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What counts as English?

**A discursive investigation between two English Language
Cape Town Primary School Grade Six classrooms.**

Minor Dissertation

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of a Masters degree in Applied Language and Literacy
Studies.**

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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

Signed:

Date:

University of Cape Town

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How do we recognise the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For, if we can recognise them, we are also able to break them.

Franz Boas (1858-1942).

To all my family and friends, thank you for all your time, love and support over the past few years of this, my journey, and path of study. Thank you all so very much!

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ABSTRACT

What counts as English depends on the circumstances and where and how it is employed. In classrooms this socio-cultural artefact is constructed through practices in particular ways. Language and literacy practices in schools produce and re-produce certain things that count. In this dissertation I asked what counts as English and what practices were employed in varying contexts to validate what counted in a greater context. I was concerned to find out whether and how English-language resources in different contexts did or did not contribute to enhancing students' (social and economic) mobility.

This ethnographically-based study focused on two Grade Six classes in State run Primary schools in Cape Town, one of them being a well-resourced, monolingual, English classroom and school and the other being a poorly-resourced, multilingual, English as an Additional language classroom and school. Data were collected by means of digital audio recordings and field notes. Contrastively, these two sites differentiated in terms of literacy events and practices, and classroom context shaped what counted. The findings indicated that the classroom interaction between students and teacher constructed and normalised particular forms of language interaction in these settings. The story of what counts, in current South African classrooms, is that a more sophisticated tale of how school fails or succeeds to provide mobility, in terms of language and literacy, for core or peripheral students needs to be told.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 EXPLORING WHAT COUNTS AS ENGLISH

This introduction draws on relevant readings to construct the outlines of my opening research focus. In this opening Chapter, I discuss the concerns and the literature resources that encouraged me to elaborate on my question and to set up a line of enquiry. I start by considering the social circumstances surrounding schooling and what such a perspective brings to concerns around language, literacy and learning in school settings and I then go on to introduce my research focus for this study.

Classrooms are undoubtedly affected by circumstances beyond the classroom walls. Schools are institutions where values are imparted and acquired, ideological positions are taken, resources are unequally distributed and power is exercised – and this plays out in the context of increasing social and linguistic diversity in the wider society. My study therefore concerns itself with exploring how social practices are developed around English as a category in contemporary society and specifically how English, as a mediative resource and a social practice, is constituted and constructed in the context and discourses of the classroom. While the focus of my research was the classroom, this study has taken into account how wider social dynamics construct particular linguistic resources as valuable or less valuable.

The discursive practices in society, school and, specifically, the classroom produce situated rules for interaction and these exist before a particular conversation begins. Specific ways of using English are constructed in the classroom and participation in this dialogue is deemed appropriate or inappropriate according to the classroom conventions that pertain. Languages are social constructions along with the other facets of social life. Is the English that is produced, then, always the same thing in every location, context or setting? In answering this question, I identify categories of language usage and the practices that accompany them in two contrasting school settings. Language and literacy are socially situated practices (Heller, 2007, Street, 2009) and what I examine in my thesis

are the events that indicate what these practices might be. This is done by way of analysing instances of classroom discourse. These are analysed to examine what counts as English in two contrasting classroom settings and to understand how students encounter the learning of English in each respective space. I examine what counts as English by contrasting classroom talk - I examine instances of classroom interaction and practices that construct and normalise particular forms of language practice in each classroom. I employ an ethnographic-style research methodology to examine two classrooms from two different schools in order to contrast divergent interactions and practices in one working class and one middle class school in Cape Town.

My study is, thus, a language and literacy study that contrasts a monolingual, English classroom at a middle class Primary school with a classroom in a working class Primary school where students are predominantly not first language English speakers and come from various Language backgrounds. Grade Six classes were observed at each of these Primary schools, which are both situated in suburban Cape Town. So, two classroom environments (one at 'Railway Primary' and one at 'Midway Primary' – these are pseudonyms used to maintain the anonymity of my sources), each with its own teacher, were the sites for my research.

My aim in my fieldwork was to gain insight into each context for the purposes of my contrastive ethnographic case study of classroom dynamics. I considered the classroom environment and looked at the resources at hand in each setting that were used to make meaning - for both student and teacher. I examine how the actors, in this setting, act and interact in this social space that they find themselves in and whether the resources available to the students help them to participate productively or hold them back. In the data collection I endeavoured to remain sensitive to the specificities of the contexts under study. While I selected the schools on the criteria that they contrasted along class lines and the predominance of first language English speakers amongst the student population, the particular classes at the school were not chosen for study on any specific criteria. I attempted not to apply pre-judgements on my sites of study as my intention was to make as full sense as possible of what was happening, and to contrast the two settings through analysis of the data. I have focused in each case, on a bounded context, from a case study perspective, where only teachers, students and classroom interaction, from the selected schools I observed, were my focus of study, and I have then drawn contrasting conclusions across the sites. I did not attend to events or interactions outside the

classroom at all. I followed a qualitative, ethnographic-style methodology in my research, in order to allow for depth of meanings to be generated. I discuss my research methodology and research practices in the third Chapter of this dissertation. At this point I will mention that Heath & Street (2008: 6-7) talk about what ethnographers encounter, that is, that an ethnographer's greatest challenge is attempting to comprehend the manner in which, "...cultural patterns support, deny, and change structures and uses of language and multimodal literacies". Furthermore, ethnographic study is a search for patterns that are interconnected.

1.2 THE MILIEU OF ENGLISH

English, as a language entity that is commonly understood to exist but whose parameters and trajectories are disputed, is usefully studied as social in nature and I therefore focus on language and literacy as social practices (Heller 2007). While I ask what counts as English in specific contexts, this undertaking is not about solving the problems of English language teaching, but is about studying what is happening to learning in classrooms when what counts as English takes specific forms as part of social practices in the classroom. In each setting I aspired to understand the classroom in its current state in South Africa, from the perspective of what language resources are being used for learning. I was concerned to find out more about what sorts of consequences for learning and life-chances for students might follow from such language uses. This aim included trying to understand the classrooms in terms of the larger context that validated the production and use of particular language resources and what the consequences are for linguistic understanding and for understanding the linguistic practices of schooling. I kept in mind that if what is 'good' or 'bad' is socially constructed, then there is a more complex story to be developed as to how student failure or success in schools is produced in terms of language and literacy.

Blommaert (2003) argued that names which monolithically signify language, such as English or Swahili or isiXhosa are problematic when they construct essentialised or reified approaches to languages as bounded systems in multi-lingual contexts where language variation and hybridity are widespread. Crucial differences in the complex idea that is English become invisible when an essentialised view of language is taken. This stance toward English, as a stable, bounded system rather than a dynamic social practice is

not helpful for research in contexts of linguistic variation and difference; when looking at language it is its use that counts and the variety shown by this usage. It must also be borne in mind that social inequality is, at least, as much a contemporary reality as in the past; language can contribute to and perpetuate inequalities (Bourdieu 1991) and seeing English as uncomplex, without layers or norms that differ depending on location, is not useful for understanding inequality. As a source for making meaning, language is socially and culturally laden, for we do not acquire it in a socially neutral vacuum. Language in society is characterised by differential patterns of use that become components of individual speakers' repertoires. Speaking and writing are manifest in a diverse range of language varieties, genres, registers and practices. Such resources are not equally distributed amongst users of these resources and they carry different social weightings or valuations. Blommaert (2003: 5) asserts that language is thus "fundamentally indexical in nature", i.e., every instance of language use points to social position. Language function and social value can thus, in terms of meaning, not be separated. Meaning making can be seen as a continuous mapping of linguistic forms onto social functions by all involved in the communicative process, a process that is fundamentally a social one as well, with consequences under conditions of social inequality, as a result of the appraisal of language use with regards to expectations, standards and norms. Linguistic resources are thus applied in specific normative ways in terms of language use and "orientations towards orders of indexicality" (Blommaert, 2003: 6) are displayed by speakers. These orders are also called norms of language and are associated with specific shapes of language as in, for example, the high-status variety of 'global English', in contrast to local and less mobile varieties. By activating these norms in language use, one becomes situated by them and issues of identity and grouping come to the fore as important facets of language in use and orientation toward indexicality. Bourdieu (2006: 503) endorsed this view as follows: "...the linguistic relation of power is not completely determined by the prevailing linguistic forces alone: by virtue of the languages spoken, the speakers who use them and the groups defined by possession of the corresponding competence, the whole social structure is present in each interaction (and thereby in the discourse uttered)".

Blommaert (2003) refers to the role of social institutions that centre, stabilise and authorise this system of indexicality. Such centring institutions are active at all points and strata of social life, from family to school and up to levels of state and world systems. For Bourdieu there is power in the linguistic market (2006: 505), and price is attached to variations on offer of these linguistic products in different markets, that is, "... the more formal the

market is, the more practically congruent with the norms of the legitimate language, the more it is dominated by the dominant, i.e., by the holders of the legitimate competence, authorised to speak with authority”.

Language and literacy norms at the local level (and its divergence from the core or mainstream) are the focus of an ethnographic study of classroom practices in a Cape Town township school that illuminates what is called ‘peripheral normativity’ (Blommaert et al 2006). An outside view on classroom and language use in this setting might be that a restricted or defective form of language and literacy is being taught, as evident by the written work of both students and teachers which shows multiple errors of orthography and grammar when judged by the standards of the hegemonic ‘centre’. But the authors feel that such ‘errors’ have a local authenticity. The errors the teachers and students alike make may be seen as locally normative, in terms of the norms that operate on the periphery as opposed to the core, where the rules of mainstream or hegemonic English apply.

These teachers teach within the context they know, in terms of the content they are familiar with and the training they have received. The English employed by the teachers is not far removed from the English resources of the students, as most teachers have similar origins to the students, in terms of meaning making and language practices. This production of locality impacts upon the student in terms of restricting their mobility beyond the local, the classroom and its immediate community, due to such local validity not being recognised in relation to the wider societal system, that is, to other spaces or places. Such a perspective on local normativity endorses Heath’s (1983) earlier ground-breaking study of what type of English language resources and practices were encountered before school. She showed how African-American and White working class English speaking students took different language resources and ‘ways with words’ to school to their middle class counterparts and these had direct consequences for their success at school, because of their divergence from school norms.

From this perspective, language use is particular to speech communities and this raises a question around marginality. Where do the rights of those on the periphery sit when their language use is not identical with the hegemonic core? The study of linguistic resources in contemporary social settings must focus on how language is employed and under what conditions. It is not enough to look purely on a local sociolinguistic level, but global

constraints need also to be taken into consideration. Language is a social phenomenon, with language production and language construction certainly not limited to the classroom. In reality, an amount of incorporation, merging and blending of language resources occurs in everyday life and presumably in classrooms. This is where what counts emerges in importance as a consideration, for it becomes more a matter of 'voice' than of languages. Voice is the capacity to engage in interaction, and to navigate, with success, between projected meaning and granted meaning (Blommaert, 2003: 7); to produce dialogue creatively within set constraints or norms. In settings which are characterised by multilingualism these concerns become more complex.

Heller (2007), focusing on bilingualism, argues that languages today are widely viewed as bounded systems. She suggest that this view on language is a result of 19th century European nationalist movements which promoted one language as a national language, in terms of the ideologies of state and nation, e.g., in England, France, Italy and Germany. She argues that this view of language as bounded and systemic rather than as constructed social practices becomes increasingly problematic under contemporary conditions of global flows, migration and hyperdiversity, but that the perpetuation of this view of language is maintained through power relations that are manifest in 'natural' talk (e.g.: in classrooms) and in institutional structures (e.g.: the Western Cape Education Department) and at a national level (e.g., in the Constitution of South Africa where eleven languages rather than one are given official recognition but as separate, bounded systems rather than as the variable mixes that reflect actual language use).

Hierarchies exist that are as social and political, as they are linguistic, in constructing social inequality; language is only one terrain for the creation of social difference. Seeing language as a collection of ideologically-defined practices and resources helps us to assemble an idea of language as a social phenomenon, thus aiding reflexive analysis of its discursive regimes, regulations and social actions. In my study, the underlying thought is: what are the language practices of the classroom setting and how do they relate to the reality outside the classroom? In answering this question I look at interactions that occur between teachers and students in the two classroom settings: the one multilingual in nature and the other monolingual in character.

1.3 SITUATING MYSELF: STUDENT, VOLUNTEER AND RESEARCHER

My exposure to various accounts of discourse analysis and literacy studies in postgraduate courses taken as a student at the University of Cape Town motivated my line of enquiry into discursive analysis of the classrooms. I became interested in the area of literacy in action, and associated ideas of symbolic power. During the course of my studies I felt the need to become more involved with literacy volunteer work and I began to volunteer at the AWAKE Programme at Railway Primary (names changed). In due time my roles, as volunteer and researcher, crossed paths when I realised that my experience of Railway Primary via AWAKE had introduced me to a context that potentially had volumes to say about literacy, and ultimately what counts as English in this setting. What remained was to find a school in which to contrast these literacy and language practices, and so I chose Midway Primary School (name changed).

1.4 FOCUS, ORIENTATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My primary focus is language in context, that is, reviewing what counts as English and in what context(s) this English counts, specifically, what social load is carried by these language resources? Is it a personal choice or an external choice by agents of relative monolithic proportions, such as the institutions of school and government with their respective agents being teachers and policy? I start from the view that English is constituted in divergent ways in different settings, due to socio-discursive constraints. I investigate this concern in a contrastive study of classroom interaction with a particular focus on teacher talk. I aim to explain and describe patterns and identify relationships, in order to shed light on what counts as English in the current classroom so as to expound in broader terms. I ask what the nature of classroom interaction and practices are and how they influence, adjust or alter what counts as English in contrasting settings. This research aims to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the language and literacy dynamics relevant to the role of language in the current arena of teaching. That is, its visible or less visible power; how this power shapes classroom discourse and what constitutes English as a medium in monolingual or multilingual classroom settings in terms of classroom practices.

