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CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS AS DECOLONISING TOOL FOR A UNIFYING ECOLOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Abstract

This article determines whether transliteracy practices can be employed as a basis for introducing decoloniality into teacher education. The aim of the project was to devise ways of turning learning spaces into critical areas of enquiry. Discursive spaces were created to strengthen cross-cultural interpretive sensitivities, and to develop a stronger sense of voice and reflexivity among student teachers. Examples are provided of various collaborative tasks devised and implemented in this process. Evidence from student course feedback, suggests that a transliteracies framework can interrupt the discourse of coloniality; enacting epistemological and social change.

Keywords: transliteracies, critical language awareness, decoloniality, pre-service teacher education, South Africa, transculturality

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1. Introduction

This article focuses upon the question of what kind of language awareness can be brought to bear to transform the perpetual, and self-perpetuating, stand-off on race/ethnicity and separatist discourses in South African pre-teacher education. The pedagogical implications of transliteracy practices are set out (Stornaiunolo, Smith & Phillips, 2016). Collaborative tasks were provided to students, together with opportunities for guided reflection on these tasks. This research project made use of language awareness tasks distributed to a class of student teachers at a university of technology in the Cape Province of South Africa. These tasks were found to enhance the critical thinking of student teachers enabling them to recognise taken-for-granted assumptions in their cultural milieu and interrogate them. This process of recognition, identification, interrogation and self-reflection was undertaken by creating discursive spaces in the classroom and introducing learning tools to strengthen cross-cultural interpretive practices.

The aim of this sort of intervention was to model a particular interpretation of the new Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum (DoE, 2011), which, through the process of students working collaboratively in a series of activities, was intended to provide a sense of agency to pre-service teachers and their learners. This kind of intervention shifts the emphasis away from traditionally quantitatively measured student performance in English. The focus is upon less tangible yet essential skills which develop students into critical and empathetic thinkers, and ultimately create social cohesion - one of the millennial goals of the South African education system. Non-transformative procedures have, however, become calcified in the education system at present so that it is necessary to kick-start transformation within classroom structures and to devise ways of collaboratively and innovatively engaging students and staff as partners in learning. The research paradigm in which this investigation is situated is interventionist, transformative and qualitative. The project described here sets out to build reflective processes and critical awareness of constructions of power and identity in texts in the curriculum in order to prompt awareness of the ways in which decolonising processes could be implemented.

Research questions which guided this study were as follows:

Research Question 1: How can a transformative literacy practice initiate and stimulate patterns of interrogation and self-reflection?

Research Question 2: Can a learning space become an area of enquiry?

2. Historical/Social Background

Since the beginning of the South African democratic political transformation process, more than 20 years ago, racism and stereotyping, contrary to expectations, has not noticeably diminished, but seems instead to have become more overt, almost to the degree of having changed into a form of symbolic violence. This kind of racial stereotyping remains highly visible in pre-service teacher education, and for pre-service teachers of English in particular, where students from different ethnic groups with differing competences in English appear in the main not ready to deal with difference or to communicate freely with what or whom is still largely regarded as the 'other'. From the classroom evidence of this research, students continue to live and to act in separatist groups from each other within the classroom. They often appear to operate socially, and in the institution, as separate racialised 'tribes'. This situation persists even though they have spent several years together in a classroom as a supposed learning community. Horsthemke (2017: 6) issues a clear warning against this kind of 'transcultural' situation: 'the depiction of cultures as separate, distinct islands or self-contained spheres is both unrealistic and normatively dangerous.'

In the context of this discussion, coloniality is sustained in a Gramscian sense of hegemonic supervision of a willing and unwilling oppressed majority which derogates the colonized as objects of production; preventing the majority from becoming critical and autonomous agents.

In terms of higher education Luckett (2016:10) states that 'it is ethically imperative to recuperate and in the process to build black student agency for integrated identity formation, deep learning, and academic achievement' through 'dialogic engagement, a commitment to building a community on campus and knowledge production that expands the archive and re-reads the canon in new ways.' Luckett's argument encodes an ethos of inclusivity, of restoring agency among black students, of the re-reading of the canon of English literature, as well as the introduction of globally relevant texts, particularly African literatures and texts. Luckett (2016) describes higher institutions of learning in the country as reactive sites of extreme contention in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, economics, and equity issues, particularly regarding curriculum content based on and informed by African views and perspectives which to date remain neglected in the education system. Luckett thus regards the institutional and socio-political landscape within which teacher education in South Africa is poised to transform itself as potentially toxic, static and destructive.

