

# Journal for **Language Teaching** Tydskrif vir **Taalonderrig**

44/2

December/Desember 2010

*Journal for Language Teaching* is an accredited journal which publishes refereed research articles. It is the official publication of the South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT) and is distributed free of charge to all its members.

*Tydskrif vir Taalonderrig* is 'n geakkrediteerde tydskrif waarin gekeurde vakwetenskaplike navorsingsartikels gepubliseer word. Dit is die amptelike publikasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Taalonderrig (SAVTO) en word gratis uitgestuur aan alle lede.

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ISSN 0259-9570

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## Preface **Voorwoord**

Without the contributions of the relevant authors whose specific research is published in this publication and the reviewers who judged the scientific merits of the contributions, this edition of *Journal for Language Teaching* would not have been possible. I thank you sincerely for this.

I would like to thank Tisa Viviers, the assistant editor of the journal, personally. Her commitment during the final preparation of the manuscript – especially regarding the language editing – contributed to the production of this edition.

T Human | Editor



Sonder die bydraes van die betrokke outeurs wie se spesifieke navorsing in hierdie publikasie neerslag vind en die keurders wat die wetenskaplike meriete van die bydraes beoordeel het, sou hierdie uitgawe van *Tydskrif vir Taalonderrig* nie moontlik gewees het nie. Ek bedank hulle daarvoor.

Ek spreek my persoonlike dank en waardering uit teenoor Tisa Viviers, die hulpredakteur van die tydskrif. Haar toewyding tydens die finale afwerking van die manuskrip – veral wat taalversorging betref – het dié uitgawe tot stand help bring.

T Human | Redakteur

## Contents **Inhoud**

- 007 \_\_ Instructional and regulative discourse in language tutorials: An analysis of educators' response to potentially offensive views  
*Marthinus Conradie*
- 023 \_\_ Teaching and learning English as a Home Language in a predominantly non-native English classroom: A study from KwaZulu-Natal  
*Joseph Moyo, Anne-Marie Beukes & Wilhelm van Rensburg*
- 040 \_\_ Students' Comprehension of the representation of African American Vernacular in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*  
*Marilize Pretorius*
- 052 \_\_ Eating soup with a fork – why the EFAL syllabus cannot promote learning across the curriculum  
*Kotie Kaiser, Maryna Reynecke & Mandie Uys*
- 069 \_\_ “Dwelling in fear of the scales forever”: Religious diction in Pro-Anorectic websites from a discourse-analytic perspective  
*Gisela Ulliyatt*
- 088 \_\_ Vinkel en koljander? 'n Diversiteitsperspektief op Afrikaanse en Nederlandse moedertaal-taalhandboeke  
*Alta Engelbrecht*
- 106 \_\_ Examining bias in a test of academic literacy: Does the *Test of Academic literacy Levels (TALL)* treat students from English and African language backgrounds differently?  
*Frans van der Slik & Albert Weideman*
- 120 \_\_ Teaching social skills in the language classroom  
*Elza Venter*
- 133 \_\_ Foundation Phase teachers: The “battle” to teach reading  
*Anna J Hugo*
- 146 \_\_ SUBMISSION of manuscripts / VOORLEGGING van manuskripte
- 148 \_\_ SAALT membership / SAVTO-lidmaatskap
- 149 \_\_ INDEXING of JLT / INDEKSERING van TTO
- 149 \_\_ ELECTRONIC VERSION of JLT / ELEKTRONIESE WEERGAWE van TTO



# Instructional and regulative discourse in language tutorials: An analysis of educators' response to potentially offensive views

**A B S T R A C T** Contemporary perspectives on language learning emphasises the importance of encouraging students to play an active role in the learning process. Accordingly, teacher-student interaction must reflect these views, by facilitating student participation. This presents educators with unique challenges. For example, students may express views which are potentially offensive to their peers. This article conducts an analysis of two case studies, in which educators were faced with this challenge. The research is situated in the context of literature tutorials. To achieve this goal Bernstein's (1990; 1996) pedagogic discourse is employed, as it was used by Buzzelli and Johnston (2001).

**Keywords:** language learning, learning process, teacher-student interaction, participation, potentially offensive views, pedagogic discourse

## 1. Introduction and research aims

Contemporary pedagogic research highlights the importance of developing autonomous learners, by encouraging them to play an active role in the learning process (Camiciottoli, 2008; Savignon, 2007; Brokensha, 2007; Belchamber, 2007; Kaufman, 2004; Bárcena & Read, 2004; Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Killen, 2000).

This trend implies that educators must use their authority in a manner that is compatible with the pedagogic principles which underlie it. The present article's study is situated in a context which was designed to reflect these views on teaching and learning. This context is the New Academic Tutorial Programme (NATP), which was launched in 2007 at the University of the Free State.

This article concentrates on spoken discourse in NATP lectures, and aims to make its contribution by replicating Buzzelli and Johnston's (2001) study in a South African context.

More specifically, the article aims to use Buzzelli and Johnston's (2001) study as a framework with which to analyse the use of authority in the NATP, to address challenges that arise from educators' attempts to facilitate student participation. After reviewing the data collected for this study, it was decided to focus on incidents in which students express potentially offensive views during class discussions. This decision was based on the notion that these are particularly challenging situations, which require educators to respond creatively and tactfully.

The study is justified by the need to ensure that lectures are conducted in accordance with the pedagogic perspectives which underlie contemporary views on education (cf. Goduka, 1998a; b; Singh & Sinclair, 2001). Furthermore, the manner in which educators dealt with their challenges in this study may serve as a guideline for educators in similar contexts. Finally, the article also aims to suggest areas for future research.

To achieve the article's goals, conversation analysis (CA) was used to analyse the data qualitatively, within the framework of Buzzelli and Johnston's (2001) study. More specifically, Bernstein's (1990; 1996) conceptualisation of instructional and regulative discourse was used to uncover the manner in which educators aimed to address their challenges.

## **2. Theoretical context**

### *2.1 Buzzelli and Johnston's (2001) study*

#### 2.1.1 Theoretical foundation

Buzzelli and Johnston's (2001) research rests on three fundamental assumptions. The first is that teachers' authority remains a persistent feature of every educational system, whether liberal or autocratic. Secondly, teacher authority is based on asymmetrical power relations, regardless of the manner in which educators aim to employ these relations. Thirdly, education is "fundamentally moral in nature" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:873). This implies that educators bring personal and social morals – as informed by their position as teachers – to the classroom. The result is a dynamic and continuous challenge to reconcile personal morality with the needs of the context and individual learners (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; cf. McCrown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:321-322).

Based on these assumptions, as well as studies by Peters (1966) and Oyler (1996), Buzzelli and Johnston (2001:874) view authority as made up of two features: being "in authority" and being "an authority". The former refers to a person's ability to supervise events, while the latter refers to a person's position as "the possessor and transmitter of sanctioned forms of knowledge" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:874). In teaching practice, it becomes difficult to distinguish between these two elements, as educators possess both "the power to direct classroom activities [as well as] the knowledge that the students need to acquire" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:875; cf. Christie, 1995).

In summary, this study follows Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) by viewing authority as a parallel enactment of being 'in' and 'an' authority.

#### 2.1.2 Bernstein's (1990; 1996) pedagogic discourse

To investigate the parallel enactment of authority, Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) employ Bernstein's (1990, 1996) framework of pedagogic discourse.

In this framework, classroom discourse can be investigated by studying the manner in which the “instructional discourse” is embedded within the “regulative discourse” (Bernstein, 1990:188). The former refers to the knowledge and skills students are required to master, while the latter refers to individual learners’ socialisation into society’s norms/rules (Bernstein, 1990:188; cf. Christie, 1995; Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001). To illustrate the relationship between these two discourses, Bernstein (1996:46-48) states that:

“Often people in schools and in classrooms make a distinction between what they call the transmission of skills and the transmission of values [...] In my view there are not two discourses, there is only one [...] [t]he regulative discourse [which] is the dominant discourse [...] that creates the criteria which give rise to character, manner, conduct.”

Therefore, the process of instruction is always embedded within the regulative discourse (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:876-877; cf. Christie, 1995). As a result, pedagogic discourse is a discourse which “embeds competence in [social] order and [social] order in competence” (Bernstein, 1990:185; cf. Liu & Hong, 2009; Dalton-Puffer 2005). This notion is directly related to being ‘in’ and ‘an authority’, as both may be used: 1) to educate students on the knowledge/skills they are required to master [instructional discourse], and 2) to order the process of instruction, according to societal norms and values [regulative discourse] (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Christie, 1995).

In summary, the parallel enactment of authority occurs within the instructional and regulative discourse. For example, teachers may direct students’ behaviour – by virtue of being ‘in authority’, but also because they are an expert on the topic under study (‘an authority’). These activities aim to achieve the learning outcomes of the lesson [instructional discourse], but are inevitably influenced by, or embedded in, the societal norms and values which influence student-teacher interaction [regulative discourse]. The following section illustrates this relationship by referring to Buzzelli and Johnston’s (2001) study.

### 2.1.3 Instructional and regulative discourse

This section will briefly discuss the manner in which Bernstein’s (1996) pedagogic discourse was applied by Buzzelli and Johnston (2001), in order to contextualise the research aims of the present article.

As mentioned earlier, Buzzelli and Johnston’s (2001) research investigates the parallel enactment of authority, within the instructional and regulative discourse. By analysing a single case study, they were able to draw attention to a teacher’s strategies for dealing with a specific challenge. In their case study – which was set in a third-grade classroom in the United States – the educator aimed to stimulate students’ development as individual writers. This aim forms part of the instructional discourse, as it is one of the educator’s learning outcomes. The teacher’s dilemma was introduced when one of the students’ essays mentioned alcohol. Believing this to be inappropriate for a third-grade learner, the educator attempted to guide the learners to the same conclusion. Since this attempt is related to the educator’s conception of appropriate conduct, it is part of the regulative discourse.

However, in accordance with constructivist principles (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:881), the educator could not simply enforce her view on the learners. Instead, she was required to engage

them in the learning process. To achieve this goal, the teacher asked her students to debate standards of appropriate conduct. By doing so, she was able to lead students to the conclusion that alcohol should not be mentioned in third-grade essays.

Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) draw attention to the fact that the teacher addressed her dilemma by being 'in authority' and 'an authority' at different times. With regards to the former, the educator directed classroom activities in a manner that was consistent with her views on teaching. This enabled her to systematically guide learners to the conclusion that certain topics should not be mentioned in third-grade essays. Finally, by acting as someone who is 'an authority' on writing, she reiterated that good writers are able to censor their own writing in accordance with the criteria of their setting (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:878-881). As a result, the teacher was able to embed the skills of a good writer (instructional discourse) within the ability to censor one's writing (regulative discourse; Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001:879).

In summary, educators who operate from a constructivist perspective are required to facilitate students' learning by engaging them as active learners (Brokensha, 2007; Bárcena & Read, 2004; Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). This confronts them with unique challenges, which can be investigated by viewing the instructional discourse as embedded within the regulative discourse (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001). This article aims to investigate this phenomenon within the context of the NATP.

## *2.2 CLT and Constructivism*

This section discusses CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) and Constructivism, as both perspectives exert a strong influence on the context from which the article's data were collected. Consequently, one may expect authority to be used in accordance with the principles of these perspectives.

With regards to CLT, researchers from Roberts (1987) and Allen (1987) to Savignon (2007) and Belchamber (2007) have noted the emphasis that this method places on learner autonomy, as a means for developing communicative competence. Educators must, therefore, use their authority in a manner that 1) stimulates student participation, and 2) allows for the development of communicative skills that can be used outside the classroom. For this reason, the current study pays specific attention to the degree to which educators dominated the discourse, as well as the degree to which students' contributions reflected natural conversations. With regards to the latter, efforts were made to determine whether control of the conversational floor reverted to educators once a student had answered a question, and whether students were able to select the next speaker in a spontaneous manner.

Constructivism proposes that "[l]earning [should be] an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience [and] collaborat[ion] with meaning negotiated from multiple perspectives" (Smith & Ragan, 1999:15; cf. Bárcena & Read, 2004). With regards to authority, this view implies that educators must be willing to negotiate meaning with students, in order to facilitate knowledge construction.

## *2.3 Learners as active participants in classroom discourse*

A range of empirical studies have investigated ways to stimulate learners' participation in language classrooms. Candela (1999, 2005) examines the role of Mehan's (1979, 1985)

initiation-reply-evaluation sequences (IREs). Hellermann (2005), Smith (2006) and Brokensha (2007) investigate the use of peer-interactions, while Chun (1994), Sotillo (2000) and Kung (2004) analyse the role that synchronous computer-mediated-communication (CMC) can play in this regard. Schleef (2009) has also conducted a quantitative study on cultural differences between German and American lecturers.

This study aims to build on the above-mentioned research by examining the manner in which teachers have responded to one of the challenges which are inherent in attempts to facilitate student participation. The study focuses on the micro-level of “naturally occurring discourse” in tutorial lectures (Macbeth, 2003:246). Therefore, the main focus is on student-teacher interaction, instead of group-work or CMC. The following section discusses the setting of the current study.

#### *2.4 The NATP*

The New Academic Tutorial Programme was selected as the setting for the article’s research. This setting was considered appropriate since it aims to create a learning environment that will encourage active student participation, in a manner that is consistent with Communicative and Constructivist principles. As such, the use of authority should reflect these approaches. The article’s research is, therefore, justified by the need to determine whether or not this is the case.

NATP lectures function as a supplementary form of education. In this capacity, tutors are required to function as model students, rather than lecturers. For this reason, tutorial lectures are meant to focus on students’ needs, as well as learning strategies. Each tutor is assigned to a group of no more than twenty-five students, so that he/she may be able to attend to individual needs. It should be mentioned that this article is limited by the fact that it does not pay attention to the gender or race of individual tutors. This limitation was caused by the fact that, at the time of data collection, all the tutors in the NATP were Caucasian and predominantly female. Furthermore, only three tutors (one male and two females) were willing to participate in the research. Ideally, future studies should take these variables into account. Researchers who are interested in analysing cultural differences, with regards to teaching style, are referred to Schleef (2009), who provides a useful framework for such investigations.

All tutors were native speakers of English, or possessed L1 competence. Two of the four tutors held an honours degree in English, while the other two were in the process of completing their third year of study. Students are predominantly non-native (L2) English speakers.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Sampling procedures*

The case studies for the article’s research were taken from a larger corpus of audio-recorded lectures, which was being collected for a comprehensive analysis of classroom talk. These two lectures drew the researcher’s attention, as the respective tutors were required to deal with situations in which a student had expressed a view which might have offended fellow learners. These lectures were then transcribed and analysed as case studies (cf. appendix for transcription

conventions). The research is, therefore, clearly qualitative in nature, as it is based on a detailed analysis of a relatively small sample. However, as mentioned by Camiciottoli's (2008:1228):

small corpora allow for follow-up qualitative analysis to interpret the findings within the specific context, which would be clearly impossible with very large corpora. Thus, this methodological approach can be seen as an acceptable trade-off that succeeds in providing insights that may be useful for related types of research with similar objectives.

### 3.2 Framework of analysis

As mentioned earlier, this article employs a CA approach to replicate Buzzelli and Johnston's (2001) study, with special emphasis on Bernstein's (1990; 1996) concepts of instructional and regulative discourse.

CA is particularly well suited to the study of social interaction, as it is influenced by its institutional context (Drew & Heritage, 1992). CA allows researchers to trace the development of talk-in-interaction, as a sequentially organised event that is influenced by underlying conventions/norms (Psathas, 1995). In the present article, however, CA is limited by the fact that it is used in a qualitative manner. The article's findings will, therefore, benefit from subsequent analyses to judge its reliability.

## 4. Results

As mentioned earlier, two lectures in particular demonstrated a specific challenge with which educators may be faced when encouraging student participation: the expression of potentially offensive views by one or more students. The following sections report the article's findings by discussing each of these two lectures.

### 4.1 First lecture

This section discusses the findings for a second-year tutorial lecture on *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker. In the previous turns, S2 has stated that she finds it difficult to relate to the novel's characters. Subsequently, S4 expresses a question on this matter.

94: S4: -can I just ask her so:meting?=  
[ja]

95: T: =YES

96: S4: what do you mean you can't identify with it- in in what se:nse?

97: S2: mea::ning meaning if I if I were a black person and MY parents were talking about ALL these things that have happened? then I could feel more- NOT meaning I can't identify but JUST [1.2] do you understa:nd what I'm try:ing [to]=

98: S4: [ja]

99: S2: it's not it's not my::::=

100: S3: personal experience=

101: S2: YES it's not my: personal experience [0.4] being there::, and being a sla::ve, and these people beating the wome::n, and- it's that's that's why it's difficult to identify with [it]

102: S3: [you] didn't grow up like that?

103: S2: YES exactly::

104: S3: we we didn't see like::

105: T: ok.

106: S2: ja. [0.5] and that's why-

107: S4: -it broadens your horizons-

108: S2: -exactly exactly THAT's why we must read boo::ks books like this.

109: S5: I also feel that in a very strong sense that- no offence [0.5] to anybody [0.5]

110: T: just say it

111: S5: I just want to say that- ok I grew up in a part of Sout-South Africa? where I wasn't kept in a con- in a uhm-

112: T: -like a cocoon

113: S2: ((laughs))

114: S5: in a cocoon [1] I was [1.7] I grew up with seeing everybody's points of view and I was comfortable since I was like five years old with like [0.9] all different kinds of views↓ but the thing is with↑- no offence but with the majority of Bloemfontein students as soo:n as they read a book which puts them in an uncomfortable position or it's something that they're not used to they back [away]=

115: S2: =[yes]

116: S5: = and they go [0.9] I don't like this book, I don't want to read it, umm I don't want to [1.7] I don't want to mess with this because it makes me fee:l uncomfortable- or umm we don't actually talk about this stuff at ho:me↑ so I don't think- I don't really want to touch on the topics or on the issues and I think people sho:uld step away from that- DEAL with it. it happens that's why you have to read the book↑ so that your general knowledge widen or broaden so that you can realise there's more to life THAN BLOEMFONTEIN

117: S2: ((laughs))

118: S5: there's a wider world OUT THERE- now it's not against anyone but its just the perception that I got

119: T: Adele I- I agree with you- and please nobody should feel offended but I agree with you because especially when we were doing poss the sec- possessing the secret of joy by Alice Walker- which like I told you last week is a HORRIFIC nightmare of a book-

120: S5: Dr Brooks actually touched on that part=

121: T: =ja and you know some people- she said to people if you feel like you want to leave the classroom you ca:n and some people actually DIDN'T attend the lectures because they felt too uncomfortable and I feel- you know if that is the way you feel [0.5] it's fi::ne but [0.3] read the book give it a cha:nce you know [0.2] see see what's going on but at LEAST you have an OPINION about it [0.2] you know it's better than someone reading it and just not having on opinion- so if it makes you feel uncomfortable

it means that Walker is doing her job [0.5] because she WANTS to make you feel uncomfortable [0.2] she doesn't want you to read the book and put it down and go that was SUCH A NICE STORY↑ ok so-

122: S4: ja she wants you to think

123: T: ja tho:se are the kind of feelings that you have to experience and if you can get through the boo:k and be like ok I didn't like- like I HATE possessing the secret of joy I think it's a RUBBISH book [0.1] but I read it. [0.5] and I told Dr Brooks what I thought about it and I told her I think this book is CRAP. and she said ok well that's fine at least you have an opinion↑

CLT emphasises the importance of allowing students to use language as a resource for developing communicative competence (Savignon, 2007; Belchamber, 2007). In turns 96 to 109, learners are allowed to discuss the novel under study through an autonomous debate. As opposed to the lectures analysed by Mehan (1985), control of the conversational floor does not return to the tutor after a student's turn. Instead, the learners are able to co-construct meaning through social interaction with their peers, while the tutor plays a facilitating role (cf. Maor, 2005; Jacobs, 2004; Hellermann, 2005; Smith, 2006; Killen, 2000 on the role of social interaction). In turn 109, however, S5 assumes control of the floor. Immediately, she warns her peers that she is about to express a potentially offensive view. With some encouragement and assistance from T (turn 110 and 112), S5 states that students from Bloemfontein are likely to shy away from the explicit and controversial content of *The Colour Purple*. Consequently, students from Bloemfontein are cast as conservative, in S5's view.

In turn 119 and 121 T responds to this opinion by using two strategies, which are supported by references to her personal experiences as a student. Firstly, she draws attention to the tutorial lecture as a context in which students are allowed to express controversial, and potentially offensive, views. Secondly, she outlines the manner in which students should respond to controversial literature. Note that the last aim is achieved without criticising students from a specific geographical location. In fact, the problem presented by students who refuse to read controversial texts is reformulated as an academic issue, instead of a characteristic of specific groups of people. These two strategies are clearly related to the regulative discourse – as they are concerned with the criteria for appropriate conduct in a specific context. T's turns construct tutorial lectures as a context in which students are expected to: 1) read the literature, 2) develop opinions, and 3) to communicate these opinions freely. All students are required to acknowledge and follow these norms, as illustrated in subsequent turns.

As part of the first strategy, T states, in turn 119: “please nobody should be offended”. By doing so, T aims to construct the lecture as a context in which students should be able to express views/opinions without fear of offending their peers. In turn 121, she draws attention to the value of developing individual opinions: “if that is the way you feel [0.5] it's fine but [0.3] read the book [...] at LEAST you have an OPINION”. By outlining standards of appropriate behaviour, T embeds the instructional discourse [developing students' understanding of the novel under study] within the regulative discourse [students are allowed to express personal views].

As noted earlier, the second strategy builds on the first, by describing T's views on how students should approach explicit and potentially offensive literature. Again, this is achieved by framing

the standards of appropriate conduct for students of literature. In turn 121, T describes the notion that students of literature are required to develop personal opinions of the materials under study, regardless of whether or not they are offended by it: “people actually DIDN’T attend [...] they felt too uncomfortable [...] if that is the way you feel [0.5] it’s fine [...] but at LEAST you have an OPINION” [...] it’s better than someone reading it and just not having an opinion”. In this statement, T notes that students are not required to approve of the material. However, they are still expected to read and interpret it. Thus, the instructional goal of the lecture is embedded in regulative criteria.