1.5 FOCAL RESEARCH QUESTION AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

My research question is: What counts as English in two contrasting school settings? The operationalising of my research involved developing the following sub-questions as the route to generating the data required to answer this question:

- How is English, in specific classrooms, perceived and can what counts as English be thought of as the same thing under different conditions?
- What identifiable teacher practices, classroom practices or language and literacy practices affect and produce what counts as English in classrooms, during interactions between teacher and student(s)?
- What patterns of language-based teacher practices are clearly in contrast across the two classrooms, specifically in terms of teacher-student interactivity, pedagogical orientation, subject knowledge and regulative routines?
- What is the nature of the English language resources that the students are using and learning, and how do these relate to their out-of-school language practices?
- Are there differences in the linguistic resources employed in the two settings and how can these be explained? What social load do the linguistic resources carry, in contrast?
- What are the models of language, literacy and learning which the teacher holds to and how do they inform practice?

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 DISCOURSE, LANGUAGE, POWER

In this Chapter, I review relevant theoretical resources and traditions for my research purposes. I start with discourse studies. Discourse studies can be perceived as a specific or configured view of knowledge and it can be seen as a concern with forms of dialogue and expression that have become 'common' or habituated. Discourse is also seen as representing a particular set(s) of interests. What follows is an account of where I situate myself with regard to the range of perspectives and approaches that use discourse analysis.

2.1.1 THE DISCOURSE OF DISCOURSE: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse Analysis (hereafter DA) arose out of a variety of diverse disciplines (McCarthy 1993: 1), including anthropology, linguistics, psychology and sociology. DA has constructed a considerable base in Descriptive, and most recently, Applied Linguistics. The disciplines that contribute to DA have a shared interest in how real people use language, as opposed to studying artificially created sentences; its focus is language in action. DA is concerned with the study of language, the contexts in which it is used, and the connection between these categories (McCarthy 1993: 5). DA first grew out of work in the above-mentioned different disciplines in the 1960's and 1970's, additionally including those of semiotics and linguistics. Discourse analysts observe the use of language - be it all kinds of written texts or data of a spoken nature – from forms of governmental and institutional talk to classroom conversation.

Coulthard (1977) produced one of the earliest efforts in terms of laying down fundamental concepts of what was to become a discipline in the 1980's and into the 1990's, where the efforts of analysis were applied to social and linguistic practice in order to bring about social change (Caldas-Coulthard 1999: 196). Coulthard's work there discusses DA in

terms of speech acts, the ethnography of speaking (the ethnographic study of communication pioneered by Dell Hymes and adapted by Heath [1983] and others) and conversational analysis.

Slembrouck (2006), in an overview of fundamental Hymesian ideas, notes that the term speech event is limited to activities that are governed, directly, by rules or norms for the use of speech, where the speech act is the nominal term in the 'set'. That is to say: the classroom is the speech situation and a conversation during class time is the speech event, but a command or question within the conversation would be a speech act.

In introducing the ideas of DA, Coulthard specified classroom interaction. In particular, he discussed the English used by teachers and students (1977: 99-106). He drew upon the idea of levels, especially the idea of a rank scale model to analyse, in grammatical terms, meaningful units. Within the classroom, interaction differs from unfocused conversation – its focal point is instruction and its discursive structure reflects this (or at least it should, but that is what this research aims to investigate). The teacher selects subject matter, presents it as well as departs from said subject matter, and then deals with any confusion or uncertainties that arise. Coulthard talks of the lesson being the largest unit, where transactions take place, which have boundaries cordoned off by certain words. It is possible to say DA of classroom transactions and interaction can produce retrospective meta-statements (1977: 103), especially by viewing the composition of the interactions (that of informing, directing, or eliciting) in terms of *moves*. Moves (1977: 104) merge to encapsulate exchanges, but are comprised of one or more *acts*. Coulthard defines *acts* in terms of their function in the discourse – as initiating or responding to discourse activity.

Van Dijk (1985) edited an overview of DA in four volumes that include work from Sacks, Kress, Tannen, and others. This volume shows the direction of development of DA over a period. At that time the topical areas under analysis ranged from observing inference and concerns to not allowing a subjective notion to creep into analysis (Sacks 1985), to concerns with power and the idea of power as a transitive asymmetrical relationship (Fowler 1985), to classroom discourses' internal structure and related events in the class (Mehan 1985). DA can be linguistically technical and detailed in approach, in terms of the techniques of description of spoken and written discourse. For example, Sinclair (1999: 6-22) looks at encapsulation and sentence coherence and classification with its variation and exceptions such as the ideas of 'verbal echo' and 'overlay'. Sinclair

concludes that coherence is principally achieved through encapsulation; i.e., that a text does not simply consist of a sequence of sentences that are complex in their interconnection, but should be seen as a sequence of sentence length texts, each being an entire revised 'update' of the previous sentence before it. In addition to this encapsulation of what precedes, a sentence also prospectively what is to come in the following sentence; this is perhaps more apt in terms of an interview transcription than in my case of analysis of transcribed classroom discourse.

Data provides evidence, and DA for Hatch (1994: 1) is the study of the language of communication, which constitutes the data for DA. Whether written or spoken, what the data provides, from an analysis of the action of communication, is evidence that communication is a system that connects the cognitive, social, and linguistic enterprises. Hatch looks at communication theory, in terms of system constraints and conversational analysis, as well as looking at speech acts and speech events. Perhaps, most importantly, Hatch looks at the layers that make up discourse analysis, specifically linguistic and cognitive template processes in what becomes, in a measure, a technical exercise (Hatch, 1994: 291-323).

Though more concrete, in contrast to Hatch's rather technical view, Gee's (1999: 1) work offers the idea of language as an action and an affiliation, where it serves more than just function – it is a scaffolded performance of a social activity and a scaffolded human affiliation within and between cultures and social groups. Language is enlisted and employed for specific social activities and identities. It must be borne in mind that there is the additional 'stuff' of non-language and, secondly, how language is used 'on site' to enact activities and identities (1999: 6-7). It is, in other words, a process of crafting 'things' through language, as well as the creating of worlds through activity and identity. Language is used as a resource to craft and project 'who' we are, every 'utterance' has a meaning if it projects who or what you are or are doing. The 'who', however, indicates a socially situated identity. Discourses are the doing and saying of 'who' and 'what' is appropriate in terms of manner, time, or place of one's interactions, thinking, values, etc. Discourses are not 'units' with clear boundaries – so identification work is at play, that is, trying to make visible the 'who' and 'what' of social interaction. Languages observed socially, that is to say studies of the role of languages in discourse, are involved with the task of the use of language and the 'way(s) *with* words'. What is at stake here is 'who' is doing 'what'. However, does it then become an issue of situated meaning or more one of identity?

Meaning is specific in specific situations or contexts, where the meanings of words are related to social and cultural groups in ways that transcend the individual mind. For example, an important aspect of word meaning is our experience of the world, like patterns that constitute one of numerous situated meanings of a word.

Linked to this is the idea of cultural models that, in a tacit manner, allow for children to form 'theories' of a word rooted within the domain of their cultural and social community. These situated meanings are assembled out of a variety of features; in context these features are combined to comprise the situated meaning that a word will have in that context. Gee (1999: 40-52) brings all the above in focus by proposing a view of the mind in terms of pattern-recognition. But what are the consequences of this view for a child who is not adept at this skill? If a teacher says a word or sequence of words, what is thought or associated with the word or phrase? Is it understood in the same way by the child and teacher? In light of this study, what if the idea the child has is juxtaposed to, or different from the teacher's idea? Is the idea then replaced or is there room for active agency?

The mind is social (Gee 1999: 52) and there are many ways of pattern recognition. Socio-cultural practices guide and 'normalise' these patterns in terms of student thinking, interacting, talking, acting, etc. It is Discourse (or discursive practice) that 'disciplines' and 'renorms' the mind; consequently, situated meaning in reality exists 'out there', in societal practices as much as it does inside the heads of children or adults. Gee (1999: 54) observes that utterances (spoken or written) are made up of material, mental, personal, interactional, social, institutional, cultural and the historical facets from the situations where they were produced.

In terms of DA, situated meaning is not just in the mind of the individual, it is negotiated between individuals. Meaning is situated in concrete contexts of utilisation, so why 'these' words are used in 'this' situation is a question of appropriateness and reflexivity. Language both constructs and reflects reality in a certain way; language and context are two mirrors facing and reflecting toward one another. The question, in terms of this study, is this: where does the child stand in the path of this reflection? For the discourse analyst, the 'bigger picture' must always be borne in mind as to how language (at a given time and place) is or has been used to construct meaning.

2.1.2 THE DISCOURSE OF DISCOURSE: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse (Fairclough 1995), which views language as a social practice and its focal point is the analysis of the means of social and political domination and how it is perpetuated by means of talk and text. CDA is premised upon the view that unequal access to linguistic and social resources exists, and that resources are institutionally controlled. CDA is primarily concerned with patterns of access to discourse, communicative events and with ideas of power.

Fairclough (1989: 1-3) argues the idea of domination of some people by others and that this is achieved through language. For emancipation from this domination to happen a certain level of critical awareness is required. Many 'common-sense' assumptions on power exist, implicit in their conventions; they treat authority and hierarchy as 'natural'; this should also be questioned in the classroom. Language cannot be overlooked, especially for those whose interest lies in analysing associations of power in society in all dimensions, and especially important are those associations of teaching (especially that of teaching a language such as English) in schools. Fairclough (1989: 26) distinguishes three dimensions of CDA: *description* - concerned with formal properties of text, *interpretation* - concerned with the relationship between text and interaction (seeing text as the product of a process of construction and as a resource in the process of the interpretation) and *explanation* - concerned with the relationship between interaction and *social context* (the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation and their social effects). These three dimensions are taken into account in my study.

Additionally, Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) work on CDA as a field in terms of cross-disciplinary research of what is essentially language is drawn upon here. CDA brings critical social science and linguistics together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, providing an interdisciplinary resource for this study. CDA, is a reflexive tool and is self-critical about its own institutional position and all that accompanies it. As researcher this is critical to me in terms of how my research objectives have been achieved, what relationship I, as researcher, have to the people whose social lives I have analysed and what type of language my thesis draws upon.

In terms of power and ideology the work of Fairclough (1989), and that of Bourdieu (1991, 2006) and Blommaert (2003, 2005) illustrate the way in which orders of discourse are structured, and how the ideologies they embody are decided upon by relationships of power - relationships of power particular to certain social institutions (i.e.: schools), and in society as a whole. The power 'in' discourse, the power 'behind' discourse and the access 'to' discourse is a concern in this study.

For Blommaert (2005), though, the main areas of concern in CDA are politics, media, advertising, ideology, racism and institutional discourse. In terms of text and context, he identifies a problem for CDA and DA in that they endorse the centrality of the text and their task is to explain discourse, not to explain society through the privileged lens that is discourse. Inequality related to language is a reality for many and this can be observed when particular resources fail to demonstrate or perform certain functions or restrict mobility – one thinks of the classroom and what counts as language 'there' in that space. Does it function optimally and does it offer students mobility? Do certain students encounter hegemonies in the semiotic facade that is globalisation and, if so, will they also be made to feel inferior in terms of the value of their peripheral texts? Or will they continue to operate within the 'rules' of the discourse, unaware of the 'bigger' picture? Blommaert (2005: 233) says it is time for CDA to go "back to basics" and focus on power and its effects.

Blommaert *et al* (2006) expound on the idea of peripheral normativity, referring to variations on the social margins as to what is set up as 'correct' in the classroom, and to teachers' ways with words and things under the constraints of limited resources, large classrooms, lack of experience, inadequate training or poor English language ability. Along with Bourdieu, Blommaert and Fairclough's work on power and discourse, a Foucauldian perspective (Mills 2004: 54) is helpful in analysing power struggles that lie 'behind'. Rather than seeing discourse as simply a 'set' of statements which have some coherence, it should be thought of as existing because of a complex set of practices which attempt to keep discourse(s) in circulation; where these practices attempt to fence 'them' off from 'others' and keep the voice of the 'other' out of circulation.

Finally, CDA (as in Fairclough, 2005) considers an assortment of moves toward the social analysis of discourse and its transdisciplinary in nature with a disposition toward a realist social ontology. What is problematic, is that it is more a treatment for analysing text

ideologically, rather than being a lens for classroom studies. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993), Bloome et al (2005), or Edwards and Westgate (1994), are perhaps better suited as examples for shedding a light on analysis of the classroom, as I discuss in the next section.

2.1.3 THE DISCOURSE OF DISCOURSE: CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

DA and CDA are used as analytical resources here in the study and analysis of classroom discourse. While discourses (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 63) have beginnings, middles and ends, it is the diversity, the intricacy and often culturally motivated features of these phenomena that are of interest in this study. Crucially, 'openings' serve to establish and, for the participants, signal the kind of activity which is about to take place in the classroom; orientation (or refusal to orientate) is signified in terms of the features of genres that are socially and culturally instituted. Orientation works at three levels: the ideational or topical (what participants will talk about), interpersonal (kind of rapport established between participants - informal, distant, etc.) and the enabling or textual level (how the matter at hand will be communicated - business letter, phone call, face-to-face talk, etc). Genres thus become quickly established in opening phrases, even though individual features of register (how formal/informal communication will be) possibly will vary. Not all questions that discourse analysts set out to answer are of immediate relevance to language teachers (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 117), but a significant aspect of ethnomethodology is the close observation of natural patterns in everyday linguistic events such as: apologising, arguing, agreeing, disagreeing, explaining, telling anecdotes, inviting, requesting or thanking. Ethnomethodologists attempt, when working with real data, to describe events and practices in terms of patterned behaviour within particular cultures, whilst aiming for elusive objectivity which can be achieved only by viewing one's own culture as 'exotic' and an awareness that culture itself cannot be neutral (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 155).

Language socialisation, in the classroom as a dynamic arena, is a concern of this study. Bloome and Egan Robertson (1993) and Edwards and Westgate (1994), all consider classroom language. Bloome et al (2005) regard events, practices and analysis of classroom discourse from a micro-ethnographic angle, but inform their discussion with ideas on positionality, identity, power, meaning making, sociolinguistics and socio-cultural analysis. Different theoretical lenses are invoked to observe and investigate the

classroom, such as: literacy events and practices, boundary making, message units, turn taking, contextualisation, as well as, analytic induction. The focussed analysis of linguistic characteristics of social communication and interaction is, in their work, linked to the collective turn toward the social study of language.

