporary humanity and its future. Sizwe's implication is that the attitude of the "older generation" and "his generation" are incommensurable. He establishes himself and his generation as the fulcrum of this new progressive social dynamic.

When examined through CDA's processes of production and interpretation, two aspects become evident. The first is that Sizwe models his ideology and subsequent socio-political thought on what he perceives

to be the shortcomings of the generation preceding his own. Secondly, he motivates this progressive stance in two ways. First, it is to serve as a “message to the older generation”, which alludes to a criticism of some kind and also instils a divide, both in terms of ideology and power. Secondly, it will also “send out a message to students who are younger than university students to say that the generation which is coming, which is going to lead the world, is one that we can trust and that we can put our faith in.” (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 94) The latter bears many of the hallmarks of political rhetoric. The high modality of Sizwe’s language, the broad scope of his ideals and the altogether generic nature of his argument, all point towards a narrative that works to elicit a collective emotional response of support. However, in the process, it fails to provide an adequate foundation upon which to base its line of reasoning. Finally, as is characteristic of much political discourse, Sizwe’s statements serve to position himself as the key figure, supported by individuals of his generation, who will advocate his ideology.

(see Appendix 14)

Following the interview are a series of comprehension questions:

1. Which organizations is Sizwe involved in?

Factual question.

2. Why do you think Sizwe introduces himself at the beginning of the interview? This solicits a response which serves to identify Sizwe, both in terms of an individual and a collective (the youth) whom he represents, as agency and as voice.

3. Do you think the interviewer was prepared for the interview with Sizwe? Why do you think so?

Although this is a relatively easy question, it invites interpretation and evaluation. The author has not directed the learner in either a “yes” or “no” answer, but has simply asked for an answer that is validated by reasoning either way.

4. Do you think that Sizwe was prepared to answer all the questions asked in the interview? Explain your answer?

Again, the question solicits a response by means of which the learner will qualify their position with, or against, Sizwe’s socio-political agenda.

5. What register is used by Sizwe and the interviewer? Do you think this is appropriate? Explain?

This question represents one of the more difficult in the comprehension. Firstly, it raises the topic of register, which for most learners, would probably constitute a noun with which they are not familiar. What is problematic is not the introduction of a new word (which is central to critical language awareness and CAPS), but rather that the text fails to scaffold the concept. It also does not aid learners in identifying features that will lead to critical language awareness. Following this, learners would have to determine which types of registers are used under which circumstances. Thirdly, they would then have to justify their final answer.

6. Do you think that Sizwe is believable and convincing in the things that he says? Explain?

This question is difficult for reasons that differ from that posed above. At this point, learners will make individual decisions regarding Sizwe's interview. While his responses to the various questions have already been discussed, it is very likely that most learners will easily identify with Sizwe and will relate to the messages that he conveys. In terms of CDA, I could suggest that learners will serve as the framework of the processes of production and interpretation in this case. They will use their conceptions and experiences and interact these with the ideology and political stance taken by Sizwe. From that point, they will produce the answer to this question, i.e. their text and their product.

7. Identify interjections used by Sizwe in his interview. You think it is appropriate for him to use these? Explain?

This is possibly the most difficult question. As in question 5, this question raises its first difficulty in the form of "interjections". It is probable that most Grade 8 learners will not be familiar with the word and will have to identify its meaning first. This is complicated by the fact that interjections constitute a very long list of examples. Secondly, the learners will have to engage with the text again, this time to ascertain how and where interjections are located. By answering these two questions, learners will be able to speak of their suitability.

The questions following this interview do, at various times, invite a degree of critical reading/critical language awareness. How consistently critical reading is advocated and/or practiced is perhaps more open to question. As for the afore-mentioned "suitability", here it is perhaps more an issue of the appropriateness of language as put forward by (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 33-35). The issue that he points out

is one of the appropriacy of appropriateness in language. For the purposes of this dissertation, I direct this issue specifically to English language learning. Conventional views hold that varieties of language are appropriate for different purposes and/or situations. Therefore, when addressing the issue of English, learners should be able to develop the range of varieties of Englishes (Pennycook, 1994), in order that they may accomplish more with it. To return to the question regarding “suitability”, Sizwe is appropriately engaged in both the language and context of their interview. The concept of “standard English”, as well as the conventions thereof, thus play an effective role in the “suitability” of his interjections.

