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A case study of knowledge structures and pedagogic practices in English Education and English Literary Studies at a South African university

Abstract

This study arose out of a concern that lecturers, tutors and students in their disciplines pay insufficient attention to the nature, structure and effects of the types of knowledge that is being disseminated and learnt. It is argued in this paper that lecturers, tutors and students are under the spell of what Maton (2018) terms 'knowledge-blindness'. This study investigates how knowledge structures impact on lecturers' and/or tutors' pedagogic practices in the English Education and English Literary Studies disciplines at a South African university. Since this is a qualitative study, focus group interviews with students, one-on-

one interviews with lecturers and tutors, classroom observation and documentary evidence were used as research instruments. Case study research was chosen as the research design. Drawing on Legitimation Code Theory, the study shows that both English Education and English Literary Studies privilege a particular kind of disposition or 'gaze'.

Keywords: Knowledge structures; knowledge blindness; Legitimation Code Theory; English Studies; pedagogic practices; cultural capital; epistemological access

Introduction

The radicalisation and decolonisation of education in South Africa is foregrounding a need for the transformation of knowledge in higher education institutions. South Africa embodies a diversifying student body in its education system, however, it is argued that even though we embrace diversity and we assert that students must be active and critical thinkers in their workplaces, there is still a huge gap between what the knowledge students acquire is and who creates and dictates this knowledge to students (Sevnarayan, 2015). The term Maton and Howard (2018:3) ascribes to the tendency to overlook the analysis of the nature of knowledge is knowledge blindness. Knowledge blindness is viewed as the tendency to ignore knowledge practices, that is; it does not matter what students are learning or how they are being taught. On being influenced by Maton's ideology of knowledge blindness, I embarked on a study which explored knowledge structures in two disciplines located within the field of English Studies at a university in South Africa.

Using interviews, classroom observation and documentary evidence, this paper attempts to examine the extent to which the nature of knowledge into which each discipline inducts their students is made explicit. Explicit attention to this aspect within each discipline has remained largely hidden. Such knowledge blindness proceeds as if the nature of what knowledge is taught, on the one hand, and how it is taught and learned, on the other, have little or no value. To engage with these issues, the paper begins with a discussion of the context and aims within which the study was conducted. It then discusses the literature relevant to its subject matter. The discussion of the conceptual framework that informs the paper concludes the review of literature. The paper then moves to a discussion of the data generation process employed, and concludes with a discussion of the research findings and implications for the disciplines of English Education and English Literary Studies.

Context, aims, literature review and conceptual framing of the study

The motivation to write this paper arose from the challenges often experienced by teachers and lecturers alike in relation to knowledge and knowing within formal education. Teachers and lecturers are confronted with the dilemma of bridging the epistemological gap between what they teach and what learners and students produce. Several studies reveal that most students drop out of university because they are unable to access the knowledge in their disciplines (Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh and Susuman, 2018; Boughey, 2010; Cosser and Letseka, 2010). The high dropout rate is problematic in higher education and general access remains a major challenge. According to a study conducted by Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh and Susuman (2018:1), "finance, orphan-hood, transport to the higher education institutions and, to a lesser extent, unplanned pregnancies", are some of the factors which prevent students from accessing knowledge. Boughey (2018:1)

very poignantly argues that the “knowledge [is] often neglected...and is seen as central to innovation and social change”.

The main aims of this paper is thus to investigate, firstly, knowledge structures in English Education and English Literary Studies disciplines. Secondly, ways in which these knowledge structures impact on pedagogic practices (teaching methods and assessment). Thirdly, the reason for the kind of effects pedagogic practices have on students' learning. It is within the context of these concerns that this paper asks the following research questions:

- What are the knowledge structures in English Education and English Literary Studies?
- How do knowledge structures in English Education and English Literary Studies impact on pedagogic practices?
- Why are the effects of pedagogic practices on student learning the way they are?

To render the connection between the research questions and the discussion of the findings, the impending theory will aim to clarify the findings to the research questions listed above. Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), it is argued, not only allows knowledge practices to be observed and analysed, it also brings them into relation with an analysis of the students themselves. I shall thus briefly introduce LCT and the key concepts that are used to analyse data in this paper.

The principle basis of LCT resides in the work of Basil Bernstein's code theory (2000). LCT, however, expands and integrates code theory to offer concepts that embrace more phenomena within a more integrated framework. LCT regards society as a succession of independent social fields with actors exemplifying messages concerning what should be the dominant measurements of success within a field: they are the *languages of legitimation* (Maton, 2000, 2007).

The languages of legitimation in most disciplines generally “places different strengths of boundaries around and control over the definitions of, on the one hand, what can be claimed as knowledge, and, on the other, who can claim knowledge” (Maton, 2000:155). The principles that create these messages are known as ‘legitimation codes’. There is usually more than one code within any specific context and there are typically struggles over which code should be dominant. The equilibrium of power between the diverse codes within a social field characterises what is legitimate. LCT is, therefore, a sociology of possibilities: a means of investigating what is possible for whom, when, where and how.