This negative landscape could, however, itself be transformed by embarking on a pedagogical experimental tour. The aim of such a transformative excursion is for higher education institutions to respond more appropriately to a student body for whom language alternation and superdiversity (Blommaert, 2017) are the norm in student interaction. This reality ought to be taken into account in addressing inequality within and outside formal learning spaces. The curriculum intervention described here prompts students to share learning across cultures, to expand their existing repertoires, and to acquire critical tools for reflection and reflexivity.

Lillis and Scott (2007:13) distinguish between students who gain knowledge and those who gain voice. By ‘voice’ is meant the active participation of students in critiques of perspectives on those taken-for-granted knowledges which have become fossilised within curricula in South Africa nationally. For example, African literatures as part of World Literatures in English are still being implemented in ways that resemble tokenism in that they are regarded as rarefied texts.

Luckett (2016) and Lillis and Scott (2007) argue that little attention has so far been paid to the incorporation of indigenous African knowledges in English language education. If these knowledges and literatures are acknowledged in higher education curricula, they comprise the knowledges of the majority, who essentially remain marginal and relatively disempowered people of colour. These knowledges should be included and prominently highlighted in the curriculum.

This study is transformative by nature and draws a distinction between normative and transformative approaches to curriculum. This has been extensively discussed by Lillis and Scott (2007) and by Jacobs (2013) among many other curriculum researchers in South Africa who describe how the curriculum for English teacher training has solidified largely in favour of one canon which is broadly the Western canon, founded on the prioritisation of modern Western knowledge over ‘non-western’ knowledges. This ossified canon is based on an assumption that ‘modern’ knowledge, and its transfer via educational institutions, would naturally instantiate modern subjects. Yet an exclusive emphasis on African writing and on an African literary canon has skewed some curricula interpretations towards parochial and essentialist knowledges and views minimally connected or related to ‘modern’ knowledge. The more appropriate term ‘World Literatures in English’ has not as yet entered the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum for teacher education. One of the ways in which curricula may be transformed is through the use of multiple languages in the interpretation and construction of knowledge.

This article thus defends a transliteracies framework for language awareness in English teacher education. A transliteracies framework, in the context of this discussion, refers to a pedagogy which takes as given, and addresses overtly, the complexity of social code-switching, code-mixing, code-meshing and mixing which has become a reality within communication in institutions of higher education across the country.

3. Theoretical underpinnings

According to Wertsch (2000: 335), cultures have always overlapped and been mutually constituting, characterised by mixtures and permutations. In this age of globalisation, this kind of crossing and mixing has become amplified in socio-economic terms, with the global poor being ever further marginalised in terms of access to education and technology. The primary role of transformative education should be to counteract both colonisation and an apartheid/separatist kind of ‘indigenization’ by local authorities, and to work towards transculturality. This paper posits ways in which lecturers and teachers can transform pre-service teacher education based on the recognition of language alternation, i.e. transliteracies, languaging and transculturality. Transliteracies as a framework need to be recognized as a useful underpinning for curricula and pedagogy across disciplines. These should constitute a prerequisite for staff in terms of recognizing and affirming student identity and power, rather than constructing serial deficit models as has been done in the past by herding secondlanguage speakers into formulaic-style additional/add-on language development courses and additional years of study, as is still the custom at some South African institutions, perpetuating the stigmatized separate developmental processes of the apartheid era.