With regards to the parallel enactment of authority, it may be noted that by explicitly taking control of the conversational floor T is acting ‘in authority’. This allows her to avoid discussing the character of Bloemfontein students, by focusing on the conduct of literature students. Subsequently, T also functions as ‘an authority’ on literary analysis, by discussing the characteristics of a good student. Her status as ‘an authority’ on literature is reinforced in later on in turn 121: “Walker is doing her job [0.5] because she WANTS to make you feel uncomfortable”.

Finally, in order to support her views on appropriate conduct for literature students, T relates her experiences as a student. In particular, she refers to reading *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (a prescribed novel for third-year students): “123: T: [...] I HATE possessing the secret of joy I think it’s a RUBBISH book [0.1] but I read it. [0.5] and I told Dr Brooks what I thought [...] and she said ok well that’s fine at least you have an opinion↑”.

In summary, T begins to address her challenge by framing the notion of what conduct is appropriate in the context of literature tutorials. Thereafter, she discusses the correct way of approaching potentially offensive literature. This allows her to avoid the issue brought up by S5. Finally, to illustrate the behaviour she has discussed, T recounts her experience as a student who did not enjoy the novel under study. As a consequence, students may be able to relate to T and become more receptive to her regulative discourse.

#### 4.2 Second lecture

The following excerpt was taken from a first-year lecture on the play *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland*, by Zakes Mda. The lecture focused on the theme of corruption in the play. In order to activate the learners “pre-knowledge” about the subject, the tutor asked them to discuss the form that corruption takes in the real world (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1997:171). One of the students (S6) noted that, in his view, corruption is not always reported in accordance with legal procedures.

59: T: let’s- sorry=

60: S2: =no no no umm [0.7] so you:: you don’t thi:nk the:: the people- umm- who is corrupt is actually so: much to blame?

61: S6: they are of cou:rs e they are- at all times- you you know you you you tres- you trespass and all that you you ought to be: punished for tha::t [0.5] but I’m sa::ying [1] most of the time you know from from previous umm cases and so on- which were published- according to me you know from m-m-my umm side I see them as like- people didn’t actually report them you know with the right procedures- the people were not caught you kno::w with assessing their work and kind off like- they were

reported even before investigations were done [0.5] you you know- so: m-m-my point is is that most of the time it's actually on a [0.6] personal level you know- we: don't get some point then you know: w I'm going to [1] open a case for you [0.3] or I'm I'm I'm going you know try to:: make your life more difficult and so on by:: [1.2]

62: T: so if I can summarise? [0.5] what you're saying is::s we see certain PARTS of corruption cases in the media but we are never quite- as the people we are quite enlightened about what happened beforehand? =

63: S6: =yes

64: T: umm [0.7] the WAY in which cases are reported [0.9] shows us that it has a lot to do with personal vendettas and personal struggles and personal gripes that people have with each other so there there there are personal struggles for power [0.5] in the way that these cases are handled =

65: S6: =to add on that [1] most of corruptio:n- ok since well I'm more familiar with the umm provincial ones umm more in depth. most of people who are charged with corruption are millionaires by now cause they GET you know cha::rged, they go to jail for [0.9] maybe three days or something like that↑ after that they win the case and they come back again and sue the the people who umm was pros- umm brought the charge against them [0.5] millionaires- most of them are you know are millionaires by now. so:: it clearly shows that investigations are not done thoroughly and and- for you to umm [1.2] to to implicate somebody wi::th with such things [1.2] you:: you must have seen some things some other things before hand and you must have a valid proof [1.2] so I'm saying the the the protocol or the procedures is not followed coming to that- the way I see it- I don't know [1.4] because I fail to understand why so many cases↑- you know: w charges of corruptions are thrown out of the ca::- out out of the court↑ WHY so many? [2.8]

66: T: what do you think? [3.6] it's a very good question [3.3]

67: S3: it may be personal struggles but it's the TRUTH↑ there is corruption and it must come out so. [1] but I hear what you're saying↑ its- but it is the truth there is there is corruption so:: it must be reported [2.2]

68: T: now let's see if we can apply this↑ [0.6] to the play? umm there are two characters in the play who a::re- who in a certain sense SYMBOLISE corruption [1.3] ofisiri and mafutha [0.5] who is not a character in in [0.3] what's that movie? when I read the name I thought it was a character in the lion king- mafutha it sounds like some or other =

69: S3: mufasa =

70: T: =o::: is that the name

71: S6: yes mufasa ((laughter from other students))

72: T: ye:s I thought something rang a be::ll- anyway [0.3] the:y are:: SYMBOLS of corruption so look at them, look at what they do:: a:nd see if you can TRACE signs of corruption in them

As illustrated in the excerpt, S3 disagreed with S6's view (turn 67). To circumvent conflict between S6 and S3, T changes the topic from corruption in the real world, to corruption

in the play (turn 68). The tutor is, therefore, reminding students that the outcome of their discussions should always be to improve their understanding of the literature under study. This embeds the instructional discourse within the regulative discourse as follows: because T is 'in authority', he can remind students that, within the context of tutorial lectures, personal opinions must always be relevant to the literature under study. Although T's instructional approach required him to allow students to express their views, he uses his authority to remind them that their views must enable them to analyse the material.

An additional strategy, evident in this lecture, involves the use of humour in order to alleviate tension between students. Owing to the fact that NATP lectures serve as a supplementary form of instruction, the relationship between tutors and students may be somewhat less formal. In addition, as each tutor is responsible for only a small number of students, the use of humour in these lectures may be more regular than in formal lessons.

This notion is reinforced by the fact that the tutor in the first lecture also resorted to humour when the students digressed from the topic under discussion. While discussing racial stereotypes in *The Color Purple* the students began to discuss problematic stereotypes in the real world. The tutor then used humour to remind students that their comments must be relevant to the novel under study. In this case, however, the tutor's facial expression and tone of voice alone was enough to signal humour.

245: T: Ja I think it's you know it's because it's difficult as well and I think that's one of the things- **just get back to the book ((student's laugh)) that's one of the things that frustrated the author of this article so much** is that the white people where you know like I always [1] um always feel it's almost as if? aww shame those poor little white<sup>1</sup> people- they were so- ag poor them- so it's like a PITY because- I found the thing I wanted- (emphasis added)

## 5. Implications and recommendations for future research

The findings of this article indicate that the regulative and instructional discourse may provide a useful framework for analysing the manner in which educators respond to challenging situations. These situations appear to stem from the fact that students are encouraged to play an active role in the learning process. The findings suggest that, in response to this situation, tutors in the NATP tend to embed the instructional discourse within the regulative discourse, in order to prevent offensive views from disrupting the lecture.

More specifically, it appears that tutors use references to their personal experiences as students, as well as humour, to support their views on appropriate conduct, and to alleviate tension between students. Owing to the nature of NATP lectures – specifically the fact that tutors function as model students, who deal with relatively small classes – the use of these two methods may be particularly characteristic of this form of instruction. Both strategies are embedded in the parallel enactment of authority, as

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the tutor meant to say poor little black people, and was eventually corrected by one of the students. This mistake was unintentional and therefore not part of her use of humour.

informed by Communicative and Constructivist principles. However, as this article employs a qualitative methodology – which is predominantly hypothesis-generating rather than hypotheses-testing in nature (cf. Seliger and Shohamy, 1989: 120) – it is important for future researchers to establish whether these strategies are in fact typical of the instructional medium (tutorial lectures) or whether they simply reflect personal style.

Future research projects may also investigate the efficiency of these methods, so that recommendations may be made to educators who work in similar situations. Finally, the difference between NATP and formal lectures, in this regard, may also be investigated by using instructional and regulative discourse as a framework. In this vein, Schleef (2009) provides a useful framework with which the discourse of tutorial and formal lectures may be compared.

## 6. Conclusion

The research presented in this article suggests that by focusing on the instructional and regulative discourse of classroom interactions, educators' strategies for dealing with specific challenges may be uncovered. The dominance of the regulative discourse draws attention to the moral component of education. For this reason, research on teaching practices should not only make educators aware of this moral component, but should also provide practical suggestions on how it may be negotiated in order to create a learner-friendly environment.

The article has also drawn attention to the role that references to educators' personal experiences as students may play in supporting, or legitimising, the regulative discourse. As NATP tutors are invariably still students of English – whether under- or post-graduate – this strategy may be especially typical of their lectures.

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## Transcription conventions

The conventions used in this study are based on those found in Psathas (1995:70-78).

Utterances which begin simultaneously are indicated with [, and ] indicates the end of the overlap:

A: [[I thought that]

B: [[It means that] yes it means that

Utterances which overlap are indicated with [, while ] indicates the end of the overlap:

A: I thought [that] the meaning is

B: [yes I]

Latching is indicated with =

A: That is what it means =

B: = yes it means this

Note that when A latches onto B's last utterances it is indicated as follows:

A: That is what it means =

B: = yes it means this =

A: = exactly

Pauses are indicated by noting the seconds and tenths of a second as follows: [1] indicates one second

Sound stretches are indicated as follows: A: I rea:::ly think you should look again

Cut-offs are indicated with –

A: Read the line-

B: It reads as follows

Note that cut-offs may also occur in a single speaker's turn:

A: I thought that- I think if you read carefully

A stopping fall in tone is indicated with a period:

A: It is true. [1.2] Let's go on

When a syllable is stressed, it is underlined:

A: I think that

When an entire word is emphasised it is underlined and recorded in upper-case:

A: Its all about THIS

Marked rising and falling intonation is indicated with ↑ and ↓ respectively

Rising intonation is indicated with ?

A: What do you: thi:nk?

A continuing intonation, predominantly used when uttering a list, is indicated with commas:

A: You say this, I say that, you say that,

Verbal descriptions were also added where necessary, for example ((laughter from all students)).



# Teaching and learning English as a Home Language in a predominantly non-native English classroom: A study from KwaZulu-Natal<sup>1</sup>

**A B S T R A C T** This study focuses on a secondary school in an Indian-African suburb of Merewent in KwaZulu-Natal, an example of a suburban school where English as a Home Language (EHL) is taught to a majority of non-native English learners from township schools. The EHL classrooms were investigated for ‘communicativeness’ and then compared to English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. It might be expected that EHL classrooms would exhibit an affinity with ESL classrooms. However, although non-native EHL has many aspects in common with ESL, there were significant differences between the two. The most important difference from the standpoint of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was in the learning content selection, with the EHL settings using more literary works, and so focusing less on the direct teaching of grammatical forms. However, a disturbing pattern was the inability of the learners in both sets of settings to take full advantage of CLT, which suggested that the learners might not be at the appropriate level of language development.

**Keywords:** English as Home Language (EHL), non-native English learners, township schools, English as a Second Language (ESL), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), language development

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a minor dissertation, “A study of the teaching/learning of English as a First Language in a predominantly non-native English classroom in South Africa”, in partial fulfillment of a Master’s degree in Applied Linguistics and Literary Theory (TESOL) at the University of Johannesburg.

## 1. Introduction

The proclamation in 1990 of the Clase Model schools led to the migration of many African learners from township schools into former white, Indian-African and 'coloured' schools (Metcalf in Walters, 1994:177). Clase Model A, B, C schools resulted from the adoption by white public schools of any one of the admission policy options announced by then Education Minister Piet Clase, by which they could become private schools, remain segregated or admit learners from the other population groups. Model C schools are the majority of white public schools that admitted learners from other population groups (Hofmeyr, 2000:5-6). The label 'Model C' has since tended to be loosely used for all public multiracial schools, including those that fell under the House of Delegates and House of Representatives, which respectively administered Indian-African and 'coloured' affairs under the 1984 apartheid era tricameral parliament (Hofmeyr 2000:7). The designation 'suburban schools' is used in this study to refer to all public multiracial schools, including ex-Model C schools, that did not fall under the administration of the erstwhile Department of Education and the education departments of former homelands, which administered the education of African learners. While ex-Model C schools are still expected to have better physical resources, and well-trained and experienced teachers (Walters, 1994:180), the reclassification of schools has brought changes to the resource-base of all suburban schools as they now have to compete for the scant resources with other public schools (Hofmeyr, 2000:7). The most distinctive feature of suburban schools is that they offer English as a Home Language (EHL), rather than the traditional English as a Second Language (ESL), to African learners, which Walters (1994:176) calls a 'bizarre combination'. This was necessary initially as English home language learners were in the majority. However, the demographics of some of these schools now show an African learner majority (Hofmeyr, 2000:7), which may point to the need to consider some changes.

The aim of this study, which focuses on a secondary school in an Indian-African suburb of Merewent in KwaZulu-Natal, was to establish whether the African learners in this school ended up with an improved educational experience from that in their former schools, given the expectations associated with suburban schools. The research question was: What distinguishes a suburban EHL classroom wherein non-native English learners are in the majority from a typical township ESL classroom? The unit of analysis was classroom communicativeness, as realised in teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction, and content-learner interaction, which led to a description of the EHL classrooms, which were then compared to ESL ones. Proponents of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) believe that, the more communicative the classroom, the more effective the language teaching. Therefore, if the EHL classes were found to be more communicative than ESL classrooms, it could be concluded that it is worthwhile for the African learners to travel long distances to attend suburban schools.

## 2. English Language Teaching in the National Curriculum Statement

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) distinguishes between English as a Home Language (EHL), English as a First Additional and English as a Second Additional Language (Department of Education [DoE], 2007:16). English as a First Additional Language replaced English as a Second Language, but the latter term is preferred in this study because of its international entrenchment. The NCS further endorses Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and text-

or genre-based language teaching. A contentious issue in English language teaching has for a long time been the integration of EHL and ESL.

### **3. Can EHL and ESL be integrated?**

The premise for the defining difference between a home and a second language is the vexed construct of a critical period for language acquisition, which posits that the acquisition of a first language is completed by the age of five (Berman, 2007:347). Traditional home language learning, therefore, uses in school the same code that is spoken at home. Since the learner already has the fundamental knowledge of the sounds and structures of the language by school-going age, home language learning consists in vocabulary development and in exploring spoken and written rhetoric (Saville-Troike, 1989:257). Whereas second language learning may now begin earlier, it traditionally begun in school after the learner was five years old. The second language learner already has mastery of his/her home language by school-going age, but is required to learn, and learn in, another language. Because the second language learner needs exposure to every aspect of the target language, the syllabus pays equal attention to all language aspects marked for instruction. This theoretical thinking reflects in the primary outcomes for either level in the national curriculum. For EHL Grades 10 to 12, the outcomes are reading and viewing, and writing and presenting, with listening and speaking, and language structure as secondary outcomes. For ESL, they are listening and speaking, reading and viewing, and writing and presenting, with language structure as the secondary outcome (DoE, 2007:8), included “to ensure that the learner is able to use language structure and conventions appropriately and effectively” (DoE, 2007:16).

Because of the learners’ mastery of oral language skills, home language classrooms are characterised by more interaction than second language ones, which experience interactional encumbrances because of the learners’ initial limited language proficiency. This may partly explain why EHL and ESL have continued to be separated as curriculum options. Integration of the two has been attempted before in the form of submersion, which refers to language programmes in which a few minority language speakers attend the same classroom with a numerical majority of home language English speakers for the entire school day without language support, in the hope that they will learn the language by association; and immersion, which refers to language programmes in which the learner’s introduction to English is executed in a guarded manner and at varying times (Freeman & Freeman, 1992:187-188). Their outcomes so far have been inconsistent and unflattering, resulting in more questions such as: What conditions would have to exist for EHL and ESL to be successfully integrated?

One of them would have to be the advanced oral language skills of the ESL learners being integrated into EHL classrooms, as it is these skills that will facilitate the acquisition of academic literacy (Di Pietro, 1987:109). Research has revealed that it takes five to seven years of effective schooling in English for children to score in the native-speaker range in oral language proficiency (Paradis, 2007:393). Cummins (2009:1) suggests that it takes two years for language minority children in the US to acquire oral language proficiency, and an additional five years to reach the age/grade-appropriate academic literacy level, as measured against the language majority learner. This will vary in different contexts since the place of instruction, which distinguishes between foreign language, second language and bilingual environments,

is another input variable to consider (Brown, 1994:277). However, this still means that after seven to ten years of effective schooling in English, ESL learners could be integrated with EHL learners. It therefore appears as if the division between EHL and ESL in Grades 10 to 12 is based on superficial grounds that are motivated by social segregation and ineffective ESL teaching in earlier schooling. Advanced ESL learners ought to have sufficient communicative competence to allow for their integration with EHL learners. Any communicative competence shortcomings making this undesirable will be attributable to ineffectual teaching and learning. It would therefore appear as if the arrangement of language curricula into rigid levels is responsible for language-based segregation in multilingual societies (Levine, 1990:5). The language levels imply a hierarchised view of language education, by which EHL is the prestigious level and ESL the average one. Such a conception of language education perpetuates education-based discrimination by ascertaining different learning conditions for groups of learners based on language privileges (Skutnabb-Kangas in Ellis, 1994:222) and is contrary to the NCS principles of social transformation and integration (DoE, 2007:8). Thus, as is happening in South Africa, non-native English speakers may be discouraged from ESL because some native English speakers view it as inferior (Levine, 1990:5). Educationists such as Mpepo (1998:87) have called for the de-nativisation of ELT, in recognition of the world-language status of English.

#### **4. Meaningful interaction as the goal of instruction in CLT**

Instruction, defined by Ellis (2005:9) as “an attempt to intervene in the process of language learning”, is important if it leads to interaction since it is the latter that supports effective language development through the negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 1994:573). Long’s Interaction Hypothesis (1980) claims that engaging in interpersonal, oral interaction in which communication problems arise and are negotiated, facilitates language acquisition (Ellis, 1994:244). Wagner (1997:20) defines interaction as an interplay and exchange in which individuals and groups influence each other. The primary role players in classroom interaction are the teacher, the content and the learner, such that there will be teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction and content-learner interaction in the classroom (Moore & Kearsley, 1996:128-131).

##### *4.1 Teacher-learner interaction*

The teacher attempts to influence the course of learning through instruction (Littlewood, 1984: 60). The role of the teacher has been “to provide corrective feedback and correct models to set tasks”, and that of the learner “the rather passive one of coming up with the correct target language forms” (Nunan, 1989:85). Teachers control learning content and the direction of the discourse by asking questions and reformulating learners’ answers (Fisher, 1994:159), and teacher talk accounts for about 70% of classroom time (Cook, 2001:144). Classrooms dominated by teacher talk employ a listening-based or telling style, by which more value is placed in learners extracting from what they hear than in speaking themselves (Cook, 2001:145). Classroom interaction is characterised as occurring according to the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) pattern – that is, the teacher initiates the exchange, the learner responds and the teacher gives feedback (Foley & Thompson, 2003:161). Such a pattern, along with activities such as drills, rote learning, grammatical explanation and translation, give more power and control of the classroom to the teacher. The communicative style, however, emphasises the

learner's dual roles as listeners and speakers (Cook, 2001:149). Communicative activities such as role plays, problem solving and simulation seek to give equal control of the classroom to the learner and the teacher (Nunan, 1989:86). This CLT principle of the equality of classroom participants is viewed by some scholars as a weakness (Cook, 2001:222). Cook (2001:222) argues that, since CLT relies on a dynamic classroom situation and on the learners' taking advantage of learning opportunities, they must be given an opportunity to accept or reject its use. This would be difficult within the constraints of a nationally predetermined policy such as the NCS. However, learners can be consulted on syllabus matters by means of representations through their national and on-site representative bodies, and the continual administration of questionnaires and interviews.

#### *4.2 Learner-learner interaction*

The benefit of collaborative learning is in its affording "more opportunity for language production and a wider range of language use in such situations as initiating discussion, asking for clarification, interrupting, competing for the floor and joking" (Foley & Thompson, 2003:165). It occasions acquisition-rich discourse when learners interact among themselves (Ellis, 2005:41). Learner-learner interaction may be encouraged through abandoning listening-based methods – those by which the teacher predominates and provides all the information – and embracing task-based methods, whereby gaps are exploited to get learners to work together and be involved in classroom decision-making. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:139) believe that information gaps prompt learners to think – which is obligatory in learning – because of the missing information. They identify these gaps: *information gaps*: one learner has some information, another does not; *media gaps*: the information is available in one medium and needs to be transferred to another medium; *reasoning gaps*: the answer needs to be extrapolated from clues and pieces of evidence; *memory gaps*: the learners need to use their memories to reconstruct some information that they received at some point; *jigsaw gaps*: all the parts are there, but they need to be put together to form a complete unit; *opinion gaps*: these have to do with what is important, what is not important and what is relevant; and *certainty gaps*: they have to do with what is definitely known, what can be presupposed, what can be predicted, and what is completely unavailable (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:139-140). Kotze (2007:30) counsels that course designers should consider learner, pragmatic and linguistic goals in planning learner-learner interaction tasks.

#### *4.3 Learner-content interaction and Genre-based Language Teaching*

Learning is conducted through teacher-talk, the language of textbooks and other learning materials (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:23). Form-focused instruction (Long, 1991 in Ellis, 2005:12), which distinguishes language teaching from other subjects, is divided into direct and indirect teaching of language. In direct instruction, the focus is on teaching grammar; while in indirect instruction, synonymous with the communicative style, the focus is on pragmatic meaning or the message. It is generally accepted that grammar teaching does not produce communicative competence (Ellis, 2005:10), the real goal of language teaching and a complex construct. A meaning-focused language pedagogy, however, is weakened by its drifts into discussions of the social and other issues related to the content, and not even referring to the communicative value of the content's linguistic properties, resulting in little or no language

awareness. The distinction made between real and carrier content (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998:98) tries to address this challenge. The real content refers to linguistic units and the carrier content, or just the content, to the message. It is the linguistic units that ought to be the object of language teaching, and not the content.