‘Specialisation’ is one of the dimensions that renders somebody or something different, unique and commendable of distinction. Specialisation shows that each practice,

belief or knowledge claim is concerned with or geared towards something by means of somebody. One is hence able to systematically differentiate epistemic relations (ER) amid practices and their object or focus and social relations (SR) amid practices and their subject, creator or player. These relations highlight questions of: what can be legitimately described as knowledge (epistemic relations); and who can claim to be a legitimate knower (social relations). Simply, each relation may well be strongly (+) or weakly (-) stressed in practices and beliefs, and these two relative strengths jointly confer the specialisation to the code of legitimation. The two strengths together generate specialisation codes (ER+/-, SR+/-). This continuum of strengths (strong and weak) can be illustrated as the X and Y axes of a Cartesian plane in which one can identify four principal modalities:

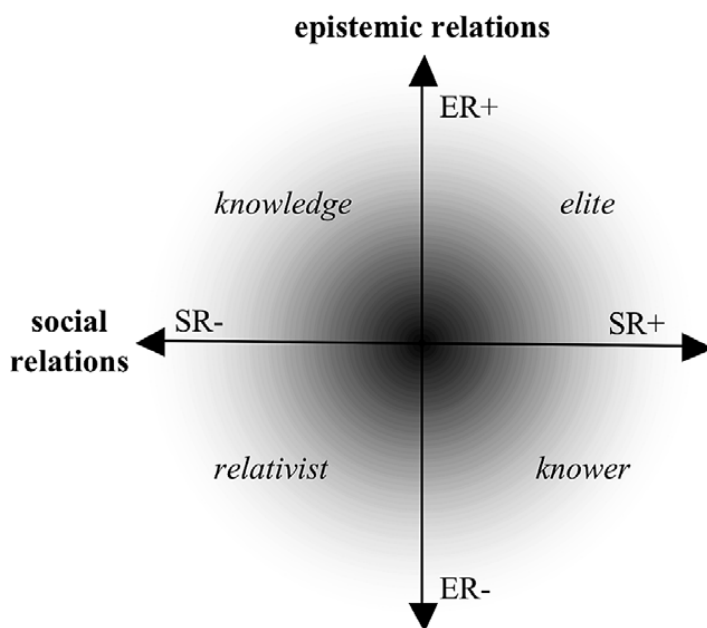


Figure 1.1: Continuum of specialised codes of legitimation (Maton, 2016:12)

As represented in Figure 1.1 above, there is a/an:

- *knowledge code (ER+, SR-)*, which is the custodian of specialised knowledge, principles or events emphasised as the foundation of attainment, and the qualities of the actors are downplayed.
- *knower code (ER-, SR+)*, where specialised knowledge is not viewed as valuable and instead, the qualities of actors as knowers are emphasised as the measure of attainment, even if these qualities are viewed as genetic (e.g. ‘natural talent’) or learned (e.g. artistic gaze or ‘taste’).

- *elite code* (ER+, SR+) is where legitimacy is based on both owning specialised knowledge and being the right type of knower. The word 'elite' in no way indicates social exclusivity, but the importance of the ownership of legitimate knowledge.
- *relativist code* (ER-, SR-) is where legitimacy is determined by neither specialised knowledge nor knower attributes – 'anything goes'.

Specialisation codes conceptualise one area of the measures of achievement (languages of legitimation) embodied by actor's dispositions, contexts and practices. In the four codes listed above, what matters is: 'what you know' (knowledge codes), 'the kind of knower you are' (knower codes), both (elite codes) or neither (relativist codes). A particular code may dominate as the source of achievement. It is not effortless to recognise or realise what is required, there may be more than one operating code, and there are more than likely to be struggles among actors over which code is emphasised. Consequently, one may describe code matches and code clashes between students' dispositions, pedagogic practices, subject areas, intellectual fields and education policies. Thus, often the code shifts effectively alter the 'rules of the game'.

Knowledge codes are restricted to specific procedures which claim to supply unique knowledge of an ontological field of study. They emphasise the distinction between the field's "constructed object of study and other objects", and between the knowledge it produces claimed to be provided by other intellectual fields (Maton, 2000:156). It is in this context that students are equally positioned in relation to the educational knowledge and practices of the field, and the assumption is that everyone is capable of constructing knowledge if they conform to extra-personal practices. Knowledge codes, therefore, legitimate intellectual knowledge fields according to specialised procedures for producing knowledge of a distinctive object of study. Knower codes of legitimation, conversely, support claims for fields on a privileged object of study.

The purpose of knower codes of legitimation is to allow experiential knowledge to be heard through a voice, with truth eventually being defined by the voice. If one has to analyse educational knowledge, one has to focus on its social and institutional arrangement. Bernstein (1999) distinguishes between 'hierarchical knowledge structures' of the natural sciences from the 'horizontal knowledge structures' of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. In hierarchical knowledge structures, knowledge is explicit, coherent and systemically principled. This is the reason hierarchical knowledge structures exhibit a high capacity for knowledge building or verticality. In the Humanities and Arts, horizontal knowledge structures are segmented and struggle to achieve verticality. Because of this, they develop merely by adding another segment horizontally.