Street (2005: x) points out that narratives of ostentatious proportion fail to account for specific events and allow for little or no agency for participants or understanding of the constraints that contain their daily operations. Street (2005: xi) notes the debate on the restrictions of the local and that it fails, in ways, to account for the experiences of local literacy when the local comes into contest with 'core', 'other' or 'outside' literacies. Resistance to these, in terms of language and literacy in the local context, is more than just a 'local' versus 'global' debate. Street calls for analytical tools and theories that are sensitive to the participants' cultural and social positioning. Researcher 'neutrality' was a constant idea that challenged me at every phase of my thesis; whilst researching the 'other' is the researcher not probing the very 'frame' that they operate in? Am I researching my own 'culture', if so, have I sufficiently seen it as 'exotic' in order to analyse the data optimally?

Rampton (2006) presents a sociolinguistic perspective on schooling, interaction and late modern language in terms of discourse in the urban classroom; interwoven with this is an observation of the stylisation of social class, thus power, in terms of schooling and language. Rampton presents his research on inner-city high school teenagers (observed through the analysis of classroom talk) and sets up novel ways to discern the perceived 'neatness' of classroom talk. This is useful to bear in mind with the classrooms I investigate, in order for me to not succumb to ideas of 'neatness' in classroom talk. Edwards and Westgate (1994), though an older text, draw on an extensive variety of classroom studies to show processes in investigating classroom discourse, especially useful to this study in terms of recording, analysing and interpreting data; that is the treatment of classroom discourse as evidence toward an argument.

A visual element exists in communication and discourse. Language in the classroom has a visual facet to it in that the images used in this context, as a means of visual communication and interaction (print images present in the classroom or lack thereof), forms part of the classroom discourse. Jewitt and Kress's (2003) work on multimodal literacy is useful in terms of a vocabulary to 'talk' about the semiotic landscape of the

classrooms I observed. Additionally useful are Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) who provide a language to 'speak' of the visual.

2.2 TEACHER PRACTICES, CLASSROOM PRACTICES

This study explores teacher practices, events and exchanges, and classroom practice - that is how these contribute to what counts as English. Additionally borne in mind, though not central to my study, were external circumstances, the greater institution that is school, policy, government and wider society (with its prevailing value systems, ideologies and unequally distributed resources and power) that all could impact upon teacher or classroom practice. Hatch's (1992) communication theory and Rampton's (2006) focus on communicative interaction in urban schools are applicable to my thesis. In terms of classroom practices Bloome and Egan-Robertson's ideas on intertextuality (1993) and the work of Bloome et al (2005) on classroom literacy events and language were constructive to my study.

2.3 THE PLACE AND SETTING OF ENGLISH AND RELATED MOBILITY

Phillipson's (1993: 52-54) investigation of the theoretical foundations of linguistic imperialism and the dominant centre are borne in mind in my study as the exploited, dominated periphery is a thread woven throughout the fabric of my study. Presently, in the wider linguistic economy, some languages have superior status over others and this is highlighted in Bourdieu's (1991, 2006) discussion of language status, linguistic communication and symbolic power in the wider linguistic economy. In my study the focus is on the linguistic resources in the classroom, where I ask: are they acknowledged, enforced or dismissed?

Sapir (2003: 28) believed language has a setting and Heath (1983) endorses this view on indigenous language use at home and school. Heath feels that besides a few social scientists with specific research concerns, little is known about language socialisation among young indigenous children, yet there is the increasing importance of technologies in aiding the everyday language-learning of adolescents and children. Bearing in mind, future possibilities and mobility for these children depends on the language socialisation

they are exposed to. Language socialisation delineates the manner in which we navigate the social world(s) in which we live, and there is an extraordinary neglect in scholarly interest surrounding this facet of human development. Simpson and Wigglesworth's (2008) work focuses on early development of language, including activities at home that are language-related, along with language and learning in the classroom context. Also, of significance, are thoughts on language shift and landscapes, and multilingualism – though this is all with an eye to indigenous Australian languages, it is a significant contrast and thus importantly kept in mind due to the South African situation of my study.

The dominant position of English may be to blame for the lack of scholarly pursuit of understanding indigenous language socialisation. Maartens (1998: 35) points out that the central position of English, in modern life, is rapidly becoming entrenched in South Africa. She claims that the majority of children, approximately 80%, do not possess an adequate command of the English language resources and registers that are required for success in higher education or in order to vie for occupations that are better paid. Indigenous languages (including Afrikaans) have a perceived minimal market value in terms of usage in the market place, unless they are combined with an adequate proficiency in certain kinds of English. She suggests that the official language policies over the years has resulted in most African people attaching very little value to their mother tongue and aiding a belief that it is deficient or, perhaps, impecunious and thus making it inappropriate for utilisation in contemporary society. The current state of affairs is not aided by the prestige that English now enjoys amongst the Black elite or the current leaning toward adopting (ostensibly for economic reasons) an English-only policy among major institutions.

In line with the ideas of Bourdieu and Maartens, McDermott (1998) believes English is closer to being *the* language of governance and national communication. On the national television channels, any clips, not in English, are run with English subtitles. But why is international status claimed for it if most users are second language speakers and why has English retained *and* increased in power? What are the implications for other SA languages and what implications does English imperialism have for what constitutes English in the classroom?

McDermott (1998: 110) points to the subversive effects of English. He argues that the frequent claims that English can be a 'gateway' to the world for all, regardless of their extraction or class, is a 'modernised' account of European claims of superiority, along

geographic and racial lines. Pennycook's work (1994, 1998, 2007) draws attention to the 'world' of English in a global sense (albeit ever-shifting), reminding us how the colonial past influences the present and that there are 'other' Englishes besides 'core' English.

New Literacy Studies (NLS) research regards activities relating to language to be all about social practices, English included. Pahl's (2008) exploration of Bourdieu's notion of habitus in an account of children's multimodal text-making and Gee's (2008) perspective of learning in semiotic domains, in that it is social and situated, are useful ideas I bore in mind in my study. In addition Freebody and Freiberg (2008: 17-33) enquire into what, in educational sites, school children receive in terms of what is expressed as 'literacy'. In these sites, what counts as 'literacy' is particular; rationalised in order to be measurable, and tied into practices of assigning exact significance. In terms of literacy and globalisation, and thus power, they argue that literacy as a concept in terms of its function, has been 'compacted'. Compacted, they assert, by being culturally and ideologically specific to globalised training programs and materials, while being represented as a simple, useful, neutral and universal technology.

Bailey, Burkett and Freeman (2008) see language having a critical and mediating function in terms of teaching and learning. The classroom is a language 'environment', however, it should be considered in 3 domains: between home and school, student and teacher, and among students. These interactions are, out of the classroom or in it, extremely rule-governed linguistic events of language in use. Students, globally, are taught in a language that is not their native tongue. Professional teacher practices (of second language students) need to change to acknowledge shifting student demographics and perpetual transformations in curricula. The expansion of English as the language of school instruction in traditionally non-English speaking countries may be intensifying, however, the proliferation of second language demands also occurs in English-speaking countries. The practices involved in linguistic teaching are, basically, the perceptive understanding of how language is employed to generate particular meanings in specific subjects and situations.

I have dealt in this Chapter with theoretical resources, arguments and frameworks that inform my perspective on language and literacy as social practices. I examined a number of ideas around literacy and in addition I expounded on how discourse operates within social contexts. I also examined language use in situated 'ways'. In the Chapter that

follows, the focus will be on my methodology applied to my study. Following that, in Chapter Four, I move to present and make my argument. I do this by providing a brief outline of the first school and begin to discuss the related data.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter I discuss my research methodology and design, as well as, data collection methods, and modes of analysis. This study analyses spoken discourse that has been transcribed, for analytical purposes, but my aim is to avoid redundant technical terms in analysing the data. The research approach taken in this study is that of a qualitative, ethnographic-style case-study approach. From this perspective there are multiple socially-constructed domains, contexts, sites and social realities that make up any larger social world. At my sites of study there were multiple overlapping social worlds, that of the school, the classrooms and the social worlds of the teachers and students that existed outside of the school and were engaged with or excluded in classroom discourse. The research question that I follow in my study is exploratory in nature and thus my ideals for carrying out the research included appropriate attention to detail, inductive reasoning, reflexivity in relation to theory and emerging data and strong narrative writing. Theoretical tools and resources from Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, and New Literacy Studies, are drawn on as my analytic lenses to explore and understand the data collected and to answer my research question.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE METHOD

Research is for Leedy (1997: 5) “a process through which we attempt to achieve systematically and with the support of data the answer to a question, the resolution of a problem, or a greater understanding of a phenomenon”. Qualitative research (1997: 155-156) can be sociological, historical educational, political, and much more. Qualitative studies in education may have proliferated in recent times, but it would be incorrect to view qualitative research as something ‘new’. Historically, people have always

shared knowledge and observations through detailed oral descriptions. Presently, in research, when there is limited information available on a topic, or variables are unknown, or an applicable theory base is incomplete then a qualitative study can facilitate in defining what needs to be studied. With my research I have made use of descriptive, qualitative methodologies to gather detailed data from my research population at two specific schools, namely, Midway Primary and Railway Primary. In collecting my qualitative data I, as researcher, have attempted to capture the nuances of the human experience of language to bring about a deeper understanding to what counts in terms of English.

3.2.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

Leedy (1997: 111) describes ethnography as a “qualitative inquiry that involves an in-depth study of an intact cultural grouping in a natural setting” and that ethnography, as a research method, is distinguished from other types of qualitative research through its focus on “(a) discovering cultural patterns in human behaviour, (b) describing the perspective of members of the culture, and (c) studying natural settings in which culture is manifested” (Gall *et al* 1996). Leedy (1997) sees the distinguishing purpose of the ethnographic method as its explicit focus on the features of a given cultural environment with the purpose of describing the relationship between the mores of that environment and the behaviour in that environment (where my study is on the classroom environment’s discourse). As a process this type of research involves a method of site-based fieldwork that is the *sin qua non*¹ of ethnography. My fieldwork for this minor dissertation involved a full term in the classroom setting. This allowed me time to observe and record processes that would be unavailable using any less extensive method.

3.3 RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.3.1 RESEARCH OBSERVATION AND SOURCES OF DATA

The observation, data collection and taking of field notes took place over a period of a full school term, that is, the third term of the school year in 2009. The data I recorded, observed and collected directly from first-hand experience is the primary data of my study;

¹ The essence.

this data is the direct classroom observation I undertook by digitally recording the classroom talk which I later transcribed. I used appropriate data collecting tools and materials for my observation, such as a digital audio recorder and A4 notepads. A variety of different school subjects, where the teaching medium was English, were recorded. The observations were later analysed, after transcription, as communicative events (Heath, 1983).

The most common method of collecting ethnographic data is by means of participant-observation. In order to successfully perform such observations, it is necessary to be liberated by any means feasible from the filter of one's own cultural experience, as argued by Saville-Troike (1989: 119). Thus, as researcher, it was my duty to be sensitive, aware and open to identifying, and to be appreciative of the cultural context and values of my observed research population. Secondary sources of data I used were published data that pertained to my study. The quality of the data was always a concern, especially with regard to its ultimate utilisation in my study.

3.3.2 RECORDING OF CLASSROOM TALK

I employed the use of a digital electronic voice recording piece of equipment and I made extensive field notes as the recording took place. A myriad of speech events and linguistic activities occur daily in human life, and in the classroom, but each activity or event comes with its own frame of practices, norms and conventions. The ethnographic method of research is, to my understanding, the best format to analyse and present my observations and research findings. All my recorded classroom data were transcribed and thus became the raw data for later analysis. In writing up my research in the ethnographic case study format, this thesis ultimately offers a widened description of events and practices because I was able to record on two 'levels', digitally and in the written format of my field notes, in order to show a classroom context in a more developed sense beyond that available in conversational data alone. Selected transcribed data appear in the body of my work that follows. There were no dominant school subjects that I recorded; my only guide in this respect was to remain with English medium instruction classes in line with my research question, as I was asking *what counts as English?*

Prior to recording data in each school's classrooms, I gained permission from the WCED as well as from the schools to be present in the classroom, to observe and record. In order for me to create a conducive and relaxed environment prior to my classroom arrival, as I was extremely anxious regarding my presence in the classroom and how my audio recording and taking of field notes might influence the behaviour of my participants (teacher and pupils), I arranged to meet the teachers at the respective schools so that they could get to know me and ask me questions about my study prior to my entry into their classrooms. I did this to put the teachers at ease and as an attempt to limit their awareness of me (in reality however, in terms of this awareness, I observed, whilst recording in both my formats, that teachers and students, by no means were entirely able to not be completely unaware of me as researcher, my recording and why I was there to record). At Railway I was introduced to only the staff who had agreed to allow me into their classrooms (one teacher had refused me permission to observe in her classroom stating stress related issues and I was informed of this via the Principal), while at Midway I was introduced in the staffroom by the Principal to all the teaching staff and no teacher refused me entry into their classroom.

3.3.3 FIELD NOTES

Heath and Street (2008: 76-81), on addressing the genre of field notes, state that rarely is the meaning of field notes realised at the point of collecting data, I strongly followed their recommendations as to recording, transcribing and reviewing of data and field notes. The field notes I took, during classroom observation time, stand alongside the data I recorded, adding a depth that lends a fuller illustration of events, especially during the analysis in an ethnographic-style case study like mine.

In writing up my research in the ethnographic case study form, this thesis ultimately offers a deepened description of events and practices and I draw from my field notes to deepen the 'reality' of the classroom and its context. However, this data will appear by way of direct quotations where appropriate to support my case and to provide a 'thick description' of the research context.