However, the endorsement of genre-based teaching as the authentic content/input provider in the NCS's language teaching approach indicates support for indirect instruction, by which grammatical forms are only taught incidentally or not at all. Besides being criticised for restraining creativity by being too formulaic, genre theory is criticised for giving little attention to lexico-grammatical issues (Henry, 2007:464). Genre is defined as a social activity in which language is used to establish and maintain relationships in order to achieve specific goals (Henry, 2007:463). The NCS 'text' has the wider meaning of genre for referring to "written, oral, audio-visual and multimedia texts, such as posters, advertisements, radio and television programmes, and a range of different written texts" (DoE, 2007:9). Genre knowledge can be used pedagogically to provide a method for the analysis of generic texts and to assist writers to acquire the means of creating their own generic texts (Bruce, 2008:48). The important elements of genre language teaching are learning content, text structure, language style and purpose (Hyon, 2001:421), which the NCS refers to as format, layout, structure, grammar and register (DoE, 2007:9). Through the genre-based approach, the NCS seeks to encourage interaction between the text and the learner and to enable learners to become "competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts" (DoE, 2007:9). By definition and practice, home language teaching may be characterised by very little or no grammar instruction at all, while second language teaching may have it in degrees.

## **5. Research design and tools**

### *5.1 Population*

A secondary school in the Indian-African suburb of Merewent in KwaZulu-Natal was chosen for the research with a view to studying Grade 10, 11 and 12 EHL classrooms. The principal of the school informed the researcher that the school opened its doors to African learners in 1984, six years before the proclamation of Cluse Model schools. It is now classified as a Quintile Four school, up from Quintile Three, which means that it only receives part of its funding from the government, and raises the rest from parents and donors. It also meant that the Department of Education was satisfied that there was enough managerial capacity in the school for the governing body to take full responsibility for the decision-making. The reclassification of schools in the post-apartheid era has seen schools being ranked into quintiles of disadvantage. The lower the quintile, the more disadvantaged the school and the bigger the subvention from the government. The principal confirmed that the school's majority learner population comprises African learners from the township. The researcher observed that, in spite of this, and except for three African teachers, the teaching cohort remained Indian-African. According to the principal the school had never experienced any social integration problems.

### *5.2 Participants*

The research focused on the observation of Grade 10, 11 and 12 EHL classrooms. It was assumed that the learners in these grades would have spent a number of years at the school, and would

therefore, have had more experience in English as a Home Language at the school. In a focus group consisting of seven Grade 11, and six Grade 12 learners, the Grade 12 learners had spent on average 3.5 years at the school; and the Grade 11 learners, 3.7 years. All the 13 learners except two, confirmed that they came to this school for a good education. One learner stated that his reason for enrolling at the school was “to learn more skills about the english (sic)”.

The principal and the three female teachers interviewed were all Indian-Africans. The principal was interviewed for data relating to the management and history of the school and the three teachers for permitting the observation of their classrooms by the researcher. The teachers had 40 years of English teaching experience between them, with two each having 19 and 18 years, and the least experienced, 3 years. Two had a degree in English; and the third – who was also the most experienced - had English 3, an honours and a master’s degree in Applied Linguistics. All three teachers were English home language speakers. Two do not speak nor understand Zulu, while one speaks and understands Zulu poorly.

### *5.3 Data Collection*

The qualitative research design was anchored in the ethnographic method of classroom observation because of the capability of qualitative field studies to lend themselves more aptly to studying cases that do not fit into particular theories (Welman *et al.*, 2005:188), such as the teaching of EHL to non-native English learners. The empirical data were collected by means of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation scheme devised by Allen, Frohlich and Spada (1983), a focus group and unstructured interviews.

The COLT scheme, which also served as the organising tool for the whole research because of its comprehensive and clear categories, is divided into two main categories: Classroom Activities and Classroom Language, which are each respectively subdivided into five and seven subcategories. The researcher’s observations were recorded in the form of comprehensive field notes, which together with the focus group and unstructured interviews, were used to complement the scheme and to clarify its high-inference categories. The researcher came into the classrooms, witnessed their dynamics, described the classrooms and then determined if these dynamics were different enough to those in the English Second Language classrooms described in the Schlebush and Thobedi study (2004), carried out in Thabong Township in the Lejweleputswa District of the Free State Province, to imply an enriched educational experience for the learners in the described EHL classrooms. This ESL study was chosen for its recentness, having been conducted in the current curriculum dispensation, and for the generalisability of its findings, although it was conducted on grade eight classrooms. Two texts of this study were used: the original dissertation (Thobedi, 2002) and the abridged journal version published on the internet (Schlebuch & Thobedi, 2004).

The researcher was a non-participant observer in 27 periods of Grades 10, 11 and 12 classes, over a period of three weeks, in February 2008. Each grade was observed three times a week over this period, which translated into 9 periods per grade over the three weeks. By the end of the three weeks, each teacher had been observed teaching three Grade 10, three Grade 11, and three Grade 12 classes. The data was collected in real-time and compounded into field notes guided by the categories of the COLT scheme.

The focus group with the learners and the unstructured interviews with the teachers and the principal were used to complement and clarify the data from the COLT scheme. The focus group was conducted half-way through the observations, as were the unstructured interviews with the teachers. The learners in the focus group were allowed to record their views in writing. The reason for the timing of the interviews and the focus group was the researcher's view that the data provided by the COLT scheme would be sufficient to provide a satisfactory impression of the classrooms being observed. A decision was thus taken to use the data from both the interviews and the focus group selectively to clarify certain aspects according to necessity.

## **6. Findings**

The ESL classrooms in the Schlebusch and Thobedi study (2004) are referred to as the ESL settings, and the EHL settings in the present study as the EHL settings. 'Both sets of settings' is a reference to both settings to eliminate ambiguity.

### *6.1 Classroom Activities*

#### 6.1.1 Activity type

There was an overarching employment of the listening-based style or telling method, with a limited use of spontaneous discussion in the EHL settings. Games, role play and dialogue were not used at all. Whereas learners were made to complete written exercises on the content, they never had to carry out any tasks related to language use in the real world. In the ESL settings, Thobedi observed that the teachers showed a preference for the telling method and that the tasks given to the learners were limited to copying questions from the textbook and the chalkboard and writing answers in their workbooks and on the chalkboard (Thobedi, 2002:107). Group discussions and frequent questioning did not take place and neither did dialogues, debates, discussion or drama and singing, all activities that could involve learners in a co-operative learning environment (Thobedi, 2002:109). In respect of this code, there was similarity between both sets of settings.

#### 6.1.2 Participant organisation

Both sets of settings were characterised by the absence of learner group work, even though the learners had been organised into some kinds of groups. The teachers taught to the whole class and gave no individualised attention to the learners, except during one composition writing lesson when the teacher attended to the learners individually. With 40 to 60 learners on average Schlebusch & Thobedi's ESL settings had more students than the 30 to 40 learners in the EHL settings. The ESL settings were over-crowded (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004:40), as were the EHL settings with some of the learners not having places to sit and then having to sit in the front facing their class mates. In terms of this code, there was similarity between both sets of settings.

#### 6.1.3 Content

The lessons in the EHL settings fell into five content types: reading comprehension, composing or writing skills, poetry, drama, and the novel. The title of one comprehension passage was *Is Beauty Skin Deep?*, and had a caption directed at young people, which read, "taken from a web-site for young people, and expresses many feelings and emotions that you may share". The

prescribed novels were *Cry the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton, for Grade 10; *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, for Grade 11; and *Nervous Condition* by Tsitsi Dangarembga, for Grade 12. The prescribed drama texts were all by Shakespeare: *Merchant of Venice* for Grade 10; *Macbeth* for Grade 11; and *Hamlet* for Grade 12. One poem was entitled *White Child Meets Black Man* by James Berry, a poet from Jamaica. In the ESL settings, Thobedi (2002:125) observed that the learners did a number of exercises on grammar or copied teacher-prepared summaries from the chalkboard and wrote a few compositions and letters. In regard to this code, there was a stark difference between the two sets of settings.

#### 6.1.4 Student modality

Both sets of settings were dominated by the learners' listening to the teacher talking or reading, and their copying questions from some source and writing the answers in their classwork books (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004:43). On five occasions in the EHL settings, classwork and homework were given, but were not assessed and reinforced, which reduced the chances for effective writing. The learners in both sets of settings struggled with reading. When this happened in the EHL settings, the teachers took over the reading, while in the ESL settings learner speaking and writing activities were avoided (Thobedi, 2002:110-111). No learner presentations were observed. The learners in the EHL settings only spoke when they gave relatively short answers to the teachers' questions, which translated to less than ten percent of classroom time. However, whereas the learners in the ESL settings struggled to express themselves verbally and failed to produce proper sentences in English, a few in the EHL settings could formulate grammatically well-formed sentences when they were given speaking opportunities. In respect of this code, both sets of settings were different.

#### 6.1.5 Materials

The EHL settings employed literary texts, which are long, complex, non-pedagogic, sometimes pedagogic, written texts. However, there were not enough copies of these texts for the learners. The few copies that the learners shared during the lessons remained in the teacher's possession after the lesson, which meant that the learners could not take them home to study by themselves. Each teacher had just fewer than 40 texts for 120 learners, which was not enough for even one class. About 10 copies of dictionaries were also shared, one dictionary to four learners. Overhead projectors were expected in the EHL settings, but none were observed. Only one teacher used an audio tape of a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which was purchased with her own money since there was not enough provision in the school budget for purchasing extra materials. In spite of the school being electrified, no visual materials were observed in use or storage. The chalkboard, reproduced hand-outs, charts with explanatory notes, and learner classwork books were the most-used teaching and learning materials. Except for the privately purchased audio tape, the two sets of settings were similar in being bedeviled by a lack of teaching and learning materials.

### 6.2 Classroom Language

#### 6.2.1 Use of target language

The target language, English, was used exclusively in teacher-learner interactions, while those learners who shared a home language, particularly Zulu, used it to communicate among

themselves in class. All the focus-group learners confirmed that the teachers communicated with them and their classmates only in English. One learner reported that s/he used English to communicate with Indian learners, while s/he used Zulu to communicate with Africans in class. The learners who had Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu as their home language, said that they used these languages to communicate inside and outside the classroom with their fellow learners who understood them. Although the teachers did not openly allow or prohibit the learners from communicating in their home language, they did not sanction those who spoke Zulu amongst themselves. One teacher said she encouraged the use of the learners' home language in her English classroom because she believed it enhanced learning. The second teacher said she sometimes allowed the learners to communicate to each other in Zulu, but that, as far as possible, they had to communicate in English during her lesson. The third teacher expressed her lack of comfort with learners' using their home languages because "it would be extremely difficult for any learner to learn English without speaking it." The code-switching conditions in the EHL settings contrasted with the English-only conditions in the ESL settings, where the learners' home languages were only used outside the classroom, even in communications with the English teachers (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004:41).

#### 6.2.2 Information gap

Information gaps were used successfully by the teachers in certain cases. For example, the learners responded intelligently to one teacher's question why the characters in *Lord of the Flies* painted their faces by saying that it was "to camouflage themselves" or "to blend in with the environment". However, when the learners could not answer the teacher's questions, the teachers provided all the information. The problem with the teachers' use of information gaps was that they happened within their employment of the telling method, not within the use of the activities they could have designed for the learners in the learner's own small groups. No use of information gaps was reported for the ESL settings. With regard to this code, both sets of settings exhibited difference.

#### 6.2.3 Sustained speech

The EHL settings lacked a focus on the development of the learners' monologic skills. Even though the teachers wanted to share talking time with the learners, the lack of learner response made extended conversation impossible. At best, the dialogue in the EHL settings was limited to the teachers asking questions and getting minimal one-word or one-sentence answers from the learners. In the ESL settings, learner speaking activities were avoided because the learners were afraid of making mistakes as they thought that they could not speak proper English (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004:42). With regard to this code, the two sets of settings were different.

#### 6.2.4 Reaction to code or message

Although the focus in the EHL settings was on meaning, the learners were corrected upon making grammatical mistakes. This correction consisted in a teacher intervention with a grammar sub-lesson, a reformulation, or description and explanation of the grammar point. The focus in the ESL settings was on grammar (Thobedi, 2002:112). In respect of this code, the two sets of settings were different.

### 6.2.5 Incorporation of preceding utterance

Incorporation of preceding utterances was a constant feature when learners could respond in the EHL settings. For example, in a lesson on *Lord of the Flies* the teacher asked the question: "What is Jack talking about?" One learner answered, "He is talking about a ship that might rescue them". In another instance, the teacher asked, "How did the Egyptians preserve the corpses of their high-class citizens?" to which a learner responded: "They preserved them by wrapping them around with bandages". The teacher reformulated the learner's response by substituting the action-specific word that she had perhaps hoped that the learners might know, which was "embalming", and then explained that the learner had not necessarily been wrong. In the ESL settings, the learners failed to construct proper English sentences (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004:42). Thobedi (2002:106) reports that learner involvement by way of effective questioning by the teacher to ascertain their level of understanding was minimal. In this code, both sets of settings were different.

### 6.2.6 Discourse initiation

The teachers in the EHL settings always initiated discourse. They announced at the beginning what the lesson would be about and everything would be targeted at achieving that. They said that they had to initiate the discourse because the learners' knowledge levels were not such that they could initiate knowledgeable discourse, and that the learners expected them to initiate discourse. In the ESL settings, it was observed that little time was given to learners to express their ideas, as a result of which they seemed unable to think and reason on their own (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004:43). In respect of this code, both sets of settings were similar.

### 6.2.7 Relative restriction of linguistic form

The standard code of the English language was expected in the EHL settings. For example, during a lesson on essay writing, one teacher emphasised that the learners were not to use inappropriate language in their essays. The examples of inappropriate language cited were the use of contracted forms, such as "cause" for "because", and "til" for "until"; incorrect punctuation; the use of slang or any other type of non-standard language. Although learners could use such informal words as "guy" in spoken language, the teacher still corrected them when reformulating the learner's response. In the ESL settings, the teachers directly corrected the learners' language mistakes (Thobedi, 2002: 112) and relied on the 'correct' language of the textbook (Thobedi, 2002:117). In terms of this code, both sets of settings were different.

## 7. Discussion and implications of the findings

Although the telling style would have helped the teacher cover programmatic units of work, its value to the development of the learners' communicative abilities would have been minimal. The overcrowded classrooms, the teachers' paying negligible individual attention to the learners, and minimal learner-learner group interaction made for an imperfect language-learning environment. However, for the reserved learners, the environment may have been less threatening, and, therefore, of benefit. Drawing content from such other school subjects as Mathematics and Science, and using different media, could have enriched the language learning input by exposing the learners to more registers and topics, in agreement with genre

theory. The use of literary texts was a positive practice, as they exposed learners to language in use, but the learners lacked the capacity to use them to sharpen their interpreting skills, forcing the teachers to provide all the interpretation. The learners' being overwhelmed by reading them was evidence that their readability, which refers to "all the elements in a text that help readers to cope with the text" (Fielding, 2006:198), was beyond the learners' real reading level, as opposed to the age/grade-appropriate level.

The lack of learning materials was unfortunate in the light of the history of resource deprivation in the education of African learners. Because of it, the teachers were limited in their variation of teaching activities. Even though the school governing body at this secondary school bears responsibility for materials provisioning at the school, it is arguably the responsibility of government and parents to ascertain access to the best education practices as a matter of redressing the history of under-provision. The lessons lacked the form-focused instruction that distinguishes a language lesson from other types of lessons in that the contents of the texts became ends in themselves, instead of being the carrier content by which the real content of language could be engaged with in the classroom. It was observed that the teachers employed the story-telling method when using texts as language input, since they seemed to understand the meaning to be the actions of the characters. The lack of form-focused instruction was however consistent with the conception of English as a Home Language, and may therefore not have been misplaced. The learners themselves may have been misplaced in the EHL classrooms.

The most disconcerting observation at the school was that the learners did not do sufficient reading and writing activities. They seemed to lack reading capacity because of their undeveloped word recognition skills, which affected their pronunciation and fluent reading. It was a concern that they seemed to resign when they stumbled in reading. The teachers did not offer encouragement and instead deprived the learners of reading practice opportunities by assuming the reading. The lessons were evidence that the communicative approach continues to be misunderstood by the practitioners themselves, the teachers, confirming Long's reference to it as black box learning (in Allen *et al.*, 1983:2). The analogy with a black box – which the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Wehmeier, 2005:140) defines as "a complicated piece of equipment, usually electronic, which is known to produce particular results, but which nobody completely understands" – implies that, while the communicative approach promises a lot functionally, nobody knows exactly what it should consist of. The teachers seemed to understand the communicative approach as consisting of cultivating listening and speaking skills, and thereby discounting the importance of grammar, reading and writing, in spite of acknowledgements by experts that "the more the learner reads and writes, the better their performance" (in Chuenyane, 2008:6). Language learners in school are expected to work out the complex grammatical system by mere exposure to authentic language content, which is not usually the case. The observed lack of learner grammatical sensitivity in the EHL settings may point to the need to implement direct grammar interventions. As in EHL proper, the basis for school language learning ought to be reading and writing. The benefit of reading and writing is that they allow for individual psychological engagement with the content, and thereby add a higher degree of profoundness to the learning experience.

Since some of the learners had enrolled at this school to learn good English, which they expected to acquire from taking EHL, it would arguably have been against their expectations and those

of their parents if teachers communicated with them in a language other than English. Besides, the communicative style discourages the use of any other language than the target language (Cook, 2001:222). Information gaps will always be a challenge for teachers since they require a lot of off-line and on-line planning. It would be easy for a teacher to walk into a classroom with a set book and no lesson plan, and hope to anchor the lesson on spontaneity. If that fails, the teacher is likely to revert to a style that is less stressful, such as the telling style. However, the information gap may not be amenable to use in the context-reduced situations of academic literacy, which require that teachers take more of the leading role. The requirement that learners ought to produce proper English, which seemed to be equated with formal English, was not properly handled. Colloquialism and non-standard English were discouraged without explaining the contextual nature of language use, creating the impression that everyday language and non-standard language are totally undesirable. On the contrary, mastery of everyday language is the building block for the later mastery of other more formal registers.

The concise interactional exchanges between learners and teachers might have facilitated language accuracy and fluency, but they were too occasional to be effective, and involved only a limited number of learners with better-developed communicative skills. The incorporation of preceding utterances was indicative of the presence of mutually comprehensible exchanges between the teachers and the learners. However, it can also be unnatural in spoken language since non-sentence responses are the norm in this kind of language. The teachers controlled discourse initiation. This might have signalled a change of teaching strategy for the teachers, who were faced with a different type of learner whose language proficiency level was not grade-appropriate. When learners are not responsive to the teacher's prompts to communicate, the teacher has to adjust his/her teaching style, which could make a bad teacher out of someone who is otherwise a good teacher.

## 8. Conclusion

From the perspective of the COLT observation model, a communicative classroom would probably have more group work than the one using the telling method, would focus on meaning, and the participants would choose the topics, the texts would be extended, and the language would be authentic (Cook, 1996:126). The EHL settings in the present study were characterised by the use of the telling or listening-based style with no group work, no use of extended written pedagogic texts, no prohibition of the learner's home language, a limited use of information gaps, a lack of sustained speeches involving the learners, reaction to the message in the learners' responses, incorporation of the learners' preceding utterances, discourse initiation by the teacher, and no restriction of the learner to any linguistic form. These settings were therefore clearly communicative in only three of the 12 codes, namely, *relative restriction of linguistic form*, *incorporation of preceding utterance*, and *reaction to code or message*. The *information gap* and *sustained speech* were not employed optimally, while the *target language* was not used in learner-learner interaction. The settings performed particularly poorly in Classroom Activities subcategories, which were all found to have been 'uncommunicative'. The EHL settings were about 25 percent communicatively oriented and when compared to the ESL settings code-to-code, the EHL settings were found to be different in eight codes and similar in four. Both sets of settings were therefore only a third similar.

Following these findings it can be concluded that there is indeed some value to township learners' attending suburban schools where English as a Home Language (EHL) is taught. Even if this school did not offer maximum value in the classroom, it at least had a semblance of orderliness that is necessary for teaching and learning to take place, as opposed to conditions in township schools (cf. Hofmeyr, 2000:5).

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# Students' Comprehension of the representation of African American Vernacular in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

**A B S T R A C T** This article was prompted by observations in tutorial lectures on African American Literature and reports on a subsequent pilot study. It explores students' responses to African American Vernacular (AAV) as used in the novel *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. A questionnaire was used to explore students' comprehension of AAV. The results indicate that although students were confident of their understanding of AAV, most could not correctly translate it into Standard English (SE). The findings have implications for the field of Applied Linguistics, in terms of the way linguistic features affect the reading and teaching of a literary text, and suggests that students will benefit from guidelines for interpreting Walker's representation of AAV.

**Keywords:** African American Literature, African American Vernacular, dialect, Standard English (SE), literary text, reading, teaching

## 1. Introduction

The critically acclaimed novel *The Color Purple* won Alice Walker the Pulitzer Prize. However, Trudier Harris, an African American woman herself, criticised the novel mainly on the basis that it reinforces negative stereotypes in terms of the morality, or lack thereof, of African Americans (Harris, 1984). It is therefore surprising to note the praise with which Harris (1984:156) refers to Walker's use of African American Vernacular (AAV) in the novel.

During English literature tutorial classes at the University of the Free State, discussions on the novel *The Color Purple* revealed the different reactions that students had to the novel. Some found it difficult while others experienced it as stimulating. A number of students also had difficulty understanding certain idiomatic expressions, while others had no difficulty with

these at all. This led to the question of how different students experience the reading of AAV in novels, specifically *The Color Purple* in this case.

This article explores the affects AAV has on readers on a cognitive level, and is aimed at exploring the extent to which students have difficulty in reading and understanding the dialect, as well as identifying factors which may influence this. Its focus is students' comprehension of AAV. Thus, a working assumption is that correct interpretation of AAV contributes to students' understanding of the novel.

The investigation was conducted by means of a questionnaire, which students were required to complete during tutorial classes. Analysing some of the results proved problematic, as some responses were ambiguous and contradictory. However, the findings hold definite implications for the way African American literature is taught. More specifically, it serves as a pilot study for future endeavours, by pointing to specific research areas.

## **2. Research on the Use of Dialect in Texts**

The manifestation and use dialects in written form have been approached from both a literary and linguistic perspective. The former is mainly concerned with thematic issues, especially race relations, as well as using AAV as an effective means of characterisation (Ives, 1958; Minnick, 2001; Wright, 2008). The latter concentrates on its influence on the acquisition of Standard English (SE) and the representation of its phonetic elements in written texts.