The horizontal knowledge structures in English Education (a Humanities discipline) and English Literary Studies (an Arts discipline) are constituted of weaker grammars, and knowledge based markers are less visible, and thus the construction and legitimation of texts more problematic. If knowledge is explicit, as is evident in hierarchical knowledge structures, Bernstein's analysis also becomes explicit. However, if knowledge is less

explicit, as in the two disciplines studied in this paper which constitute horizontal knowledge structures, Bernstein's analysis becomes less explicit. It is for this reason the basis of insight into pedagogic practices becomes vague and difficult to interpret within the Bernsteinian perspective. In other words, if English Education and English Literary Studies have obscured knowledge structures, it becomes difficult to isolate the basis for specific knowledge practices.

Research methodology

The reason for electing to investigate the phenomena of knowledge structures and pedagogic practices within the two English disciplines, is that English is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. These disciplines are furthermore located within the broader field of English Studies, which concerns itself with, *inter alia*, an analysis of the ways in which language is used in literary, oral and visual texts, as well as in media and popular culture to create meanings about individual and group identities.

The broad field of English Studies includes disciplines such as English Literary Studies where English is taught as an art, and English Education, which teaches language education to prospective educators, have been chosen. English Education and English Literary Studies are disciplines in the field of English studies, which is an academic field that includes the study of literature written in the English language, English linguistics and English sociolinguistics (Pope, 1998:43). English Education as a discipline includes the teaching and learning of English, the preparation and systematic professional support of educators of English at all levels of education and methodical inquiry into the teaching and learning of English.

Research design

A case study was selected as the research design since the study aims to reveal how knowledge structures and pedagogic practices function within a specific context. Case study research is often described as qualitative inquiry. Creswell *et al.* (2007:33) adequately collates the hallmarks of key approaches and represents the core features of a case study:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes.

Qualitative research designs are broad and comprise of explanatory, exploratory, interpretive, and descriptive aims. Qualitative designs include phenomenology, case

study research, grounded theory, narrative research and ethnography. Each methodology is unique and all have their own epistemological and ontological perspectives. Each has the impetus to investigate, explore and seek understanding about experiences. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011:8-10) qualitative research reduces the use of positivist or post positivist perspectives; accepts postmodern sensibilities; captures the individual's point of view and examines the constraints of everyday life and secures rich descriptions. Case study research was chosen since it exemplifies all these qualitative attributes.

The category of case study research that this study uses is exploratory and interpretive (Yin, 1994) as it sets out to explore and interpret any phenomenon that serves as a point of interest for the researcher. In this case study, prior fieldwork and data collection was conducted, such as interviews with lecturers and students, observations of lectures and tutorials and an analysis of documentary evidence. Throughout the design phase, the researcher ensured that the study was well-constructed to ensure construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. As a result, triangulation was adopted by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness in the study. In each discipline, data was generated through semi-structured interviews with lecturers and tutors, a focus group interview with students, classroom observation and documentary evidence.

Data generation

To answer the first research question, the researcher elicited data from two types of interviews: focus group interviews with the students and semi-structured interviews with lecturers and tutors. The questions were read from interview schedules, recorded on a voice recorder, transcribed by the researcher and analysed. A focus group interview was conducted with students because it entails a group session of participants who share common characteristics or activities, and the content is also focused; hence the term 'focus group' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). This type of interview allowed participants the flexibility to feel comfortable in a group setting, as opposed to a one-on-one interview, as it generated much more reliable and trustworthy data. To avoid responses the participants believed the researcher would have wanted, certain questions were repeated to ensure validity and to elicit unrestrained responses.

Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with the lecturers and/or tutors enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views on a particular topic (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). It enabled flexibility for both researcher and participants, especially because the topic deals with disciplinary identities as they are revealed in and through knowledge structures and their pedagogic choices. Semi-structured interviews with the lecturers and/or tutors sought rich, qualitative data which enabled the generation of solid descriptions on all three research questions.

In addition to the interviews, classroom observations enabled the researcher to ascertain students' learning, which would help the researcher to answer the third research question. For the purposes of this research, the researcher observed, *inter alia*, the relationship

between how assignments are explained and discussed in tutorials, who dominates tutorial discussions and how the individual lecturer's and tutor's understanding of English Literary Studies and English Education is reflected in tutorial worksheets, explanation of assignment topics and lecture and tutorial pedagogy. The above concerns were crucial in understanding the phenomena of the study: knowledge structures and pedagogic practices, and the ways in which learning was impacted. The questions in the observation schedule further elicited qualitative data which aided in answering the second research question: How do knowledge structures in English Education and English Literary Studies impact on pedagogic practices? For Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), classroom observation is an important tool in research that does not depend on the views of others.