5.4 Critical Discourse Analysis of Michelle Obama’s speech, Soweto 2011

(see Appendix 16)

Michelle Obama visited Soweto in 2011 and made a speech to a group of young community leaders.

This text can feasibly be approached from several perspectives. The most common approach will be that the central message of the speech emphasizes the importance of altruism and compassion, especially to those who are in difficult socio-economic positions. This is neither more nor less appropriate than many of the other lines of interpretation.

Like my husband, I had a modest background. My parents saved and sacrificed so that I could get an education. And when I graduated, I got a

job at a big, fancy law firm – nice salary, big office. My friends were impressed. My family was proud. By all accounts, I was living the dream.
(Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 151)

“Like my husband” – Obama begins her speech by establishing who she is. She does this not by citing references to herself, but rather by pointing to her spouse, US president Barack Obama, as her source of significance by proxy. When viewed through the lens of CDA, Obama is at the very focal point of the social conditions of production and interpretation, or the dominant discourses, as her husband occupies the premium position as Chief of State of the US. He is one of select individuals who have the power to directly influence the dominant societal discourses and their outcomes.

Her speech then adopts a different bearing. She explains that she had a modest background and that her parents saved so that she could get an education. After she graduated, she “got a job at a big, fancy law firm with a nice salary and a big office.” Her friends were as impressed as her family was proud. “By all accounts, I was living the dream.”

In the above, Obama has succinctly sketched what is commonly referred to as “the American Dream”. The first and most conspicuous problem for her young audience is that of interpretation. The latter mentioned here, is that which is used as an interpretative framework in CDA’s processes of production and interpretation. She mentions that she had a “modest background” which, when speaking on an international platform, is a relative concept. This becomes particularly evident when comparing ideas of “modest backgrounds” in first- and third-world countries. Through her parents’ prudence, she was able to “get an education”. In the US, the

latter phrase refers to attending university or acquiring some other form of tertiary education. To the youth of South Africa, “getting an education” more often simply points to successfully completing secondary education. This is a legacy of black education borne in the years of struggle under Apartheid-era laws and mandates, which resulted in even this passage becoming a major obstacle for many of the youth.

In Soweto, as in too many areas in South Africa, financial hardship and the problems that accompany it are endemic. It is estimated that as much as 24% of South Africans live in poverty (Nicholson, 2015). In such a context, being capable of saving money is itself not feasible.

But I knew something was missing. I knew I didn't want to be way up in some tall building all alone in an office writing memos. I wanted to be down on the ground working with kids, helping families put food on the table and a roof over their heads.

So I left that job for a new job, training young people like yourselves for careers in public service. I was making a lot less money. My office wasn't so nice. But every day, I got to watch those young people gain skills and build confidence. And then I saw them go on to mentor and inspire other young people. And that made me feel inspired. It still does (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 151).

After the story of her success, Obama changes the direction of her narrative. Her account has a metaphorical nature, as it is a tale of reaching the heights only to find them ironically lonely and detached. This is then resolved by the action of summarily resigning from a prestigious and well-paid career, so as to descend the tower in order to work with people at a grass-roots level.

Whilst this imagery may sound effective as part of a speech, to the youth who are the audience, it represents something of an enigma. Certainly, the discourse with which Obama engages them is ethically sound and politically-correct, but in itself it is also an indicator of socio-economic and socio-cultural prominence.

So I left that job for a new job, training young people like yourselves for careers in public service. I was making a lot less money. My office wasn't so nice. But every day, I got to watch those young people gain skills and build confidence (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 151).