Using a transliteracies framework, Stornaiuolo, Smith and Phillips (2016: 4) suggest that ‘literacy is the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media, from signing and orality, through handwriting, print, TV, radio and films, to digital social networks.’ This definition frames literacy as part of ‘a unifying ecology, not just of media, but of all literacies relevant to reading, writing, interaction and culture’. Other researchers have named these rather ambiguous, unpredictable crossings between and through discourse communities, which they conceive of as unbounded systems constantly in flux in time and space. Crossings (Rampton, 1995) such as these are variably known as trajectories, resemiotizations or interactions in third space. One of the key questions regarding learner uptake of literacies posed by Stornaiuolo et al. (2016) is directly relevant to the quest for decolonising higher education curricula: ‘How do people take each other into account and signal their understandings to one another, and what resources do they make use of, out of those which they have at their disposal?’ (Stornaiuolo et al., 2016:13). From this arises another question: ‘How can knee-jerk culturally-biased responses be recognised, interrupted and interrogated in order to reveal the ways in which they perpetuate or counter social inequality?’ (17). These questions are closely linked to the kinds of collaborative language activities and critical reading across disciplines in higher education which the author seeks to promote. Kaschula (2002:210) poses this problem statement as follows: ‘… the power imbalances that hold the normative in place, prevent genuine dialogue between traditions…’.

Barton (1994:32) defines literacy as a set of accepted social practices and habits associated with particular symbolic systems and their related technologies. While interaction between interlocutors from diverse backgrounds may initially require a strong sense of agency and competence, these practices become ‘normal’ through practice when they become good habits. The purpose of this transformative transliteracies project is to create a learning community which establishes common understandings of how interactions are framed for inclusivity and mutual benefit of all parties, expanding reflective practices, group and teamwork repertoires, and awareness and repertoires of accountability, ethics and human rights agendas.

In such a project, the introduction to a range of additional resources (technological and otherwise) allows for alternative manners of expression and the possibility of minimising the disadvantages that additional-language users face. Multimodal engagement requires a curriculum focus on student-generated texts, using a variety of, and innovative combinations of, web-based tools. Text production should offer the opportunity for students to work in a variety of genres. In this study the texts produced by student teachers were used as a basis from which to conduct collaborative class discussions and critique on the assumption that students are regarded as future catalysts of change. This implies that negotiation for meaning is required by interlocutors in order to bring their interpretive frames into alignment with each other. The many ways in which face-to-face interactions in this study were tailored to each situation and cultural mix of the participants provided rich research material.

The challenge is for students to acquire interpretive repertoires and a sense of voice with which to brave these communicative situations which differ in terms of cultural mix and frames of reference of the specific participants. Strategies for creating a critical transliteracies framework for language awareness in tandem with a discursive methodology are presented below.

4. Methodology

The methodology is transformative and interventionist and encourages a learning curve for students which was introduced through three classroom management interventions described under 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 below. The extracts from student course evaluations highlight specific breakthroughs regarding the issue of what kind of language awareness can transform the perpetual and self-perpetuating stand-off on race/ethnicity and separatist discourses in South African pre-teacher education in the context in question? Twenty-eight students participated in the activities and in the feedback.

4.1 Creating discursive spaces in the classroom

This section focuses on Research Question 2: Can a learning space become an area of enquiry? Under discussion is how a strategic classroom organisation can facilitate the creation of collaborative learning. Such a community of practice is defined as ‘an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour’ (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2002: 464). Ellsworth (1989), an early conceptualiser of the idea of mutual engagement between students and educators for social justice, is cited by Freedman (2007):

> Grounded in a clearly articulated political agenda and her experience as a feminist teacher, Ellsworth provides a critique of ‘empowerment’, ‘student voice’ ‘dialogue’ and ‘critical reflection’ and raises provocative issues about the nature of action for social change and knowledge. (Ellsworth, 1989 in Freedman, 2007: 443).

Ellsworth and Freedman’s ideas suggest that the nature of what is generally regarded as ‘empowering’ needs to be carefully deconstructed, and cannot be taken at face value.

Kirkham (2015:630) suggests examining intersections between class and ethnicity in order to gain a more refined picture of linguistic variation within communities and the ways in which both class and ethnicity index social categories and ideological orientations and attitudes. This approach shows how linguistic features overlap with demographic categories and distinctive styles of habitus and discourses. Lave and Wenger (1991), who first conceptualised communities of practice, describe their relation to the concept of *ubuntu*:

> there is a commitment to reciprocity and reciprocal learning relationships, and a deepening participatory process, related to *ubuntu*. A different commitment is required from pre-service educators where they learn to value the learning of others as much as their own. The aim is not just to develop one's own reflection skills but to facilitate the development of others' reflection skills (Lave & Wenger, 1991 in Kirkham, 2015).

This attitude indicates a strong belief in participatory frameworks for learning which are mediated through the differences of perspective amongst co-participants.

