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A World Englishes perspective in English language teacher training: Rejection and reluctance

A B S T R A C T This study is concerned with the training of mainly Afrikaans- and English- speaking, postgraduate students to become teachers of English in multilingual secondary, South African schools.

The students involved in this study are graduates from linguistically and economically advantaged backgrounds; usually Afrikaans-English bilinguals. These prospective English language teachers followed undergraduate courses in English literature and they have little knowledge of or insight into applied linguistics issues like language contact and conflict and the different varieties of English.

In this context teacher trainees have very definite teacher identities that they want to develop: they want to be the model and measure of *accurate, proper* and *decent* English, in their own words. The article discusses the degree to which students find a 'third space' to accommodate what they perceive as conflicting ideas: their own teacher identity as a home language speaker model of English in opposition to classroom discussions and study materials aimed at developing awareness for different varieties of English in post-colonial countries.

Keywords: World Englishes, English language teaching, varieties of English, teacher education, third space

1. Introduction

In South Africa, like the rest of Africa and India, English is used as a *lingua franca* and extensively as a language of learning and teaching. The increasing use of English in education is the direct result of its status as a language of access to jobs and therefore to economic progress – it is a very desirable commodity. A person who uses English 'effectively' (whatever 'effectively' may constitute in a particular environment) is seen to be educated, a citizen of the world. As a result

of the status of English, most former 'black' schools in South Africa, which previously still provided mother-tongue instruction at least up to grade 3, have now switched to English as a language of learning and teaching (or LoLT) from Grade 0 or 1 onwards. The only language apart from English that is still used widely as a LoLT at primary, secondary and tertiary levels is Afrikaans and the number of schools where it is used is declining, according to one watchdog organisation, from 2 500 to less than 300 in the past 10 years (TABOK, 2004)[i].

In this context English language teaching is a very important component of the school curriculum and English language teachers become, in a very real sense, gatekeepers to the job market and to higher education.

The curriculum for English language teaching at both the GET and FET levels emphasizes that it aims for additive bi- and multilingualism. The newly released FET curriculum that the students[ii] will have to teach, states:

> In view of the linguistic and cultural diversity of South Africa, its citizens must be able to communicate across language barriers and foster cultural and linguistic respect and understanding (FET 2005: 10).

One of the objectives of the FET curriculum is that learners should be enabled to:

> Recognise the unequal status of different languages and language varieties. Learners will be able to challenge the domination of any language or language variety and assert their language rights in a multilingual society (FET 2005: 10).

These are, like all curricula, idealistic statements, but most South African teachers with experience of classrooms where English is used as a language of teaching and learning to second- and foreign-language users of the language will sympathise with the goals of the curriculum statement, even while they recognize difficulties of implementation.

This article reports on a course in English language teaching methodology for postgraduate students where, among others, the impact of different varieties of South African English on English language teaching was discussed. The way in which students dealt with this aspect of the course provides the data which show students' resistance to a World Englishes perspective. In the course under discussion the idea is to inculcate awareness of varieties of English in general and of the multilingual environment in which English functions in South Africa in particular. It seemed important that the students, many of whom were second-language users of English themselves, should acknowledge the fact that different varieties of English are used in South Africa and that people who are not home language speakers of English should not simply be regarded as 'interlanguage cases' who are desperately trying to attain a British or American standard and style of speaking.

In the course of the year it became clear that students were uncomfortable with these ideas and they managed to construct a space for themselves where they could maintain their own *beliefs* and *satisfy* the curriculum, even if the two were contradictory. This idea of a 'third space' is derived from Bhaba's (1994) conception of discursive spaces created by powerless, often colonized cultural minorities where they can participate in mainstream culture and yet maintain a degree of (subversive) independence by either refusing to assimilate wholly to mainstream culture or by maintaining a kind of equilibrium between their two identities[iii]. In fact, the whole idea of

identity is one of the important directions in which discourse around third spaces has veered, according to Hannula (2005). According to him "identity no longer locates itself or is reducible to only one physical or ethnical background".