The sequence of Obama's logic, which through CDA can be viewed as the processes of production and interpretation produce a specific perspective, which in turn, manufactures the narrative that is her speech. Her interpretation of her own actions is meant to motivate and emphasize the virtues of service and selflessness to young people. However, this will not necessarily resonate as intended. Again, the reason for this is precisely the process of interpretation. For young South Africans, many of whom come from poor families and communities where money almost always represents a problem, the idea of getting opportunities, using them to achieve success in a career which entails influence as well as affluence, only to give it all up in order to return to where they are right now, could quite realistically be considered unreasonable. This is not to say that the youth leaders in Soweto have no desire to help their fellows, quite the contrary. However, these young leaders are part of the context in which they provide their services. Obama literally exists on the other end of the political and socio-economic spectrum.

See my husband and I, we didn't change any laws, we didn't win any awards, get our pictures in the paper. But we were making a difference.

We were part of something greater than ourselves. And we knew that in our own small way, we were helping to build a better world. And that is precisely what so many young people are doing every day across this continent (Barnsley, et al., 2013, p. 151).

Once again, if Michelle Obama's speech is analyzed through the processes of interpretation and production, there is evidence of a marked division between her perspective of the message she is conveying to her audience and that which her audience is receiving. Obama consistently uses language in the past tense, which indicates that what she is describing is historically located. At a certain time certainly, neither Barack nor Michelle Obama changed laws, won awards or appeared in the newspapers. However, with the exception of Michelle Obama herself changing laws, everything else did come to fruition. The quotes about "making a difference"; "were part of something bigger than ourselves" and "in our own small way, we were helping to build a better world" amount to little more than political rhetoric. Then, there is the nebulous nature of the final line: "And that is precisely what so many young people are doing every day across this continent."

There appear to be two different narratives at work in Michelle Obama's speech. The first consistently makes references or alludes to pinnacles of achievement and success. The latter can relevantly be applied to any aspect of life; vocational, financial, social and familial. There are two references to her being the spouse of US president Barack Obama. In terms of power, prestige and finances, Obama makes it clear, sometimes in ways less direct than others, that she has reached the highpoint of her ambitions. Her narrative is structured along the lines of the "American Dream". It is a tale of great achievements stemming from small

beginnings. She then sacrifices a flourishing and profitable career in law so as to concern herself with those “on the ground”. Through Michelle Obama’s interpretation, these narratives are intended to merge together to serve as an example for altruism and compassion. However, what makes them incompatible is the very source of the speech, namely Obama herself. By virtue of who and what she is, of her socio-cultural, political and economic status, she cannot simply add dimensions to her person which are so intrinsically removed from her cultural, ethnic, social and economic context.

In terms of socio-economic as well as socio-political categories, she and her young audience occupy starkly contrasting social frameworks. It follows therefore, that the respective discourses of the two parties (Obama and the Soweto youth) are also radically different. In a general sense, both parties are striving toward similar ends in this particular context. However, while the Soweto youth are socially, culturally and economically, very much part of the respective social fabric, Obama on the other hand, is decidedly removed from this context. Whilst the young leaders have a motivation to help that is at least partly based on the fact that this is the society, communities and homes to which they belong, Obama, [paraphrasing] “descended the heights of her tower to help those on the ground.” At this point it is important to reiterate that the claim here is not one which maintains that someone who inhabits the framework of the powerful, dominant discourses cannot by default, be of help to those in need. Instead the problem, as has been mentioned before, is one of interpretation. The young leaders of Soweto, being in greater proximity, have less need of the processes of production and interpretation to understand the state of their society and their personal stake in it. Obama on the other hand, relies heavily on the above-mentioned processes of

interpretation, as she is much removed from the social milieu that she is addressing. It is important also, to note that she does so in the capacity of someone who speaks with the tenor of authority.

In the textbook, Michelle Obama's speech is located approximately in the middle of the textbook. This follows several other texts which have had socio-political issues as their central theme. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the political argument or view of the textbook has remained consistent. The emphasis has remained on issues that have been discussed earlier in this dissertation, namely those of CAPS. It is also clear in this passage that the aims of transformation, of addressing problems that for too long have been ignored is a pressing concern. Therefore, regardless of whether there are problems with Michelle Obama's speech, the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of people who do not have the means to do so for themselves is ethically-sound and in keeping with the issues of the textbook.