The curriculum design suggested by Lave and Wenger prioritises the creation of functional sites of equitable transactions in the classroom as a research forum, and a close-knit learning community with a common discourse. The tasks outlined are simulations of 'real-life' contexts in which individuals perform as agentative selves. This classroom-based experimentation presents an opportunity for each student, or group of students, to develop different types of flexible language and discourse awareness as well as to develop the key graduate attributes relating to strong community-building value systems in the classroom as outlined in CPUT and Faculty of Education Graduate Attributes (2016). Practically speaking, a series of workshops needs to be conducted to reconstitute the class as a research forum and a close-knit learning community.

In this study, a simulated functional site of diversity within the student group/class community was constituted and was intended to act as a model for real-life interaction. A series of workshops were conducted at the onset of the course[1] to establish such an ethos. Ideally, in this way a flexible pro-active learning organisation is created, in which the teaching agenda includes team processes, facilitation, mandating and leading with each student having the opportunity to experience all of these aspects of participation.

This project used both Barton's (1994:68) 'communities of practice' lens which views language in teaching and learning as socially situated, and the multi-literacies framework for language development (Gee, 2008:72; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000: 5). The framework views any communicative situation in an institutionalised learning context as a coming together of multiple discourses around a specific task. According to the framework, learning communities are communities in which certain practices originate, are developed, perpetuated, and discarded, or adapted with the intention of moving them forward. This raises the question of what definitions there might be of 'moving forward'. To some educationists and education policy makers, this kind of progression means education for economic gain. From a more comprehensive, inclusive and human rights perspective, performance and ‘progress’ in complex literacy performance are ideally measured by a cluster of variables which do not exclude the economic well-being of members of such communities of practice but do include such variables as the social well-being, strong senses of agency, and voices of members.

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[1] See Appendix attached for details of schedule questions and responses required.

Implementing an interactive curriculum entails staff across departments jointly designing an accountability structure with maintenance measures for intergroup and interpersonal interactions. Practically speaking this requires establishing, with shared frameworks for modus operandi, shared norms, values and understandings, as well as buy-in and recorded agreements. Secondly, it includes language awareness informed by interpretive and self-reflective practices as well as gender sensitivity and awareness of ecological principles. An ecological model (Barton,1994) of communication implies integrated, collaborative practices which address power relations between the interlocutors. Le Cornu and Ewing (2008) provide examples such as co-mentoring, peer and mutual mentoring, collaborative mentoring, and critical constructivist mentoring for staff and students. Hibbert and Dippenaar (2017) provide a recent local example.

4.2. Providing ample space for strengthening development of voice

Innovative student expression in this study was facilitated through creative text production such as, activities involving creative problem-solving and production of ideas, interacting with texts and communicative artefacts in a variety of media, through a variety of modes. Essential to the project, were collaborative tasks, in which different participants brought varied expertise to the table and played a range of different group roles such as scribe, monitor, speaker and timekeeper. This practice facilitated the inclusion of indigenous knowledge structures and practices and built in ethical ways of social networking within the classroom. This was done by creating equitable space in terms of student voice in difficult conversations, and by creating awareness of power dynamics inherent in these exchanges between interlocutors - all done on an enhanced equitable basis. Fostering an awareness of ‘voice’ means taking account of the dialogic nature of discourse and non-institutional discourses of participants which includes gesture and body language. Often students are taught not to use the ‘I’ (their own voices), and to be ‘objective’. This works against the development both of voice and a sense of agency and responsibility for ’ownership’ of point of view and perspectives taken. In a transliteracies framework, particularly in the context of a diverse student body, the institutional/traditional rationality/ objectivity, impersonal discourse excludes newcomers, as they are not familiar with the received normative conventions which have solidified in most institutions. However, interaction in a transliteracies framework breaches the divide between institutional and individual voices, highlights difference, and struggles for power and position. This is why this was foregrounded for students: it helped students find their feet within a range of perspectives. For this purpose, Soudien (2009:92) suggests that it is ’the local context’ that ‘must become the point of departure for knowledge-building in universities’ across Africa and, indeed, ‘the world’.