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to explore the extent to which student responses to pointed questions show evidence of their having 'integrated' their ideas about the nature of English language teaching with a World Englishes perspective by creating a space where they can hold contradictory opinions. A second purpose is to speculate on the application of the notion of third space to the teaching-learning situation as done by Kamberelis (2001) and Candela (1998) with a view to exploiting its possibilities for reflection on, and perhaps innovation in language teacher education and training.

2. The participants in this study

The students involved in this study are graduates from linguistically and economically advantaged backgrounds; mainly Afrikaans-English bilinguals. These prospective English language teachers followed undergraduate courses in English literature and they have little knowledge of or insight into applied linguistics issues like language contact and the different varieties of English. The 2004 class that I will discuss here numbered 37 students of whom 22 were postgraduate students and the rest were third-year students following a course in Educational Psychology[iv].

The Postgraduate Certificate in Education, which is the official postgraduate qualification for upper secondary school teachers in South Africa, is structured in such a way that students follow some courses in education (e.g. learning theories, curriculum design, lesson design) plus two courses in what is generally known as their 'didactics' subjects[v]. These are the subjects that they will teach. Most students identify strongly with these subjects and they usually have a preference for one or the other. This means that their identity as a teacher is usually formed in close association with a subject: students are studying to become *English* or *Mathematics* teachers, rather than, e.g., *secondary school* teachers. Even the students studying to become educational psychologists feel that they are training to be a teacher of something at which they excel. They pride themselves on their knowledge of English and particularly their oral proficiency.

3. The course in English language teaching

The course that these students followed in English language teaching was divided equally into three components: home-language teaching, second-language teaching and literature teaching. The division between the methodology of home-language teaching and second language teaching is problematic because of the situation in the schools. There is a perception that the home language course is 'better' and that the more 'intelligent' learners should take this course. Therefore many learners choose the subject *English as a home language* despite the fact that they are second-language users of the language. This means that a teacher can, in fact, have a wide range of abilities in a home-language class and will have to integrate different approaches to home- and second-language teaching.

Since so many learners in the FET band hope to attend a higher education institution where English is mostly used as a language of learning and teaching (a LoLT), one of the prime concerns in English language teacher education is that students develop a sense of their responsibilities as *English* language teachers in particular. English is crucial for their learners'

academic and professional success: if students do not develop a sense of how important things like academic literacy *in English* and teaching across the curriculum *in English* are, they will fail their learners in so much more than just this subject.

In the course of the year students are also expected to develop awareness of the different varieties of English and the effect that this phenomenon may have on, for example, teaching grammar, extended writing, oral fluency and on dealing with issues like error correction. They are given examples of ways in which South African varieties of English differ from Standard English, which, in South Africa, means using British spelling conventions and Received Pronunciation (RP) as the model for oral proficiency exercises in textbooks. One of the examples of 'non-standard speech' that gave rise to a heated debate in class is the following apology:

I couldn't attend your class. I was at my father's funeral because he is <u>late</u>.

Readers may recognise this as an example of Black South African English, where 'late' is used instead of the more standard form:

My father passed away or *My father died.*

Students were asked how they thought a teacher should deal with this and whether the learner should be corrected. The main purpose of this exercise was to show that teachers need to be sensitive to language variation and they should know that, by correcting the learner, the teacher would go against very powerful politeness conventions. The students argued that by not correcting the learner the teacher might set her/him (the learner) up for ridicule or at least being misunderstood. There are a multitude of examples like these which can cause misunderstanding and which require that teachers constantly examine their notions of error.

In a discussion on developing oral fluency and teaching pronunciation, another heated debate took place about non-native accents of English, particularly on radio and television. The model of pronunciation that is currently presented in South African textbooks is RP. Most students did not accept the argument that second language users of English usually communicate with other second language users of English, rather than with native speakers, and that this means that the idea of all learners striving for a particular (usually British or American) standard of English is fading. Two students, both home language speakers of a non-standard English, argued that pronunciation is like handwriting and that the teacher cannot do much about it and should, in fact, not stigmatise a learner's accent. However, the class insisted that 'standards' must be maintained and referred (in scathing terms) to non-standard speech on television and radio.