3.4 THE PARTICIPANT POPULATION RESEARCHED

My study was conducted on two sites in Western Cape Education Department (WCED) schools and permission was the determining factor in selecting study sites and, ultimately, the participants of this study. A key concern for me was validity, that is, the extent to which the elucidation of my study outcomes follow from my research and the extent to which my results may be isolated and interpreted in other situations by researchers possibly repeating my study on similar sites. For this reason I chose only two WCED schools. Critical to my sampling of the two schools was to maintain external validity so that the findings of my research could be comprehensively applied in other situations, other than to those observed in my study. Early on in my fieldwork I realised two teachers stood out, one from each proposed school and they will be known as: Teacher A. from Railway Primary (female) and Teacher B. (male) from Midway Primary. I did not select teachers based on age, sex, race, or any other variable, except for availability and my interest. My research took into account not only teachers, but students too. Students were observed in a similar manner to teachers and at the same time, mostly. For the purposes of my research and to maintain anonymity, all participants, both students and teachers, names have been changed to pseudonyms for identities to remain confidential.

3.5 RESEARCH SETTING(S)

My research, in the school setting, was undertaken weekdays, Monday to Friday, excluding week-ends and public holidays. I worked according to each school's timetable and would visit each school on alternate days. Often a teacher would approach me before the time and tell me what they would be dealing with the next period or the next day. As mentioned the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and the two site specific schools' permission was gained for each study setting. However, it must also be stated that I also made observations in my role as volunteer at the AWAKE programme. Here, as volunteer, I was able to observe my interactions with children from Grade Two and Three from Railway Primary. This was, however, not my focal data collection setting – the school classrooms were.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

All throughout the data analysis stage, according to Tesch (1994), the researcher is organising, arranging, as well as chronologically structuring the data and, in essence, the researcher is seeking any patterns or recurring themes that signify the perspective of the study participant(s) and the researcher anticipates putting forward any relational assertions regarding these observed participants.

A standard focus of my data analysis was the use of the perspective frameworks of Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and New Literacy Studies. These resources make it possible for one to fill out analysis of the research question. These were chosen as the most conducive tools for analysing my data from my research because they together provided an in-depth and theoretically compatible basket of resources for analysis. While it is understandable that one might start one's analysis from a functionalist perspective, where events are analysed in terms of what larger functions they serve, an adequate explanation must move beyond this point, using the resources I have described, to explore why and how particular constructions and productions have emerged. My data analysis strategies, for my secondary data, was to screen for relevancy to the question studied, in order to eliminate any articles that were not relevant.

Similarly, in terms of the primary data, my data analysis strategy was to search strategically for evidence in line with the research problem. Thus, evidence that was relevant to the question asked was extracted from the observational data and from the sourced literature.

During the data processing stage, I was critical in my approach to transcribing the data. As much of my data consisted of digital audio recordings, I listened to these repeatedly whilst I transcribed them. Whenever something sounded or was unclear to me, I would rewind. This I did until my transcribed work, as closely as possible, matched what I heard on the audio recording. Once I had completed my transcribing process, I compared the transcribed material to the audio version yet again to ensure as close a textual match as possible. The data I analysed is presented in this study as a series of excerpts within a discussion.

3.7 ETHICS AND METHODS OF ACHIEVING TRUSTWORTHINESS

In line with the Code of Ethics of the American Sociological Association (Leedy 1997: 116) I endeavoured to: maintain scientific objectivity, recognise limitations, uphold rights to privacy and dignity. I have attempted to present my research findings honestly, I have acknowledged all assistance and I have not accepted any means of assistance that might violate ethical research principles. In addition to this, I have also adhered to the University of Cape Town's research ethics and principles guidelines and I have submitted a report on the ethics of the research to the University of Cape Town in a statement jointly signed with my supervisor. I always bore in mind that the objects of my inquiry were human beings and thus took great care to avoid any harm to the members of my study. As such, preceding data collection activities, teachers were briefed as to my research and the importance of their participation and this was done prior to my data collection so that they were aware of all implications and so that necessary arrangements could have been made should they have refused to participate. In sum, I emphasised that participants' input was anonymous and highly confidential.

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As regards validity and reliability, Leedy (1997: 32-36) feels that they are to be applied to measurement instruments and they govern the acquisition of data, and indeed all parts of a research design. Validity, as a criterion, has an eye to the end result when it comes to the measuring of any data and the principle question it asks is this: are we measuring what we truly think we are measuring? Reliability, on the other hand, is the degree to which a measuring instrument performs. To ensure the integrity of any research, a researcher should thus declare the exact specifications of the measuring instrument they have used. Because the research was ethnographic in style I was myself the major research instrument that I used, where my reflective observations and reflections guided my research direction. The validity and reliability of my research was important to me and I wanted my analysis and conclusions to follow from my research, rather than from elsewhere. Critical to my sampling of two WCED schools was my concern to maintain external validity as much as is possible in such research, so that my arguments could be tried, tested and elaborated on in similar situations by other researchers. A limitation to my study I can foresee, however, is the use of only two teachers, Teacher A. from Railway

Primary and Teacher B. from Midway Primary. This decision was based on the limited nature of this minor dissertation, however, and the point about ethnographic research is the *telling* nature of its findings, not their size or extensiveness.

For Cohen and Morrison (2000: 164) ethnographic research as a methodological data collection approach presents a number of complex factors affecting the research reliability and validity. Such difficulties include reactivity (how the researcher's presence alters the situation) and secondly, neglect of the wider social contexts and constraints. I agree with Cohen Morrison in that participants' actions and conduct may be influenced by the researcher's presence during data collection and I made efforts to minimize such influences and to take account of them when they occurred.

In conclusion I have, in this Chapter, aimed to provide a summary of how my research was conducted, that is, from conception all the way through to the data collection stage and analysis process. In the subsequent Chapter I provide a complete analysis and discussion of transcribed data that I gathered in the field.

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CHAPTER 4

WHAT COUNTS AS ENGLISH AT THE SCHOOL BESIDE THE RAILWAY LINE?

4.1 OVERVIEW

In Chapter Four I begin to illustrate divergence between Railway and Midway in terms of: context, mobility and literacy practices. This was no straightforward comparison especially as these schools are socio-economically divergent. What follows is the application of my research question to the first school, Railway Primary. I provide a brief background to the school, the Grade Six class I observed and their teacher, Mrs. A. Additionally, I set up a departure point in order to contrast Railway with my second research site, Midway Primary. I use relevant portions of data as evidence toward answering my focal research question. Broader issues, social or other, are considered where relevant to my argument - no classroom operates in a void. I must point out that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and gaining both schools' permission was a determining factor in selecting study sites. Validity was key to my sample, especially to which the elucidation of my research could be interpreted in similar situations by other researchers possibly repeating a similar study.

4.2 THE RAILWAY MILIEU

I came to collect data at Railway Primary due to my exposure as a volunteer at AWAKE, a non-governmental volunteer-based literacy programme run on the school premises and that aims to assist at risk students, those with English as a second or additional language, in Grades One and Two. Literacy practices I experienced, within this programme, were a maximum of two students to one learning partner. I was conscious that this individualised attention differed greatly from the reality the children returned to in their respective classroom learning environments (AWAKE volunteers were informed that class sizes could be around forty students). What then, I wondered, was happening in the senior Grades at this school, what counted as English beyond my experience of volunteering and what

counted as English at other sites of learning, socio-economically divergent from this site? So I fixed my gaze upon Railway Primary with researcher's eyes.

Railway Primary is not a dusty, derelict school as so often painted by studies undertaken in schools experiencing sub-economic conditions. It is, however, a small school, positioned alongside one of Cape Town's main commuter railway lines. The suburb Railway resides in is an established, leafy, early 20th Century development that, on one side, is bordered by the main road leading into the city and it is in the vicinity of various light industrial concerns. The school building, for its age, is in an outstanding state, yet it is a state-funded school and home to a school feeding scheme. In terms of the school grounds and layout, there are disused tennis courts and a large open sports field where the senior grades had recess². The junior grades' took recess at a different time, to senior grades', and in an enclosed area in the front of the school. Interestingly, whilst collecting data at Railway, the tuck-shop was closed as the Governing body decided the food sold was unhealthy, this information I garnered whilst having tea with the teachers in the staffroom. I mention this as on the school grounds there is, along the side of the school dividing the junior and senior recess areas, a vegetable patch. This vegetable patch is run by a lady volunteer who organises and involves volunteer senior students in the maintenance of this garden; there was also talk of using her produce for the feeding scheme.

Railway Primary is revealing as a setting to relate what counts as English and, following the notions used by Blommaert et al (2009), this school sits in close proximity to the core, yet it is located peripherally. It is not a school geographically very distant from the city centre, but there are hallmarks of geographic distance that play a role in the lives of Railway students bussed in to receive a perceived idea of schooling aiming, ultimately, at upward mobility. I, however, observed a divergent nature to the English taught in classrooms and, though not central to this thesis, through that taught at AWAKE. The AWAKE programme was staffed by volunteers who were trained by AWAKE who also provide the learning material that must be worked from. The twice weekly one hour sessions a child spends at AWAKE are divided up into phonics based work, reading alone, reading together and writing. This is what makes Railway unique: all the volunteer programmes, specifically AWAKE, as they act as enabling mechanisms. However in AWAKE attempting to facilitate assistance toward a core English there is minimal

² Railway Primary also has a volunteer system to help with physical education and a major clothing retailer sponsors a ballet teacher. She teaches ballet in the school hall during school periods. During a number of observed periods, in Mrs. A's class, many students missed classes to attend ballet.

observation of circumstances at the school or the language environment the child experiences at home and brings with them to school. The language of play during recess for most students I observed, whilst helping teachers' with recess duty, was Xhosa and not English. It must be borne in mind that Railway Primary was once a Model C school but now it is mostly attended by township children seeking an English language education in a space interestingly situated outside the townships.

I observed several teachers in my term at Railway, but my focus lies with Mrs. A. As a teacher she had a formidable depth to her teaching career. She is over 60 years of age and came out of retirement a few years ago to teach again. If a constructed term of racial legacy must be applied to Mrs. A., the label afforded her by even the current Government, would be Coloured. In conversation with her, I discovered that she had taught through many periods of South African history. She taught during the Apartheid era in a Coloured school, she also taught in Coloured schools in post-Apartheid South Africa during the changes in education during the 1990's and, now, in her current post teaching in the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system in a predominantly black school. The Railway staff demographic was a blend of a majority Coloured staff (predominantly female) and very few Black Xhosa-speaking teachers, of which only one was male. The staff demographic in no way was a representation of the student body makeup of the school or the classroom. The student body was principally Black with few Coloured students. In socio-economic terms the teachers at this school aspired toward middle-class mores, but were in fact from working class backgrounds. English was the language of the staffroom; followed by Afrikaans and then minimally Xhosa (I only observed it spoken between Black teachers who spoke Xhosa as a first language).

A feature of Railway was that most students were bussed to the school from elsewhere, in particular from the predominantly Black townships of Langa, Nyanga and Khayalitsha; not unlike other schools of its kind in Cape Town (Fataar, 2009). Fataar discusses the schooling landscape in terms of choice and geography; he sees this movement within the urban landscape as a practice rooted in the aspiration for quality schooling, whilst the notion of mobility is central to these practices and educational choices. In other words, unmet expectations at township schools thus fuel school choice. The inner-city suburb where Railway is located is home for, in particular, University of Cape Town students sharing digs, as well as middle-class and lower-middle class families (White, Coloured and Black) who do not send their children to Railway. Instead, most children who attend school

at Railway Primary travel by combi-taxi, bus and/or train to and from school each day from the distant townships where their families live.

4.3 THE NATURE OF THE CLASSROOM AT RAILWAY PRIMARY

Railway Primary was by no means a derelict shell on the outside; rather it was alive with eager students. Internally, however, each classroom was lacking in many respects compared to the middle-class school which was the other site of study. In particular, the overcrowding which I observed in Mrs. A.'s classroom made for unpleasant working conditions for both teacher and pupils. There was no comfort or ease of movement around the class as there was very little room available to navigate between the clusters of desks. As a result, the teacher moved about very little and students were hemmed in. Notably, Mrs. A. was the only teacher I observed who applied a technique of using small, standing exercises and stretches to alleviate boredom, frustration or to rejuvenate students during long double periods in these cramped conditions.

The dearth of technological resources was another problem at Railway. Mrs. A. used the chalk board mostly in her teaching and upon my asking her, she informed me that her overhead projector (OHP) was broken, lying in her storeroom. It remained there for the duration of the term of my fieldwork at Railway. Neither teachers nor students were in possession of personal computers³. Her chief technologies, as with other Railway teachers, were her voice, her piece of chalk, and her photocopied handouts, and she employed them as best she could. Textbooks were not used in every lesson. When textbooks were used, there were not enough to go around. They were kept in the classroom and handed out as and when they were required for teaching purposes. This lack of resources did not stop Mrs. A. from teaching with energy and commitment, however, but what I observed could be classified as impeded or restricted teaching. Mrs. A.'s lack of resources, as well as the constraints of the crowded classroom, limited how well she could successfully translate into learning what content she was aiming to teach in her classroom. Her pedagogical orientation together with her commitment to teaching through the medium of monolingual English where hardly any code switching took place at all are aspects of her teaching that I examine in detail in this Chapter.

³ Students did, however, attend computer classes but there were not enough computers for the entire class and thus the class was divided in two alphabetically and each took turns attending said class.

One characteristic of Mrs. A.'s classroom was a predominance of English literature and visual printed matter on the walls of the classroom. This struck me as apt as the medium of instruction of the school was English, while at the same time strange as there was minimal, if any, representation or inclusion of any other languages that were signified by the student demographic at the school.

As I will show by way of the data analysed below, Mrs. A. does not exactly misunderstand her class, their needs and the context they find themselves, but it is more that she can't, for complex reasons, give her students the high-status resources that they wish for. For within this English-centered school, linguistically it diverged from home in terms of language practices. Mrs. A. seems not to actively seek to understand her students in terms of their differing contexts between home and school as sites of literacy. For the better part, I observed that student heritage was left at the classroom door upon students entering an English-zone, and only taken up as the child exits the classroom to recess (where English did not dominate) or to return home, and ultimately to a language other than English. I observed that her immersion-style strategy did not bode well for an overwhelming buy-in by the students; over the term that I spent with her I became aware that it was more tacit acceptance by her students that this was what the system offered and that these realities are "the way things are".