Context was communicated and reflected on in this transformative curriculum project: context was mutually constituted by the interlocutors through their emerging commonality of discourse. Thus students needed to be made aware of and be able to identify the use of contextualisation cues which signalled contextual information. This required reliance on knowledge of interpretive frames. The curriculum needs to facilitate the sharpening of interpretive skills, the acquisition of skills to interpret contextual cues, the understanding and interpreting of non-standard styles, and the refining of listening strategies. Central to the project was translating unfamiliar and 'foreign' messages into local/own discourses/ other contexts and developing a spontaneous and confident sense of voice and agency. The issue of including African language-speaking students from currently and previously marginalised groups is neither acknowledged nor adequately addressed by lecturing / knowledge transmission only methods (with no prompts for critical engagement). For the purposes of the decolonising of a curriculum project, this meant including the teaching of interlingual awareness, discourse awareness, interpretive skills, and the development of voice.

Below are examples of written assignments the author designed with the specific purpose of encouraging students to:

1. interact with texts – both literary texts and formal critiques,
2. develop their own voices,
3. Critically evaluate texts/discourses, both their own as writers, and the texts of other writers.

An example of an essay question set for third-year students, and relating to the critical evaluation of texts based on their own experiences was:

> *Do you think it is important for school learners and university students to read and study Shakespeare in South Africa, or do you think Shakespeare is irrelevant in our education context? Give clear reasons for your view and support your argument with three recent online articles on the issue and from your own experience.*

The students were studying Macbeth at this stage under the theme of 'greed and power'. As complementary text, the film *Black Panther* was prescribed. The idea was for students to pick up parallel themes in the two texts. This was successful in that they related to the dramatic elements in both. Although the language of Shakespearian drama was not easy, the students came to enjoy it once they had 'cracked the code' in key speeches and extracts.

4.3. Providing tools for interpretive skills through critical discourse analysis

Two kinds of language awareness are needed for addressing superdiversity (Blommaert, 2017) in the classroom and strengthening interlingual awareness. One is related to interlingual communication, that is, communication between speakers of different languages, with all participants using English or any other common language. The second is discourse awareness, in the comprehensive ways that Gee (1996) defines it, as being composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing and using tools and objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or recognise a particular social identity (Gee 1996:10). The higher education curriculum needs to afford students the opportunity for critical reflection and critical reading, and writing. These practices should be based on a discourse analysis framework, in particular on nexus analysis. The nexus is where and how different cultural, religious, regional, and gender discourses intersect, and how that intersection may be interpreted by the various stakeholders/participants in the conversation. Students' critical reflection on various discourses as used by themselves and others both within and outside the classroom and institution needs to be developed.

A point of entry into discourse analysis is a task in which students are asked to critique their own discourse resource-bases and to identify 'foreign' discourses embedded in their own language, for example American-speak, with which all South Africans are exposed to on the media. The curriculum therefore needs to afford the opportunity for the development of these critical practices by means of student production and analysis of case studies and/or literatures which centre around issues of race, culture, gender, and religion. The development of this kind of critical reflection and analysis is particularly important in South Africa where, in many cases, students embody outdated value systems, many of which are evidence of the long-term effects of apartheid. Pillay and Wassermann (2017:29) provide clear evidence that the overt critical analysis of literature and/or other texts which address issues of race, culture, religion, and gender directly do not of themselves address the discrepancies and contradictions between students' espoused and enacted values, and the prejudices in themselves and in their own lives. Critical discourse analysis of their own and each other's discourses is crucial to their awareness of this, and to students' development and use of these practices, and in turn, to develop conviction in them, and a motivation to develop these skills in their future learners.

Understanding the concept of identity and how it articulates with class is central to critical language awareness and intersectionality, and to students' own lives and experiences, particularly in the context of a socially unequal society and history. Studying instances of intersectionality forms is a suitable basis for the development of critical language awareness because it presupposes the ongoing development of nuanced views of the concept of identity. Because students viewing identity as intersectional indicates to them that the meanings of social categories such as gender may vary as a function of how they intersect with other aspects of a person's identity, including ethnicity/culture, sexuality, religion, and aspects of material life other than money, such as lifestyle, educational experiences, and patterns of residence. All of these factors affect conceptions of ‘class’. Block and Corona (2014:29-35) regard social class as a key construct and mediator of our life experience:

class always intersects with a long list of identity dimensions, such as gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, language and so forth. Indeed, it is one of the challenges of class-based research today to work out exactly how these different identity inscriptions interact with class. (Block & Corona, 2014:35).