The intention in the course was not to convince students that they should abandon all conventions of 'correctness' or 'accuracy'. However, it seemed important that students reflect on the practices that they were accustomed to rather than merely continuing in the way they were taught. As Jenkins (1998) indicates, teachers need a more realistic approach to pronunciation (for example) by treating home language models as a point of reference rather than a goal. In this way it is possible to prevent speakers from moving too far away from standard forms. What this statement implies, among others, is that teachers and teacher trainers re-examine their prejudices in terms of accent, grammatical correctness and writing conventions, to mention a few.

In the course of the year many students in the group seemed to feel that something is being taken away from them: they knew right from wrong and 'wrong' English should not be condoned.

However, this 'feeling' that I perceived required more empirical evidence. Therefore the following question was set in a test towards the end of the year, referring directly to the classroom discussions and an assignment that they had completed on the status of English as an international language:

English as an international language: the influence on teaching English as an additional language

Discuss the influence of English as an international language on the role of the English language teacher as an academic gatekeeper. Refer to the first semester material and discussions and link these to the classroom issues discussed in the second semester, e.g. the teacher's judgements of grammatical accuracy, the status of the essay as an indicator of scholastic competence and oral proficiency exercises that attempt to improve pronunciation. Your answer should not be longer than 700 words.

In the discussion that follows it will become clear that a 'World Englishes' perspective was accepted reluctantly, if at all, and with a number of qualifications. Students' attempts to voice their own convictions but also, to keep the lecturer satisfied, seem like typical examples of students adapting and appropriating curricula by creatively finding a space that would satisfy their lecturer and themselves.

4. Analysis of the data

The analysis that follows attempts to illustrate the almost untenable position or space that the students created for themselves in their answers to the question: a position where they try to make sense of what they probably experience as a clash between their own ideas about 'correct' and 'proper' English and what they perceive to be a tolerance of 'incorrect' or 'inappropriate' English.

There are at least two methodological problems with this kind of discourse analysis. In the first place there is a danger of taking bits and pieces of students' answers and presenting that as evidence of their 'waywardness'. In the examples below this is avoided by always presenting their thoughts on a particular topic in context; for example by showing how they make a statement about 'correct' and 'proper' English followed or preceded by an attempt to reject or qualify this statement.

The second problem is that their answers may be seen as examples of students' not understanding or not grasping the concept, whereas they may simply not agree with their lecturer. The examples provided below will show that their insistence on correctness and accuracy is formulated in such a way that their attempts to acknowledge issues related to language variety are often at odds with their own positions, which show the degree to which they are uncomfortable with the point of view presented in class and in reading materials. The point here is to move beyond being right or wrong and to speculate on the possibilities of exploiting disagreement in the class to encourage discussion and perhaps deeper levels of understanding.

The positions that students take up in their answers to the question are grouped under three headings, the first two showing their rejection of a World Englishes approach and the third one a reluctant compromise. In the first category, titled *Decent English and other languages*,

students show their conviction that there is one, 'decent' English. In the second category, *What is realistic? What does the world want?*, students argue that you cannot fight world opinion and finally, under the heading *Compromises*, they reluctantly make allowances for more nuanced approaches to learner 'errors'. In the examples provided below, an attempt is made to reproduce students' handwritten answers in print by showing where they struck through certain words and inserted others. Their grammar was not corrected but words are underlined for emphasis.

4.1 Decent English and other languages

It is clear that students have a construct in their heads of what 'good English' entails. They repeatedly refer to

- proper English
- decent and thorough English
- correct English, correct usage, correct grammar and correct pronunciation.

To develop and maintain this kind of English, students argue that teachers have to meet certain requirements. They should be trained to have a sound English background and be competent in English. Teachers of English should set their standards high, do the fundamentals and emphasize correct grammar.

These opinions do not demonstrate a critical awareness of what accuracy or competence may mean in post-colonial situations. In fact, students see the idea of language variety as highly problematic:

> (1) "...the influence of minority languages on English resulted in a great variety of different English, which poses the question: 'Which English is correct?' This could create many difficulties for the teacher ...[and] make the instruction of standard English complicated."

The student continues by using the example of *My brother is late*, stating, "These influences on English could create many communication obstacles, not only local, but also on international level."

Although listening exercises are suggested to familiarise learners with different accents, the student concludes, "I would like to emphasize the teaching of correct grammar and pronunciation of Standard English".