4.4 ARE LITERACY PRACTICES AT RAILWAY ON TRACK?

Railway Primary is dissimilar to the township school that Blommaert, Muyliaert, Huysmans, Dyers (2006) studied, chiefly in the areas of location and volunteering programmes, but similarities exist. Railway is not a township school; it is a school situated in a formerly White neighbourhood, and not many years ago the school was still attracting a mostly White and middle-class/ lower middle-class school population. Railway is now, however, a site where most students come *from* townships to attend a school that instructs in a language medium that is not the language that the majority of students speak.

At Railway I observed social practices related to literacy in the language of instruction, English and in this setting, I observed, literacy *from* home was by no means accredited

and was treated as separate and, through tacit exclusion, unequal. This is evident in the following example of a reading event.

1. T: Why can't we waste water? Why can't we waste water?
2. P: Because there's gonna be no more water left.
3. T: Yes! Water is not renewable. We've got too little water to feed the mass ././ to ././ so that the masses of people can use it. There was a ././ little insert in *Die Burger* this morning, which said, very soon, George, one of our little towns on the ././ Garden Route, will not have anymore water. Their rivers are drying up. With all the rain we had, their rivers are drying up. And that is a disaster. Ehm, what's the next thing? Yes, (Pupil)?
4. P: Care for our planet.

Preceding this excerpt Mrs. A. had started by using a poem called "Make the Change" (See Appendix A – 22 October 2009) that the class had to read on their own in silence, followed by a class discussion and then various students were chosen to re-read the poem, stanza by stanza, as presenters to the class. The text of the poem was a photocopied hand-out⁴ that every student received. In the passage above we see the teacher referring to her out-of-school reading of *Die Burger* (line 3), signaling that her home reading (and her first language) is Afrikaans. The laboured discussion of the poem was similar to other exercises I observed. She ends line 3 by asking "...what's the next thing?" and continued to ask simple questions, and in return got simple answers; this was her *modus operandi* throughout the poem analysis. She made students read the text of the poem twice, in this instance; during many other classroom exercises this pattern of repetitive text reading was observed. I understand reading is part of school and classroom activity, but for Mrs. A. re-reading was focal to her classroom and specifically reading events. What counted for her was to process the text by repeating it, in more than one form: in this case silent reading and stanza by stanza; student context and comprehension were not central here, but the act of repetition was. In this pedagogical approach she might be seen as having developed a pedagogy which is a reasonable response to the teaching constraints that she finds herself in but the inevitable consequence is that her students are not getting exposure to the high status language resources that they seek. What they do get will not ensure that they succeed.

To illustrate that the problematic practice of chant reading/reading out aloud was a key strategy in Mrs. A.'s class, I now look at print advertisement exercise⁵. Below are singular

⁴ This photocopied handout was not included as an appendix due to possible copyright being infringed.

⁵ As above, handout not included as an appendix due to possible copyright infringement.

extracts of teacher speech taken from four different time points in the same lesson (breaks indicated). I include this here to indicate the teacher directives to read, and ultimately re-read the text at some point in each of the five directives below.

1. TEACHER: Then people won't be interested. They will actually become bored. Yoh! I must read all this and the print isn't even nice. OK? So, here we going to read what they say about this advert with all the words on and that is written so indistinctly. I'm going to ask you one by one to read for me all the complaints 'cause that's complaints, complaints, complaints. OK. We gonna start here by Sara. The heading?
(BREAK)
2. TEACHER: The marine turtle is a sea animal and the tortoise is a land animal. Grade 5, please go and sit down. Read that book finish. Right. Ehm, we going to read this story. What can be so interesting about it? OK, I'm gonna, eh – Daria starts, eh, then Nola, then Mitchell, then Leto. OK? Just three lines. Ok I'll tell you when to stop.
(BREAK)
3. TEACHER: Shuh! You know what is wrong here? You know what is wrong here? Same thing that happened when we read that first that was so badly done. OK? The sentence is written and on the other side in the middle is a picture, and the sentence goes on, on the other side. OK? So, we will start there again.
(BREAK)
4. TEACHER: OK. We are gonna do ./ read that again. I'm gonna take this, ehm, one, two, three, from this table and one, two, from this table. I'm gonna start with you. Start again. And the others, listen, OK? Please read loud because some of them can't hear. Please follow on your work sheet.
(BREAK)
5. TEACHER: ...of the birds. Why? Because the birds eat the young turtles. OK? Right. We gonna read it once more and then we gonna answer these questions. Grade 6T, not Mrs. A.'s. I want those learners that did not read yet. [Identifies certain students.] Farra, ehm, you read, you read, eh, Bundi, you can read, then you are gonna read, Leti. Ehm, who else didn't read yet? Bongi and, ehm, right. OK. Right. OK, we gonna start with - ? Eh?

The class had started this exercise earlier in the day and continued with it in this period. The topic the class worked on was print advertisements and, again, they were working from a handout distributed earlier by the teacher. This handout's visual layout caused difficulty in reading for many students as there was an image of a turtle in the middle of the text and students struggled to read the text as it wrapped around the image. Mrs. A.'s discourse moves here, echo Street's (1995: 123) view that the linguistic and visual markers for navigating a text governs classroom discourse and sets out the teacher's power over the reader and the direction they will move in, in that classroom text becomes a set of signs that is a concrete trail on which the student is searching for prompts, signs and indications for the level of their own involvement. Her pedagogic voice is not

concerned with the metalinguistic features of the text or decoding the significances of different print faces for her students. Indeed, she directs concern toward procedural skills and asserts her own authority on the text and in turn stresses to students that they view written texts as detached and separate. There was also a sense of orderliness (Fairclough, 1995: 28) to the discourse with her students and the interactions had a sense of conditioned discourse and behaviour, as if participating in this discourse for her students, and for her as teacher, were as things should be.

In the above tracts of teacher talk it becomes clear that there is a practice of reading and re-reading the text repeatedly. This highlights the controlled and routinised environment that literacy events took place in, in this classroom. The context of this event was specific to a way of reading in this particular teacher's class, it is a deliberate exercise and on Mrs. A's terms of what she sees counts, with minimal student contribution allowed for. Literacy and literacy events are not neutral, neither is the curriculum nor its pedagogy. The above extracts point to the level of authority that Mrs. A. exerts in her classroom. She uses her teacher talk (Baynham, 1995) in authoritative ways to not only set up activities, but also to shift through phases of an activity, as well as to organise purposeful learning for her students. In the fifth excerpt above, she used the pronoun "we" which, while it does not neutralize the roles and relations of teacher/students, aids the forward movement of the lesson. Oral discussion, together with the use of the written text, moved the activity forward, in a fairly free-flowing, open discussion with the class as a whole. She was the dominant participant, indicating who may participate and her expectations of her students varied from phase to phase of the activity, as she moved them on. Concluding the activity remained her prerogative, a role with which she was comfortable. Relations of dominance and subordination in the context of delineation of teacher-student roles, are interactively achieved and sustained through classroom exchanges. She may, however, not be aware of her role in fostering critical thinking and how the classroom as interactive environment is influenced by her.

In the extracts above, as regards language and literacy practices and what counts as English for Mrs. A., control and discipline of the class was the key, whereby she managed to teach in an organised fashion with what tools she had. Mrs. A. did not recognise a connection between home and school because such a recognition had no place in the procedural system that she had developed (I did not once observe an activity that brought ideas of or from home into the classroom) and her use of a monolingual English, which did

not allow for deviation in the direction of alternative linguistic resources, supported the conclusion that her teaching was removed from the students' homes, from the language usage of the school playground and thus also removed from the linguistic resources which they already had. Her literacy here is set apart because school, for her, is separate from home and not "the second classroom" (home, by default, being the first). For her the classroom is the only classroom and site of language that counts. The difficulty for both her and her students lies in the minimal overlap between home and school. Her classroom is the only space where English is exercised for most of her students, and home and the playground are where their first language resources are exercised. Mrs. A. did not see that her students might be helped to develop some autonomy through learning events or that they could contribute uniquely to the literacy events and learning activities. In the exercise discussed above, and in her other classes I observed, learning did not go much beyond the decoding and clarification of the text that the students were exposed to. For example, I observed her perceptions and uses of spelling and dictionary work to indicate an approach that what counts is not the bigger picture of language in action, but just the fundamentals of language. It was fascinating to see how she unknowingly operated her classroom space and lessons in a decontextualised manner.

4.5 CONTEXT

By inference, or directly, my or any other ethnographic account of language, literacy and learning (such as in Heath, 1983), attests to and highlights larger forces at play, such as authority, influence and power with regard to social hierarchies and inequalities. Context in linguistics and ethnographic study refers to social context – the larger socio-economic and political circumstances as well as the smaller, interactive social conditions where the individual social being finds herself; where utterances take place, where roles, obligations, encounters and identity processes are encountered. I take context to mean here both the physical and non-physical aspect of what constitutes the idea of the classroom. This context (physical and non-physical) contributes to the dissimilar practices and outcomes, in what counts as English, both in the school presently and in the future and this links to future student mobility. For my purposes here, therefore, I understand context in this thesis as the setting for the impact of classroom circumstance on what counts as English. Bourdieu's (1991) insights on standard language and the manner in which it is legitimised by the education system were applicable to my analysis of both Railway and Midway

Primary. Schooling has the power to perpetuate disproportionate and uneven literacy outcomes and context is a factor in this perpetuation. Street (1995) refers to the labelling of school space in terms of its symbolic presence, however, its main expression is via a particular category of language (be it teacher talk, text on classroom walls or, perhaps, paperwork of a bureaucratic nature) that signifies, situates and replicates itself over time whilst positioning, in space and time, all those involved. In other words, how this space is constructed linguistically is crucial to understanding context.

The physical context or circumstance of the classroom impacts upon teaching. The classroom context at Railway could almost not be spoken of in terms of space, but rather spoken of in terms of the lack thereof, due to overcrowding, as in Mrs. A.'s classroom. However, each classroom I observed displayed distinctive uses of the physical context (including the use of walls for display of materials) and this divergence contributed to differences with respect to literacy events and practices in the classroom. The layout of Mrs. A.'s classroom and the usage of the walls and wall space was telling. Mrs. A. had a majority of students who did not have English as a first language, but the walls displayed only English-language materials. In this space, the language permitted was thus signaled as being only English of a monolingual variety that did not allow code-switching or linguistic flexibility. As regards the non-physical context of the classroom, curriculum policy was interpreted with regard to the physical constraints of the classroom – the point being that what policy prescribes and how it is implemented will diverge across diverse school settings. Policy is unable to be taken up in each classroom in a similar manner due to differing contexts or circumstances - the physical and non-physical constraints as I have outlined them. As Street (1995) described it, teachers' procedures help to organise the classroom (work practices, time or literacy materials), form a part of the pedagogic voice and diverge in substantial ways across settings and in smaller ways within distinctive school settings, across classrooms. If one thinks of language, too, as variable social practice, then, it is fair to conclude that what counts as English will also vary across these settings.

To demonstrate pedagogic voice and show teacher interjections I turn to the following extract.

- 1 T: OK, can you come and spell that "chose" on the board for me?
 {Chairs bang.} Watch it! Zahied chooses his library books.
 Yesterday Zahied /../

- 2 PP: {Multiple pupils comment. More noisy chairs.} /./
- 3 T: Make up your mind (). Spell it for me quickly.
- 4 PP: C-h-o-s-e. {The class spells out the word “chose”.}
- 5 T: Now you must never forget, né? Chose. OK, can you write that neatly for me. Stirling, you were brave and now you will always remember. /./ Okay. This other one Mr. Hofmeyer teaches us Science. OK, Inga?
- 6 Inga: Mr. Hofmeyer taught us Science.
- 7 T: That’s a difficult one to spell. Can you go spell it for me? {Noise of chairs scraping.} Give her a chance! () see. Listen, hang on, hang on, hang on! Hang on! There’s just one error there. A sma:ll error. {Chairs move.} OK, Nolita, can you go fix it up for her? So that you will never forget again. See what error you made, my darling?

The surface function of Mrs. A.’s interjections (lines 3, 5 and 7) serve to organise but also to define for her pupils what literacy is, even as they appear to be part of her teaching strategy. Mrs. A. has afforded authority that bounds space and time for her students, and this helps her reinforce bounding and defining of linguistic practices in her classroom. Stirling wrote on the board “chowse”, thus it was not spelled correctly; his classmates immediately put their hands up. Although she as teacher says his written answer was wrong, her rebuke is softened by adding that he was brave and that he “will always remember”. Later on in this lesson she went on to say, “...the English language is actually very difficult,...”; this interjection and the authoritative voice she asserts over textual artifacts, spelling and ultimately English, stresses to her students that the written English language be seen as detached and separate.

4.6 MOBILITY

In his study of the complex movements of students from the townships to schools across Cape Town, Fataar (2009) concludes, “Children and their families have made their school choices on a highly atomised basis” and that there are “desire lines” relative to human geographic flows. Railway is such a space with students who flow toward it from the townships, yet what counts as English in one setting, does not inevitably match what counts in another, nor is what is on offer the same everywhere. English is not the same at Midway and Railway and if students were to hypothetically be immersed in each others’ contexts I venture to say the Midway child would struggle less with the Railway context, because the literacy practices at Midway have a depth and flexibility to them that makes these resources more mobile and adaptive, as I argue in the next Chapter.

In order to explain what I mean here, let us look at the next extract. Here the teacher had asked them if they remembered doing this poem earlier in the term and the class had chorused back, “Yes, Miss”. Mrs. A. instructed Jasmin, Peo and Lyeto to each read a few stanza’s (these students were clearly the better English readers, especially Jasmin who was South African of Indian descent).

Jasmin: Fish are funny creatures
 They never say a word
 They swim around in circles
 Looking quite absurd
 Catfish haven’t any scales
 But their whiskers win a prize
 Fish sleep in the daytime
 But cannot close their eyes
 Because they have no eyelids
 Which really is quite sad
 While () fish sleep on the side
 () {Inaudible and a loud bang.}

Peo: () fish cannot wear earrings
 Although they hear quite well
 You see, they have no earlobes
 Which may () just as well
 Most fish are not good parents
 They lay their eggs in ()
 But the time () scared

PP: {Shuffling and a chair scraping make the text inaudible.}

Lyeto: Yes, fish are funny ()
 They have ()
 () around in circles
 Was all we had to do.

T: Fi:ne! We can read the poem through on our own. Silent reading.
 Then we are going to turn the page ././ and we will put our answers
 [...