The explanation by Block and Corona (2014) of how this mediation can occur serves as a useful guide: ‘Taking on board inter-categorical and intra-categorical complexity allows us to see beyond the cardboard cut-out identities ascribed’, to more nuanced conceptions of identity through nexus analysis (Block & Corona, 2014:39). Nexus (derived from ‘nectere’ in Latin, meaning to bind or connect) in this context refers to a means of connection between members of a group or things in a series, a link or a bond (Benvanot, 2015:19). The term nexus is useful in relation to literacy and learning in that it indicates how strategically well-planned and implemented literacy activities can together act as a social nexus for developing a tight web of social relationships in the classroom: ‘Literacy thrives when a state of connectedness – or nexus – of social relations among individuals, households, communities and social institutions is forged, nurtured and sustained’ (Benvanot, 2015:12). Based on Benvanot’s (2015) concept of connectedness in the development of literacy/ies, some generic guidelines are provided (see Appendix A) to students to assist them in developing the metalanguage for more nuanced critical textual interpretation.

For example, students in this study were given a task in which they had to translate a scene from Shakespeare’s Macbeth into *Kaaps* (a dialect/mixed patois consisting of mainly English and Afrikaans enmeshed with many community discourses spoken on the Cape Flats outside of Cape Town, a vast working class residential area). The aim was for students to first understand the meaning of the action before they could translate it, or the words accompanying it. Part of the mark was allocated for an enactment of the scene, with costumes and rudimentary available stage props. Through this incident of defamiliarisation, students became curious about varieties of discourses in English, and came to love the playwright, Shakespeare, for his engagement with real life issues, such as sexism, revenge, murder, alongside plentiful humorous interludes. Recognition of a transliteracies framework, which includes translanguaging as well as transculturality, cannot be underestimated. This was evident in the student feedback, a summary of which is provided in the next section.

5. Feedback from students[2]

Students acknowledged a heightened awareness of the uses of critical language awareness in interpretive processes: ‘The brain has the opportunity to do something different'. They started understanding the notion of 'no one correct answer' to any question relating to perspectives: 'People looking at the same picture may have completely different interpretations.' This indicateds an expanded consciousness of the difference between the uni-dimensional concept of 'learning', and learning as located in the individual, in 'learning something' and a broader critical engagement/education. Another student referred to this differently: 'This method is not one-sided. It nurtures the other intelligences and skills of the learners as well.' Another student expressed awareness of 'different intelligences', i.e. spatial awareness through drawing. The fact that these students experienced defamiliarisation as a complex and challenging process was pointed out by another student: 'I first started off with, like a place or what I thought, okay, this is what I am starting with, my starting point. And then it just started flowing into different places basically. So, I started to see a bigger picture after a while.'

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[2] See Appendix attached for nature of schedule.

A further interesting and valid observation was: 'Content should relate and be linked to family history and oral history.' Some argued essentially in favour of an interpretation of decolonisation which focussed only on local content, on things 'closer to home.' In this regard, the *Kaaps* translation task outlined in this article, is a good example of how this can be done without sacrificing what is known as the entire 'English canon'. By being prompted to see things through a different lens, one student remarked: 'The content was more vibrant in my head'. All these observations testify to forms of decolonisation through critical engagement.

One student found it significant that, because the assignment was not for marks, its purpose being to convey specific meaning to the reader/viewer, a lot of emotion went into it. This evidence testifies to enhanced engagement and the notion of development of voice through language awareness tasks which are affectively engaging, i.e. linked to the lives of the students.

To the question: 'Did we teach, or develop in students the abilities to critically analyse their taken for granted perspectives through this intervention?', there was some positive feedback. For instance, one student said: 'You get to see the other person's perspective in the drawing, how they see things and how they think about something.' Students indicated the reinforcement of agency by making references to 'footprints', 'journeys', 'spaces', 'places', all of which attest to an awareness of significant 'mind travels' , for which the task provided a catalyst.

One of the feedback groups commented that the question asked was ambiguous. This expressed an awareness of the global power of English and a shift away from thinking of English as representing only one ancient culture. This shows sharp and thoughtful insight into the non-static nature of language and identity: 'I am turning the page,' one student said. This is an apt metaphor, indicating a change in perception and thought processes.