The participants' first semester tutorial and/or lecture worksheets, test questions and mid-year examination papers were analysed and assisted in answering the second research question. The analyses of worksheets and test question papers have been carried out through a document analysis schedule. A document analysis schedule, in addition to the methods discussed above, enhanced the accuracy, dependability and reliability of the study. The disciplinary identity of English Education and English Literary Studies disciplines (what constitutes the disciplines and what the discipline expects from students) have emerged from the documentary evidence to show how a lecturer's and tutor's roles impacts on knowledge structures and pedagogic practices in lectures and tutorials.

Sampling techniques and ethical considerations

The research participants were purposefully sampled in this study. Purposive sampling is a method used to select study participants when the researcher selects individuals in a particular location based on the purposes of the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Since this study uses a qualitative research methodology, it requires a small sample to elicit rich, detailed data. In this instance, the criteria were experienced or permanent lecturers/tutors with a minimum of a Master's degree in the discipline and who were teaching at the research sites selected for this study. Four lecturers/tutors and four students were selected from each discipline. The rationale for purposefully sampling four lecturers/tutors from each of these disciplines was to represent the wider population and not a select few (*ibid.*). It is in this context that this study seeks to explore the interplay between the construction of knowledge and lecturers'/tutors' disciplinary identities, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, pedagogic practices in English Education and English Literary Studies disciplines in order to better understand and critique knowledge structures and pedagogic practices in English Education and English Literary Studies.

To establish the interrelations between the topic, aims and research questions of this study, the students were purposively sampled in terms of the following characteristics:

level and/or phase¹ of study and gender. First year English Education and English Literary Studies students representative of gender were selected for this study. The reasons for selecting this group of students is that, most of them are young and recently out of high school, and research (Boughey, 2005, 2010) indicates that the highest dropout rates are most significant in the first year level of study.

In the English Literary Studies discipline, four students were available to participate in the focus group interview. Two male and two female students volunteered to take part in the study. In the English Education discipline, because of a small teaching staff complement and their limited availability, only two lecturers were interviewed, one male and one female. At the end of one sixty minute lecture, two male and two female students volunteered to be part of the focus group interview. The students from both disciplines chose pseudonyms for themselves.

In accordance with the university's research ethics codes and procedures, this study was granted ethical clearance. Participants and heads of both English departments signed informed consent forms for their willingness to participate in the study. Care was taken to ensure that all participants' details were confidential and hence, pseudonyms were created. During interviews, participants were informed about the objective of the research and their rights to withdraw from the research at any time were repeated to ensure a situation of voluntary participation.

Discussion and Findings

English Literary Studies

In relation to the first research question, which sought to investigate the lecturers' and tutors' understandings of their discipline, tutor Sandile² in English Literary Studies emphasised the strongly insulated nature of the curriculum, "for me, studies in English have been basically about studying a variety of [literature] and [acquiring] skills to ... analyse literature written in the English language (Interview, Sandile, May, 2015). Lecturers felt that the learning of content knowledge was emphasized in this explicit curriculum. Anything beyond the boundaries of English literature, such as other forms of educational knowledge and one's everyday practice, was not considered relevant to the learning of the particular subject content.

1 The FET phase was selected since the study is concerned with teachers whose majors are English and are training to teach English as a subject. Phases do not apply to the English Literary Studies discipline since it is not concerned with teacher education.

2 Lecturers and tutors from both disciplines were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Emphasis was thus placed on strongly bounded and controlled content knowledge: relatively strong epistemic relations (ER+).

In terms of curriculum, from the one-on-one interview above, Sandile's response, "skills to ... analyse literature", is similarly reflected in the course outline. This tutor, in conjunction with one other tutor and two lecturers interviewed, echoed a similar understanding which is in line with the outcomes in the English 1 Course Outline as shown below (Appendix I, Sevnarayan, 2015):

- Basic skills for analysing various kinds of texts – poems, plays, short stories, films and novels;
- An ability to engage with texts which make contextual demands;
- The ability to construct an argument in essay form, and to substantiate arguments with analysis and textual evidence.

As indicated above, the interpretation of the thrust of the discipline is that it develops students' abilities to read and understand a variety of text; think, write and speak critically, fluently and with clarity. On being asked to reflect on the second question in the interview schedule, which was: "According to your understanding of English Literary Studies,

do you think your module design and pedagogy are shaped by this understanding?" two lecturers in English Literary Studies responded in the affirmative. However Anne's response was:

We do have outcomes but they're quite generic and, I think, problematically generic. They're not really driving curriculum development as much as satisfying the need for there to be written down outcomes. So, in my own teaching, I try to come up with outcomes. I try to think about what students need ... (Interview, Anne, May, 2015).