5.5 Comparison of the Macmillan and Oxford University textbooks

The two textbooks engage the same subject, grade, level and were published more or less at the same time (Macmillan 2011; Oxford University 2013). To a certain extent, both textbooks follow similar methodologies as far as language pedagogy is concerned. Much of this information has already been covered throughout the analyses themselves. In both textbooks certain aspects were evident:

- The use of texts in the form of extracts from novels, short stories, poetry, magazine articles, newspaper articles, plays, scripts for TV or film and advertisements.
- Reading comprehension questions which accompanied the various texts.
- Grammar exercises which were, in some cases, taken from the texts that had been presented earlier in the chapter.
- Vocabulary learning.
- Writing learning, in the form of writing format conventions such as those found in essays, poems, letters, reports, reviews.
- Exercises on speaking and listening.

All of the above were relevant and specific to CAPS. Having listed the above, it is incumbent to ask where the differences between the two textbooks lie.

- Firstly, in the use of texts. The Oxford University textbook contains 61 separate texts altogether and is 272 pages long. The Macmillan textbook has 53 texts and is 298 pages long. Although the quantitative difference here is not significant, the former makes more prodigious use of the proffered texts than the latter, as will be described in more detail later.
- Reading comprehension questions regarding presented texts are a consistent feature of the Oxford University textbook. This occurs much less frequently in the Macmillan textbook, where a text can often directly be followed by grammar and/or vocabulary learning that has no connection to the text.

- the Macmillan textbook creates a distinct divide between material that is considered literary (in the form of texts) and that which falls into the more technical categories of language such as grammar and vocabulary learning. In so doing, the afore-mentioned utilises more space and time for the latter two practices. These are also frequently completely detached from the texts. In the Oxford University textbook there is far less evidence of the afore-mentioned divide as grammar and vocabulary learning is for the most part drawn directly from the texts themselves. This affords opportunities for re-reading and re-examination of the texts [i.e. promoting critical language awareness].
- In terms of writing learning, much of what is mentioned above is applicable here also. The Macmillan textbook often approaches the subject of production of particular writing genres, i.e. the conventions of certain writing are explained, brief examples provided and these are followed by exercises. In the Oxford University textbook, writing genres are first and foremost represented by the preceding texts. Models of the genres under analysis are then considered, features of the format noted, as well as their why they are significant and how this can be put into practice. Essentially, it follows a genre approach Ivanic (2004).

The issue of whether one textbook is necessarily “better” than the other is contingent on several different factors. Most notable amongst these, will be how effectively the textbook will function within the primary context that is the classroom, i.e. teacher and the learners. The Oxford University textbook’s practice of integrating the primary texts with grammar, writing and vocabulary learning will undoubtedly serve the pedagogical practices of some teachers and subsequently the progress of their learners. On the

other hand, the more distinct delineation of various aspects of language learning, as is evident in the Macmillan textbook would better aid the styles of pedagogy for other teachers and thereby facilitate the acquisition of knowledge for learners.

An essential aspect in the respective analyses is the effect of discourses, dominant or otherwise, in the textbooks; how they are affected and in turn reflect, the societal discourses that shape and reshape so much of contemporary society. There can be no doubt that the dominant discourses are strongly evident in the texts used in both textbooks. Subject matter, use and/or formation of popular opinion, tenor, modality, the coupling of certain formats with specific material, all of these are just a few of the ways in which learners are persuasively “familiarized” with discourse-as-practice. Even the composition of the textbooks themselves makes it evident how broader contemporary value systems work to affect the structure Bhattacharya, et al. (2007). One conspicuous example is the emphasis on technically-correct and “proper” English in the numerous grammar and vocabulary learning sections of the Macmillan textbook. The central premise throughout seems to be that the projection of grammatically-correct and “standard” English vernacular, which usurps understanding and meaning-making as the primary purpose of language learning. It is important however, to acknowledge that language learning cannot transpire without the structure afforded to it by the more technical aspects, such as grammar and other linguistic practices. Neither meaning-making or grammar for example, can be altogether privileged without proving detrimental to language learning.