When asked to elaborate on his comment, 'You are actually doing your own work', one of the students indicated a marked shift in his perception of what teaching means, or had hitherto meant, to him. Hitherto, the student had seen the teachers/ lecturers as the primary agents doing the work. He now realised that each student, through enhanced tools of language awareness, can be prompted, and ought to be prompted, to engage and to produce their own ideas, opinions, and artefacts. The student realised that meaningful contributions to the group or class discussion are reliant on student and lecturer collaborative critical engagement.

Some evidence from student course feedback at the end of each term suggested that these strategies went a long way towards addressing coloniality within teachers', and potential teachers' minds in the specific location under discussion. Some student collaborative tasks were successful in facilitating a shift in their thinking and awareness, but some elicited negative feedback. Students often felt that they would rather stick to the school syllabus which they are required to teach at school level. This is precisely the kind of entrenched ethos/comfort zone thinking that this project refutes.

6. Limitations of the study

Being of an exploratory nature, this study cannot provide quantitatively assessed data, but instead provides three examples of ways in which learning processes can be decolonised. A change of heart, different feelings about the self, and changing attitudes towards the activities provided by the lecturer, indicate positive delinking from textbook-based, teacher-centred learning. Sample size and triangulation were not the object under investigation. The data provided testifies to what was observed when the group of 28 students started behaving like a support group to and for one another and gained 'social cohesion'. The observations that some had no idea what 'the others' know or don't know were of value in developing awareness of, and reflective thinking about, this process. The rift in the class had been partially bridged by curiosity and a kindled interest in the perspectives of 'the others'.[3]

7. Conclusions

This investigation focused upon two central research questions. The second question concerned the possibility of changing a classroom into an area of open enquiry. This issue was largely addressed under section 3.1. The response is affirmative. A learning area can become a space for fair and student-centred enquiry of a constructivist nature. The main research question: How can a transformative literacy initiative stimulate patterns of interrogation and self-reflection? can now be dealt with.

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[3] Although the format of the questionnaire was in English, translanguaging took place as described when students turned Shakespearian English into their own patois.

Awareness of the origins of ‘ways of speaking’ of the other communicative participants in a learning community places divergent forms of speech at the centre of both learning about language and about each other. Time is allocated in the curriculum in order to negotiate these, though this is not officially sanctioned. It was important for students to investigate the conditions of their own linguistic practices and the linguistic practices of their classmates, if endemic alienation and marginalisation of groups of students were to be addressed. The linguistic capital of these students should not be marginalised. Measures of success, alongside student performance in assignments, would be the degree, strength and quality of student and staff responsiveness. In addition, (as mentioned by Bozalek & Dison, 2013:385 and also Walker, 2015:291), marked changes in feelings, attitudes and beliefs about language and learning which all participants show, the quality of staff and student cross-cultural interactions, and the degree to which participants feel part of a learning community, are all indicators of success or failure. This kind of evaluation cannot be done using the standardised, quantitative and atomised criteria conventionally – and conveniently - used, but needs to be done by means of rubrics which are ideally negotiated with students, at least to some extent. Appendix A lists some of the critical vocabulary/phrases and ways of approaching reading and writing, which have been found to be extremely useful to students, once they have become used to applying them practically and consistently over a number of years. The responsiveness of students to the attached guidelines has been noted in the process of constituting a shift in a reading and writing culture of individuals. Students realised that reading is by definition deep processing, and that writing is by definition a very time-consuming and evolutionary and fluid process, in which perspectives on a single issue may change from minute to minute, or day to day, and that this is acceptable. The process of engaging in academic reading and writing culminated in a visible degree of sustained critical engagement and commitment. Some pilot work now needs to be done with all official stakeholders in the Faculty of Education.

8. Recommendations

Collaborative engagement and community-building (‘buy in’) needs to be done with staff, as well as with students, both separately and together, as a platform for anticipated and ongoing sustained and sustainable changes in language learning practices.