The students show their resistance to multilingual or multidialectal contexts by giving the standard, everyday response that multilingualism or multi-dialecticism is a problem that can be solved by English, as the following statements from their answers show:

- "Pronunciation is a problem in some situations. Different dialects of the language makes it impossible for some people to understand each other."
- "These influences [other South African languages] on English could create many communication obstacles, not only local, but also on international level."
- "In general, the mind is less efficient in an AL [additional language] whatever it is doing. This is sometimes called the 'cognitive deficit'."

Teaching English to speakers of diverse language backgrounds is seen as 'tricky' because it 'affects' learning. One student touched on the problem of English language teachers who are not home language speakers of English, "many of whom are not proficient enough in English

to serve as good models for their students". This student provides examples of words that are pronounced differently by Afrikaans and SeTswana speakers of English and concludes:

> (2) "Therefore there has to be beacons for teachers. Guidelines that says: if they [learners] can't be accurate with their grammar use or they can't write a proper, on standard essay, or they can't pronounce the words correct, then they are not allowed to move forward, because we want learners to be able to communicate in English."

Although the fact that there are different varieties of English is acknowledged, the implications are rejected and the student concludes that

> (3) "The teacher must be the learner's "advocate", helping him to improve his case, helping him to communicate better in English, ... but in the end the teacher is also the "judge", who has to decide if the learner's case is strong enough".

Another student's acknowledgement of the existence of different varieties of South African Englishes, is accompanied by a warning, "If varieties of English develop in sufficiently different way, they could become mutually unintelligible". The solution is, "Thus to make things clear, we should get our students to focus on a particular variety of English (British or American English) as a spelling, grammatical, essay and pronunciation for them to aspire to."

The word *aspire* is important here, because it reflects the student's conviction that such standards are the ultimate goal, the Holy Grail that learners should reach.

4.2 What is realistic? What does the world want?

Students are very aware of the opportunities that English promise. The inevitability of the role and status of English is discussed by advising teachers to be 'pragmatic':

> (4) "The English language is being propelled forward not by linguistic imperialism (linguicism) but by globalism and pragmatism. People want to learn English because they want to ... play in the global arena. Therefore the role of the teacher needs to be geared towards that to. In other words the study of grammar, speaking, reading, and writing and listening is all important and must be presented in its full extent. If that requires writing essays to prove competency then so be it ... there are certain fundementals which still needs to be done."

The phrase " then so be it..." is used in the same way by another student:

> (5)"Although many English teachers aspire to teaching their students standard British English and won't see anything less than perfect pronunciation and grammatical accuracy as successful, I believe that our main aim as English language teachers should be to teach effective communication. If that means that we have to work on correct pronunciation, or accent, then so be it. I believe there's nothing wrong with speaking English with an accent, as long as communication is not affected. When I do however have a problem with accent, is when communication is hindered (e.g. when someone with some or other African accent say 'bed' but actually means 'bad'). Grammatical accuracy is important, because if you speak or write grammatically incorrect, it could influence the way people perceive you ... it is important that teachers give attention to grammar, whether they do so explicitly or not."

In a similar vein there is an appeal to acknowledge 'reality':

> (6) "The <u>reality</u> is that learners capabilities, with regards to their English language proficiency, is still judged in terms of their grammatical accuracy, the essays they write and their oral proficiency. The <u>reality</u> is also that this is what will count against learners once they leave school and apply for jobs. They will be judged on grounds of their accent and pronunciation of the English language. An English language teacher thus needs to prepare his or her students for the <u>realities</u> they will <u>undoubtedly</u> face once they leave school."

As one student concludes, "English as an international language is here to stay".

4.3 Compromises

In the examples above students already, albeit reluctantly, acknowledge the existence of other varieties of English although they are quick to return to their own point of view. In example (4) above, the structure of the sentence indicates that the student is countering Phillipson's well-known argument about the process of linguicism, one of the readings that they were required to do. In both (4) and (5) the phrase *'then so be it'* demonstrates resistance to the view that the teacher should treat errors or non-standard accents in a nuanced way. The other point of view is acknowledged, if only to dismiss it in the next breath.