During a classroom observation, evident in Anne's lecturing style is an assumption that all students come to the lecture with the same intrinsic cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2002). At random intervals during her lectures, after explaining a concept, she assumed that the students understood concepts, as she kept saying: "This is easy right?", "You understand this now right?", and "Do you get what I'm saying? Do you agree with me on this?" and, "Do you see how that works?" Crucial in this paper is the absence of any explicit attention in the course outline and during lectures to the nature of the discipline, knowledge to be learnt, and how to access it. In LCT terms, a lack of explicit attention to these aspects means the knowledge and knower structures in the English Literary Studies discipline are set in place to favour Social Relations (SR+) and downplay Epistemic Relations (ER-). The figure below aptly identifies knowledge structures in relation to LCT:

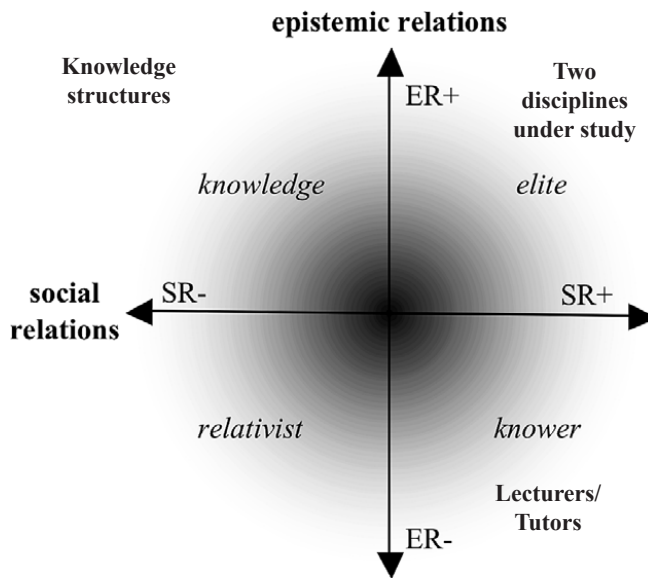


Figure 1.2: Knowledge structures in relation to Maton’s Legitimation Code Theory (Maton, 2007)

In Figure 1.2, the *knower code* represents a horizontal knowledge structure and hierarchical knower structure. Arguably, the English Literary Studies discipline is governed by hierarchical knower structures as knowledge, skills and procedures are downplayed and are not explicit from the course outline and the classroom observations. However, as evident in the responses to the interview question above, disposition, attitudes and aptitudes of knowers were emphasised. As a result, this discipline emphasised weaker epistemic relations and stronger social relations (ER-, SR+). Furthermore, the course outline in English Literary Studies (Appendix I, Sevnarayan, 2015) seems to favour SR+ and gives less attention to ER-. Furthermore, it seems to fall within the *knower code* quadrant in LCT terms as it focuses on, for example, students acquiring basic skills for analysing texts, engaging with texts and debates and construction, and writing of arguments, all of the skills that depend on what students already know as they join the university that are not taught explicitly in the discipline.

In response to the second question which was, “According to your understanding of English Literary Studies, do you think your module design and pedagogy are shaped by this understanding?” Lecturer Kathy stated:

... I think we are ... the difficulty we face ... is that we ... [are] dealing with a group of students who ... come in to university with very different skills ... levels ... so we are constantly trying to adapt in order to help students with less skills address that skills gap ... I know, most of my colleagues, we’re always trying to find new ways in order to help students develop their skills (Interview, Kathy, May, 2015).

Kathy stated that lecturers and tutors find it difficult to teach students as they come into the classroom with different types of *cultural capital*. They arrive with “very different skills”. She mentions that she and other lecturers and tutors are constantly trying to adapt their pedagogic practices to support students. Lecturers emphasised that the curriculum sought to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of students. Thus, lecturers downplayed boundaries around and control over legitimate knowledge in the educational landscape: relatively weak epistemic relations (ER-). To verify her assertion, the observation schedule below is a record of what transpired in Kathy’s classroom:

English Literary Studies Lecture

The lecturer started the lecture with the play “Sizwe Bansi is Dead” and she said, “I’m sure most of you have a familiarity with it?” The Black girls that I am seated with at the back of the lecture hall shout out, “NO!”... and then later again she repeated, “I’m sure most of you have been to the apartheid museum?” Not many students, it seems, have had the privilege of visiting the apartheid museum, judging by the shake of heads around me.

Observation of lecturer Kathy in English Literary Studies in Appendix C (Sevnarayan, 2015)

This is contrary to what was stated in her interview, where Kathy admitted that all students come to lectures with different skills and learning abilities and they try to close this knowledge gap. During a classroom observation of her lecture, it was noted that she did not seem to address “that skills gap”. Instead, she simply fulfilled her role as a *knower*. Kathy emphasised her own qualities as a lecturer as she recognises herself as being in the ownership position of what can be regarded as legitimate knowledge in English Literary Studies. Basically, the lecturer suggests that personal experience is less significant. Students downplayed their personal attributes or characteristics as knowers: relatively weak Epistemic Relations (ER-), and downplaying the students personal voices represents weaker social relations (SR-), the case of anything goes.