According to Griffin (2004), since the Civil Rights and Black Power movements there has been an increase not only in the production, but also the distribution of African American literature. It is also increasingly taught at academic institutions. Thus, research is necessary in order to determine how students receive and understand the literature, in order to teach it more effectively to students less familiar with the dialect.

Research on the use of AAV in African American literature is divergent. Bunton (1990) researched the effect African American literature has on students of differing backgrounds in terms of racial issues. The results were divergent as some texts caused negative racial tensions to surface, while other texts led to positive changes in perspectives and attitudes. A similar study by Walker-Dalhouse (1992) indicated that incorporating African American texts into the reading list of a fifth-grade class allowed the teacher to broach the topic of ethnic differences with students in the class. Walker-Dalhouse (1992) seems to have succeeded to some degree in creating an understanding about ethnic differences among the students. Both studies show that African American texts have a definite impact on readers. These studies are, however, concerned with the content rather than the actual form that AAV takes.

Other studies investigated AAV speakers' performance at school as they learn SE as a second dialect. These studies look at factors such as phonemic awareness and spelling (Apel, Bahr, Bryant, Kohler, Silliman & Wilkenson, 2007), and differences between the dialects which affect the acquisition of SE phonology (Bryant, Charko, Pearson & Velleman, 2009). Stockman (2010) also investigated the increase in sensitivity with which language and cultural differences are being approached in schools, especially with regard to support for African American students' language learning needs.

Many linguists have also concerned themselves with the written presentation of dialect in various texts, such as the studies by Macaulay (1991) in transcribing “normal discourse” into written language, Preston (1982) concerning dialect in folklore, and Cohen (2007) with regard to dialect in poetry. These studies however, focus on the correct method for transcribing dialect and vernacular in specific types of texts and are thus not directly related to its use in literature and how it affects the reader. .

Burkette (2001) and Barry (2001), however, researched the degree to which AAV is presented accurately and consistently in novels. Barry (2001) analysed the use of AAV in the works of Zora Neale Hursten, determining the degree to which the use of AAV is consistent and authentic. Burkette (2001) measured the accuracy of employing dialect in characterisation using quantitative linguistics. Their results proved that from a linguistic point of view dialect can be presented accurately in literature, but this cannot be generalized to all texts containing AAV and also do not explore the extent to which readers understand it.

As mentioned before, the use of dialect has been discussed in detail by Dennis Preston (1982) where he severely criticises the use of dialect in transcribing folklore. Although folklore and fiction are two different fields with different purposes in using dialect, Preston claims that writing in dialect has a negative impact on the reader in terms of assumptions made about the characters with regard to education and economic status (Preston, 1985:336). He states that “the negative responses are attached to the spellings themselves and not to the pronunciations represented. Totally unwarranted demotions of social status are brought about by honest attempts to imitate in writing something of the impression created by rapid, casual speech.” (Preston, 1985:336). Elizabeth Fine (1983) provides a critical view of Preston’s initial claims in her article *In Defense of Literary Dialect: A Response to Dennis R. Preston*. She states that even if the use of writing in dialect does result in readers assuming that the characters are of a lower status than themselves, this does not necessarily indicate negative attitude towards characters. Preston goes further in saying, “Writing is a poor, secondary system when compared to speech. No tone or quality of voice can be represented; no helpful and delightful accompanying body language is seen; and no dramatic or embarrassing pauses or rapid tempo can be provided.” (1982:304). Fine however, counters by saying that on the contrary, it is able “to capture the rhythms, tones, and dialects of a variety of speaker” to great effect and proceeds to name just a few authors who succeeded in doing just that (Fine, 1983:324). Preston (1983) responds by saying his article was concerned with folklore and not creative writing, and presents the results of a research project which indicates that using dialect in writing does cause the reader to make assumptions about the characters. Preston continues to state that he is opposed to the use of respellings and nonstandard forms of words in writing because it often causes confusion for the reader in interpreting what is said.

Although this article deals with fiction rather than folklore, it supports Preston’s claims that transcribing dialect in writing can lead to erroneous interpretations on the reader’s part. As far as exploring the cognitive responses of the reader is concerned, Lang’s (2009) research on the novel *Small Island*, by Andrea Levy, is particularly relevant to this study. Lang uses “academically untrained” readers for her analyses, seeking to “disentangle real readers from

ideal readers” (Lang, 2009:125, 126). The study shows that “real” readers experienced the text with both pleasure and difficulty due to specific literary features, but mentions briefly the difficulty some readers had in interpreting the dialect. This paper then aims to investigate the difficulty student’s encounter when reading AAV in *The Color Purple*.

### 3. Methodology

This study proposes to explore the factors which influence the experience of AAV in literature by means of a qualitative pilot study. The research took the form of a questionnaire (see Appendix A.) given to second year English Literature students at the University of the Free State. *The Color Purple* was one of their prescribed texts. There were no scheduled tutorials on *The Color Purple* due to time constraints, but tutors were asked to briefly discuss certain thematic aspects of the novel in one tutorial, although this did not include the use of AAV in the novels. Lectures did include some information on the use of AAV as a means of characterisation, but did not deal directly with the interpretation or understanding of AAV.

Twenty-eight questionnaires were completed anonymously and handed in. Information from the tutors after the questionnaires had been completed revealed that the vast majority of students were English Second Language speakers, most of whose mother tongue was Afrikaans although a few students had an African language as their first language. The remaining minority had English as their mother tongue. Future research should investigate whether the student’s proficiency in English plays a role in their understanding of AAV. Their competence as literature students was all approximately on the same standard and they were between the ages of 18 and 21 with two exceptions. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions and an extract from the novel. Six of the questions consisted of two parts, where the students were first asked a closed ended question and then asked to explain the reasons for their answer as an open ended question. The remaining two questions required the students to read an extract from the novel and to first translate the underlined section from AAV into SE. Secondly, the students were asked to discuss whether or not they found this specific extract difficult to understand and to indicate an example in the section that was problematic. The answers to the open ended questions were then analysed by identifying the patterns and irregularities and categorising them (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:205).

### 4. Analysis and Discussion of Data

The results of the closed ended questions are provided in the tables below with a discussion of their implications.

Categorisation of Questionnaire:

| Question 1.                                |    |
|--|----|
| Able to spell out                          | 14 |
| Had Difficulty Understanding               | 1  |
| Had Some Difficulty, but Mostly Understood | 13 |

| <b>Question 2.</b>            |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Understood All                | 14 |
| Difficulty Understanding Some | 10 |
| Other                         | 4  |

| <b>Question 3.</b>    |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Correct Translation   | 12 |
| Incorrect Translation | 16 |

*Question 1.*

Question 1 explored the cognitive level in terms of the difficulty presented by the actual grammar and spelling. This question was prompted since some students indicated in the tutorial that they had no trouble reading the text and were actually able to “hear” the characters speaking in their minds. Other students said that they found it difficult to read and had to concentrate on each word, phrase and sentence in order to make sense of the story. Most students claimed they either understood it easily or that they found it difficult initially, but became accustomed to it after a while. A few students made comments such as, “The spelling made it better to ‘hear’. One gets more intrigued into the story. Picturing and hearing the events.” (retained students’ grammatical errors) This would indicate that this method of writing enhances the reading experience.

On the other hand, there were some students who found that although they could “figure out” what was going on, it did not necessarily make the reading experience better. For example: “Yes the language was clear, but I found difficulty understanding some of the images.” This seems to indicate that although students were generally able to decipher the grammar and spelling, this does not necessarily mean that they correctly understood the event. Unique aspects of AAV, such as idiomatic expressions, were particularly problematic. Question 2 and 3 pertain more directly to this and supports this student’s comment.

*Question 2.*

Question 2 is focused on ascertaining whether or not students actually understand AAV in the novel, as opposed to their perception or belief that they understood it. They were asked to read the extract provided and comment on the manner in which language distorted the meaning. Half of the students claimed they understood the language without any problems, however their answers to question 3 casts doubt on this confidence. Also, five of the fourteen students, who stated they understood the extract without any problems, incorrectly translated the underlined section. This seems to indicate that even though many students claim they understood the text, few in fact did. The only two students from this category who offered examples of what they found difficult in the extract provided the same piece. The one providing, “Nettie she finally see the light of day, clear. Our new mammy she it too. She in her room crying. Nettie tend to first one, then the other.” while the other student provided the sentence,

“Nettie tend to first one, then the other.” A third student who provided this as an example fell into the category of students who had difficulty understanding the language. This suggests that even those students who generally understood the language had some difficulty. The way the action is portrayed through language makes it ambiguous and students seem unsure of what is really occurring.

The ten students who stated that they understood the extract, although with difficulty, mostly commented that it took a great deal of concentration and rereading to understand what was happening. Few of these students provided examples from the extract they found difficult to understand. One student stated that the first paragraph was hard to understand. This paragraph narrates the sexual abuse the main character suffers. Another student indicated that she was shocked by the fact that such a subject matter was narrated. This could indicate that it is both the difficulty in reading AAV and the unpleasant subject matter which renders the reading of the novel problematic. So not only is the actual use of AAV difficult to decipher for students, the issues Walker present to the reader intensifies the difficulty of the reading process. As stated above, one student from this category mentioned the section, “Nettie she finally see the light of day, clear. Our new mammy she see it too. She in her room crying. Nettie tend to first one.” Two other students from this group also refer to this paragraph as problematic. One student attempted to explain why this paragraph was hard to understand, “One area where I struggled and had to refer to again, however, was in the second paragraph where the ideas were put into separate sentences. Made it difficult to find a flow in the narrative.” Thus students seem to find it difficult to understand the sentence fragments, a technical means by which Walker presents AAV, and have trouble interpreting what the language implies. Two other problem areas in the extract pointed out by a student were, “Don’t know nothing but what you tell her.” and “And she big already.” In the tutorial classes, a number of students had mentioned the latter expression, used to indicate a woman was pregnant, as a phrase they had difficulty interpreting.

The four responses classed under “other” for question 2 did not give direct answers to the question, yet provide noteworthy responses. One student explained that the language in this extract, as in most of the novel, reveals a child who does not completely understand what is happening to her, which is reflected in the ambiguity of the manner in which she writes about the situation. The other three answers merely provided examples from the extract they found difficult to understand. Two of these answers are related, one having trouble with the section, “She ain’t fresh tho, but I specs you know that. She spoiled. Twice.”, and the other providing the sentence, “I got a fresh one in there myself and she sick all the time.” This specific section narrates how her father is trying to persuade Mr.----- to marry Celie instead of Nettie. He is referring to the fact that although Celie is no longer a virgin, she may still make a good wife. The fourth answer in this category again stated they had difficulty in understanding the phrase, “She big already.” This was the only answer that offered an explanation of what the section they struggled with actually meant. It is unclear whether the other students understood the pieces they had difficulty with, but further research should be done to clarify this.

### *Question 3.*

Question 3 provided significant results since twelve students translated it correctly, while the remaining students failed to do so. Nine of the twelve students who correctly translated the underlined section stated in the previous question that they had no difficulty in understanding

the text, while one student stated they had some difficulty in understanding, and the other two did not offer an answer but merely provided an example from the text they had difficulty with. Significantly, six of the sixteen students who translated the section incorrectly had claimed in the previous question that they had no difficulty in understanding the text. Two of the remaining ten fell into the 'other' category; while the remaining eight had answered that they had had difficulty in understanding the use of AAV.

The section the students were asked to translate from AAV into SE was,

“Mr.----- say, Well Sir, I sure hope you done change your mind.

He say, Naw, Can't say I is.”

This chapter deals with Mr.----- who is coming to ask for Nettie's hand in marriage a second time, and Alfonso, their father, is yet again refusing to allow the marriage. The correct translation would then be,

“Mr. ----- said, ‘Well Sir, I hope that you have changed your mind.’

He replied, ‘No, I can't say that I have.’”

As already indicated above, twelve of the twenty-eight students translated it correctly. Note however, that a 'correct' translation does not mean that it was necessarily accurate in terms of grammar, but they 'correctly' interpreted that Mr.----- was asking Alfonso if he had changed his mind, Alfonso then replying in the negative. There was only one slight variation in terms of a 'correct' translation as just explained, where the student translated the section as,

“Mr.----- said, ‘Well Sir, I really hope you will change your mind.’

He said, ‘No, I can't say I will.’”

The main error here is that it is translated into the future tense, where the text is in the past tense.

There was a definite pattern in terms of the way the remaining sixteen students 'incorrectly' interpreted it. Five students translated it as, “Well Sir, I sure hope you are done changing you mind.” It seems that the use of “done”, which indicates that he “has” changed his mind, was taken quite literally. Seven other students alternatively interpreted it as, “Well Sir, I sure hope that you do not change your mind.” A quarter of the students had interpreted it to mean something quite different from the intended meaning, indicating a complete misunderstanding of the actual conversation taking place. At least three of them had claimed in the previous question that they had no problem in understanding the text. The remaining four 'incorrect' translations were variations of the above, with one student simply stating they do not understand the underlined sentence and one translating only the second sentence and doing so incorrectly. The other two students provided the following answers,

“Mr.----- said, ‘Well Sir, I hope you have not gone and changed your mind.

He said, ‘No, can't say I have.’”

“I hope you will not change your mind. He: No, I can't say that I am.”

The first two interpretations are quite the opposite of the intended meaning. It could be seen as a positive thing that only two out of the twenty-eight students had in fact translated it as quite

the opposite, but it is significant that sixteen out of the twenty-eight had in fact misunderstood the meaning in some way. One possible explanation for this is that you need to have read the preceding chapters to understand the interaction between the two men, and it became apparent after the study that although the students had discussed the novel in class, some of the students had not actually read the novel. As the questionnaires were anonymous, there was no way to determine exactly which students had or had not read the novel, although future research should take this factor into account as this could possibly account for the misunderstanding of the section. The results to this question do seem to indicate however, that more than half of the students had some difficulty in interpreting the text.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker uses AAV effectively, as even one of its staunchest critics (Harris, 1984) have commented. The question has to be asked though, whether all readers understand AAV. The results of this study showed that first of all, the majority of students found it challenging to read AAV. While approximately half the students had no real difficulty in 'hearing' the language as they read, the other half had to put effort into understanding the unusual use of language. The difference in the number of students who claimed to understand the text and the number of students who were actually able to 'correctly' translate the indicated section seems to show that students do not completely understand the text. It is uncertain though, to what extent the students misunderstood the text, and what the main causes were. Therefore, the findings hold implications for the teaching of African American Literature, by indicating the importance of testing whether students interpret AAV correctly and to what extent this distorts their understanding of the novel as a whole. Research (Burkette, 2001 & Barry, 2001) has shown that although AAV can be accurately presented in literature, there is no standardised method of doing so since the writing of AAV is dependent on the author. However, in teaching novels by Walker, guidelines for correctly translating AAV in her works could be developed and made available to students to aid their interpretation and understanding of the use of AAV, and thus the novel.

Further research should be done to test the accuracy of these findings. Firstly, research should be done in terms of the cognitive processes involved in understanding AAV. There are various factors that may allow certain students to 'hear' the language in their minds while they read it, while others find it difficult. The home language of the reader, as well as exposure to other forms of AAV, for example in television programs and movies, could be contributing factors. If exposure to AAV in the media enhances understanding of the text, then a screening of the movie may improve students' interpretation of the dialect. Secondly, it should be investigated whether the subject matter, that of sexual abuse, could contribute to reading difficulty. Lastly, the specific aspects of AAV that students find problematic, such as the sentence fragments and idiomatic expressions, need to be identified. This could provide the necessary information for designing guidelines for the interpretation of AAV by students of literature. This study has provided preliminary information with regard to the experiences of readers with the use of AAV in literature. However, more research is needed to establish a clearer picture of the factors involved, how they play a role in the reading process and what would be the most effective means of teaching AAV in literature.

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#### **Appendix A.** (Revised Version of Questionnaire)

##### The Color Purple

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Home language: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

How much of the novel have you read? A) nothing, B) half, C) more than half, D) the entire novel: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Were you able to spell the words out phonetically (could you hear the language in your head as it would be spoken), or did you have difficulty understanding the spelling and grammar:

Could "Hear" it \_\_\_\_\_ Much Difficulty \_\_\_\_\_ Some difficulty \_\_\_\_\_

2. Read the attached extract and comment on the manner in which the language presents the content. In other words, did you understand what exactly was happening when you read it the first time, or did the language obscure the meaning:

Understood Clearly \_\_\_\_\_ Meaning was Unclear \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

If *the meaning was unclear*, give an example from the text that you found difficult to read/understand:

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If *other*, explain:

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3. Re-write the underlined section in the extract in Standard English:

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**Extract:**

Dear God,

I ast him to take me instead of Nettie while our new mammy sick. But he just ast me what I'm talking bout. I tell him I can fix myself up for him. I duck into my room and come out wearing horsehair, feathers, and a pair of our new mammy high heel shoes. He beat me for dressing trampy but he do it to me anyway.

Mr.----- come that evening. I'm in the bed crying. Nettie she finally see the light of day, clear. Our new mammy she see it too. She in her room crying. Nettie tend to first one, then the other. She so scared she go out doors and vomit. But not out front where the mens is.

Mr.----- say, Well Sir, I sure hope you done change your mind.

He say, Naw, Can't say I is.

Mr.----- say, Well, you know, my poor little ones sure could use a mother.

Well, he say, real slow, I can't let you have Nettie. She too young. Don't know nothing but what you tell her. Sides, I want her to git some more schooling. Make a schoolteacher out of her. But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first. She ain't fresh tho, but I specs you know that. She spoiled. Twice. But you don't need a fresh woman no how. I got a fresh one in there myself and she sick all the time. He spit, over the railing. The children git on her nerve, she not much of a cook. And she big already.



# Eating soup with a fork – why the EFAL syllabus cannot promote learning across the curriculum

**A B S T R A C T** Dismal literacy figures of South African learners, on the one hand, and poor matriculation results of public school learners who still prefer English as a medium of instruction, raise the question whether the current second language curriculum has failed to promote academic literacy and additive bilingualism. The authors argue that more time spent in the EFAL classroom will not necessarily mean that the objectives as envisaged by the curriculum will be attained. In order for academic literacy to be improved, the distinction between a language of learning and a language as subject matter should be acknowledged. In lieu of this distinction, a new English curriculum should be introduced from Grade 1-12 in all South African schools where English is used as the medium of instruction. The authors propose the implementation of an adjunct CBI and CLIL syllabus where language development and content development are not regarded in isolation and where the focus is on the intersection of language, content and thinking objectives.

**Keywords:** English medium of instruction; CLIL; Content and language integrated learning; CBI; Content based instruction; English First Additional Language; EFAL

## 1. Problem statement

Although South Africa has a multilingual language policy where different models of bilingual and dual medium instruction can be identified (Macdonald, 2002), the educational situation displays many characteristics of an immersion program similar to the Hong Kong medium of instruction programme during the late 1990s. Some of these are:

- South African learners are assumed to already have a strong command of their second language (L2) when they enter Grade 4. Learners are thus expected to learn through their

second language without any focused scaffolding or additional language lessons at the time of their transition in Grade 4.

- The L2 is spoken in the classroom only. Especially in lower socio-economic environments learners do not speak the language outside of the classroom.

This state of affairs is much maligned by the advocates for mother tongue education, who argue that second language medium of instruction is the reason for the majority of second language learners' poor academic achievements, lack of functional literacy, high drop-out numbers and a general loss of cultural pride (Langhan, 1993; Burkett, 2001; De Varennes, 2009). Researchers maintain that education in one's own language is desirable not only for effective education at least in the first seven years of school, but also for retaining cultural diversity (Heugh, 2002; Bedford, 2007; De Varennes, 2009). In spite of this, many parents and learners prefer English as a medium of instruction, because English as the language of commerce and trade, government and law, is seen as a solution to the poverty problem (Kgosana, 2006; Saunders, 2009).

The highest enrolment for any subject in the curriculum is, therefore, English as a First Additional Language. Since most South African learners "undergo the majority of their schooling, learning and being assessed in English, as their second language" (DoE, 2009:14). English has become the common denominator in multicultural classrooms within the diverse South African society and plays an increasingly more important role in education in this country (Burkett *et al*, 2001).

In acknowledgement of the importance of proficiency in English as the language of learning, the Task Team for the review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (2009:42) recommends that, English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) and Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) needs greater specification in the curriculum, with attention paid to preparation for the use of English across the curriculum. In view of this argument, more time should be made available in preparing learners for English medium of instruction and the use of English across the curriculum.

In this article the authors argue that:

1. the distinction between a language of learning and teaching and a language as subject matter should be acknowledged;
2. more time spent in the EFAL classroom will not necessarily mean that the academic literacy objectives as envisaged by the NCS will be attained;
3. the EFAL syllabus, which focuses on the teaching of English as a subject, may not be suitable for promoting academic literacy in the language of learning; and
4. in lieu of the distinction between a language of learning and teaching and a language taught as a subject, a new English medium of instruction curriculum, adjunct to the present FAL and Home Language curriculum and focused on the attainment of academic literacy in the language of learning, should be introduced from Grade 1-12 in all South African schools where English is used as the medium of instruction.

The following questions are addressed in this article:

- Why is the EFAL syllabus not sufficient for promoting the level of academic literacy required for learning across the curriculum?
- What alternative curriculum should/could be implemented?

- What are the objectives of an adjunct English medium of instruction curriculum?
- How should this new curriculum be implemented?

## **2. Why the current EFAL curriculum is failing to promote adequate academic literacy for learning across the curriculum**

The South African National Curriculum Statement envisages that objectives in the English class (First Additional Language) 'should provide for levels of language proficiency that meet the threshold level necessary for effective learning across the curriculum' (DoE, 2003b:11). These objectives include the abstract cognitive academic language skills required for thinking and learning. The NCS furthermore states that:

the Languages Subject underlies all other Subjects, since language is the medium through which all teaching, learning and assessment takes place. Thus without language no other Subject could exist. The language teacher has an important responsibility to ensure that languages are fully utilised across the curriculum. Sufficient time and attention need to be given to the languages of learning and teaching for all other Subjects (DoE, 2003a:19).

This excerpt raises the following questions:

- What is the syllabus content of EFAL and will this provide sufficient opportunity for teaching and learning the academic skills required for learning across the curriculum?
- Is it the responsibility of the language teacher alone to ensure that the language of learning is taught across the curriculum?
- How much time is 'sufficient' for attaining language skills required for academic learning?