Students do, however, make allowances for arguments against 'correct' grammar and 'proper' English by proposing that the teacher treat these 'errors' in a specific manner. The teacher should not interrupt learners when they make these mistakes but should try and correct them afterwards. The teacher must be 'tolerant', 'sensitive' and 'fair'. One student concludes with the following comment: "Lets embrace our differences (a little romantic) and strive towards educating our youth".

5. Discussion

In the course of reading students' answers it became clear that the initial and fairly vague impression in the classroom discussions that students are resisting the implications of teaching English in multidialectal and multilingual contexts, is confirmed in their answers[vi]. Their essays show attempts to incorporate the issues raised in reading materials and lectures, only to reject them or reluctantly take a position of compromise. In some cases these attempts actually interfere with the structure of the sentence and become contradictory:

> (7) "I feel that the most important thing is that one person should be able to understand another person even if pronunciation is not 'correct'. I also believe that we should still encourage $_\wedge$correct pronunciation, rather good pronunciation and that persons on the radio <u>and</u> television should have correct pronunciation."

The first sentence shows that the student relativizes the concept of correctness (by using quotation marks) and in the very next sentence undermines it again by inserting the word *correct,* this time without quotation marks. There is an attempt to qualify this by using the phrase *'rather good pronunciation'* implying that there is a distinction between *correct* and *good* pronunciation. In the last sentence the underlined <u>and</u> seems to function as an attempt to fuse two viewpoints that the student senses may actually be dissimilar: the meaning of the

sentence suggests that the conjunction in this case should be <u>but</u>. The insertion and lack of clarity about whether 'good' and 'correct' pronunciation are actually different things, are indications of how the student struggles to balance or accommodate conflicting ideas.

In example (5) above, the student seamlessly meshes two disparate points of view by first stating that a particular accent is not as important as communication, and then continues,

> (8) "I believe that our main aim as English language teachers should be to teach effective communication. <u>If that means</u> that we have to work on correct pronunciation, or accent, then so be it.

By juxtaposing a specific accent and communication, the first implication is that the two are not necessarily the same and then the sentence continues by stating that they are: the words *If that means...* are key to the student's attempt at fusing communication and 'correct' pronunciation or accent. In some cases the fusion is less successful:

> (9) "They [English teachers] as gatekeepers set the standards for these learners for communicating effectively in a global context. They show the ˄standard correct usage for English learners and this their gatekeeping roles. Language varieties like grammatical constructs, pronunciation and cultural content are all important to ESL learners to understand and use the English language.
>
> ESL teachers must keep up with international trends and teach their learners accordingly. ESL learners may encounter difficulties in the understanding of ~~other~~ English speakers of other cultures because ~~indigenous language~~ native language conventions can interfere with grammatical and pronunciation of the English language. As the gatekeeper ESL teachers can guide their learners to use English in a proper way."

In the first part of this extract the student adds 'standard' to the text to make quite sure that there is no doubt about what can be regarded as correct English. There is an attempt to include an awareness of language variety which is then negated by the second paragraph, which is also the final paragraph of the essay. The student nods in the direction of varieties of English, but then reinforces the position of the ESL teacher as the key to 'proper' English, previously described as 'standard, correct usage'.

In the quotation above, the words that the student struck through are included because they are significant in this context. The use of 'other' in front of 'English speakers' may be indicative of a basic 'othering' process, which is then specified in the correction. In the case where 'indigenous language' is replaced with 'native', the student actually uses a very problematical term, a point that was discussed in class. The term 'native' is generally avoided in South Africa because of the negative connotations it has acquired in the apartheid years. It is interesting that the student struck through a more acceptable term and used the negative term as a correction.

In some cases the parallel structure of sentences suggests that the student tries to balance two views that could be contradictory:

> (10)"Minority languages <u>should not be treated</u> inferior in the classroom. Learners <u>should be assisted</u> to become competent in the English language, because this could be beneficial to learners."

One could argue that these two sentences require more qualification to make sense and the sentence that follows, which is also the final sentence of the essay, can be regarded as a final attempt at balancing the different viewpoints:

> (11) "Activities should be developed to get to these competencies <u>and</u> teachers should be sensitive to culture."

The use of <u>and</u> gives equal weight to the different issues but does not integrate them.