T: [We will write our answers in full sentences on the other, ././ side.
 You may start! I do subtract, ehm, to a maximum of two marks for
 language errors and a maximum of two marks for spelling errors. I
 just have to find the memo on my table so that I can give it to you.
 Okay? You may start!

What amazed me, as observer, was that this was a class test and not only had the poem been analysed earlier in the year, but before the test the teacher gave time for it to be read out aloud and then gave time for the students to re-read it through in their own time. This was a luxury she afforded them as, perhaps, she was aware English was not the first language of the majority of her students. A second allowance she made was a maximum mark deduction of only two marks for spelling errors. Mrs. A. allowed for time (through

sanctioned repetition of the poem) in her space, as well as allowing for a high degree of spelling mistakes. In terms of mobility, say for instance, towards these students studying at UCT one day, the luxury of time, repetition of work in class and a high degree of spelling mistakes are just that, luxuries.

The above extract shows Mrs. A. did not teach tools of adaptation, she skilled her pupils in limited, concrete language usage only. Flexible language resources, abstractions and out of the box thinking (again, university requirements) were rarely to be seen. She tied language to surface coding features in classroom activities (such as hand-outs). Her words and practices constructed a particular classroom reality, an English reality, with no link to the child's first language or to what they might do with these resources outside of the classroom. Abstract thought and reflective discussions were areas where the Railway class seldom, if ever, ventured. Instead, literacy practices such as chorusing or group work around reading activities predominated. While students did many things together as groups and seldom individually, there was little room for abstract thought, individual identity work or creative language usage.

In sum, Mrs. A.'s Railway Primary class experiences limited and routinised second language usage and literacy practices as predominant features, while language use in abstract, reflective or individualised ways was uncommon, or lacking. She focused on the basics and was highly formulaic in terms of her literacy practices in that she tied the English language to such tangible things as photocopied hand-outs, with little movement beyond that printed paper's text. Words connect to basic, tangible reality, albeit in an English reality, with no explicit link to the pupil's first language. Her classroom was more a venue for learning the basics through repetition and group thinking. Unfortunately group thinking skill sets don't lead to mobility, because what the core demands are English language skill sets that allow for individual yet abstract thinking and doing. One need only think of the minimal group work occurring in the highly individualised arena of tertiary education. Her affordances to her students were, as I will show in Chapter Five, not the norm at Midway.

CHAPTER 5

ENGLISH: WHAT COUNTS ELSEWHERE?

5.1 OVERVIEW

In contrasting my observations of language and literacy practices across sites, it became clear to me that what was happening at one site was unlikely to be the same as at another site, particularly when these were geographically and socio-economically divergent, as Railway and Midway Primary were. At Railway, the resources of language and meaning-making children brought from home were not acknowledged but rather excluded. What counted as ways of making sense at home, for Railway students, was not taken into consideration or used as a resource for learning, even though (and perhaps also because) English was not the first or even second language of most students. At Midway, in contrast, I observed that the home literacy and language practices, the out-of-school identities and the interests of the students were acknowledged, such that home, as a distinct site, often meshed with classroom literacy practices in a seamless fashion, partly due to the English at home being closer to what counted as English in school (most students spoke English as their first language at home) and also because of the pedagogic strategies of the teachers that allowed students to engage with school work in an interactive and reflective manner.

5.2 LOCATING MIDWAY AS SCHOOL

Midway Primary school lay only a few kilometers from Railway primary, but there was a great social distance between these schools. Midway resided in what could be called a leafier, more affluent suburban area of greater Cape Town. Though it is bounded by light industry, this suburb is a green, planned suburban space, a remnant of 20th Century town planning for people designated as White under Apartheid. It remains a middle class suburb, with some middle class Coloured and Black families moving into the area during recent years. I chose this school for its proximity to Railway Primary and for its contrasting

features; I was interested in seeing how English might differ across a relatively short distance when there was a notable difference between the two schools in other respects.

English was predominantly the first language of the majority of the staff and student body at Midway, though a number of teachers spoke Afrikaans as a second language. Teachers were predominantly White and Coloured and there was one Black teacher who taught isiXhosa. The student body makeup followed this template, that is, mostly White and Coloured students with a relatively small portion of Black or Asian students. Differences in student fees for the two schools were not focal to my research, but Mrs. A. did mention, in passing, that many students defaulted on paying school fees at Railway.

5.3 THE CLASSROOM

Physically Midway classrooms were not luxurious, but were rather more comfortable, in terms of space, by comparison with Railway. Students shared two-seater desks and were grouped in rows rather than in circular clusters, such as at Railway. Students all had their own textbooks, and there was, unlike Railway, no handing out of textbooks that were strictly to remain in the classroom.

Student governance, and to a degree autonomy, in this classroom was made visible by a points system that the teacher had in place. Each group was made up of a row of desks and they were awarded points, or deducted, relating to behaviour in class: contribution or disturbance had a price and these students were so conditioned to behave as part of a community (desk group) within a community (Mr. B.'s class), within the bigger community of Midway Primary.

As a teacher Mr. B. was very different to Mrs. A. In particular, for my purposes here, he transported the children in a relaxed way between home and school. Mr. B. brought more of a social relevance to his classes (e.g.: he used new media resources which his students were exposed to in their home settings), and while he saw himself as being in control of his students and his classroom space, this control appeared to be responsive and negotiated.

5.4 LITERACY PRACTICES IN A MIDWAY CLASSROOM

In terms of what counts as English, literacy and language practices and events, occurred in each setting through the medium of English. They were, however, vastly different activities. The following example begins my illustration of this claim.

1. T: So far today, you people made quite a bit of noise, okay? Yes, you're included in that group, (), alright? I know it's Friday and it's the last few hours of the day, and this happens every Friday. Please, we do have work to do. Okay? Sit up straight now please, and take out your exam pad and your creative writing books, please. Now I know we're not next door, so I could put ./ normally we do creative writing () the picture on the white board, okay, and we have discussed the lessons () but what we gonna do today last week we started the process of creative writing. I gave you a picture to help you brain-storm some ideas. I gave you a planning, ./ ehm ./ format in terms of what questions to ask yourself. What are the questions ./ they called the? ./ to help you plan? Yes?
2. P: ()
3. T: The five W's. What are the five W's again?
4. PP: {Inaudible as many pupils answer simultaneously.}
5. T: EXCUSE ME?

In line 1 Mr. B., as with Mrs. A., uses interjections, but here he is simultaneously censuring (i.e.: noise and posture) the class for behaviour that fell short of the standard of behaviour he required in the confines of his classroom. He did not use exclusionary practices to censure (see "you're included") and the border of time and space beyond the classroom (and on to home) was highlighted with "...it's Friday and it's the last few hours of the day,...".

6. P: {One student attempts to quieten the class down.} SH:HH!
7. P: Who, when, what, why and where.
8. P: Thank you, Claire. Right. Five W's. Use those questions to help you plan an event to use those questions for the brainstorm. Okay. Now, your plan, your brainstorm is supposed to have been completed. I came around to help you with your plan and brainstorm, this week on Wednesday, and today you were supposed to have written your rough drafts on the exam pad. Brent, how many sentences are you supposed to have? At least? ./ Approximately? ./
9. P: Fifteen to twenty.
10. T: Fifteen to twenty sentences. Okay. Brief. Short. Short, descriptive piece. Yes?
11. P: () yesterday.
12. T: Yesterday? When were you absent? When did you come back to school?
13. P: On the ./ Tuesday.
14. T: Tuesday. So you had the Tuesday. And were you here on Wednesday? Ah!

You did this on Wednesday. Right! () here's what we gonna do now:
{Noise and shuffling. All talking. The Teacher reprimands a student.}
CRAIG! SHHH, I SAID [Yes?

15. P: {A pupil addresses the Teacher.} ()

Student self-monitoring (line 6) was a behaviour that I observed at Midway more than at Railway. Students understood the standard of behaviour Mr. B. required and for the most part confined themselves to his classroom rules. I did not observe Mr. B. ever having to raise his voice to a shouting level, like I observed at Railway (although Mrs. A. never shouted at students while I was in her classroom, I overheard teachers screaming at their students in nearby classrooms). The above extract was an exercise that began with a collaborative brainstorming session where they went over "the 5 W's" (line 8). Mr. B. wrote the following two main words on the chalkboard: edit and rewrite (as he taught he added related words to these points in a mind map format).

16. T: Okay, I'm gonna do that now. () sets. () gonna do now. Number 1. We are going to edit. {Pupil sneezes. The Teacher continues.} Okay, during your editing you are supposed to check your ./ your written piece ./ your draft ./ and then after checking your piece, you swap the person next to you or any other person in your group. I'm going to give you 3 to 5 minutes to check your own, then I'm going to give you 3 to 5 minutes to check your partner's ./ another person's ./ draft. And then we hand it back and you check it, ./ the work we have ./ for the third time. When we edit, ./ pay attention, ./ when we edit, right, you first look at the criteria. A couple of things I asked you to do. First the criteria. Number 1. You get the instructions first. Did they follow the instructions, ./ criteria? In other words, did they follow the instructions? Hey, I'm just gonna give you, ./ I'm not going to give you all the editing, but the most important part I'm gonna give you. Okay? Did they follow instructions? What were the instructions? Who remembers? Come! It's in there, the instructions. Yes?

17. P: We had to () five paragraphs.

18. T: Thank you! Number 1. Five paragraphs. What other instructions do they have to follow?

19. P: Introduction ().

20. T: Introduction and the Conclusion. Good! You are looking at the bigger picture first before you go to the nitty gritty. Good. And that's why you always do this first. Look at the big, overall picture. Right. Five paragraphs, Introduction and you have a Conclusion. What else?

21. P: Complete Mind Map which should consist [

Mr. B. navigated the lesson by scaffolding student activities, through pointing to instructions and criteria (lines 16 and 20) that the students should follow; in other words, he laid out a path based on his idea of what counted. The rest of the lesson continued along this vein; attention to both the surface features and the deeper features of writing were pointed to, as follows, in line 22.

22. T: Okay. Check the spelling. Yes, and the grammar. Okay? Hey? Spelling and grammar. Punctuation as well, /./ () punctuation. Okay, those are the final pieces but there's still a third one, /./ a general thing that I want you to actually do, okay, besides these two, but there's a third one, because, besides the Grammar, besides the Punctuation, I think the third one most of your parents help you with. Okay? The third one your parents basically help you with, at times if you do ask for help with creative writing. The third thing. Yes, you get the structure, the criteria, spelling, yes, that's fine. Your parents also look at this part as well, but the third part of your, /./ that your parents often help you with? {The Teacher asks a pupil.} Yes?

Spelling, grammar and punctuations are mentioned by Mr. B. (line 22), but as he taught he mentioned "...your parents help you...", this was unique to him, in that Mrs. A. not once mentioned parental involvement. Here he was alluding to two things: parental involvement (he mentions parental participation four times), but more importantly he was acknowledging home as a space linked to school, but, deeper yet, he was alluding to literacy in the home. Later, toward the end of the lesson, he assigned homework and a debate ensued between him and the pupils as to when, according to the rules, he, as teacher, was allowed to assign his students homework (lines 23 - 26).

23. T: Tuesday (). And, the rules state we can't give you new homework. I've been giving you this last week already. This is not new work.
24. P: () Maths, that's new ().
25. T: No, it's not new work, you got this on Tuesday. All right?
26. PP: {The pupils all talk simultaneously.}

A debate in this style (open, two-way and without immediate censure) has the style and typical middle-class hallmarks. This style of verbal exchange, elastic and giving, between the parties involved, was not an isolated event during my time observing at Midway. I witnessed no such debates in my whole term at Railway – here work was assigned by the teacher, on rare occasions questions were asked to clarify for understanding, but by no means was the assigning of assignments or its rationale ever questioned.

Mrs. A., during my observation, never overtly connected the practices of language at home with her use of English as medium of instruction in school, whereas with Mr. B. there was a tacit acceptance of the link between home and school language. Most of his students were first language English speakers and he taught in a more inter-connected fashion, where home resources were acknowledged. Here literacy was not set apart, nor was his the second classroom (with home being the first) – rather, it was an extension of home, a place where the rules and formats were formalised in terms of language that bridged home

and school; it was a continuum of sorts. For example, in the excerpt above, his class was not the first or only venue for English. The data above showed the teacher as holding a mandate for asserting the rules that govern words and text, with regard to creative writing, but he distributed this responsibility to his students by drawing their attention to these features in their own writing. Regarding the above extract, the dissimilarity between Midway and Railway, lies in the relative autonomy the child has in the course of the learning event. While the teacher sets the frame for the literacy event, the Midway child was free to query and explore the potentials of creative writing, with the teacher as guide to the rules.

Mr. B.'s ease of teaching undoubtedly benefitted from the fact that most of his students were English first language speakers (bar one student who had Mandarin as a first language), whereas language difficulties were Mrs. A.'s main struggle. English as a medium of instruction was not, in Mr. B.'s class, totally disconnected from what was exercised at home. English was spoken at home, on the playground and on the journey home, and on this journey it seamlessly transitioned between home and school for the students. Literacy was not set apart from home in his classroom. The Midway classroom, using English as medium, can be seen as the second classroom and home as the first classroom for language learning, where the two are interlinked. Students at Midway thus had at least two sites where they learned what counted as English. To further illustrate this point, regarding the flow of language resources across sites, I refer now to Circle Time, one of Mr. B.'s methods of being more connected with his students.

1. T: {Teacher addresses the class.} Okay, starting now we have, what, about seven minutes left. Anything thus far, I know we've had the () last () now for the past term, for the past three weeks now, you want to mention anything, now's the time. If something is disturbing you, something made you happy, and you want the class to know how you are feeling and you want to tell the person, you want to tell the class or that particular person, you don't have to mention names () – now's the time to talk.
2. P: ().
3. T: Now's the time to talk. If you want to maybe try and solve anything, if you can solve it now, or you want to try and sort it out as a class together, () what can we do as a class. If you can't, then obviously, after school or some time next week. Okay? Remember what stays in here, or what's in these four walls, stays in this class.
4. P: ().
5. T: Right. But it's not going in there (). Right, who would like to start?
6. P: I'd like to start. {Many pupils talk simultaneously. One pupil tries to

- shush the class at the same time that the teacher reprimands the class.}
7. P: Sh:hh!
8. T: YOU CAN'T TALK AT THE SAME TIME! () speak to that person. If you all talk at the same time, you have no respect for that person. If you have no respect for that person, you have no respect for your alter ego.
9. P: {Female pupil addresses the Teacher.} Sir, may I also say something ()?
10. T: If you want to mention something that's really bothering you...