### *2.1 EFAL curriculum content*

The current South African National Curriculum Statement claims that the Language curriculum provides strong enough support that 'by the end of Grade 9, these learners should be able to use their Home and First Additional Languages effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes, including learning' (DoE, 2003a:20). However, it is clear that a clear distinction between learning a language as a subject and using language as a tool for learning. Quane and Glanz (2005) call neither the current NCS nor the revised Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement CAPS (DoE, 2010:6) makes this distinction "critical". The only indication of such a distinction can be seen in the NCS's exclusion of learning outcome five (Thinking and Reasoning) from the Second Additional Language syllabus. Presumably, a person who learns a language for communicative purposes does not need to use language to think and reason, and access, process and use information for learning (DoE, 2003a:21-22).

Neither the NCS or CAPS document is clear on how a language for learning and teaching, as opposed to learning a language for general purposes, may differ in the teaching methodology and content. This is illustrated by the statements that in 'practice it is not necessary to have a rigid division between the teaching of Home and Additional Languages', and that the 'teaching and learning of Home Languages and Additional Languages is not different in approach or methodology' (DoE, 2003a:20). This implies that the content of the FAL syllabus is similar to that of the Home Language in terms of the focus on creative writing, the study of literature, and the study of grammar instead of equipping learners with academic literacy skills.

According to the objectives for FAL learning in the NCS (2003b) and the new CAPS document (2010), the FAL syllabus (should) “provide for levels of language proficiency that meet the threshold levels necessary for effective learning across the curriculum” (DoE, 2010:6). This includes the abstract, cognitive academic language skills required for thinking and learning. A careful analysis of the approaches to teaching, however, proves that the focus is on the attainment of general language skills for social purposes as opposed to acquiring academic literacy skills for learning across the curriculum.

As far as learning across the curriculum is concerned, the NCS explains how teachers should link language teaching with themes and topics derived from the other subjects, yet no prescribed body of knowledge exists for the Language Subjects. This means that teachers do not have a coherent plan for teaching the academic literacy skills across the curriculum and may randomly select themes for attaining the language learning objectives.

An excerpt from a typical Learning Programme for Grade 8 learners of EFAL (Future Entrepreneurs, 2007) contains the following topics:

| <b>LO</b><br><b>AS</b>  | <b>Title/Objective (Skills/Knowledge/Values)</b>   |
|---|--|
| <u><b>Listening</b></u><br>8.1.2(a)<br>8.1.4<br>8.2.3(a)  | <b>Listening to and giving directions</b><br>Communicate interpersonally and observe and discuss communication |
| <u><b>Writing</b></u><br>8.4.2<br>8.4.4(h)  | <b>Creating a map</b><br>Design a basic map of a specific area   |
| <u><b>Speaking</b></u><br>8.2.2<br>8.5.1(f)   | <b>Having a discussion</b><br>Discuss relevant social and environmental issues                                 |
| <u><b>Reading and viewing</b></u><br><u><b>Thinking and Reasoning</b></u><br>8.3.3<br>8.3.4(a), (b), (c), (d)<br>8.5.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f)<br>8.5.2(a), (b)<br>8.6.1(c) | <b>Reading and viewing</b><br>Consider a text in depth   |
| <u><b>Grammar and Structures</b></u><br>8.6.2(a)  | <b>Parts of speech</b><br>Study information and do exercises involving parts of speech                         |
| <u><b>Writing</b></u><br>8.4.2<br>8.4.4(b)  | <b>Travel</b><br>Create an advertising poster and write a prose report   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b><u>Reading</u></b><br/>8.3.4 (c)</p>   | <p><b>Reading a weather report</b><br/>Interpret a weather report<br/>Draw conclusions</p>          |
| <p><b><u>Listening</u></b><br/>8.1.2(a)</p>  | <p><b>Listening to a weather report</b><br/>Obtain information by listening to a weather report</p> |
| <p><b><u>Grammar and Structures</u></b><br/>8.6.2(a), (b), (c), (e)</p>                  | <p><b>Clauses</b><br/>Study information on clauses Complete language exercises</p>                  |
| <p><b><u>Speaking</u></b><br/>8.2.2 8.2.3</p>  | <p><b>What worries you?</b><br/>Discussion, survey and graph to represent results</p>               |
| <p><b><u>Listening and Speaking</u></b><br/>8.1.2<br/>8.2.3<br/>8.3.1<br/>8.6.4</p>      | <p><b>Thando's been arrested</b><br/>Listening to and taking part in a conversation</p>             |
| <p><b><u>Reading</u></b><br/>8.3.1<br/>8.3.2<br/>8.4.6<br/>8.4.7<br/>8.4.8<br/>8.6.9</p> | <p><b>Overcrowding</b><br/>Reading, word games, and comprehension</p>                               |
| <p><b><u>Writing</u></b><br/>8.3.1<br/>8.4.1<br/>8.6.6 (a) – (d)</p>                     | <p><b>Dear Mary</b><br/>Asking for advice</p>   |
| <p><b><u>Grammar and Structures</u></b><br/>8.6.2</p>                                    | <p><b>Any one or a special one</b><br/>a, an, the – determiners</p>                                 |
| <p><b><u>Reading: Speaking</u></b><br/>8.3.1<br/>8.3.2<br/>8.6.2<br/>8.6.3<br/>8.6.9</p> | <p><b>Plagues and diseases</b><br/>reading, translating, determiners and prepositions</p>           |
| <p><b><u>Speaking</u></b><br/>8.1.2<br/>8.2.3<br/>8.3.2<br/>8.6.6<br/>(a) – (d)</p>      | <p><b>All fall down!</b><br/>Talking about things, asking and responding to questions</p>           |

An excerpt from a Learning Programme for Grade 10 EFAL learners for one year (Reyneke, 2008) shows themes such as *Celebrities; Advertising; Soccer 2010; Global warming; Physical and Spiritual Health;* and *The World's Richest People*. Learning activities for the cycle based on "Celebrities" include the following: Use informal speech; Start a vocabulary list; Study a comprehension passage and answer questions; Write a Précis; Form questions, negatives and tag questions; Conduct an interview; Write a magazine article; Analyse poem(s) and answer questions.

An analysis of this Learning Programme shows that the themes and activities selected reflect a general purpose language learning approach, aimed at enabling the learner to communicate effectively in a variety of situations. It is also clear that, in spite of the fact that the prescriptions of the NCS are followed regarding Learning Objectives and Assessment Standards, the themes and topics and subsequent language skills developed focus little on the acquisition of academic skills across the curriculum. As in the NCS, the compilers of these Learning Programmes seem to believe that a general knowledge of the language and a wide range of randomly selected topics that create a certain context for learning will enable a learner to function effectively when using the language as a tool for learning.

In contrast with this general purposes approach for language learning, which will allow learners to use English for a variety of purposes as prescribed by the NCS, it is now believed that the language skills that students need for social interaction with their peers and teachers in the English subject class are different from those needed to function in a formal academic language class (Short, 2002). The differences include not only specialised vocabulary, but also special forms of expression related to specific academic domains. Language learning for academic purposes, therefore, cannot take place in isolation, as is the case when it is taught as an academic subject. Consequently, even though second language children may be attending FAL classes, many researchers agree that general purpose language instruction that is taught in isolation of the rest of the school curriculum will not necessarily be transferred or be useful for coping with academic instruction (Genesee, 1995; Johns, 1997; Grabe and Stoller, 1997; Eskey, 1997). It is now generally recognised that when a language has to be used for learning across the curriculum, academic literacy skills will be acquired more effectively when the language is learned in conjunction with meaningful content and purposive communication, and where the language is not the object or purpose of the learning but only the vehicle of instruction.

## *2.2 Time allocated for acquiring the language of learning*

Although the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement makes it clear that "more time needs to be made available in preparing learners for English medium of instruction, and the use of English across the curriculum" (DoE, 2009:42) the question is, how much time is sufficient for teaching and learning language for all other Subjects? Also, would extra time spent in the EFAL classroom result in more effective learning across the curriculum?

Cummins (1995) maintains that a child can acquire basic interpersonal skills within two years, yet it may take five to seven years to acquire academic literacy. But, taught for only seven hours per week, during which time the content of English as a subject may be the focus, the time spent and skills acquired in the English First Additional Language class are not sufficient to

enable second language speakers to meet required standards of academic reading and writing skills in the content areas (Hugo, 2008).

It is generally accepted that teachers of English 'have the leading role in providing learners with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to read, write, speak and listen effectively' (Goodwyn & Findlay, 2003:27). Both the NCS (DoE, 2003a:21) and CAPS document make it clear that language teachers should enable learners to "study the language skills required for academic learning across the curriculum" (DoE, 2010:7).

However, Fillmore and Snow (2000), Klaassen, (2002:19) and Uys *et al.* (2007) maintain that a two-fold approach, where both the English language teacher and the subject teacher are active agents for promoting learners' language proficiency while they are learning subject content, is much more effective for acquiring academic literacy.

Academic literacy can only be promoted once all content teachers understand how learning tasks, content and language interact, and 'how knowledge of one of the three knowledge bases required for academic literacy implies and necessitates knowledge of another base' (Short, 2002:14). How a learning task is to be accomplished requires knowledge, not only of the procedures involved in the task itself, but also of the (subject) content and the formal and functional characteristics of language, which can vary from one context to another. Because knowledge bases are interdependent, the content teacher's responsibility is not only the promotion of subject knowledge, but also to help learners acquire semantic, syntactic and pragmatic knowledge about how English is used in the specific subject area (Schleppegrell *et al.*, 2004).

Anstrom (1999:1), Al-Ansari (2000:194) and Short (2002:18) claim that learners' probability of attaining academic literacy is much higher if subject teachers teach the four language skills and consciously promote the development of functional language skills in the content classroom. Academic literacy entails more than the conventional notion of literacy as the ability to read and write. It requires the ability to understand how language construes meanings in content-area texts and how meanings and concepts are realised in language (Schleppegrell *et al.*, 2004). Science texts, for example:

unlike the familiar content and predictable story grammar of children's literature, contains unfamiliar content and text structures, heavy conceptual demands, and unique vocabulary. The purpose of scientific text is to assist uninformed and misinformed readers to construct meaning about specific science ideas using an expository approach, words (concept labels) with specific meanings, complex and interconnected sentences, and specific text structures (description, collection, compare/contrast, problem/solution, causation) Many teachers fail to recognize the unique differences between narrative and expository text and cling to the traditional notions that meaning resides solely in the text and that readers simply extract the meaning. They unknowingly design instruction involving science as if science texts were narrative rather than expository and as if reading was a meaning- taking process rather than a meaning-making process (Yore *et al.*, 1997).

Al-Ansari (2000:175) states that 'more hours spent on English medium of instruction in content subjects may be more beneficial than hours spent on formal language instruction in the English subject class'.

### **3. What additional English curriculum should be implemented?**

In contrast to the EFAL syllabus that is currently being used in South African schools, the authors argue for an English medium of instruction syllabus that focuses on the acquisition of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic knowledge about how English is used in specific subject areas, and the development of academic literacy. Such a syllabus will focus on English as a tool for teaching and learning. It will be functional in the sense that it will concentrate on what is required to function in academic classes and it will become increasingly complicated as the child's cognitive abilities develop and academic demands increase.

For this purpose, a combination of the Content Based Instruction (CBI) model used in English language teaching curriculum design in America and the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes currently employed in Europe, is well-suited. Content Based Instruction makes use of instructional materials, learning tasks, and classroom techniques from academic content areas as the vehicle for developing language, content, cognitive and study skills. The target language is used as the medium of instruction. In this approach students learn a variety of language skills which prepare them for the range of academic tasks they will encounter (Grabe & Stoller, 1997:19; Colombo & Furbush, 2009:76). Within CBI there are four models for implementing content and language integrated learning of which the adjunct model is appropriate for the South African context, as it implies a two-fold approach involving both language teachers and content teachers. This means that the content in the EFAL class will be taken from the learners' school subjects and that the subject teacher is trained to deliver language sensitive content instruction (Sheppard, 1997:23). Similarly, the CLIL programme fuses both content and language learning. Based on the constructivist theory emphasising learner activity, learner autonomy and task involvement the CLIL model for second language medium of instruction is a highly appropriate method to achieve academic literacy in a second language (Eurydice, 2006:2; European Commission, 2003). Contrary to current medium of instruction practice in South Africa that displays characteristics of an immersion programme and which subsequently results in subtractive bilingualism (Du Plessis and Louw, 2008), the CLIL curriculum respects the role of the Mother Tongue in second language acquisition. It acknowledges and values transferable language skills brought to the second language classroom and is, therefore, considered an appropriate method to achieve additive bi- and/or multilingualism and to raise educational standards (Coyle, 2006:7; Colombo & Furbush, 2009:xv).

While the CLIL programme promotes a gradual and cautious switch to the L2 and provides a transparent and planned approach to language and content, it creates a large zone of proximal development and recognises the need for significant and elaborate scaffolding to ensure successful learning. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for 'problem-solving, risk-taking, confidence-building, communication skills, extending vocabulary, self-expression and spontaneous talk' (Coyle, 2006:7). In CLIL the L2 is taught as a medium and not as a goal, analytical and hypothesising skills are developed, learning techniques and study skills are taught, a more favourable environment for learner autonomy is provided, and cognitive development is promoted (Eurydice, 2006:2; European Commission, 2003).

#### **4. A model for the development of a content and language integrated curriculum (CLIC)**

The outcome of this model is the specific academic literacy for learning across the curriculum in different subject areas. Short (2002) defines academic literacy for learning across the curriculum as consisting of three knowledge bases:

- knowledge of the subject content;
- knowledge of how the learning task is to be accomplished; and
- knowledge of the language required to understand the content and complete the task at hand.

The challenge of developing a curriculum that is fully integrative in content and language cannot be accomplished by English language teachers working alone. It calls for the involvement of content teachers (Genesee, 1995). In the proposed curriculum it will thus be possible for subject teachers and academic language teachers to work together on the development of a learning programme that is suitable for acquiring academic literacy. Marland (2001:1) asserts that the contextual teaching of language in the different subject courses strongly extends the learners' knowledge and ability to use language effectively in all aspects of their lives

The language teacher teaching the adjunct model and the subject teacher will have the same learning objectives in mind and will both be working on different levels to attain these. The subject teacher will supply the topic and subject content that needs to be understood, simultaneously focussing on the academic literacy language skills identified for mastering the task and communicating the knowledge in a coherent and cohesive way. This means that these teachers form a partnership to develop the academic learning through medium of English while the EFAL teacher will focus on the teaching of English for a variety of communicative purposes.

The CLIC (Content and Language in the Classroom) curriculum proposed in Figure 1 is based on the following theories:

1. Learners require specific academic language skills and content knowledge to function in academic classes. These skills may differ from subject to subject.
2. The integration of language and subject matter learning supports the development of important subject matter skills (Lamsfuß-Schenk, 2002).
3. English as a medium of instruction is a tool for learning and teaching and is not learned as a goal but as a vehicle for learning (Eskey, 1997).
4. There should be a gradual introduction of the L2. The CLIC curriculum should be introduced gradually from Gr 1-12 and become increasingly complicated as the child's cognitive abilities develop and academic demands increase.
5. The appreciation and reinforcement of both L1 and the medium of instruction have a complimentary effect on the learners' cognitive and social development (Du Plessis and Louw, 2008:54).
6. L1 proficiency has to be maintained while acquiring the L2. The adjunct model embraces focused, formal Mother Tongue instruction based on a traditional language syllabus as a means for learners to attain reading and writing skills.
7. Multilingualism should be promoted. The CLIC curriculum operates separately from the Language Curricula. Learners are encouraged to learn a first and second additional language. In order to develop language proficiency in English for a variety of purposes, the EFAL course runs alongside (adjunct to) the CLIC curriculum. A second additional language may be

introduced in Grade 7 and learners can elect to take this as a subject after Grade 9. Learners may also choose to take a different language as an elective in Grade 10, depending on what the school offers. These languages are taught according to a traditional language acquisition and appreciation syllabus e.g. the teaching of communicative skills (BICS), literature, grammar of the language, creative writing, and the culture of the target language.

|         | LANGUAGE                           | SYLLABUS  | SUGGESTED TIME ALLOCATED    |
|---------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Grade 0 | MOTHER TONGUE                      | Receptive skills<br>Conceptualisation<br>Basic Literacy                                       | 2-3 hours per day           |
| Grade 1 | MOTHER TONGUE                      | Basic Literacy: Reading in the Mother Tongue  | 2-3 hours per day           |
|         | ENGLISH                            | Receptive skills<br>Total Physical Response syllabus  | 30 minutes per day          |
| Grade 2 | MOTHER TONGUE                      | Basic Literacy: Reading and Writing<br>Appreciation of rhymes                                 | 2 hours per day             |
|         | ENGLISH                            | Total Physical Response<br>(School related Intercommunicative skills)                         | 30 minutes - 1 hour per day |
| Grade 3 | MOTHER TONGUE                      | Literacy  | 2 hours per day             |
|         | ENGLISH                            | Transfer of basic literacy skills<br>Conceptualisation of selected subject content            | 2 hours per day             |
| Grade 4 | MOTHER TONGUE                      | Traditional Mother Tongue syllabus  | 1 hour per day              |
|         | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION | Content Based syllabus<br>Basic academic Literacy   | 90 minutes per day          |
|         | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM  | Conceptualisation: subject specific language skills. Some code switching may still take place | Assisted Subject classes    |
|         | ENGLISH FAL                        | English for general purposes  | 2-3 times a week            |
| Grade 5 | MOTHER TONGUE                      | Traditional MT syllabus   | 1 hour per day              |
|         | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION | Content Based syllabus<br>Basic academic Literacy   | 90 minutes                  |
|         | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM  | Conceptualisation: subject specific language skills. Some code switching may still take place | Assisted subject classes    |
|         | ENGLISH FAL                        | English for general purposes  | 2-3 times a week            |

|         |  |  |                    |
|---------|--|--|--------------------|
| Grade 6 | MOTHER TONGUE                              | Traditional First Language Syllabus  | 1 Hour per day     |
|         | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION         | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Basic academic Literacy | 90 minutes per day |
|         | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM          | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills  | All day            |
|         | ENGLISH FAL                                | English for general purposes   | 2-3 times a week   |
| Grade 7 | MOTHER TONGUE                              | Traditional First Language Syllabus  | 1 hour per day     |
|         | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION         | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Basic academic Literacy | 90 minutes per day |
|         | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM          | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills  | All day            |
|         | ENGLISH FAL                                | English for general purposes   | 2-3 times a week   |
|         | A SECOND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE is introduced | Receptive skills in SAL  | 2-3 times per week |
| Grade 8 | MOTHER TONGUE                              | Traditional First Language Syllabus  | 1 hour per day     |
|         | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION         | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Basic academic literacy | 90 minutes per day |
|         | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM          | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills  | All day            |
|         | ENGLISH FAL                                | English for general purposes   | 2-3 times a week   |
|         | A SECOND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE               | Traditional SAL syllabus   | 2-3 times per week |
| Grade 9 | MOTHER TONGUE                              | Traditional First Language Syllabus  | 1 hour per day     |
|         | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION         | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Basic academic Literacy | 90 minutes per day |
|         | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM          | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills  | All day            |
|         | ENGLISH FAL                                | English for General purposes   | 2-3 times per week |
|         | A SECOND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE               | Traditional SAL Syllabus   | 2-3 times per week |

|          |  |   |                    |
|----------|--|---|--------------------|
| Grade 10 | MOTHER TONGUE                                      | Traditional First Language Syllabus   | 1 hour per day     |
|          | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION                 | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Basic academic Literacy  | 90 minutes per day |
|          | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM                  | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills.  | All day            |
|          | English FAL  | Traditional FAL syllabus  | 2-3 times per week |
|          | SECOND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE AS SUBJECT IF PREFERRED | Traditional syllabus  | 2-3 times per week |
| Grade 11 | MOTHER TONGUE                                      | Traditional First Language Syllabus   | 1 hour per day     |
|          | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION                 | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Basic academic Literacy  | 90 minutes per day |
|          | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM                  | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills   | All day            |
|          | English FAL  | Traditional FAL syllabus  | 2-3 times per week |
|          | SECOND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE AS SUBJECT IF PREFERRED | Traditional syllabus  | 2-3 times per week |
| Grade 12 | MOTHER TONGUE                                      | Traditional First Language Syllabus   | 1 Hour per day     |
|          | ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION                 | Content Based syllabus developed in conjunction with Content teachers<br>Academic Literacy Skills | 90 minutes per day |
|          | LANGUAGE IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM                  | Conceptualisation: Subject specific language skills   | All day            |
|          | ENGLISH FAL  | Traditional syllabus  | 2-3 times per week |
|          | SECOND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE                         | Traditional syllabus  | 2-3 times per week |

## 5. Advantages of CLIC

Apart from the advantages of a CLIL programme that fuses language and content teaching as identified by (Mehisto and Asser, 2007), the adjunct model offers the following advantages for South African learners. It:

- promotes academic literacy in the language of learning;
- focuses on subject content and the specific linguistic needs of the subject;
- allows for teachers to work together across the curriculum;

- allows learners to receive language support in all classes;
- promotes mastery of English for general purposes as well as for learning;
- promotes multilingualism;
- promotes teaching of the Mother Tongue. This hypothetically means that regardless of the fact that English is the tool for learning, more than one Mother Tongue can be taught in one school. This will not only promote respect for cultural diversity but will also allow for additive bilingualism;
- allows learners to fully benefit from the advantages of bilingualism: learners will reap full benefit of the cognitive advantages of bilingualism; and
- provides proper training for all teachers enabling them to support learners in language acquisition for learning purposes.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

English medium of instruction is a reality in South Africa. Although currently experienced as a barrier to learning, it can be viewed as a national resource that has the potential to be implemented successfully to produce functionally and academic literate learners. This does not only require more time for teaching English as a medium of instruction, but also a paradigm shift regarding the content of English that should be taught at school and the training and responsibility of the content teacher as a language teacher.