It can be deduced from the one-on-one interview and from a lecture-based observation that Kathy represents the *knowledge* code in LCT terms as she emphasises specialist knowledge and being the right type of ‘knower’. This is in line with Boughey’s (2018) argument that lecturers should consider how they can support the learning process as knowledge-making, rather than knowledge-reproducing. Arguably, Kathy’s approach to lecturing would be described as knowledge-reproducing more than knowledge-making. On being asked if he believes he is fulfilling the outcomes of English Literary Studies during tutorials, tutor Sandile declares:

Yes... I am fulfilling the requirements of the module, in the case of [my University] actually, I am particularly focussing on my portfolio as a teacher assistant, for what I’m responsible for, feedback [to the students] and evaluation [of students’ work] for the first year course... (Interview, Sandile, May, 2015).

Sandile was confident, as seen in his response when asked if he believed he was fulfilling the requirements of the module. Sandile defined himself as a facilitator. From his interview, it was clear that Sandile views his role as a ‘co-learner’ with the students. He viewed his principle engagement with the students as creating and maintaining an environment conducive to student learning. Essentially, the facilitation of content knowledge was downplayed: weaker epistemic relations (ER-). While this seems to be commendable as it reflects the strong dispositions and attitudes of a knower, the notes generated through the classroom observation schedule seems to corroborate Sandile’s confidence:

English Literary Studies Tutorial

This was merely a feedback session....students got their essay assignments back.... The tutor posed questions to students...students felt free to answer questions posed by the tutor. They answered questions in a calm,

friendly environment....He spent a while reading out an example of one of the best essays from his group...in doing this, he actually lost the attention of most of his students (e.g. students were busy on their cell phones and some of their heads were on the desk).

There were no tutorial worksheets. The tutor tried to get students involved....students lacked interest, they were yawning. He used most of the 45 minutes to dwell on one essay....although...he did allow space for discussion.

Observation schedule of tutor Sandile in English Literary Studies in Appendix C (Sevnarayan, 2015)

The interview with Sandile and an observation of his tutorial depicted that what he had stated in his interview does to some extent align with what was observed in his classroom. English Literary Studies, through its course outline, which highlights the discipline’s rules and policies, operates as an *elite* code modality (ER+, SR+). Taking the *elite* code of LCT into account, achieving these outcomes seems quite realistic at this point since, according to the observation schedule, the tutor made use of “feedback sessions” to guide students to “construct an argument in essay form”, emphasising the tutor’s disposition, attitudes and aptitude in the tutorial. The disciplinary knowledge being studied in the tutorial shows us the social location of this knowledge to that of the course outline and what lecturers and tutors claimed during their interviews.

Type of Document: Tutorial Worksheet

The poem focuses on master-servant relationships, white domination, and, amongst other issues, rebellion. The Serf is a South African poem and the tutor's attitudes about the poem are reflected in their attitude towards English Studies when they choose disciplinary knowledge that is relevant to students' social contexts.

Words and phrases in the poems such as: "His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain", will appeal to students since it is a South African poem and the content of the poem still applies today.

Document analysis schedule in English Literary Studies in Appendix D (Sevnarayan, 2015)

Based on the document analysis schedule above, knower structures are emphasised by placing more weight on lecturer and tutor aptitude, attitudes and dispositions (ER-, SR+). As the course outline in English Literary Studies stipulates, the tutorial worksheet (Appendix K, Sevnarayan, 2015) focuses on reading and analysing literary texts (*The Serf*) and writing coherent genre-specific answers based on the texts. Students analyse the text according to the way in which lecturers and tutors teach them to do so. The significance of English Literary Studies knowledge structures is that the discipline hopes to cultivate in all students critical thinking skills that would enable them to become productive in the workplace. An analysis of the test questions in documentary evidence is illustrated below:

Type of Document: Poetry test questions

Both poems in the test are African in nature; they deal with South African issues like apartheid.

Guidelines are given to the students in the test and students are asked to write about, among other things, the significance of the title, the voice of the speaker, subject matter and thematic concerns, style, tone, imagery and language. This is in line with what the course outline stipulates, where students gain the basic skills of analysing poetry.

Document analysis of test questions in English Literary Studies in Appendix D (Sevnarayan, 2015)

Similar to the tutorial worksheet in English Literary Studies, in the test, as illustrated above, knowledge structures are horizontal as students do not need prior knowledge of the poem itself to answer the questions. Students have to use their prior knowledge of poetry analysis from school to answer the test questions. Since the lecturer and

tutors chose the poems to be tested, knower structures are emphasised by placing more emphasis on lecturer and tutor aptitude, attitudes and dispositions (ER-, SR+). Given that students are already legitimate knowers, they would benefit from making an independent decision of their poem choice. This emphasis of poem choice creates this self-determined, individualistic image of the students which embody relatively strong social relations (SR+). According to lecturer Kathy, “we are constantly trying to adapt in order to help students” (Interview, Kathy, May, 2015). The test, however, like the examination question paper analysis below, does not seem to address the skills gap that she is referring to, since all students, regardless of their language abilities or barriers, have to write the same test, within the same time period and they are judged according to the same criteria. Consequently, if students do not have the necessary cultural capital to pass the test, lecturers and tutors blame this on student unpreparedness. The message inherent within English Literary Studies knowledge structures is that there is an assumption amongst most lecturers and tutors that all students possess the same cultural and linguistic capital to read, understand, analyse all literary texts and communicatively write structured, logical essays even during tests and examinations.