Mr. B. extends the ideals of the middle-class voice into his classroom – in this exercise he gives his students a time, space and platform to use their voice. Rules were imparted for the activity (line1 and 3) and there was teacher authority apparent in the censuring of students for being too noisy (line 8). Again self-monitoring was shown by a pupil (line7) who earnestly told the class to “Sh:hh!” (probably an indication that the students enjoyed this activity and as a whole were afraid it would be taken away from them due to misbehaviour). The possible psychological benefits of this exercise were not my focus here. However, I observed students all following attentively in this activity, taking turns to express how they felt and to address problems. In this activity Mr. B. signalled to his students that he saw them as emerging adults, as co-producers of meaning in his class. He was tacitly conveying to his students that what counted here was for them to use their voices responsibly but thoughtfully in the bounded space he provided for them to function in. The rest of the life lesson maintained this course, but picked up in pace and intensity. Every lesson normally ended in a conclusion or wrap-up, as did this life lesson (see below, lines11 through 13) in Circle Time.

11. T: But now you know why we had this discussion in this week and last, why certain people – I dunno, I have it with the boys as well. Now, Ms Parker is having exactly the same conversation or talk in her class. Alright? And her class, and particularly the girls, they are working at their – trying very hard now for people to change, right? I've said this before to you. You can't just say “Sorry”. What else must you do?
12. P: Action!
13. T: You show it through your? Ac:tions. Now for people to change, everybody, just remember, people to change, takes a while. Takes (). For people to change, the change are wanting, it needs to become a habit. When something is a habit, people will change. Example, homework. There's a very simple example. Normally you do your homework on the last minute – ten, eleven o'clock here at night. Let's just change your habit. For example: you come home immediately. Let's just say you start your homework at half-past four to six o'clock. You do that every single day. When you do that every single day, it becomes habit. Home, change, eat, homework. Get into a routine. So I have to (). Getting into a routine, it's just a habit.

Think before you try and – before you say somebody is something – before you do. It could hurt, that words. And now you think before you say. If you do that all the time, it becomes a habit. People will change. Some will be Sarah and some girls next door. Okay? It will take time. {Student coughs.} People in our class. It takes a time. But it – but Grade 6, listen to me, listen to me, for people to change, what people like to see, is that you try:ing. () trying to change is very pleasing to see. They know there's something wrong and I want everybody to think about what they are trying to do. What you are trying to change. Okay? That is going to build. That trying can go a long way. {Teacher addresses specific pupil.} Yes?

With these last few comments, before class ended, Mr. B. demonstrated concern and imparted what he believed to be useful tips to his students. He could not have done this had he not allowed for this time of relatively open discourse between him and his students. No doubt, there were still rules at play and he was the authority regulating these rules but it is clear that he has stepped beyond the constraints of the school curriculum, as narrowly set down, to cross over into realms of moral and behavioural guidance that are normally associated with parental roles in the home. The facility of a shared language makes it possible for him to achieve this. The key difference identified here, between Railway and Midway, lies in the relative autonomy the child was afforded, within the classroom, to speak freely, though within the constraints of what counted as being appropriate. The above discussion was clearly teacher sanctioned with rules that applied, even during this free discussion. By extension, what counts can be negotiated at Midway, while limits are clearly set by the teacher. In this literacy event one sees a verbal elasticity, that is, the dialogue was negotiated in the confines of this classroom and within the unseen conventions that govern its space; within a specific time and space the language was allowed to be more elastic in its use between teacher and pupils. I also felt the rules were, to a degree, co-generated and, it seemed, that even the learning context was more elastic than at Railway. These spaces to explore and express very rarely, if ever, existed at Railway Primary; partly because the rules of the Railway classroom were all-consuming and partly because the space for self-expression was not afforded much importance, but mainly, due to the teacher being more focused on English being learned through repetition and out of context, than allowing for open student self-expression. Thus, in contrast, I observed Railway to be inelastic in terms of verbal transactions between students and teachers. The exercise of Circle Time in Mr. B.'s class, as a verbal literacy event, took learning and English beyond the texts that students were exposed to.

5.5 CONTEXT, CIRCUMSTANCES AND WHAT COUNTS

Circumstances at Midway were undoubtedly dissimilar to those of the Railway Primary setting. As such, dissimilar classroom context and circumstances inevitably impacted upon what counted and led me to think in terms of future mobility and how schooling perpetuates disproportionate literacy outcomes, in line with Bourdieu's (1991) idea of the capital of language. Context, here, I take to mean the physical and non-physical aspects of what constitutes the idea of the classroom. Classroom context, in this fashion, could be seen as contributing and perpetuating to uneven literacies, with dissimilar practices and resultant divergent outcomes.

The physical context and circumstance of the Midway classroom impacted upon teaching. By this I mean such things as classroom dimensions, layout of walls (wall uses and usage), layout of desks, that is, the setup of the space impacted upon teaching. Mr. B.'s classroom, in the physical sense, helped to produce distinct literacy practices and ways with words (Heath, 1983). Mrs. A. had a large student population in a restricted space. The walls of her classroom were covered with English-language writing (with images), that did not relate to the home languages of her students. Mr. B., on the other hand, had English language displayed on his classroom walls which were both fresher examples of what was relevant and which related to the subject-content he taught, as well as being linguistically available to his English-speaking students, for whom the language registers of the material, as well as their content, was familiar. In one example, a number of the students' own reviews of a set work book were affixed to the back wall. There was, notably, also a higher ratio of visual images to text affixed to the walls of his classroom than in Mrs. A.'s classroom.

Classroom context was also a product of the technology available and how it differed. Mrs. A.'s only option was that of writing on a chalk board or giving photocopied hand outs to her students; her overhead projector (OHP) had been broken for some time previous to my arrival. For Mr. B. the options ranged from a choice of a whiteboard, a smartboard, the chalkboard and the OHP. This privileged availability of multiple writing media at Midway, in itself, shifts the answer to the question of what counts as English in this setting. At Midway the varied use of tools for communication allowed for greater avenues for communication, thus allowing for more ways of meaning to be explored within the classroom space, and thus for more varied and creative ways with English language resources to be developed.

In one class alone, Mr. B. wrote notes on the white board and on the smartboard (researcher observational notes). The lesson was on adjectives and Mr. B. wrote the word 'desk' on the board and went on to say, "let's describe that common noun" and he drew arrows from the word and wrote words that students suggested to him (such as: wooden, strong, brown, boring). What he ended up producing was a visual on the board that could be likened to a mind map while actively using student contributions. He additionally wrote on the smartboard: Proper Adjective, Adjectives of Comparison and Adjectival Phrases to highlight categories. Throughout this lesson Mr. B. went on to utter such phrases as, "let's compare now", he moreover referred to the "rules" and said "look on this board here" (referring to the white board). The lesson was interactive and used technology that the students were familiar with both in the class as well as in their homes, as they related to the smartboard as a shared computer medium; most of Mr. B.'s students had computers at home and all students had computers as a school subject. Railway and Midway both had a computer room and students attended computer class. At Railway, due to class size, most pupils shared a computer and the majority did not go home to a personal computer. If one thinks of language as something that people do, as a social practice, then the English practiced at the two sites was a different thing, just on this basis alone, in that they were able to do a range of things at Midway that were not possible at Railway.

As regards the non-physical aspects of the classroom, it can be said that education policy and standards that are meant to be implemented uniformly within the classroom cannot be taken up similarly in each classroom due to the widely differing contexts. Through my observations, I came to see the physical and non-physical constraints of the classroom as being intricately linked. In illustration, how reading was approached as a classroom activity (and particularly the act of re-reading in turns) in Mrs. A.'s class was consistent with the lack of teaching resources. She used the dictionary extensively, as it was one of the few tools available to her and her students, and provided a standard for spelling and vocabulary development while simultaneously reinforcing the perception that useful knowledge resided elsewhere, not with her students, their opinions or interests. How does the classroom that lacks resources effectively achieve success in terms of set standards and prescribed outcomes? Dissimilarity between the Railway classroom and the Midway classroom rests on their dissimilar contexts, both physical and non-physical, from the size and organisation of the teaching space to the resources available for communicating and learning, to the ideas in teachers' heads as to what their enterprise was about. This

situational dissimilarity produced a different answer to the question of what counted as English when the question was posed in respect of each of these classrooms and, ultimately, each school as a whole.

5.6 MOBILITY

Student mobility (their capacity to move across contexts and make choices about work and other life-matters) was undoubtedly not the same for graduating students from Midway and Railway Primary. My point here, for the purposes of this dissertation, was that what counts as English was different in each setting and that it ultimately affected student mobility. The Midway child was middle class and far more exposed to prestige varieties of language and literacy that are required for mobility and that signal social status (Bourdieu, 1991), as they have been more closely schooled in what counts at the core of hegemonic English practices, albeit unobtrusively and imperceptibly. It is most likely that the Railway child, if transported to and immersed into class at Midway, would struggle and falter for this very reason: lack of exposure to ways with language and literacy that count as appropriate in this setting. This would happen because literacy practices at Midway are no mere replica of Railway literacy practices, as I have shown at length.

Getting through the basics of what must be learnt at Railway was achieved in a routine way, along with numerous hand-outs of worksheets. What counts as knowledge was disseminated in this manner, a simple how-to, but with no back up plan for what if's? Although the manner of dissemination occurred through English, there was little connection to the child's first language; English for Mrs. A.'s students was an isolated school practice, due to it not permeating their whole reality (unlike how English permeated the lives of most Midway pupils). What Mrs. A. could not encompass in her teaching was that reality, for her students, extended to home through other language resources that permeated the geographic spaces in-between, as Fataar (2009) similarly describes, journeys between the contexts of home and school are seldom navigated in the English language. The chorused learning of English at Railway does not provide these children with mobile resources. I observed many examples and have described some chorus-learning in Mrs. A.'s classes and I have argued that this practice provides access to a restricted form of language resources that are not flexible or available outside of the limited

classroom context. The following example, from Mrs. A.'s class, further illustrates this point.

1. T: A group of words, or one word, that we use for a group of things. One word that we use for a group of things, we call collective nouns. And you know what? I am gonna give those learners who like to talk, an opportunity to talk. Okay? To get rid of that urge to talk. Let's read these words.
2. PP: {The class chants the words on the board.} (), (), (), (), (), (), (), swarm, (), (), (), herd army, swarm.
3. T: You see, you see, you are not watch:ing, you are not paying atten:tion. You just go on and on and on. Use these {The Teacher indicates her ears.} ...mmm? Not only to hang earrings on. {The pupils are amused.} Use it to? [
4. PP: [Listen. (pupils chorus the answer together).
5. T: [Listen. Let's read again.
6. PP: (), (), (), (), (), (), (), swarm, (), (), (), herd, army, (), (), (), (), canteen. (students repeat all words on the chalkboard again).
7. T: What is that word? (Teacher points to the board).
8. PP: Canteen.
9. T: O:kay.
10. PP: (), (), (), (), (), (), (), (), (), (), (), shoal, (), gaggle, canteen, swarm. {A pupil coughs.} (pupils repeat words for the third time).
11. T: Okay. Now you are sitting there. I want you to choose one collective noun and when I call out your name, you will connect the collective noun to a noun. I will, for instance, say, "string". What will you say, (poses question to a specific student)?
12. :S Pearls. (student the question was posed to answers).

There was minimal room for autonomy or querying for the Railway child in such strained, literacy acts, especially when repetition was the format of learning or the literacy practice itself. Chorusing and repetition are exceptions and not a norm in Mr. B.'s Midway classroom. As teacher he did not focus on the basics with such force, as was the case with Mrs. A. He, I argue, took it for granted that the basics existed, or that his students would at least partly construct their own rules and generalisations if they were helped to do so. He also worked hard to make sure that the class, as a whole, was on the same page when it came to thinking things through. His tacit understanding, I believe, was that they were moving on together and if any problems arose for a student, they simply queried him. No repetition was required, no re-reading of text ad nauseum occurred. At Midway poetry, creative writing and public speaking were facets of language used that were explored and practised. I am reminded here of the Best Speakers⁶ competition that I sat in on. This was

⁶ The Best Speakers competition was a public speaking activity which any senior Midway student could participate in. Pupils chose from a selected range of topical issues and had to produce a speech of three minutes in length that they delivered in front of the whole school in the school hall. All speeches were

a platform for all to participate, be creative, imaginative and to push themselves, while there were rules, judges and genre requirements as regards to what could be said and done. Mobility was not explicit in these events, but present in that the events themselves promoted thinking and language of an abstracted or decontextualised kind, the very language required for mobility in certain discourses outside of school. Chorusing was not a feature of the Midway classroom talk, for there was almost a tacit understanding that it would not fit into the world outside the classroom. For Mr. B. and his students the act of chorusing, in the manner of Mrs. A.'s use of it, would be construed as inappropriate. The middle class child would sense the lack of autonomy in such a practice, and perhaps question and rebel against it, such that, the only times I witnessed chorusing, it was more as an act of light punishment by the teacher or to impress upon the students something they should have known and it was their fault for not knowing it. Dissimilarity again lies in the autonomy of the child. Though discipline was an aspect of Mr. B.'s class, this discipline was exercised differently to Mrs. A.'s. Her starker, severe style as authority figure, contrasted with Mr. B.'s more open, negotiating style of discipline, as seen in the Circle Time extract above and in his laissez fair attitude to the READ period, which follows below. Throughout the whole school, and indeed in Mr. B.'s classroom, there were practices to ensure acts of literacy that promote language beyond the basic, beyond mere repetition. I observed that this was represented by the school-wide, though mandatory, reading period, or READ, at Midway.