The authors recommend that:

- The adjunct model proposed in this article needs to be implemented from Grade 1-12 in all South African schools where English is used as a medium of instruction. In line with the Task Team recommendation, English as a language of learning and teaching needs greater specification in the curriculum and more time should be spent in preparing learners for English medium of instruction, and the use of English across the curriculum.
- English medium of instruction training for all teachers who have to teach through medium of English should become compulsory. Because Grade 4 is the year of transition, all Intermediate Phase teachers should receive thorough training in second language acquisition and language teaching strategies. All Senior and FET content teachers should be trained in content and language integrated learning. Apart from those English language teachers who want to specialise in the teaching of English as a subject, English language teachers should be trained in Content Based Instruction. This implies a new career opportunity for many language teachers who prefer to teach academic literacy in English as a second language.
- In order to promote the transference of reading and writing skills to the second language, Mother Tongue as a subject should be promoted and appropriate time needs to be allocated to the teaching of MT.

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# “Dwelling in fear of the scales forever”: Religious diction in Pro-Anorectic websites from a discourse-analytic perspective

**A B S T R A C T** Anorexia Internet sites (also known as “Pro-Ana” sites) employ various linguistic devices in the propagation of their message. This article sets out to investigate such devices as they are used in or by these sites. The sites themselves are regarded as texts, and are explored within the ambit of Discourse Analysis. The research looks at discourse strategies employed by Pro-Ana participants by which they share their experiences as a type of virtual support group. To decode the concealed language of these sites, Discourse Analysis is used. Central to this language are coinage, code words, and metaphors. One of the problems inherent in such language strategies are that they continually reshape themselves either to escape being shut down by search engines or to keep the sites from being read by anti-Ana individuals or groups. This constant changing was in itself a type of language evolving faster than everyday language outside these sites. Because the articulation of the Pro-Ana dogma manifests strongly religious overtones and demands absolute adherence to its liturgy, portions of the websites sampled revealed religious or quasi-spiritual diction. The aim and scope of this article is to focus particularly on specific religious diction by making use of the semantic and syntactic levels of Kitis and Milapides-model (1997) to amplify the religious aspect of anorectic websites. Because of the limited scope of the article format, Kitis and Milapides’ (1997) pragmatic and intertextual/textual rhetorical levels have been excluded. The article has a three-fold relevance for language teaching. First, it demonstrates the manner in which language is being manipulated on the internet to propagate the insidious “worship” of anorexia, and so brings awareness of such strategies to language facilitators and, through them, to learners. Secondly, in discussing specific examples of religious diction from these websites, the article shows how these language strategies are used (and misused), no matter how ineptly, for the advocacy of Anorexia Nervosa as a desirable way of life which may lead to tragic and unnecessary deaths. Finally, through worked examples, the article demonstrates ways in which Discourse Analysis may be usefully used to decode internet websites devoted to Anorexia.

**Keywords:** Anorexia Nervosa, Pro-Ana sites, Discourse Analysis, Thinspiration quotations, religious metaphors, Semantic and Syntactic Levels

## 1. Background

The purpose of the research was to investigate the various linguistic tools used in/by Anorexia Internet sites (also known as “Pro-Ana” sites). The research looked at these sites as texts within the ambit of Discourse Analysis.

The research hypothesis of the study centred on discourse strategies that Pro-Ana participants employ to share similar experiences as a type of virtual support group. At the same time, discourse analysis was used as a parameter to decode the concealed language of these sites. Coinage and code words as well as metaphors were central to this language. The problems with such a language were emphasised as it continually reshaped itself either to escape being shut down by search engines or to keep the sites from being read by anti-Ana individuals or groups. This constant changing was in itself a type of language that evolved faster than everyday language outside these sites.

The bipartite research design included (1) data collection, and (2) the analytical frame-works. Data collection entailed identifying and downloading postings to Pro-Ana websites on the Internet. Other materials included Pro-Ana journals, so-called “Thinspiration” images of iconic figures, such as film stars embodying quasi-anorexic ideals as well as various forms of practical advice on how to achieve anorexic aims (the “Ten Commandments of Anorexia”, for example). Chat rooms were not accessed, however, as the accessing process raised ethical questions of anonymity and confidentiality.

The main analytical framework that was used, and which will be defined and explained briefly, is Discourse Analysis in which the levels of analysis identified by Kitis and Milapides (1997) were employed: (a) the semantic; (b) the syntactic; (c) the pragmatic, (d) the intertextual/textual rhetorical. The discourse model proposed by Kitis and Milapides (1997) falls under Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA. Van Dijk (1998:1) brings critical discourse analysis (CDA) and socio-cultural dimensions together by arguing that CDA “primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”. Therefore, CDA can be regarded as a type of discourse analytical research that takes explicit positions and “thus wants to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality” (Van Dijk, 1998:1).

To these were added discussion of the metaphors and coined words used specifically by anorectics.

One of the final assumptions of the research was because the Pro-Ana dogma has strong religious overtones and demands absolute adherence to its liturgy, some portion of the websites sampled manifested religious or quasi-spiritual diction. The aim and scope of this article is to focus more particularly on specific religious diction by making use of the semantic and syntactic levels of Kitis and Milapides-model (1997) to amplify the religious aspect of anorectic websites. Because of the limited scope of the article, the pragmatic and intertextual/textual rhetorical levels of Kitis and Milapides (1997) are omitted.

A brief background of Anorexia Nervosa is given in order to establish the specific context for the reader who is less familiar with this eating disorder. In order to signpost the research, a brief discussion of Pro-anorectic websites follows to familiarise the reader with this specific New Millennium Internet device.

## 2. Anorexia Nervosa Online

In the psychiatric and psychological domains, Anorexia Nervosa is regarded as a psychopathology that is mapped out in terms of its characteristics in the *DSM-IV-TR*. It is viewed as an eating disorder that predominates in Westernised societies, having its origins in the self-mortifying starvation of medieval saints (Hesse-Biber, 1996:45). One of the defining characteristics of Anorexia Nervosa is having “an intense fear of obesity and relentlessly pursuing thinness” (Barlow & Durand, 2000:241).

The most useful New Millennium devices for pursuing thinness are found on the Internet. In recent years, there has been a proliferation in the number of Pro-Anorectic Internet sites – most of which have been created by anorectics themselves – which are aimed at promoting and supporting anorectics (cf. Mulveen & Hepworth, 2002:283), approximately 90% of whom are female (cf. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR*, published by *American Psychiatric Association* in 2000). Thus, a new genre of websites was being established in the form of Pro-Anorectic (Pro-Ana) sites, chat rooms, web rings, and blogs. This meant that new virtual communities were multiplying on the Internet without too many parents or health professionals noticing this phenomenon. Only after television programmes, such as the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, broadcast exposés of these websites did thousands of parents become aware, for the first time, what their daughters might be involved in. Servers like Yahoo were pressured to shut down these sites, which they ultimately did in 2001 (Holahan, 2001).

However, Pro-Ana websites survived this onslaught simply by shifting to other servers, especially free ones. Despite vicious attacks on their anorectic agenda, countless websites have continued to share the Thinspiration’s three Ts – Tips, Tricks, and Techniques – with fellow anorectics. The Pro-Ana community also makes extensive use of death and dying metaphors that are to be found mainly in song lyrics (Fiona Apple’s lyrics recur frequently); and Thinspiration is drawn from religious texts, such as the Bible, and exemplified by the “Ana Psalm”, and “The Thin Commandments”. Because the Pro-Ana dogma has strong religious overtones and demands absolute adherence to its liturgy, it is reasonable to hypothesise that some of the websites sampled would manifest religious or quasi-spiritual diction in the presentation of their doctrine.

## 3. Religious metaphors in Pro-Ana sites

Pro-Ana sites tend to use religious metaphors/language/a(na!)phorisms which mirror society’s obsession with dieting as a pseudo-religion: “What diets have in common with religion are sets of rules and prohibitions that distribute foods and eating into lists of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practices” (Tebbel, 2000:84). These lists

resemble the section in the Bible in which God hands over a set of dietary rules to Moses. Known as the Abominations of Leviticus, the list goes into immense detail about which foods are taboo and which permitted. What’s striking about the list is its arbitrariness, a characteristic that suggests it is the existence of rules, rather than what they say, that matters (Tebbel, 2000:84).

#### 4. Discourse analysis and Anorexia

In this research, Discourse Analysis (DA) is the main paradigm used to decode the anorectic's religious language into a more comprehensible narrative.

Here, the specific discourse analytical framework of Kitis and Milapides (1997) is used. This discourse model falls under Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA. An asset of CDA is that it enables analysts to “foreground language use as social action, language use as situated performance, language use as tied to social relations and identities [...] language use as essentially a matter of ‘practices’ rather than just ‘structures’” (Slembrouk, 2005:1).

In their introduction to “Read it and believe it: How the metaphor constructs ideology in news discourse. A case study”, which constitutes one of the frameworks of the Pro-Ana research, Kitis and Milapides (1997:558) discuss language as discourse. The authors' model follows a CDA perspective for the following reasons: First, they maintain that language is embedded in socio-political and ideological structures. Secondly, the close reading of a specific text could “contribute significantly towards the realization of the social conditions governing the acts of the production as well as the interpretation and consumption of texts” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:558). Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of a text should be based on the analysis of discourse, rather than the text in isolation, giving it a denotative function. Thirdly, a text is analysed as a communication act. The text is thus read as a message and characterised by “directionality” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:559). This means that the text has a producer and a recipient and its purpose is to communicate.

Furthermore, these argumentative stances are organised in specific ways: “the main organizing feature of the structure of the text at a global level is the construction of a dominant metaphor calling forth the ‘script’ (or myth)” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:562). The authors believe that there is no text representing a neutral reality, therefore distinguishing between neutral and emotionally charged language.

##### 4.1 *Semantic level*

The first level of critical analysis of a text is embodied by the semantic level. An important aspect of this level is the title: “Because of its grammatical form (a declarative sentence), the title is taken to be an assertion” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:564).

In addition, in a “comprehensive, multi-level critical analysis of a text, close attention should be paid to the status of the propositional content of the text” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:564). A proposition expressing a value judgement “usually registers the speaker's or writer's attitude towards his/her topic and as such it is not amenable to truth-valuation” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:565). However, if it is not “lacking in assertive force and, as it is not expressed in question form, but is formulated in the declarative mode, it may delude readers and pass as an assertion” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:565). This is called “factivity guise”.

Concluding this section, Kitis and Milapides (1997:570) assert that the choice of

emotionally charged lexes and figures of speech serves to heighten the semantic and pragmatic intensity and expressiveness, as well as the connotational, evaluative, and affective content of what is said. Consequently, the referential-denotational aspect of

meaning is considerably de-emphasized, not to say suppressed and distorted. This way of using language might be called persuasive manipulation by means of seduction.

#### 4.2 Syntactic level

*Syntactic* aspects include the transactive model, i.e., their semantic structure shows “an actor, an action, and an affected participant” (Kitis & Milapides, 1997:570). A necessary condition for transitivity is that the agent should be active, rather than passive. *Passivisation* looks at the passive constructions within a text, whereas the *relational model* includes relations between nouns or nouns and attributes.

Van Dijk (2003:39[6]) asserts that some sentence structures allow for variation, such as word order, active and passive sentences, and nominalisations. Therefore, words may be “put up front” by topicalisation or be downgraded by putting them in a clause or sentence later, or by deleting them completely. The canonical order in the English language is to “match the semantic agents with syntactic subjects, which are typically in first position, for instance: ‘the police arrested the demonstrators’” (Van Dijk, 2003:39).

This sentence can change in terms of the relational model Kitis and Milapides (1997:570) propose: “the demonstrators were arrested” (passive voice), here the agent is left implicit by leaving out “the police”. Nominalisation can also be used: “the arrest of the demonstrators”. A “cleft” sentence can topicalise the sentence: “it was the demonstrators that the police arrested”. Therefore, by using different sentence forms, the specific order of the words may “signal whether the meaning expressed by some words is more or less emphasized” (Van Dijk, 2003:39).

Dellinger (1995:2) says the following about the transactive model:

The mode in which an action is presented, either as transactive or nontransactive, is not a matter of truth or reality but rather a matter of the way in which that particular action is integrated into the ideological system of the speaker, and the manner in which such an action is therefore articulated in a specific discourse.

Consequently, Dellinger argues, the actual decision to use either a transactive or nontransactive clause is not coincidence but choice.

According to Wisler and Tackenberg (1998:5), the analysis of a clause as a selection of one process type is transitive analysis. In a clause, an entity is not only ascribed an identity through the choice of a category but now it performs a role. Wisler and Tackenberg (1998:5) distinguish between two roles. In the first, a participant is an agent if he/she controls the process. The example the authors use is “the police charged young demonstrators yesterday”. The agent in the sentence is “police”.

In the role of such an agent, Wisler and Tackenberg (1998:5) further distinguish between an agent and a force. A force is defined as a physical entity which performs the role of an agent. As an exemplar, the authors used “a stone breaks a window” in which “stone” denotes the force. In the sentence, “the police charged young demonstrators yesterday”, the young demonstrators are cast into the role of the patient. Wisler & Tackenberg (1998:6) define “patient” as being in the role of the affected participant. Furthermore, the authors distinguish between persons – a patient – and goals – a physical entity. In “a stone breaks a window”, the “window” is the goal.

Affected participants can perform many different roles. Wisler and Tackenberg distinguish between the roles of (1) a beneficiary (Stones flew over the *police*); (2) an experiencer (A *demonstrator* suffered a heavy injury); (3) a result (Miners produce more *coal*), and an instrument (I picked the lock with a *hairpin*).

Wisler and Tackenberg (1998:6) define transitivity as a process that is “affected, extended or directed at a patient (or a goal). However, the patient may not always be named. If the process cannot be extended to another participant, it becomes intransitive: “Demonstrators run away”. According to Wisler and Tackenberg (1998:6), there are three types of processes: (a) an *action*, which is deliberate and controlled, (b) a *process*, which is not deliberate, and (c), a *state*. Each type in itself can be *physical*, *mental* or *verbal*. For example, an action could be *physical* (the police hit, arrived, charged); *mental* (the police speculated, estimated), or *verbal* (the police issued warnings).

Furthermore, in a transitive clause, the patient can be “deleted”. Wisler and Tackenberg (1998:6) distinguish between a “directed action” (the police charge the demonstrators) and a “non-directed action” (the police charge). When the text favours the non-directed action, it “characteristically limits the responsibility of the agent” (Wisler & Tackenberg, 1998:7). Thus, the action does not explicitly reach the “patient” and appears relatively benign.

However, passivisation is the reverse syntactical process. By stating “the demonstrators are charged by the police” instead of “the police charge the demonstrators”, the demonstrators, rather than the police, are emphasised. After such a sentence executed in the passive voice, the reader’s expectation will be more on the demonstrators than the police. Thus, through passivisation, agency fades into the background.

The discussion now moves to a detailed application of discourse analysis to examples drawn from three Internet websites.

**WEBSITE 1: *Ana Psalm*: Page 2.**

[http://www.freewebs.com/pain\\_is\\_beauty/quotes.htm](http://www.freewebs.com/pain_is_beauty/quotes.htm).

Date of access: 3/19/2006.)

*3.1 Semantic level of analysis – Website 1*

For the purpose of the article, both the semantic and syntactic levels of Website 1 are discussed in detail. The remaining websites are presented in tabular form. It should also be noted that Websites 1 and 2 contain one Pro-Ana quotation each while Website 3 contains two.

Psalm 23 below is quoted from the King James Version of the Holy Bible and does not appear on the Pro-Ana website. A short comparative survey between the King James Version and the Pro-Ana variant is conducted for the purpose of understanding just how far the Pro-Ana variant has deviated from the original.

(1a) **Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul:  
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.  
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil;  
my cup runneth over.  
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

(1b) *Ana Psalm*

**1 Strict is my diet. I must not want.**  
**2 It maketh me lie down at night hungry.**  
**3 It leadeth me past confectioners.**  
**4 It trieth my willpower.**  
**5 It leadeth me in the paths of alteration for my figure's sake.**  
**6 Yea, though I walk through the aisles of the pastry department,**  
**I will buy no sweet rolls for they are fattening.**  
**7 The cakes and the pies, they tempt me.**  
**8 Before me is a table set with green beans and lettuce.**  
**9 I filleth my stomach with liquids.**  
**10 My day's quota runneth over.**  
**11 Surely calorie and weight charts will follow me all the days of my life.**  
**12 And I will dwell in the fear of the scales forever (Website 1:2).**

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1982:830), a psalm is defined as a sacred song or a hymn. A hymn, in turn, is defined as a song of praise to God; or a song of praise in honour of a god or other exalted being or thing (1982:490). While these implied functions are self-evidently fulfilled in Psalm 23 of the Holy Bible, their sacredness is subverted to honour the goddess, Ana, or to exalt the “thing” that is Anorexia. Just as there are emotional, psychological, and spiritual benefits to be gained from adhering to the Way of the Lord, so there are emotional, psychological, and spiritual “benefits” from adhering to the Way of Ana. In both instances, the crucial aspect depends on commitment to the demands of belief in their respective dogmas.

Such is the “religious” fervour of the Way of Ana's adherents that they have found it necessary to mimic religious texts by creating their own quasi-psalms. These texts are anonymous in origin, the authors frequently unacknowledged or unidentified in much the same way that several of the Biblical authors remain unknown. However, the creators of the Way of Ana psalms reveal considerably less literary talent and command of rhetorical skills than their Biblical predecessors. The Pro-Ana “psalmists” pay little attention to the elevated style and

appropriate diction associated with religious texts. Nor do they imitate the rhythmical patterns of the Biblical phrases.

It should be noted that Psalm 23 focuses attention on the power of the Lord's benign presence while the Pro-Ana psalm is a litany of threat and absence of redemption. The first two words of Psalm 23 are "The Lord..." while the Pro-Ana version opens with "Strict", thus initiating the vocabulary and tone of stringent discipline and absence of love.

The Pro-Ana psalm makes deliberate but ineffectual use of seventeenth century forms of verbs, such as "maketh", "leadeth", "trieth" and "filleth". Such forms may have been used to suggest that the Ana dogma is a centuries-old phenomenon. At the same time, these forms seem anomalous in the context of the remaining diction. This diction is focused predominantly, if not obsessively, on words naming specific foods, such as "sweet rolls", "cakes and pies", "green beans and lettuce" or identifying dietary processes or the personal issues associated with drastic weight loss including "my figure", "willpower", "calorie and weight charts" and "scales". These themes are initiated in the last two words of the opening sentence, "my diet". In passing, one notes the irony inherent in the word, "diet", in whose first three letters make up the word, "die". Excessive dieting embodies the distinct possibility of death.

The second sentence reads, "I must not want", which, at one level, suggests the correct attitude of not desiring or coveting things. But this charitable attitude is undercut by the reader's knowing that the words are restricted wholly to matters of food and body image. In line 6 of the Ana psalm, the Biblical idea of walking through the valley of the shadow of death is diminished to walking through the supermarket aisles and the pastry department. Although this smacks of rather tasteless parody, anorectics pursue their avoidance of the pastry departments with an obsessive fervour. It is no coincidence that avoiding the pastry department and the shadow of death are brought together. Pastries constitute the epitome of sin for the anorectic and lead inevitably to the "hell" of fatness. For this reason, "is a table set with green beans and lettuce". This diet reveals a monastic austerity, one that is entirely appropriate within the closed community of the anorectic sect with its secret language and strange rituals.

The Biblical psalmist's cup that "runneth over" with the Lord's blessings is replaced at the anorectic's table by a quota of food that, no matter how small or, in extreme circumstances, non-existent, is perceived as running over or excessive in all negative senses. Consequently, while the true believer will "dwell in the house of the Lord forever" and so relish all its joys, the anorectic is doomed to "dwell in the fear of the scales forever". It is ironic that the Pro-Ana psalm concludes with the word, "forever", because anorectics may not survive the rigours of their way of life (cf. Birmingham, Su, Hlynsky, Goldner & Gao, 2005:143-146).

From the discussion, it should be clear that the Pro-Ana psalm is to be seen as a devout message of encouragement to fellow believers in the Way of Ana. It is designed to encourage them and seduce them into a mode of persistence. For the non-anorectic reader, however, this text may be regarded as little more than a clumsy parody, despite its covert seductiveness.

### *3.2 Syntactic level of analysis – Website 1*

In the Biblical Psalm 23, the opening sentence is in the active voice – "The Lord is my shepherd" – and the present tense is emphasised particularly through the typographical use of italics. It is clearly an affirmative statement.

In contrast to Psalm 23, the Ana version is in the passive voice – “Strict is my diet” – and does not contain any typographical emphasis. To some extent, such emphasis is unnecessary because of the placing of the word “strict” at the very beginning. Bringing the two versions together implies that the Biblical Lord is substituted by the anorectic’s strictness.

In the second half of verse 1 in the Bible – “I shall not want” – the Lord is seen as carer and provider, the guardian of the flock’s wellbeing. By contrast, the second half of the Pro-Ana verse – “I must not want” – suggests that the responsibility for “caring for oneself” does not lie in the hands of a benign deity, but rather in the individual anorectic’s own. In this second half of the Biblical verse, the emphasis falls on the word “want” since it is positioned at the end of both the sentence and the verse, hence assuring it of a double stress. The same is true of the Ana equivalent. Given this parallel structure, the verbs in each instance assume even greater significance, with the Biblical “shall not” being transformed into the Ana “must not”.

In the Biblical verses 2 and 3, the Lord is referred to by the pronoun “He”, while the speaker refers to himself as “me”. This suggests a personal relationship of care between the deity and the individual. By contrast, the repeated use of the pronoun “it”, referring to “my diet”, de-humanises the relationship between the anorectic and food. This de-humanisation of the relationship between the actor and affected participant implies a conflictual relationship which is embodied in the following words and phrases: “to lie down at night hungry”, “past the confectioners”, “triumph my willpower”, “paths of alteration”, “no sweet rolls” and “the cakes and the pies, they tempt me”.

In verse 5 of the Biblical psalm, “He” has become “Thou”, suggesting an even more intimate relationship. In this verse, the Lord prepares a table for David, the affected participant in this example. There is no suggestion as to what was placed on that table whereas in the Ana variant, the table is set specifically “with green beans and lettuce”. From Wisler and Tackenberg’s perspective (1998:6), David would assume the role of a “beneficiary” while the anorectic’s role would be that of an “experiencer”. The table that the Lord prepares for David is “in the presence of [his] enemies” whereas the food on the anorectic’s table constitutes that very enemy.