Language requires structure, however it is important to note that this does not imply that language is static. Furthermore, the dominant discourses,

which are inextricably tied to language, are also intrinsically not static. The implication here, is that the structural aspects of language will in turn never be immutable and thus will necessarily be susceptible to change. The escalation of multi-modal technologies underscores this outlook. In keeping with afore-mentioned argument, pedagogy cannot be static nor can it take place in a vacuum. The productions of the dominant discourses will therefore be as much a factor in education, as they are in all institutions, disciplines and practices within society.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Language and the construction of the learner as subject

In this dissertation, my aim was to examine Grade 8 English Home Language textbooks. I sought to ascertain, by using poststructuralist theory as a foundation, and critical discourse analysis as a methodological tool, the influence of dominant societal discourses upon the various texts in these learning source materials.

Language is socially constructed and maintained. It also has the potential for deconstruction and the alteration of certain social dynamics. Gee (1990) points out that in order to belong to any particular discourse, one has to adopt the numerous characteristics (of which language is necessarily a part) that define a discourse. In our contemporary world with its plethora of discourses, everyone necessarily is part of numerous different discourses. Some of these facilitate and/or support one another, some have little connection and others deliberately work against each other. Since the issue at hand is discourse, power is always a key factor.

The relation between power and discourse can be characterized by its complexity. Indeed, it was difficult at times to ascertain whether the learner was being empowered by the texts of the textbook or was being constrained/controlled by the power of discourses therein. Several different examples of this are evident in section (4.3) and (5.2) of the relevant textbooks. This is demonstrated by a text concerning gender and popular views of the feminine body, which begins with a seemingly well-rounded argument against the popular notion of the ideal body. The position of the author changes adroitly several times and the text is eventually brought to a conclusion with a rather banal health warning against the dangers of obesity. What makes texts such as these

problematic is the “assumption” that the learner will simply read “with” the text (Janks, 1997, pp. 330-331). This attitude is reasonable from the point of view of positivism, where the assumption is that what the text presents is indeed, “the truth”. Furthermore, positivism ties in with humanism which describes the learner as a static, unitary and willing recipient of information and/or instruction.

Poststructuralist theory and critical literacy however, offer a very different argument. Critical literacy recognizes the highly complex relation between the subject [learner], power and discourse. This is evident in the fact that critical literacy approaches the text with an analytic or investigative perspective. Unlike humanism, critical literacy does not presume fact and certainly not “truth”. If anything, a critical reading presumes that the text contains a host of different agenda, or at least perspectives, and that an interest of some sort is being served by it [text]. Instead of advocating reading “with” the text, critical literacy acknowledges the benefit of reading “against” the text. Critical literacy does not advocate reading against the text as an end-in-itself. What it does point out is that each text stems from a particular perspective, and as such, is subject to varying degrees of “factuality” and/or “objectivity”. The perception of the subject [learner] in poststructuralism differs starkly from that of humanism. Instead of a unitary, static recipient, poststructuralism sees the learner as fluid, subject to transformation and in some instances, even fragmentation Hall (1996). The reason for the afore-mentioned description is, to a large degree, the continual construction and reconstruction of the subject by the fluctuating, pervasive and sometimes contradicting discourses of society.

Although this mini-dissertation was limited in terms of space, (hence the analysis of only two textbooks), the findings nonetheless remain relevant and significant. This is particularly so in terms of the mismatch between the critical approach evident in CAPS with its emphasis on active learning, critical language awareness and the importance of understanding texts in context.

6.2 Dominant discourses in English Home Language textbooks

The textbooks which are the subject of this dissertation are those of English Language learning. The emphasis therefore, is upon language. Language, in its numerous modes permeates, defines, controls, sustains and can alter the world we live in. This is valid whether we are referring to subtle, taken-for-granted happenings that we experience every day, to vast and forceful acts of political power that alter the course of history. Language and discourse work in correlation with one another. This is one of the most significant reasons for employing CDA to analyse the textbooks.