Research coming out of the kinds of processes described above should address the question of what constitutes quality provision of professional literacy development and innovative ways of measuring this. Finally, the ultimate objective is to work towards a set of preferred graduate attributes i.e. employability, technological adeptness, ability to apply disciplinary knowledge, socially responsiveness, innovatory thinking and actions, and environmental consciousness (CPUT and Faculty of Education Graduate Attributes, 2016). Students need to be able to use language not only to ‘get ahead’ economically, but to be informed and critically aware of what their choices are in terms of linguistic repertoires, and, in using this knowledge, make realistic choices which work for them and their colleagues. They also need to be self-reflexive in terms of the consequences of their choices:

> In the critical awareness approach, students from privileged communities would also learn to critically examine the hidden contradictions and ideologies of their own culture, the limits of their own culture, and the limits and political consequences of their own culture's world view. (Siegel 2006: 170).

This is particularly important in South Africa, where the linguistic – and socio-economic - divide between white English and Afrikaans speakers, and African language speakers and speakers of other languages and cultural groups, remains wide, a schism which is not visibly or measurably narrowing, but instead seems in some ways to become amplified as a result of what has become to a large extent, an arguably despotic one - party political system. Students are still, in 2018, entering higher education from divided systems of education or from socially and/or culturally homogeneous student bodies in a few large groups, e.g. those from privileged schools, those from township schools, and those from rote learning poorly resourced urban or inner city non-transformed schools. In only some of these schools do learners have a strong sense of belonging, nor do they automatically develop community-building expertise, empathy, reciprocity, creativity and reflexivity for self-awareness. Many students who will take up their teaching careers in a range of schools feel that they will have no say, and no power to implement changes when they arrive as teachers in those schools. This article has therefore explored some of the possible ways and means to empower future teachers to face and overcome resistance.

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Appendix: Critical Reading Guidelines

Questions to ask before you start reading:

Why am I reading this?

Have I skimmed and scanned everything (headings, subheadings, paragraph markers, last lines, first lines, date of publication, name and affiliation of the author)?

What perspective on the issue at hand, is the author likely to express?

What can I predict about the writer's point of view/stance?

You need to identify the difference between statements, assumptions, opinions, facts, points of view, perspective, common sense, logical arguments (a consistent argument versus a number of internal contradictions) and fallacy

NOW, TRY OUT THE ABOVE. CLASSIFY THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AS WEAK, STRONG, FALSE OR VALID ARGUMENTS:

Statement	Weak, strong?	Explain
It is a well-known fact that ….		
Everybody knows that …		
Statistics have shown that ….		
Scientistsallovertheworldhave		
demonstrated….		
All women are bad drivers.		
Men make good managers.		

Things to do while you read:

Underline and make notes, write down questions, summaries and mindmaps of all connected concepts or ideas or words and phrases, while reading.

FIND PATTERNS IN THE TEXT, such as:

Repetitions of phrases

Words with similar connotations

Evidence of a suggestive or persuasive tone

Emotional appeal

ambiguity,

vagueness,

evasion,

emphasis

opinions couched as facts

Questions to ask while you read:

Look for clues regarding the following, in the choice of words and language used:

HOW and WHY was this text produced?

How is it intended to be interpreted?

(refer to political, social and historical, institutional location, time, context and conditions)

In what context and from what perspective) are YOU interpreting this text?

Point of view

Where does the writer get his information from?

Who is the writer quoting?

To whom, or what audience is the text addressed? In order to answer the question, you need to look closely at the language used and at the textual organization for clues.

Whose point of view, or which sector of society is he not acknowledging? Why?

How does the writer construct a certain representation of selected facts, so called ‘facts’ and ideas?

How does the writer introduce his/her OWN point of view?

What **genre** is the text written in?

Look at the heading and try to guess who this text is directed at?

What is the status of the text?

How was this text produced?

Who would read this text?

Why do you think they would read it?

What are the readers looking for in this text?

What are our expectations of this text when we first see it?

What is your reaction to the challenge posed in the heading, if any?

Questions to ask in order to identify the intended audience?

Who is being addressed? How do you know this? What techniques are used?

By whom? Why? Where? When?

What relationship is set up between the writer and the reader?

Find some of the answers to the above, in the next section.

How does the author deliberately position the reader?

INFERENCING AND PREDICTING BY USING CONTEXTUAL CLUES:

e.g. Layout, choice, choice and size of font

Positioning of picture in relation to text

Paragraph markers to steer the reader into a certain way of thinking

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