In the final verse of the Biblical psalm, David asserts that “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”, while the anorectic proclaims “Surely calorie and weight charts will follow me all the days of my life”. The Biblical verse concludes with David dwelling “in the house of the Lord forever”, a phrase replete with nuances of security and spiritual nourishment. The anorectic, on the other hand, has no such comforts. The final sentence of the Ana psalm does not even contain the word “house”. Instead, the anorectic will “dwell in the fear of the scales forever”.

In terms of the syntactic structure, Psalm 23 consists of six verses, each containing at least two sentences. With the exception of verse 1, where a semi-colon is used, the second or further sentences are separated from the first by a colon in the King James’ version. However, in the revised standard version of the Catholic Edition, all the colons have been replaced by semi-colons. The distinction between the use of a semi-colon and a colon is significant. A semi-colon does not necessarily require the sentence following it to be linked logically to the sentence preceding it. In the case of the colon, the converse is true. The sentence following it must be related logically to the one preceding it.

With regard to punctuation strategies in the Pro-Ana psalm, there are neither semi-colons nor colons. Instead, each sentence concludes simply with a full stop and where a sentence runs on to a second line, either a comma or no punctuation mark is used. Where the comma is used in a run-on line, it occurs after the opening clause of line 6.

It is worth noting that, while the Biblical psalm’s verses are numbered (from 1–6), the Ana psalm has no such numbering. The numbering present in the text given above has been inserted by the researcher for the reader’s convenience and for ease of referencing.

Most spiritual texts can be identified not only by the ideology of their content but also by the stylistic elegance and gracefulness of the diction. It has been frequently observed that much of the Bible’s style can be characterised as “poetic”. Such elements are singularly absent from the Pro-Ana variant, to the extent that line 10 is not a run-on line, yet lacks any end-stopping punctuation mark. This would lead to the conclusion that, within the ideology of Anorexia, only the message counts; style and diction are secondary and liable to neglect. It would also seem from this lack of attention to detail that writers of such texts are less concerned with the literary merits of their work. Ultimately, for them, *what* has to be said is infinitely more important than how it is said. Anorexia websites do not constitute a mine of stylistic sophistication.

The transitive and transactive structures in the Ana psalm are illustrated in the table below.

| Transitive Structures   | Transactive Structures  |
|---|---|
| <p><i>[My diet] maketh me to lie down at night hungry.</i></p> <p>Subject: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Object: <i>Me</i></p>                      | <p><i>[My diet] maketh me to lie down at night hungry.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Affected participant: <i>Me</i><br/>Type of act: Inducing hunger-pangs</p>                           |
| <p><i>[My diet] leadeth me past confectioners.</i></p> <p>Subject: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Object: <i>Me</i></p>                              | <p><i>[My diet] leadeth me past confectioners.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Affected participant: <i>Me</i><br/>Type of act: Forcing one to ignore food</p>                              |
| <p><i>[My diet] trieth my willpower.</i></p> <p>Subject: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Object: <i>my willpower</i></p>                              | <p><i>[My diet] trieth my willpower.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Affected participant: <i>Me</i><br/>Type of act: Trying one’s willpower</p>  |
| <p><i>[My diet] leadeth me in the paths of alteration for my figure’s sake.</i></p> <p>Subject: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Object: <i>Me</i></p> | <p><i>[My diet] leadeth me in the paths of alteration for my figure’s sake.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>My diet [It]</i><br/>Affected participant: <i>Me</i><br/>Type of act: Forcing one to remain thin</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>[Sweet rolls] are fattening.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>Sweet rolls [They]</i><br/>                 Affected participant: <i>Me (implied)</i><br/>                 Type of act: Threatening</p>                            |
| <p><i>[Cakes and pies] tempt me.</i></p> <p>Subject: <i>Cakes and pies [They]</i><br/>                 Object: <i>Me</i></p> | <p><i>[Cakes and pies] tempt me.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>Cakes and pies [They]</i><br/>                 Affected participant: <i>Me</i><br/>                 Type of act: One of temptation</p>                               |
| <p><i>I filleth my stomach with liquids.</i></p> <p>Subject: <i>I</i><br/>                 Object: <i>My stomach</i></p>     | <p><i>I filleth my stomach with liquids.</i></p> <p>Agent: <i>I</i><br/>                 Affected participant: <i>My stomach</i><br/>                 Type of act: Filling one's stomach with liquid (instead of food)</p> |

**WEBSITE 2: THIN COMMANDMENTS: (Pages 1-2)**

<http://analifetsyle.com/28.html>.

Date of access: 3/18/2006.

- (1) If you are not thin you are not attractive (1).
- (2) Being thin is more important than being healthy (2).
- (3) You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, do anything to make yourself look thinner (2).
- (4) Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty (2).
- (5) Thou shall not eat fattening foods without punishing oneself afterwards (2).
- (6) Thou shall count calories and restrict intake accordingly (2).
- (7) What the scale says is the most important thing (2).
- (8) Losing weight is good/Gaining weight is bad (2).
- (9) You can never be too thin (2).
- (10) Being thin and not eating are true signs of will power (sic) and success (2).

**SEMANTIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS – WEBSITE 2**

**CRITERIA**

**Propositions**

The Thin Commandments (1) – (10): (1) *If you are not thin you are not attractive;* (2) *Being thin is more important than being healthy;* (3) *You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, do anything to make yourself look thinner;* (4) *Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty;* (5) *Thou shall not eat fattening foods without punishing oneself afterwards;* (6) *Thou shall count calories and restrict intake accordingly;* (7) *What the scale says is the most important thing;* (8) *Losing weight is good/Gaining weight is bad;* (9) *You can never be too thin;* (10) *Being thin and not eating are true signs of will power [sic] and success*

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Lexes</b>     | (1) ... <i>thin...not attractive</i> ; (2) ... <i>thin...more important...being healthy</i> ; (3) ... <i>buy clothes... cut your hair...take laxatives...starve...thinner</i> ; (4) <i>eat...feeling guilty</i> ; (5) ... <i>eat fattening foods...punishing oneself...</i> ; (6) ... <i>count calories...restrict intake...</i> ; (7) ... <i>scale...most important</i> ; (8) <i>Losing weight...good...gaining weight...bad</i> ; (9) ... <i>too thin</i> ; (10) ... <i>thin...not eating...true signs...will power [sic]...success</i> |
| <b>Metaphors</b> | Not applicable.   |

**SYNTACTIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS – WEBSITE 2**

| <b>CRITERIA</b>               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Transitive Structures</b>  | (3) <i>You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives...</i> ; (5) <i>Thou shall not eat fattening foods without punishing oneself afterwards</i> ; (6) <i>Thou shall count calories and restrict intake accordingly</i>   |
| <b>Transactive Structures</b> | (3) <i>You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, do anything to make yourself look thinner</i> ; (4) <i>Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty</i> ; (7) <i>What the scale says is the most important thing</i> ; (9) <i>You can never be too thin</i>   |
| <b>Passivisation</b>          | (2) <i>Being thin is more important than being healthy</i> ; (8) <i>Losing weight is good/ Gaining weight is bad</i> ; (10) <i>Being thin and not eating are true signs of will power (sic) and success</i>   |
| <b>Relational Structures</b>  | (1) ... <i>not thin...not attractive</i> ; (2) <i>Being thin...more important than being healthy</i> ; (4) ... <i>eat...guilty</i> ; (5) ... <i>eat fattening foods...punishing oneself</i> ; (7) <i>What the scale says is the most important thing</i> ; (8) <i>Losing weight is good/Gaining weight is bad</i> ; (9) <i>You can never be too thin</i> ; (10) <i>Being thin and not eating are true signs of will power [sic] and success</i> |
| <b>Imperatives</b>            | (3) <i>You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, do anything to make yourself look thinner</i> ; (4) <i>Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty</i> ; (5) <i>Thou shall not eat fattening foods without punishing oneself afterwards</i> ; (6) <i>Thou shall count calories and restrict intake accordingly</i>   |
| <b>(Implied) Conditionals</b> | (1) <i>If you are not thin you are not attractive</i> ; (3) <i>You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, do anything to make yourself look thinner</i>  |

**WEBSITE 3(a): – ANA BELIEFS (Pages 5-6)**

<http://thinspo.conforums.com/index.cgi?board=rel&action=display&num = 1145771956>.

Date of access: 5/7/2006.

- (1) I believe in Control, the only force mighty enough to bring order to chaos that is my world (5).
- (2) I believe that I am the most vile, worthless, and useless person ever to have existed on this planet, and that I am totally unworthy of anyone’s time and attention (5).
- (3) I believe that other people who tell me differently must be idiots. If they could see how I really am, then they would hate me almost as much as I do (5).
- (4) I believe in oughts, musts, and shoulds as unbreakable laws to determine my daily behaviour (5).
- (5) I believe in perfection and strive to attain it (5).
- (6) I believe in salvation through trying a bit harder than I did yesterday (5).

- (7) I believe in calorie counters as the inspired word of God, and memorise them accordingly (5).
- (8) I believe in bathroom scales as an indicator of my daily successes and failures (6).
- (9) I believe in hell, because I sometimes think that I am living in it (6).
- (10) I believe in a wholly black and white world, the losing of weight, recrimination for sins, the abnegation of the body and a life ever fasting (6).

**SEMANTIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS – WEBSITE 3**

**CRITERIA**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Propositions</b> | <i>Ana Beliefs (1) – (10): (1) I believe in Control, the only force mighty enough to bring order to chaos that is my world; (2) I believe that I am the most vile, worthless, and useless person ever to have existed on this planet; (3) I believe that other people who tell me differently must be idiots; (4) I believe in oughts, musts and shoulds as unbreakable laws; (5) I believe in perfection; (6) I believe in salvation; (7) I believe in calorie counters as the inspired word of God; (8) I believe in bathroom scales as an indicator of my daily successes and failures; (9) I believe in hell; (10) I believe in a wholly black and white world, the losing of weight, recrimination for sins, the abnegation of the body and a life ever fasting</i> |
| <b>Lexes</b>        | <i>(1) ...believe...Control...force...mighty...order...chaos...world; (2) ...vile...worthless...useless person...to have existed...planet...unworthy...time...attention; (3) ...people...tell...differently...idiots...hate; (4) ...oughts, musts, and shoulds...unbreakable laws...determine my daily behaviour; (5) ...perfection...strive...to attain...; (6) ...salvation...trying a bit harder...yesterday; (7) ...calorie counters...inspired word of God...memorise...; (8) ...bathroom scales...indicator...daily successes and failures; (9) ...hell...living in it [hell]; (10) ...a wholly black and white world...the losing of weight...recrimination for sins...the abnegation of the body...a life ever fasting</i>                                       |
| <b>Metaphors</b>    | Control is a god; The world is black and white   |

**SYNTACTIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS – WEBSITE 2**

**CRITERIA**

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Transitive Structures</b>  | <i>(1) ...the only force mighty enough [Control] to bring order to the chaos that is my world; (3) ...then they would hate me almost as much as I do; (4) ...as unbreakable laws to determine my daily behaviour; (5) ...strive to attain it; (7) ...memorise them [calorie counters] accordingly; (9) ...I sometimes think that I am living in it</i>   |
| <b>Transactive Structures</b> | <i>(1) I believe in Control, the only force mighty enough to bring order to chaos that is my world; (2) I believe that I am the most vile, worthless, and useless person ever to have existed on this planet; (3) I believe that other people who tell me differently must be idiots; (4) I believe in oughts, musts and shoulds as unbreakable laws; (5) I believe in perfection; (6) I believe in salvation; (7) I believe in calorie counters as the inspired word of God; (8) I believe in bathroom scales as an indicator of my daily successes and failures; (9) I believe in hell; (10) I believe in a wholly black and white world, the losing of weight, recrimination for sins, the abnegation of the body and a life ever fasting</i> |
| <b>Passivisation</b>          | Not applicable.  |
| <b>Relational Structures</b>  | <i>(1) Control [is] the only force mighty enough to bring order to the chaos of my world; (2) I am the most vile, worthless, and useless person...; (4) ...oughts, must and shoulds [are] unbreakable laws...; (7) ...calorie counters [are] the inspired word of God...; (8) ...bathroom scales [are] an indicator of my daily successes and failures</i>   |

|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Imperatives</b>            | Not applicable. |
| <b>(Implied) Conditionals</b> | Not applicable. |

**WEBSITE 3(b): ANA PRAYER** (p2)

<http://thinspo.conforums.com/index.cgi?board=rel&action=display&num=1145771956>.

Date of access: 5/7/2006).

- (1) I confess to gluttony and weakness.
- (2) I confess that I doubted your ability to save my wretched soul.
- (3) Please forgive my lack of faith.
- (4) Help me to resist Mia the Devil and the temptations she places before me.
- (5) Make me pure, holy and clean.
- (6) Please embrace me and make me perfect.
- (7) You are my saviour, my mother and (sic) always willing to take me back even when I have blatantly left you.
- (8) Please erase these sins from my soul and help me stand up to Mia the Devil...
- (9) Mia taunts you dear Ana, and tries to draw me away from serving you.
- (10) Help me make a reply to Mia.
- (11) Help me stand firm.
- (12) Amen

**SEMANTIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS – WEBSITE 3**

| <b>CRITERIA</b>     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Propositions</b> | (1) <i>I confess to gluttony and weakness;</i> (2) <i>I confess that I doubted your ability to save my wretched soul;</i> (7) <i>You are my saviour, my mother and (sic) always willing to take me back even when I have blatantly left you;</i> (9) <i>Mia taunts you dear Ana, and tries to draw me away from serving you</i>   |
| <b>Lexes</b>        | (1) <i>...confess...gluttony...weakness;</i> (2) <i>...doubted your ability...save my wretched soul;</i> (3) <i>...forgive me...lack of faith;</i> (4) <i>...resist Mia the Devil...the temptations she places before me;</i> (5) <i>...pure, holy and clean;</i> (6) <i>...embrace me... make me perfect;</i> (7) <i>...my saviour, my mother...willing to take me back...blatantly left...;</i> (8) <i>...erase these sin from my soul...help me stand up to Mia the Devil...;</i> (9) <i>Mia taunts you dear Ana...tries to draw me away from serving you;</i> (10) <i>Help me make a reply to Mia;</i> (11) <i>...stand firm...;</i> (12) <i>Amen</i> |
| <b>Metaphors</b>    | (4) <i>Mia the Devil;</i> (8) <i>Mia the Devil;</i> (9) <i>Ana, Mia;</i> (10) <i>Mia</i>  |

**SYNTACTIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS – WEBSITE 3**

| <b>CRITERIA</b>              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Transitive Structures</b> | (2) <i>I confess that I doubted your ability to save my wretched soul;</i> (3) <i>Please forgive my lack of faith;</i> (4) <i>Help me to resist Mia the devil and the temptations she places before me;</i> (6) <i>Please embrace me;</i> (7) <i>and [you are] always willing to take me back even when I have blatantly left you;</i> (8) <i>Please erase these sins from my soul and help me to stand up to Mia the Devil;</i> (9) <i>Mia taunts you dear Ana, and tries to draw me away from serving you;</i> (10) <i>Help me make a reply to Mia</i> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | (1) <i>I confess to gluttony and weakness</i> ; (2) <i>I confess that I doubted your ability to save my wretched soul</i> ; (5) <i>Make me pure, holy and clean</i> ; (6) <i>...embrace me and make me perfect</i> ; (7) <i>You are my saviour, my mother...</i> ; (11) <i>Help me stand firm</i>   |
| <b>Passivisation</b>                     | Not applicable.   |
| <b>Relational Structures</b>             | (2) <i>...wretched soul...</i> ; (3) <i>...lack of faith...</i> ; (4) <i>...Mia the Devil...</i> ; (7) <i>You are my saviour, my mother...</i> ; (8) <i>...sins from my soul...Mia the Devil</i>  |
| <b>Imperatives / Verbs of Obligation</b> | (3) <i>Please forgive my lack of faith</i> ; (4) <i>Help me to resist Mia the Devil...</i> ; (5) <i>Make me pure, holy and clean</i> ; (6) <i>Please embrace me and make me perfect</i> ; (8) <i>Please erase these sins from my soul and help me to stand up to Mia the Devil</i> ; (10) <i>Help me make a reply to Mia</i> ; (11) <i>Help me stand firm</i> |
| <b>(Implied) Conditionals</b>            | Not applicable.   |

The above tables represent an exhaustive analysis of a selection of the quotations that appear in Websites 1 to 3 in terms of the discourse model of Kitis and Milapides (1997). As the table illustrates, the quotations reflect the discourse strategies identified by these researchers at the semantic and syntactic levels. As stated earlier, additional strategies have been included in the discourse model. These are “Imperatives/Verbs of Obligation” and “(Implied) Conditionals” at the syntactic level of analysis.

## 5. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the three Pro-Ana websites, certain conclusions have been arrived at on the semantic and syntactic levels. These may be summarised as follows:

### 5.1 At the semantic level

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| “Ana Psalm”  | <b>Key phrases:</b><br>strict is my diet; surely calorie and weight charts will follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the fear of the scales forever  | Anorexia should be pursued with the same devotion, commitment and fear of wrath in the same way that the God of the Old Testament demands of His people. |
| “The Thin Commandments”  | Just as the Israelites of the Old Testament had to live by the Ten Commandments that Moses brought with him from Mount Sinai, so the anorectic obeys Ana and her Ten Commandments of staying thin.   |  |
| <b>Key phrases:</b><br>“Ana Beliefs”<br>I believe;<br><br>vile, useless, unworthy, hell;<br><br>unbreakable laws, salvation, inspired word of God, recrimination for sins, abnegation of the body, life ever fasting | <p>Similar to the Christian Credo in many churches that the congregation repeat after or say with the minister as a sign of outward faith.</p> <p>The anorectic’s self-concept and self-image are almost never positive; self-loathing is prominent and many hate their own existence.</p> <p>These lexical items bring together a strong religious overtone and are found in the Bible. Ana has true religious implications for anorectics. This is not only a lifestyle; it is a religion.</p> |  |

|                     |  |  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| <p>“Ana Prayer”</p> | <p><b>Key phrases:</b></p> <p>confess;</p> <p>Soul, please forgive, help me,<br/>Devil, temptations, sins, serving;</p> <p>Pure, holy, clean;</p> <p>Saviour, mother</p> | <p>This lexical item highlights an important theme: Pro-Ana websites have become modern confessionals. The Pro-Ana online community has become the congregation with Ana as the priest(ess) to whom the anorectic can pray to. Only Ana can forgive her sins;</p> <p>Theses lexical items have strong connotations with the purification of medieval saints by starving themselves;</p> <p>Ana has become the female equivalent of Christ by saving the anorectic’s soul (by helping her to abstain from the Devil Mia/Bulimia), symbolising the evil contrast of what Anorexia is. Ana is also the Holy Mother Mary, who looks after her devoted children and through whom one can also pray.</p> |
|---------------------|--|--|

### 5.2 At the syntactic level

Language usage as means of conveying ideological ideas

Websites 1 – 3 clearly indicate that the Pro-Ana writers use the quotations in such a way as to suit their anorectic ideology. This ideology is particularly evident in the use of certain word orders. For instance, in Website 1, “[My diet] maketh me to lie down at night hungry”, “diet” is in the position of agent, performing a specific action. “Diet” is therefore transactive. This suggests that this lexical item (diet) becomes pivotal in the understanding of the anorectic’s thought processes and what she gives priority to: Her diet of starvation has become her only true religious experience.

It is also evident from these websites that the Pro-Ana writers make extensive use of the foregrounding of specific words in the quotations to emphasise their ideological stance. Transactive as well as transitive structures enjoy particular focus in the quotations. Passivisation (as seen in Website 2, “Being thin is more important than being healthy”) is another linguistic device that Pro-Ana writers use for ideological reinforcement. However, in this particular case, another proclivity becomes evident: When the Pro-Ana quotation is compared with the original text (in this case, “Ana Psalm”), many alterations on the part of the Pro-Ana writer become clear: She has left out important punctuation, such as the capital letter at the beginning of each line, commas, colons, and semi-colons.

Another alteration is the fact that she has failed to contextualise ANY of the quotations from any of the websites. That means that no text references have been given to aid the reader to read more of the original text, and so place the extract within its original, and perhaps different, context. This is significant as each website has been compiled by a different Pro-Ana writer. Thus, the phenomenon of decontextualisation becomes a tendency of the Pro-Ana community evident in all the analysed websites. Of course, a limitation of the scope of the research is that a larger research sample would have been helpful to show that the decontextualisation phenomenon is prevalent in the Pro-Ana community.

Pro-Ana writers are inclined to use quotations that convey imperatives/verbs of obligation and implied conditionals. As can be seen from the tables of Websites 1-3, the quotations were chosen specifically for a certain target group who will understand them within the specific, unmistakable context of the anorectic lifestyle.

Imperatives/verbs of obligation and implied conditionals point to a specific action to be taken; the Pro-Ana reader is reminded of the right action that she has to take in order to succeed in her anorectic habits. Several times, particularly through implication, the reader is reminded of the repercussions and inevitable sanctions if she does not stick to her anorectic lifestyle. In this sense, the quotations can be likened to religious or moral directions, pointing the anorectic in the “right” way. A typical imperative is “Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty” (Website 2, “The Thin Commandments”), while a verb of obligation is evident in “I believe in oughts, musts, and shoulds as unbreakable laws to determine my daily behaviour” (Website 3, “Ana Beliefs”). None of the linguistic devices employed through the imperatives create an overwhelming sense of empathy.

The quasi-religious language contained in the Pro-Ana texts seeks to clothe the serious or even fatal commitment to Pro-Ana with a kind of spiritually uplifting dimension. However, in using such language, the authors of these sites fail to pay sufficient attention to the literary diction of such religious texts and thus present their own Pro-Ana variants in somewhat immature linguistic fashion, even to the point of their texts sounding like parodies. This necessarily undermines the credibility of the language, but not the intention or the hazards, of Pro-Ana websites.

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(Note to the reader: These particular websites may no longer be available under these URLs or may have been altered or updated to contain different information.)