However important discourse analysis is to this research, the practice of critical reading is equally so. Why is this? With contemporary digital media, learners are being exposed to more media, information and more accompanying discourses than ever before. In the case of this research the medium of print is significant, as the subjects of analysis are textbooks. In principle however, whether the medium is graphic, digital or print is not as significant as the act of reading, and in this case, critical reading. What is essential is a critical consciousness [or approach] of the

... subtle, everyday workings of language as a tool of power has the potential to illuminate our actual social and personal conditions. Learners need to develop an understanding of how language functions socially, in order that they [if necessary] may disrupt the conventions that marginalize diverse ways of being (Govender, 2011, p. 57).

In terms of any text, the interests of the text may seem quite apparent and the reader may have difficulty in questioning the text. When what the text presents as naturalisations in the text are not natural for the reader, the latter is at an advantage, as this demonstrates that what the texts construct are only versions of reality. This represents a critical model of literacy, where readers do not spontaneously comply with textual positionings, rather than an assimilationist model, which requires readers to engage with, rather than question the positioning of the texts. Essentially, a process of engagement without the practice of estrangement, represents a form of submission to the power of the text. This occurs regardless of the reader's personal positions. Conversely, estrangement without engagement represents a rejection of any infringement upon one's own subjectivity. The text, for all intents and purposes becomes a moot point (Janks, 1997, pp. 330-331).

The educational motivation behind the analysis in this research is to emphasize the need for a critical inclination towards language and literacy education. It is a mistake to see textbooks as simply being materials for transferring curricular content. Instead, they have the potential to influence [or teach] community [or even national] beliefs, values and perceptions about the world and the people who constitute it.

This is done through the use of language, which addresses diverse people, places and practices and their respective ways of being. As an example of the textbooks'

practices of power, the textbooks choose to include and emphasize particular texts and exclude others. Thereby, they determine how issues of power between different peoples are addressed. In this way, textbooks serve to position their readers [learners and teachers], while they [the texts] are positioned. (Govender, 2011, pp. 58-59)

One of the most important factors under analysis was the determination of the influence of dominant societal discourses on Grade 8 English Home Language textbooks. These factors were looked at in the form of “issues” such as those of gender, race, media, language, the socio-political and the socio-economic. In gender, for example, it was found that the treatment of women remained surprisingly stereotypical. That is to say, women were still perceived as being submissive, dependent on their male counterparts and also prone to bouts of emotional volatility. Much of this constructed perception was normalized, so as to come across as being the simple transference of established facts. In reality, what was evident was that these texts were recreating and sustaining older discourses which ensured a power divide between the sexes, with males frequently being depicted as being more worthy of power and dominance than women. The complexity of these discourses showed itself in that some texts had female authors, who themselves emphasized stereotypically male-held conceptions concerning issues such as those concerning the female body. In addition, these texts were conspicuous with regard to their complete silences regarding societal views of the male body.

An aspect common to all passages within the themes/sections of the textbooks was that of social issues. These encompassed a wide spectrum, including: gender, race, language, ethnic/cultural background, practices of inclusivity/exclusivity, socio-economic background and socio-political

hierarchies. The common problem with these “issues” is one of inequality. This commonly presented itself as one aspect of a particular individual/group being privileged over another. The manner in which these inequalities represented themselves ranged from blatant and direct to subtle and insidious. One of the more deceptive ways in which influence was exerted was through the practice of silence.

Another topic that was frequently addressed within the textbooks was that of digital media, and more notably, social networking. It would seem that since this is a more technically-orientated topic, there would be less room for social supposition and/or argument. However, in the case of digital media, virtually all the relevant texts seem to have a social relevance. Every text dealing with digital media approached the topic with circumspect and was written for a particular audience (most commonly that of teachers and parents). Digital media and social networking were uniformly depicted as complex threats to the well-being of learners. While threats do exist, particularly in social networking, these seem to cast a shadow over the positive aspects of digital media, not to mention the increasing necessity thereof in contemporary life. As was discussed in section (2.2.4), modern digital media affords language a new medium with which it can further itself. The vital role this technology has played in globalization is already evident.