English Education

The English Education discipline presented somewhat different sets of data. In relation to question one which asked lecturers what their understanding of their discipline was, lecturer Bongani responded “It’s about...giving them requisite skills...to become good teachers of English” (Interview, Bongani, May, 2015). In English Education, two lecturers share a similar notion that the focus is not only on an understanding of English, but also on the application of English in a classroom situation and “getting our students to be versed in the subject knowledge. It also promotes an understanding of the skills ... what we mean by reading critically, writing well, speaking fluently and so forth” (Interview, Nicole, May, 2015). This arguably falls within the *knower* code quadrant in the LCT, which favours and emphasises SR+ and downplays ER-.

According to the specific learning outcomes in the course outline (Appendix J, Sevnanarayan, 2015), in the first year of the English Education major, students will:

- Be introduced to key sociolinguistics themes such as language and identity, language attitudes, language varieties, language and race, and linguistic prejudice;
- Explore the relationship between language and context as well as the position of English in the world;
- Illustrate some core sociolinguistic concepts such as dialect, register, idiolect, accent and Standard English.

In English Education, the course outline falls under the *knower* code of LCT as students are expected to negotiate meaning from drawing on existing language structures and

conventions and socially and culturally applying these in a classroom context. There is a strong intimation of horizontal knowledge structures and hierarchical knower structures (ER-, SR+). Similar to English Literary Studies, lectures and tutorials are based on an interesting mix of material that ranges from poems, plays, short stories, films to novels, and students have to apply their knowledge to critique society, and will show a critical awareness of language and use language for learning and teaching.

However, from a classroom observation of lecturer Nicole, various issues emerged that conflicted with the course outline as illustrated below:

English Literary Studies Lecture

The lecturer dominated discussion. Students were given the opportunity to talk to each other in pairs. There was visible student-student interaction, but no student-lecturer interaction. The lecturer did, however, probe students to speak.

Interestingly, it was the White students who answered the questions posed by the lecturer. No Black student answered a single question in the first half of the lecture. In the second half of the lecture, the lecturer asked, “who would like to give their own story?” A Black shared her story. She was articulate in English. She had an American accent. She said that her accent has afforded her many privileges.

Observation of lecturer Nicole in English Education in Appendix C (Sevnarayan, 2015).

Nicole emphasised the *knower* modality code when she mentioned in her interview that English Education includes enabling students to be competent in the subject knowledge but acquire the required skills. In line with the aims of the broader field of English Studies, this lecturer distinguishes between knowledge *of* and *about* language, and knowledge *of* and *about* discourse communities. In the context of LCT in this study, it may be argued that the students are regarded as ‘weak’ while lecturers as knowers are a ‘strong’ positive factor with added emphasis. A slight emphasis is placed on the knowledge structures and a strong emphasis is placed on knower structures (ER-, SR+). Students would not be able to “understand the skills ... what we mean by reading critically, writing well, speaking fluently and so forth” if these skills are not modelled for them in ways that make explicit what is expected, and if they are not assessed in these skills continually (Interview, Nicole, May, 2015). Given these obvious omissions, how then would students, ‘our future teachers’, be able to apply their “awareness of language variations to explore available options for complex multilingual classrooms?” (Sevnarayan, 2015:151).

On being asked how lecturers could enhance the quality of education in English Education, for one male student:

... they are not really passionate about, you know, they should make it more interesting coz, you know, it's like their job for them, you know, you just go there and just pile you up with the work. Whoever is in charge up there, you know, and we just have to follow as students and forget about you know, being whatever ... creative (Interview 2, Siphon, May, 2015).

For Siphon, the reasons some students are not motivated to study and attend lectures are because some lecturers are not passionate about lecturing. These lecturers are 'boring' and "pile you up with the work" just to complete the syllabus (*ibid.*). Siphon appeals to the stakeholders to allow all students to be more creative in lectures and to be involved in their learning. From a LCT perspective, Siphon's argument is that because lecturers control the curriculum, students' previous knowledge of a code meant for them the emphasis of stronger epistemic relations (ER+,SR-), which is realised as explicit knowledge, explicit instruction, and invisible criteria based on knowledge. The students regarded the weaker epistemic relations offered by the lecturers (ER-, SR+) as a loss of legitimacy. Their understanding is characterised by weaker epistemic relations: a lack of knowledge to be learned. Clearly, this student was not satisfied as he felt the module did not appeal to him. The 'work' or knowledge that Siphon alluded to might be labelled as legitimate. Educational outcomes, it is argued, are about power relations and, in the case of the disciplines under study, it seems as if lecturers and tutors have the power to dictate to students the disciplinary knowledge to be studied.