1. PP: {The class is settling down for the period. Not making too much noise. Various pupils talk to the Teacher casually. Then he addresses the class:}
2. T: You're taking quite long to settle down Grade Six. Into Sure Time till eleven o'clock. And while we on that, note, so far you have twenty class points – twenty-five, okay? Need to get twenty-five. Next /./ term, the same amount of weeks. You get forty class points. Fifteen more. I'll take the class to the movies.
3. PP: {The pupils register happy surprise at this announcement! Some exclaim loudly. Others are making comments while the Teacher continues to talk.} [
4. T: [But unfortunately you have to pay your own way.
5. PP: {The pupils are amused and laugh, noise intensifies as each child gives opinion simultaneously. One pupil is intent on quietening down the racket:}
6. P: SH:HHH! {The noise slowly subsides.}
7. T: Go now. Till eleven o'clock.
8. P: Mr. B., do we get forty points ()?
9. T: Yes.

moderated by three judges (not teachers, but people from outside the school) and the judges named the winner and a substantial gift certificate was awarded as first prize.

10. P: () last ()?
11. T: No, you have still another week-and-a-half.
{The pupils talk freely to each other and to the Teacher.}
12. P: Ehm, Mr. B., when does the fourth term start?
13. T: When...? [
14. P: [does the fourth term start?
15. T: Starts on 5th October.
16. P: And when does it end?
17. T: {The Teacher coughs.} For you, round about the 11th of December.
18. P: Sir, are you gonna ()? {Inaudible as other pupils are also talking.
The noise level intensifies. In the foreground, one pupil asks another:}
19. P: I wonder if all of us are going to Grade Seven?

The teacher, during the READ period, both announces the commencement of the literacy event and regulates the above event (lines 1 and 2); even though in the beginning of the period he was casually talking to some students. Regulation was through a points system (per desk group) and there was also an additional demerit system per individual student (parents are informed of this via email from Mr. B.'s computer on his classroom desk). During this period, and the exchanges that took place whilst reading was meant to be taking place, many students were indeed silently reading. There was even an example of child self-regulation to fit into the rules (line 6), where a student spurred the class on to be silent, but to fit in with the rules, you must ultimately know the rules, that is, know what was acceptable in terms of the discourse that exists in Mr. B.'s class. Most notably, I found it interesting that the student mused (line 19) over her and fellow classmates' mobility and progression. It speaks to a greater awareness of life, in general, and appeared as a hallmark of middle class sensibilities of progression, as does it speak to middle class sensibilities that it was spoken out aloud and to the teacher as the target audience.

To conclude, Mrs. A.'s Railway Primary classroom has restricted language usage and literacy as predominant features, while a movement to using language in more applied and creative ways or modes was less central, even lacking. A focus on the basics of language was formulaic as a practice for Mrs. A. and she tied the English language to such things as photocopied hand outs. Words connect to basic, tangible reality, albeit in an English classroom with no explicit link to the pupil's first language. The use of English language resources in thoughtful abstractions was not a region where Mrs. A.'s class ventured, with her as teacher/guide. The repeatedly observed chorusing in Mrs. A.'s class, produced a bounded use of language, I suggest, with little room for, or practice in abstract thought. Language usage was constrained by the emphasis on collective display and group thinking. The autonomy of the Railway pupil was constrained by the highly disciplined

classroom arena. So too was autonomy constrained in Mr. B.'s class, but in a far less overt and restricted manner. Mrs. A. had a closed, authoritarian style of discipline, thus producing very different models of what counted as appropriate language practices in each setting.

As regards language and literacy practices in the classrooms, there was less reading of text, performed in an explicit manner, in Mr. B.'s class. While both teachers were required to manage their classes and teach in an organised fashion with what tools they had, the outcomes differed hugely. Mr. B. used language resources in his class together with technological resources in a manner that was inclusive of students, their identities and their interests. When he focused on formal aspects of language work, it was always in the context of getting a larger task completed. Where Mrs. A. did not or could not acknowledge the connection between home and school in her teaching of English to use her students' out-of-school knowledge as a teaching resource as a medium of instruction, Mr. B., did not have to teach English as the majority of his students were first language English speakers.

Mrs. A. taught in a way that was detached from the students' worlds of home and play, as her idea of literacy was that it was set apart, that is, school was separate from home and the classroom was not seen as the second classroom. For her the classroom was the only classroom and site of language that counted. There was, however, a smoother transition from school to home for the Midway child, as a singular language mediated both these spaces and even the space in-between these two arenas. For even the playground, at Midway, was part of the game of what counts.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMATIVE CONCLUSIONS

6.1 CONTRASTIVE LITERACY PRACTICES

This study focused on answering: what counts as English in divergent classroom settings? The classrooms I examined were unquestionably shaped by factors from the wider milieu, but these schools, as institutions, produced ideological orientations, had resources that differed across schools and exercised power. Essentially this was a study investigating social practices developed around English as a category in contemporary society. More specifically, I studied how English, as a social practice and mediative resource, was constituted and constructed in the contexts and discourses of divergent classrooms. These schools, and more specifically these classrooms, produced situated rules for interaction which influenced what was said and done. These schools, as social institutions, stabilised, centred and authorised indexicality (Blommaert, 2003). This point refers to how specific ways of using English were constructed in both classrooms and participation in dialogue was deemed appropriate or inappropriate according to the teacher, in relation to the context and to classroom conventions. These actions signalled (indexically) and produced social identity positions for students and teacher to occupy for language and literacy are socially situated practices (Heller, 2007, Street, 2009). The events that indicated divergent practices were, for example, Circle Time and the READ period at Midway. Students encountered learning English in each respective space differently and classroom talk, interaction and practices reflected normalised particular language practices in each classroom. Classroom observation allowed me to gain insight into the divergent nature and context of each classroom, as the environment of each, with its resources or lack thereof, essentially contributed to make meaning. The resources available to Midway students differed from those at Railway, contributing toward the literacy practices.

DA and CDA, as tools, lent themselves to my analysis of classrooms and the production of knowledge. Both are concerned with dialogic expressions that have become universal and habituated. These discourses symbolise particular interests and this thesis accounted for those using CDA and DA. Discourses are not clearly bounded units, but in using these

tools to make visible what was at play in terms of who (teacher or student) and what (classroom practices) were taking place in the classroom setting. Furthermore, a qualitative ethnographic approach to my study allowed me to search for interconnected patterns of language usage and power. Methodologically, collecting digitally-recorded data for analysis of classroom talk allowed for sustained analysis of interactive moments and events. The research method applied was that of a qualitative, ethnographic-style case-study approach, as this best facilitated researching the multiple constructed realities that existed in this study, in relation to the schools, the teachers, the students and the classrooms. The exploratory research question followed in this study demanded keen reasoning skills and attention to detail. The theoretical resources I used allowed me to show that in multilingual classroom settings, like Railway Primary's, the language experiences and practices of home are minimally brought into the classroom setting by teachers, leading to missed learning opportunities. What counts, in terms of language and literacy practices in the classrooms of Mrs. A. and Mr. B. were dissimilar in terms of observed divergent social classroom practices. That is, the English language medium used was not the same in each setting – it was used and employed in dissimilar ways and what was produced was not the same.

Mrs. A., taught in a strongly bounded fashion (not connecting home and school). For her English literacy was set apart. School remained the space where what was correct and accepted was specific to school; home was othered by default. Mr. B.'s classroom, in contrast, was a space where the language of home connected to the language of school. Practices of chorusing and repetition and re-reading were rarely employed by Mr. B. but often by Mrs. A. Dissimilarity between Midway and Railway also existed with regard to the perception of spelling and dictionary work, Mrs. A. saw them as central, almost emancipating, yet for Mr. B. spelling was important but self-regulated as the dictionary was a given background resource when the focus of work was on something else, not on the dictionary per se. Reading and writing, in each of the two classrooms was distinctive. Mrs. A. employed re-reading as a tool to reinforce work in the minds of her students, whilst Mr. B. hardly used this tool with his students, even though they had the READ period which was designed as a focus on reading for its own sake. Reading at Midway was a school sanctioned act but one which was permitted to exist as an operation of both pleasure and work.

6.2 THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM CONTEXT AND CIRCUMSTANCE

What counted as English in these two Cape Town classrooms (as well as in the schools which shaped their practices) was dissimilar. Contributing to this difference was dissimilar classroom circumstances, inevitably impacting on what counted. Schooling perpetuates uneven literacy outcomes and classrooms are sites where this transpires. 'Context' in this thesis meant both physical and non-physical aspects of what constituted the idea of the classroom. The divergent classroom contexts (physical and non-physical) at Railway and Midway contributed to dissimilar practices and outcomes of what ultimately was seen to count as English.

The physical context of each classroom impacted upon teaching in unique ways in that the layout in terms of classroom dimensions contributed to ways of making meaning. Dissimilar classroom practices took place at Midway and Railway, partly shaped by the physical context and what was possible, i.e.: Mrs. A.'s lack of anything but a chalkboard contrasted with Mr. B.'s technological options. Even with this as her only option, Mrs. A.'s chalk and talk was effective in its own way in that setting. For Mr. B. the choice of whiteboard, smartboard, chalkboard or OHP resulted in his using English language resources in ways that allowed for increased avenues of communication to be explored. Dissimilarities between Railway and Midway classrooms were thus partly due to different physical constraints and potentials and this contextual dissimilarity of context produced a different answer to what counted as English, as ultimately, each rested in a dissimilar milieu.

6.3 MOBILITY AND WHAT COUNTS AS ENGLISH

Midway can broadly be seen as an example of a middle-class context, where there was a higher level of student autonomy, and a form of colloquial English that was not at all far from the standardised English that is globally accepted. The students at Railway were also, to a degree, induced into an engagement with what was acceptable as English but on a far more local and peripheral level as compared to Midway. The high level of multilingualism in Mrs. A.'s class lead to an increased level of the production of locality, in terms of English. English produced in such localised settings, such as hers, ultimately influences future student mobility. The affordances that teachers can give students at

Railway are not those that are as readily portable as at Midway and thus not leading to mobility – they are almost made for the Railway context. Midway and Railway were not mere replicas of what was happening in terms of English.

Concrete examples of language without the accompaniment of abstracted thought or flexible language use best described the predominant application of language usage and literacy practices in Mrs. A.'s classroom. Her classroom focus was ultimately on her students mastering the basics. What counted in her class was to connect immediate reality (albeit her orchestrated English reality, with minimal links to student home language). Chorusing, re-reading, etc. in Mrs. A.'s class served to situate her students in an understanding of the now; thoughtful or flexible language usage was minimised by this practice. Dissimilarity between the two settings lay, therefore, also in the relative autonomy of the students that was promoted, and in the discipline and teaching-styles of the respective teachers; Mr. B. was less authoritarian and more open to negotiation than Mrs. A. was, and this shaped their different habits with English language resources. Mr. B. prepared his students to be social, mobile and autonomous by taking it for granted that the language basics had been covered and what counted was their use in service of wider activities of knowledge production, without copious amounts of repetition. In his class re-reading text *ad nauseum* did not feature, nor did chorusing; tacit acceptance of student understanding existed, yet the expectation existed that if a student had a query they would direct this to him as teacher. Midway students had more voice, in ways that might be seen as typically middle class, than those at Railway.

At Midway, poetry, writing competitions or public speaking were opportunities for students to explore language beyond the classroom; such examples existed very minimally at Railway, if at all. Words and language at Midway connected to reality beyond classroom reality and abstract thought and language were investigated and endorsed by way of planned literacy events where the child was expected to exercise language resources in individualised, thoughtful and in socially acceptable, standardised ways. Concerns with fostering mobility as a resource was not explicit in these events, but nonetheless present in the practices, as Mr. B.'s students navigated between the classroom space, the school without and the world beyond, all in English.

6.4 WHAT COUNTS GOING FORWARD?

The question was: what counted as English, and in researching it, it became clear that language and literacy practices were far more complex than was apparent at first glance. Placing English in context takes more than simply observing grammatical rules being imparted; it includes understanding the generation and practice of discourse as a socially embedded phenomenon. This grasp of discourse as social practice was key to my answering the question. I studied how discourse was systematically produced in the classroom by way of genres, registers and rules of interaction and I enquired how close it was to the student's home/out-of-school discourses and experiences. What counted as English resonated in three ways.

Firstly, English counts as in what matters; English as a stable but imagined phenomena has a vested status of great value, social as well as monetary. What was valued at Railway was a perceived English status that was aspirational but not available in the ways that it was at Midway. Secondly, English counts as a resource which underwrites transactions; English, ideally, is equivalent with, and core to, mobility as a social resource. Railway English was aspirational in its practices (spelling, grammar and repetition) but these basic ingredients did not equal the display of resources in ways that signalled the social mobility that students aspired to. Finally, English counts as in what is perceived; English has multiple statuses, all context-bound. The Railway context differed from the Midway context, as a result the status of what English was produced was different. In sum, what counts here does not always count over there or elsewhere. Midway English did appear more resourceful since it was the student's home language and it was part of their identity resources while Railway English did not appear resourceful or dynamic as there was little explicit allowance for students to draw upon personal daily experiences for their writing and speaking tasks. One would ideally have hoped for some kind of scaffolding at Railway that would lead students back and forth from home to school, where out-of-school ways would be used as bridges to the development of school-like ways, but this did not happen.

In conclusion, this thesis showed a peripheral setting producing localised practices; and another producing core practices in a more privileged setting. Additionally, the former did not necessarily guarantee future academic success or mobility due to the reading, writing, language, and literacy practices learned at Railway being localised in ways that made

sense in that environment; these localised norms did not lend well to portability in divergent contexts, nor automatically lead to future mobility. Further, the findings of this study point towards a divergence that possibly exists throughout South Africa; uneven English production will continue to replicate future uneven social distinctions. What I have not done in this thesis was to compare many more teachers from each school; a functional decision of space. In researching these schools, though geographically close, it became clear they were much further apart as they catered to different markets for English. I unexpectedly found that in as much as I observed difference, I also found slight similarity. The similarity, however, was more in terms of the humanity of the actors in each setting and how they played their roles in each locale. The differentiating factor, English, that guided and shaped so much, had a shape and history that itself could have been a complete study on its own. My research for this minor dissertation has just started to elaborate on this phenomenon.

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