The nature of the dominant discourses, is best explained by Michel Foucault, who describes the facts, subjectivities or ideologies as being elements of:

conceptual terrains existed in which knowledge is formed and produced.

What is analysed is not simply what was thought or said per se, but all the

discursive rules and categories that were a priori, assumed as a constituent part of discourse and therefore of knowledge, and so fundamental that they remained unvoiced and unthought. Discursive practices are characterized by a “delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for an elaboration of concepts and theories (Foucault, 1981, pp. 48-49).

The discourses concerning that which is valuable, desirable, unacceptable or even dangerous, are all already part of our society reality and include institutions or entities in society which wield dominant power and are intent on replicating and maintaining it.

6.3 The Construction of the Learner as Subject

As is pointed out in Chapter 2, the notion of the active teacher and the passive learner is erroneous. Learners are just as active in constructing meaning as teachers are in imparting it. This does not equate however, to an equal balance of power. The textbook, which not only instructs the learners, but also commonly informs the practices of the teacher, does hold sway. Hence, reference was made to the construction and reconstruction of the learner as subject. The issue of reconstruction is important to consider from the standpoint that discourses are not static in nature. Poststructuralism demonstrates this in highlighting the historical locality of discourses. Another important point of locality is that where language and practices intersect. This adds another significant dimension to the context of language.

Actually I should like to say that ... the *words* you utter or what you think as you utter them are not what matters, so much as the difference they

make at various points in your life ... *Practice* gives words their significance. (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 85)

As is stated by Wittgenstein above, neither language nor the interpretation thereof, separately possess the same gravity that is held by the triumvirate of language, meaning and the relative historicity. If this is the case, the subject is necessarily subject to change, a change which more than likely is to come from the reconstruction initiated by dominant discourses. If we scrutinize the premise of why the learner ought to read “with” the text, it is so that he/she will be open to the concept of “practice” of which Wittgenstein makes mention. In praxis, the notion of reading with the text and working with the practices within the textbooks is reasonable, for without it, learning would prove very difficult indeed. However, what I propose in this dissertation does not represent a binary of “either reading with” or “reading against” the text. In the passages of the textbooks, the notion that the learner will read “with” the text is unspoken, but certainly assumed. Many of the passages, regardless of their genres, are treated in a likewise manner by the textbooks (i.e. the texts are treated uncritically).

Critical literacy does not infer that all information, in all forms of media be subject to a summary deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction so as to determine the variety of other meanings that could possibly be deciphered. Instead, in the treatment of Grade 8 English language learning, as in the tradition of others such as (Govender, 2011; Janks, 2002 & van Dijk, 2001), I argue in favour of a particular mind-set or approach. Critical reading can be likened to an awareness of certain issues at work within the text, which, while they may often not be highlighted, are active nonetheless. For example, the manner in which systems such as exclusionary practices, are enacted. These acts of power

are often associated with other aspects of the text, such as language and race, which may underlie the principal narrative of the text.

It is a plausible speculation that critical literacy of some sort has been, and always will be necessary and important. In the contemporary Information Age, there is cause to argue that critical language awareness is more necessary than ever before. There exist an profusion of divisions on the World Wide Web already, none more conspicuous than the proliferation and domination of the English language itself.

6.5 Epilogue

During the process of analysing of English Home Language textbooks, one of the most striking outcomes was the reinforcement of the profound and complex relationship that exists between the notions of discourse, language and power. In this research, the subject is language and therefore brings the learner into direct contact with the practices of power. It has been established that these practices are not all positive, nor are they uniformly negative. However, it is worth bearing in mind that power operates on the premise of control or constraint, and thus the dominant discourses which are prevalent in the passages of the textbook (or any text, for that matter) will always work to construct the learner/reader.

Where does this leave English language learning and the learner? Are both destined to be the victims of dominant societal discourses? We are all subject to the innumerable discourses that pervade our contemporary

world. However, if language learning can instil the notion that all texts originate from a particular perspective and strive to convey a particular message, it necessarily follows that texts are never neutral and generic. If these aspects can become part of English language learning, learners will not necessarily act as the passive recipients of these discourses, powerful as they may be.

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