6. Conclusion

Is it necessary to attach so much importance to these answers or to use a construction such as third space to explain students' position? Are these not just typical examples of students not 'getting' it, or perhaps of not having enough time to formulate better answers, or simply not having enough experience to understand the issues? Such arguments would be very comfortable for the lecturer but they would also allow an opportunity to go begging by preventing lecturers from engaging with students' processes of making sense of the curriculum. As the examples show the students are not uncertain or undecided about the importance of 'correct' and 'proper' English. Many of the extracts quoted above include the phrase 'I believe', 'I feel' and 'I'd like to emphasize' and students express the duties of the teacher in terms of very definite imperatives: 'The teacher should/ must/ has to ...' do certain things. Their answers demonstrate an intentionality that cannot simply be disregarded as immature or showing a lack of understanding. It is this intentionality that can be interpreted as their construction of a third space.

Both refusal and resistance can be found not only in the meaning of their answers, but in the very structure of students' language use, as indicated above. An almost defiant *then so be it* appears in two of the essays and <u>embracing difference</u> is regarded as <u>romantic</u> by another. In one memorable instance, a student writes that "the teacher has to ensure that her judgements of grammatical accuracy is of a fair and <u>unjust</u> nature", although this is probably (hopefully) a slip of the pen!

The concept of a third space is used in cultural studies in particular to illuminate the problems of minorities in mainstream (Western) culture, a position discussed extensively by Bhabha (1994). The third space in this case is one of resistance by the powerless to an overwhelming majority culture. Hannula (2005) describes the way in which this concept has been used in studies of identity as "a break with sharp contrasts" which does not mean that differences are denied – rather, the third space indicates the "inevitable reciprocity of any pair of definitions" (2005).

Both these interpretations of third space can be relevant to the position that students carve out for themselves in this study. They *refuse* the choice between two extremes: they cannot accept a position whereby they have to condone 'erroneous' language use but they realise that an uncompromising attitude towards other ways of speaking is not tenable either. They *resist* the imposition of a point of view offered by a lecturer, but in a situation where marks have to be obtained, they are powerless and have to present a token agreement with a position that may threaten their teaching identities. It is striking that students use words and phrases that resonate with what Bhabha (1994: 227) calls "the 'newness' of migrant or minority discourse [which] has to be discovered *in medias res*", which is exactly the students' solution to the differing views of accuracy and correctness. In the above examples one student suggests that teachers find a

'golden mean', another asks for the 'middle ground' and still another requires that teachers 'maintain a balance'.

The fact that Bhaba uses these terms to describe the position of minority groups who are significantly more powerless than the students described in this study may seem strange, but Kamberelis (2001: 121) finds a specific application for the concept of third space in teaching-learning situations, saying that "these negotiations and translations often transform static (and often contradictory) school scripts into fertile spaces for collaboration, learning, and social change". Unfortunately the opportunity to engage with the students and exploit the situation in a productive way was lost. Students went into their examinations soon after they had done this assignment and there was no opportunity to analyse their answers in such detail until they had left the course.

To stimulate discussion and reflection the World Englishes perspective was deliberately contrasted with the students' conviction that they are the guardians of correct and proper English. Students' answers show that this strategy created exactly the kind of duality that Butz (2002: 24) claims is broken down in a third space: students perceived the 'choice' between their own English teacher identities and a more relativist stance as impossible. They reacted by (mostly) rejecting the kind of awareness that the lecturer had hoped they would develop probably because they were unwilling to jettison long-held and cherished notions of 'good' English, which would mean 'devaluing' their own abilities and language competence. In the process of dealing with this the students managed to find a *space*, rather than a *place*. According to Kamberelis (2001: 122) "*place* [would] define or delimit fields of activity and [is] governed by principles of proper usage defined by the dominant social/political order. In contrast, *spaces* are constructed through the productive transformation of places through the specific practices of everyday life. Spaces are practiced places produced by the inventiveness of subordinate individuals or collectives who appropriate and redeploy the resources of dominant individuals or collectives".

In this *space* students could mention the lecturer's 'alien' ideas while maintaining their own ideas, even if the two sets of ideas seem contradictory.