On being asked to reflect on the second question in the interview schedule, which was in line with their understanding of English Education, lecturers were asked if they believed they were fulfilling the outcomes and requirements of English Education. There was a discrepancy between the two participating lecturers in English Education. Lecturer Bongani was confident when answering this question, "we are doing a wonderful job, we wanted students to access socio-linguistic concepts, to understand English in context in relation to other languages and of variation in English due to the diversity of the student population" (Interview, Bongani, May, 2015).

A discrepancy surfaced when Bongani claimed that they are doing a "wonderful job" in the module, but as mentioned earlier, Nicole noted with concern that there is not sufficient time to cover all the socio-linguistic concepts because of time constraints and large class sizes. However, from observation, Bongani's lecture seemed very relaxed with him sparking a debate regarding linguistic profiling. It was not a conventional lecture, more like a large tutorial. According to Bongani, their pedagogy is intended to provide the opportunity for students to express themselves as already legitimate knowers. However, the stronger social relations that underpin the legitimacy of the knower code (ER-, SR+) were not realised as such by the students whose knowledge-code dispositions downplayed social relations. For example, the students did not feel motivated to complete their assignments since they felt pressurised with their work load. Students also expressed their view that the lectures were "boring", which left them uninterested. As a result, lecturers did not consider students as legitimate knowers whose personal experiences are crucial for assessment tasks. In addition, none of the students felt as though they were a part of a learning environment.

Lecturer Bongani stated in his interview that “we wanted students to access social linguistic concepts” (*ibid.*). Thus, apart from lecturing, Bongani went further by instructing students to read a passage in their course packs and thereafter, requested students to respond to the passage. It is evident that he tried to make the lecture interesting by incorporating different pedagogical approaches into his teaching. Bongani emphasised strong SR+ during his lecture, however, as mentioned above, a student from his class, Siphso, noted that “they should make it more interesting”, rendering knowledge structures weak (ER-) (Interview, Siphso, May, 2015).

Lecturer Nicole held a contrary perspective to that of lecturer Bongani. On being asked if she believed she was fulfilling the outcomes and requirements of the module, she stated:

No...the module, although it's six weeks long, it's been lecture-based, the students really haven't had an opportunity to write anything ... and that will only come up in the exam ...but I think that's the nature of the way these modules are placed in the curriculum ... the [limited] time available for them. (Interview, Nicole, May, 2015).

In comparison with Bongani's response, it is clear that Nicole feels there are a few predicaments within English Education, namely, it being lecture-based with no tutorials (emphasising ER- and SR+), hence, students are not given the opportunity to write and share their understandings. Furthermore, she states that time constraints are an issue in completing the syllabus. To investigate if students in English Education were prepared to write the examination, according to one student:

...they are [lecturers] remorseless maan!!!! They ... we are first years maan!!! Boom! And we got in ... we just walked one way ... since from day one ... there was no time ... we were getting one assignment after the other [in other modules] ... (Interview, Siphso, May, 2015).

Siphso's response above reveals the consequences presented by Nicole in the above interview. In essence, Siphso re-emphasized the basis of achievement as embodying a knowledge code: they continued emphasizing stronger epistemic relations and downplaying social relations. Arguably, the students in the English Education discipline experience knowledge as a limbo; an emptiness devoid of guidance and clarity – a complete lack of legitimacy.

Limitations

This study focused on the phenomena of knowledge structures and pedagogic practices in one university. One may argue that this fact limits the study in that the findings may be said to be generalised. The researcher has broadened the scope of the study for this reason, by investigating the phenomena at two different campuses at a university, which focused on two different disciplines: English Education and English Literary Studies. In these two respective disciplines, the phenomena of knowledge structures and pedagogical practices were explored by means of various instruments such as

interviews, observations and documentary evidence. This study could be extended to include other disciplines to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data.

Conclusion

I should emphasize that this paper is not a generalisation about English Education and English Literary Studies, nor is it casting judgments about colleagues and students in these disciplines in the context under study. Instead, I offer an analysis of how the particular participants of this specific study described their own experiences and expectations of their disciplines. The aim is to reveal the educational dispositions both academic members of staff and students brought into the two disciplines. Thus, the authenticity of the study participants' accounts of their disciplines is not at issue: the focus is how their descriptions and practices facilitate (or not) an explicit rendition of the nature of each discipline, and thus make possible epistemological access. As demonstrated in this paper, LCT's contribution forces a focus not simply on knowing, but to the nature of knowledge itself, and to be explicit about the principles guiding its construction. In the study, it was found that those students who already knew the 'rules of the game' accomplished the expectation of their lecturers and those students who were the 'wrong kind of knower' were unable to realise what was required of them or guilty of 'knowledge blindness'. There is thus a need for a thorough explanation for students' learning to be meaningful and for academics to introduce new concepts and ideas to students they have never met before. It is thus through explicit 'knowledge building', teaching practice and the use of elaborated code as a matter of principle, that students may develop skills to cope with English Literacy Studies and English Education, and be in a position to expand the boundaries of each discipline.

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