The texts that students produced in a very real way act "as a means of transportation (*metaphorai*) in the shuttling that constantly transforms places into spaces and spaces into places" (Kamberelis, 2001: 123). If this 'shuttling' between conflicting ideas could be made explicit in class, the opportunities for growth of understanding (by the students and the lecturer) would have increased. Students' answers show them "strategically appropriating and contesting the material and discursive practices" (Kamberelis, 2001: 89) that they found in the class and the prescribed materials. In the case of the students in this study writing an answer that they know will be marked, the issue of appropriating and contesting the material 'strategically' is particularly important, because they still have to pass the course. By literally balancing two points of view without integrating them, they strategically keep all the balls in the air: they acknowledge one point of view but they will not allow it to influence theirs.

In a teaching-learning situation the process of writing is ideally suited for students to grapple with ideas and for lecturers to study the way in which they do it. Every student has a voice in this process and they have the opportunity to 'take on' the authoritative voice of the lecturer. The lecturer has the opportunity to structure teaching on the basis of this information. Even

though the students in this study are not nearly as powerless or disempowered as the 'colonised' described by Bhabha (1994) and Butz (2002), they are students and they are at the start of a career with real challenges. It would not help to take away the certainties that they feel comfortable with and another way will have to be found to develop awareness of different varieties of English as envisaged at the beginning of the course.

An awareness of English in its multilingual and multidialectal context is important in South Africa for two reasons. Communities are multilingual in the first place, and many social initiatives fail because people refuse to believe that there are those who do not know enough English and who do not understand 'standard' English: AIDS campaigns come to mind as an obvious example. In the second place, and more importantly, seeing multilingualism as a problem is simply a prelude to seeing many varieties of English as a problem.

The concept of third space offers the opportunity to think anew about the way in which the asymmetry in the relationship between lecturer and student "is continuously being negotiated, reinforced, manipulated or even inverted rather than merely being imposed or denied" (Candela, 1998: 158). If the students do not show evidence of having 'integrated' knowledge, information or values presented in class, did they 'learn' anything? What did the lecturer 'teach' them? Is their creation of a third space a necessary prerequisite for the construction of knowledge in disciplines where human interaction is the main ingredient and result? How does the process affect teaching?

It seems as if the concept of third space has serious implications for current constructivist models in teaching and learning on the one hand and for transformative teacher education on the other. In terms of constructivism we start our teaching at the point where the learner is and develop knowledge and insight from there in the hope that the learner 'integrates' new knowledge with existing knowledge. The concept of third space posits that such integration may not take place or that the 'knowledge' is rejected. It is very important to analyze classroom discourse to discover, as Candela (1998: 140) indicates, "whether the students' resistance to follow the teacher's orientation is necessarily a resistance to learning".

Teaching in South Africa must have a transformative agenda and the construction of a third space may mean that we accept that learners will not change their attitudes towards different speakers of English. On the other hand the process of constructing a third space is obviously crucial in an education system that also wants to teach independent and critical thinking. In the case described in this article the management of such a space (as part of the learning and teaching process) was left behind in the rush of everyday teaching. The reflective process that took place afterwards is hoped to have a positive influence on the teaching and learning process in subsequent years.

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[i] However, the new minister of education seems to be determined to re-introduce home languages as LoLTs, at least in the first few years of primary school.

[ii] Please note that 'student' is used to indicate university students and 'learner' is used to indicate a school-going student.

[iii] The idea of applying the concept of 'third space' to language teaching was used as the theme of a conference, *Interrogating Third Spaces in Language Teaching, Learning and Use*, presented by the Centre For English Language Teacher Education & Applied Linguistics at Leicester University on 27 and 28 June 2005. A previous draft of this article was read at the conference. I would like to thank participants at this conference and Jennifer Jenkins in particular for comments on that paper.

[iv] The students gave permission for their words to appear in this article after seeing a pre-final draft of the article. Small revisions (such as the addition of this endnote) were done for the final version. I would like to thank them and my research assistant for comments and suggestions on this draft.

[v] Despite efforts by the department to instill the term 'curriculum studies' the old terminology in the form of 'didactics' persists.

[vi] Although the purpose in this article is not to present a quantitative account of students' beliefs and convictions, it is necessary to point out that the answers account for the position taken by 17 of the 27 students who answered the question.

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