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# Vinkel en koljander? 'n Diversiteitsperspektief op Afrikaanse en Nederlandse moedertaal-taalhandboeke

**A B S T R A C T** Where human society is involved, the world can never be objective, but is a place where, through cultural power relations, human inequalities are legitimized by meaning, interpretation and value (Hall 1997). At the same time prejudice and stereotyping disguise inequality and enhance the exclusion of certain sectors of society. Mechanisms such as inclusions, exclusions, confusing representations, cultural codes, and silences are relevant stereotyping strategies. In this article the visual representations in Dutch and Afrikaans language textbooks are compared in order to determine the strategies used to address diversity within the textbooks. The conceptual framework and literature review comprise an explication of the concepts and influential issues presented in the literature. Data sources are constituted by the visual material of one textbook series from each of the two language communities. The findings are presented as indicators derived from focus group discussions. Eurocentric perspectives of the dominant white group about the 'other' were identified, projecting the 'other' as problematic, poor and primitive. The cultural codes in the visual material furthermore generalise the non-Western 'other' as either extremely religious or as fundamentally different. No signs of apartheid prejudice could be found in the Afrikaans textbooks and Afrikaans is demythologised as a 'white' language. The visual material offers a platform for different, even contradictory, values in order to create a new cultural and social reality, even if the representation, in which everybody speaks Afrikaans, is sometimes forced and unauthentic.

**Keywords:** diversity, representational practices, visual material, language textbooks, Dutch and Afrikaans, stereotyping strategies, thematic analysis, focus group discussions

## 1. Inleiding en vertrekpunt

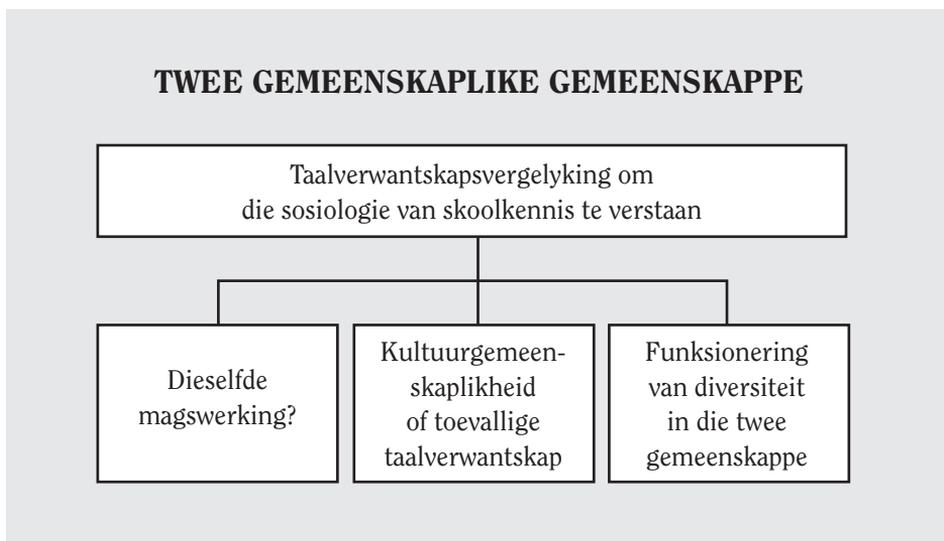
Daar is 'n groeiende besef onder leidende stemme in handboekondersoeke (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1995; Marsden, 2001; Montgomery, 2005) dat kulturele waardes, kennismanipulering

en amptelike perspektiewe onwillekeurig integreer tot 'n magspel wat veroordelende perspektiewe en ideologiese voorstellings in diens van die verskuilde of kovert kurrikulum<sup>1</sup> vertroetel. In handboeke manifesteer ras en kultuurvooroordeel as sosio-politieke konstruksies wat “prominensie aan sekere vorme van kennis verleen, terwyl dit ander verskuil of ignoreer” (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991:97, eie vertaling). Hierdie ondersoek gaan van die aanname uit dat die materiaal wat ondersoek word, nie arbitrêr is nie, maar deur die sosiale wêreld waarin dit gereproduseer word, geënkodeer word. Een veelgebruikte Nederlandse en een veelgebruikte Afrikaanse handboekreeks word deur fokusgroepbesprekings in Nederland en Suid-Afrika ondersoek om vas te stel in watter mate ideologiese voorstellings in diens van kennismanipulering aangewend word.

## 2. Probleemstelling en navorsingsvraag

Die verwantskap tussen die Afrikaanse en Nederlandse taalgemeenskappe bied 'n natuurlike navorsingvergeelyking. Wat sou die invloed van die gemeenskaplike herkoms en kulturele waardes op die ideologiese voorstellingspraktyke van die twee gemeenskappe wees? 'n Ondersoek na die funksionering van 'dieselfde' taal in twee verskillende diversiteitskontekste, en die verskille en/of ooreenkomste ten opsigte van onderliggende magswerking kan betekenisvolle inligting ten opsigte van die sosiologie van skoolkennis oplewer. Figuur 1 gee die relevansie van die studie sinopties weer:

FIGUUR 1: Die twee gemeenskaplike gemeenskappe



Die volgende navorsingsvraag sal die ondersoek rig: *In watter mate verskil die diversiteitsperspektief in die visuele materiaal in taalhandboeke van verwante spraakgemeenskappe?*

<sup>1</sup> Apple (1990:84) definieer die verskuilde kurrikulum as “the norms and values that are implicitly, but effectively taught in schools and that are not usually talked about in teacher statements of end or goals” en voeg by: “... children learn to falsify certain aspects of their behaviour to conform to the reward system extant in most classrooms.”

### 3. Kontekstualisering en konseptuele begronding

#### 3.1 Nederland

Islamitisering, immigrasie en diversiteit in Nederlandse skole het in die afgelope dekade brandende kwessies geword. Dit wil voorkom asof die multi-kulturele werklikhede waarvoor Nederland tans staan, die land (nou eers) met sy donker koloniale verlede konfronteer. In 1997 reeds skryf die kontroversiële politikus Pim Fortuyn<sup>2</sup> oor die “*islamisering van onze cultuur*” (Botman, Jouwe, & Wekker, 2001:11); in 2000 skryf Paul Scheffer, tot 2005 hoogleraar aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam en prominente lid van die Arbeidersparty, dat die huidige beleid te veel ruimte laat vir “*migranten en vluchtelingen*” (Botman *et al.*, 2001:11) en kort daarna betoog die sosioloog Paul Schnabel dat Nederland geen multi-kulturele samelewing is nie en dit ook nie moet word nie (Botman *et al.*, 2001). Schnabel, vanaf 2006 direkteur van die Nederlandse regering se *Sosiaal en Cultureel Planbureau*, word in 2006 gelys as een van die top tien persone in Nederland (Paul Schnabel, 2009). Al drie meningvormers fokus op die verskil tussen ‘ons’ (wit) en ‘hulle’ (ander) Nederlanders.

Die verskillende benamings wat sedert 1970 aan Nederlanders van kleur gegee is, asook die chronologie daarvan, gaan van dieselfde polarisende vertrekpunt uit en bied ‘n blik op die diversiteitsdenke in Nederland. Naamgewing, terminologieë en begrippe is affektief en kultureel gelaai en weerspieël historiese ontwikkelings wat in ‘n sosiale magstruktuur ingebed is. (Hagendoorn, 1986; Nele, 1996; Shadid, 1994).

Die aanvanklike gasarbeiders uit Suid-Europa, Turkye, Noord-Afrika en Nieuw-Guinee<sup>3</sup>, sou na hulle eie lande terugkeer ná hulle voorsien het in die tekort in die arbeidsmark (Botman *et al.*, 2001). In die 1980’s word die term ‘*gasarbeiders*’ deur ‘*migranten*’ vervang, ‘n term met twee konnotasies, te wete iemand wat heen-en-weer beweeg tussen verskillende lande en ‘n nie-wettige (im)migrant. ‘n Nuwe term, ‘*asielzoekers*’, het ontstaan toe vlugteling in die 1980’s om Nederlandse paspoorte aansoek doen. Teen die einde van die tagtigerjare was dit duidelik dat nóg die ‘*asielzoekers*’ nóg die ‘*migrante*’ weer na hul eie lande teruggaan. ‘*Minderhede*’ is ingestel as die nuwe amptelike term. Hagendoorn (1986) kritiseer hierdie term, omdat dit op ‘n sosiale groepering met weinig mag dui. Die kwantitatiewe term kry ‘n kwalitatiewe assosiasie van onwaardig en ongelykwaardig. Ook kry die term in die maatskaplike sin ‘n stereotipiese betekenis. Dit roep assosiasies met agterstand en probleme ‘n maatskaplik agtergestelde posisie en gebrek aan institusionele mag op. In 1989 word ‘*minderhede*’ met die sambreelterm ‘*allochtonen*’ vervang. ‘*Allochtoon*’ sluit die volgende groeperings in: gasarbeiders, mense uit voormalige kolonies en mense van wie minstens een van die ouers nie in Nederland gebore is nie (*Allochtoon* Sa.). Twee teenstrydighede spreek uit hierdie naamgewing. Eerstens word alle etniese minderhede volgens (Botman *et al.*, 2001:159) op “*een grote hoop gegooid*”:

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<sup>2</sup> “Pim Fortuyn was the centre of controversy for his views on *Islam* and his *anti-immigration* positions. He called Islam “a backward culture” and said that he would close the borders to Muslims if it were legally possible” (Pim Fortuyn 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Die eerste groep Nieuw-Guinee-Molukkers is in 1951 na Nederland gebring. In 1962 is die Nederlandse deel van Nieuw-Guinea aan Indonesië oorhandig, maar Molukkers wat vir die Nederlandse bestuur gewerk het, het die opsie gehad om na Nederland te gaan, waar hulle dan Nederlandse burgerskap sou verkry (Molukkers naar Nederland Sa.).

De terminologie ‘allochtoon’ schijnt voor ons migranten, vreemdelingen, zwarten, asielzoekers, vluchtelingen, zigeuners, burgers van EEG-lidstaten een verzamelnaam te zijn zolang alles maar controleerbaar blijft en rust en harmonie heerst in dit landje.

Tweedens definieer die Nederlandse regering se *Centrale Buro vir Statistiek (CBS)* die begrip ‘allochtoon’ deur te onderskei tussen eerste en tweede generasie ‘allochtonen’. Eersgenoemde verwys na ‘n persoon wat in Nederland woon, maar elders gebore is en van wie ten minste een ouer ook in ‘n ander land gebore is. Laasgenoemde verwys weer na ‘n Nederlander van wie minstens een ouer in ‘n ander land gebore is. ‘n Nederlander van wie een ouer byvoorbeeld in Vlaandere gebore is, behoort, volgens hierdie definisie, dus ‘allochtoon’ te wees. Die algemeen-aanvaarde omgangstaal wyk egter heeltemal hiervan af. Iemand is slegs ‘allochtoon’ wanneer hy/sy ten opsigte van voorkoms en gedrag duidelik van wit Nederlanders verskil (*Allochtoon*, Sa.).

Die term ‘allochtoon’ sluit dus witmense uit. ‘n (Wit) Poolse of Suid-Afrikaanse immigrant sal nie ‘allochtoon’ wees nie, al is nie een van die ouers in Nederland gebore nie; maar ‘n swart Pool of Suid-Afrikaner sou wel ‘allochtoon’ wees (Wekker, 2006). Dit is ook die geval met die chronologie van die name tot dusver bespreek: ‘*gasarbeider*’, ‘*asielsoeker*’, ‘*migrant*’, ‘*minderheden*’- almal het een kenmerk gemeen: hulle is nie-wit. Ook die nuutste toevoeging tot hierdie naamgewingsproses, ‘*nieuwkomers*’ verwys amptelik na “*mensen boven de achttien jaar, die minder dan een jaar geleden in Nederland zijn gekomen*”, maar daar word selde indien ooit, na witmense as ‘nieuwkomers’ verwys (Botman *et al.* 2001:159).

Wanneer etniese groeperinge as probleemmmense gesien word, soos in Nederland (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Perkins, 2003; Smelink, 1999), vind stereotipering plaas, omdat veralgemeen word en omdat ‘probleem’ ‘n negatiewe assosiasie het. Terselfdertyd is dit eufemisties omdat dit nie openlik vyandig is nie. Westerse lande se vrees vir vreemdelinge berus op implisiete stereotipering (Ledic, 2000; Nganda, 1996). Hoe sterker die xenofobie, hoe sterker die implisiete stereotipering waarvolgens ‘hulle’ andersheid ‘ons’ eendersheid bedreig (De Figueiredo & Elkins 2003). Die persepsie dat daar geen raakpunte tussen ‘ons’ en ‘hulle’ is nie, vorm dus die basis van nie alleen die affektief-gelaaide naamgewing nie, maar ook die polarisering en xenofobie waarna verwys is.

### 3.2 Suid-Afrika

Die nuwe, demokratiese Suid-Afrika bestaan reeds sedert 1995. Dit is dus noodsaaklik en tydig om in retrospek te kyk na hoe suksesvol Afrikaanse handboeke in die omkering van die vorige bedeling se oningeligte en met vooroordeel-ge vulde voorstellingspraktyke was (Esterhuyse, 1986; Webb, 1992). Is die ignorering en stilswye ten opsigte van die religieuse en die sosiolinguistiese werklikhede van die Afrikaanssprekende taalgemeenskap reggestel? Die helfte van die Afrikaanse gemeenskap is immers bruinmense (Esterhuyse, 1986). ‘n Moedertaal-taalhandboek behoort die wêreld van alle moedertaalsprekers van die taal te weerspieël, tog is Afrikaans gedurende apartheid as die alleenbesit van die blanke Afrikaner geprojekteer (Engelbrecht, 2003).

‘n Opspraakwekkende studie tydens apartheid was ‘n sosiolinguistiese ondersoek: *Taalhandboeke binne die Christelik-Nasionale apartheidspadigma* (Esterhuyse, 1986), wat ontstellende taalstereotipering ten opsigte van bruin Afrikaanssprekendes in twee

veelgebruikte handboekreekse, naamlik *Afrikaans my taal* en *Ons moedertaal* uitgewys het. Taalstereotipering begin, volgens hierdie studie, by die implementering van *Algemeen Beskaafde Afrikaans* ('n term wat setel in die koloniale geloof dat die blanke die beskawing na Suid-Afrika gebring het). Die waarde van Esterhuysen (1986) se ondersoek lê enersyds daarin dat Afrikanereksklusiwiteit aan die hand van universele sosiolinguïstiese reëls aan die kaak gestel is. Sosiolinguïstiese manipulasie deur sillabusbeplanners, voorskryfkomitees en handboekskrywers kom byvoorbeeld in die studie onder skoot. Andersins het die ondersoek openbaar in watter mate bruin Afrikaanssprekendes in die 20ste eeu geïgnoreer en gestigmatiseer is. Hierdie taalstereotipering het by die bruin sprekers van die Kaapse variant 'n identiteitskrisis laat ontstaan, wat uiteindelik 'n grootskaalse taalverskuiwing na Engels meegebring het (Engelbrecht, 2003). In watter mate is die bordjies na meer as 'n dekade van demokratisering verhang? Is daar byvoorbeeld steeds Eurosentriese reste in die boeke teenwoordig?

In watter mate word sensitiewe kwessies (veral rondom politiek en godsdiens) wel aangespreek? In Suid-Afrika is regeringsbetrokkenheid, bepaalde seleksieprosedures en die aanbeveling van bepaalde voorgeskrewe handboeke algemene praktyk. Daar was sedert 1994 ook doelbewuste beleidsinisiatiewe om gelykheid en regverdigheid in leermateriaal te verseker. McKinney (2005:1) verduidelik:

... the setting up of the Race and Values Directorate in the National Department of Education (DoE), the establishment of a special sub-committee on human rights to ensure the integration of values into the revised national curriculum ... and the creation of of anti-racism and human rights in education networks by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) ...

Hoe eerlik en outentiek is de-stereotiperingstegnieke en -strategieë? In 'n studie oor geskiedenis-handboeke in Suid-Afrika na 1995 (Engelbrecht, 2008), word byvoorbeeld bevind dat kitsstrategieë soos swart/wit rolomkering of te wel *'exchanging white heroes for black heroes'* (Jansen, 1989), aangewend word om apartheidsvoorstellings van die verlede reg te stel. Montgomery (2005) argumenteer dat handboeke in Kanada, die beeld van 'n anti-rassistiese en onproblematiese staat konstrueer (in teenstelling met die Kanadese werklikheid). Is dit moontlik dat Afrikaanse handboeke ter wille van konformering aan 'politiese korrektheid' en goedkeuring deur departementele komitees dieselfde doen? Kusendila (2003) beweer byvoorbeeld dat 'n ideale prentjie van hoe 'n gemeenskap behoort te funksioneer in die handboekreeks *Raamwerk* gekonstrueer word, asook dat ander tale en hul sprekers nie werklik in die reeks 'n stem kry nie, aangesien almal (swart of wit) voorgestel word asof hulle vanuit huis Afrikaanssprekend is.

Die nuwe demokratiese post-apartheid waardes en norme behoort dus in die nuutste leermiddele te manifesteer, maar in watter mate dit kunsmatig is of ter wille van die goedkeuring deur die provinsiale onderwysdepartemente verander is, bly 'n ope vraag.

#### **4. Literatuurstudie**

Internasionale navorsingstemas ten opsigte van handboeke het gedurende die afgelope dekades 'n verwickelde ontwikkelingspatroon getoon. Voor die Eerste Wêreldoorlog was navorsingstemas toegespits op post-koloniale invloede, gedrewe deur 'n beskawingsmissie wat

by implikasie enige produktiwiteit in ontwikkelende lande misken het (Greaney, 2004). Na-oorlogse studies het probeer lig werp op die impak van verdraaide historiese feite, uitbeeldings van minderwaardigheid en politieke vooroordele op die onderwysstelsels van verskillende lande, gemeenskappe en rasminderhede. ‘Onderliggende aannames’ en ‘verskuilde agendas’ was die akademiese *jargon* van die afgelope drie dekades. Kwantitatiewe inhoudsanalises het gelyke voorstellings van ras, geslag, klas en gestremdheid in tekste en illustratiewe materiaal bereken, wat op grond van die letterlike en simboliese betekenis wat hieraan geheg kon word, gekategoriseer is (McDiarmid & Pratt, 1971; Paton & Deverill, 1974; Stewart, 1950).

Vergelykende ondersoek oor ooreenkomste en verskille tussen die handboeke van die sogenaamde ‘ontwikkelde’ en ‘ontwikkelende’ lande wat eers in die middel 1980’s begin het, was uitsluitlik toegespits op die probleme van ontwikkelende lande, naamlik armoede, wanvoeding en hongersnood (De Jongh, 1995; King & Morrissey, 1988; Nele, 1996; Van den Berg & Reinsch, 1983). In Suid-Afrika verskyn die eerste studie oor rasvooroordeel in Suid-Afrikaanse handboeke reeds in 1965, te wete die opspraakwekkende studie van Auerbach, wat later as motivering gedien het vir die *Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation* (UNESCO)-verslag *History in black and white* (Dean, Hartmann & Katzen, 1983).

In die afgelope twee dekades het die navorsingsmetodes verander van positivistiese ontledings van negatiewe beelde wat in diens staan van óf ‘ons’ óf ‘hulle’ tot konstruktivistiese pogings om wetenskaplike kennis te ontwikkel oor hoe stereotiperende voorstellings en blote assimilerende werkswyses effektief teëgewerk kan word (McKinney, 2005; Rice, 2005). Kontemporêre ondersoek is merendeels kwalitatief van aard en word gekenmerk deur interaksie tussen verskillende antropologieë en stelsels. Klem word dus geplaas op nuwe en verskillende stemme wat in hierdie ondersoekveld te voorskyn kom en wat hierdie stemme ten opsigte van bepaalde sosiale en politieke wêreldbeelde weerspieël (Montgomery, 2005; Roberts-Schweitzer, 2006; Sierens, 2000).

Nie alleen is hierdie nuwe navorsingsfokus reeds in 1990 deur akademiese afgevaardigdes na die *George Eckhardt Institute (GEI) for Textbook Research*<sup>4</sup>-werkswinkel in Braunschweig, Duitsland, bevestig nie, maar die navorsingstemas in die handboek-onderzoekveld is ook tydens hierdie navorsingswerkswinkel ‘n stap verder gevoer. Konsensus is bereik dat toekomstige navorsing oor handboeke van die veronderstelling moet uitgaan dat kontroversiële kwessies wat voorheen gerieflikheidshalwe omseil of geïgnoreer is, aangespreek behoort te word (Bourdillon, 1992). Wat nie verander het nie, is die amper onaantasbare rol van handboeke in die konstruksie van sosio-politiese paradigmas waarbinne leerders se sosialisering plaasvind; asook die inherente regverdiging wat handboeke aan kulturele norme verleen (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; McKinney, 2005; Mok & Reinsch, 1996). Handboeke word dus steeds beskou as sosio-kulturele ‘agente’ wat as voedingstof vir formele en verskuilde kurrikula dien. Evalueerende studies wat kennis aangaande onbewustelike persepsies, waardes en stereotipes

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<sup>4</sup> Hierdie instituut, gestig in 1951, publiseer studies oor die inhoud van nasionale, Europese en globale geskiedenis in skoolhandboeke. Internasionale seminare oor handboekanalise word ook aangebied, byvoorbeeld die *Baltic States History Textbooks Project* wat op die gemeenskaplike interpretasie en insig ten opsigte van historiese gebeure in Estland, Letland en Litaue gemik is. Uiteindelik is een handboek met al die betrokke lande se historiese perspektiewe ten opsigte van die Baltiese streek uitgegee (Stradling, 2001).

ontwikkel, poog om alle leerders se sosiale werklikhede op grond van die herkennings- en identifiseringsbeginsel wat in handboeke behoort voor te kom, te weerspieël (Homan, 2003; Höpken, 2006; McKinney, 2005). Die demitologisering van persepsies aangaande ontwikkelende lande word (volgens Kaomea, 2000 en McCall, 2005) steeds deur Eurosentriese perspektiewe in die wiele gery.

Dit is duidelik dat daar nie in die handboekwêreld 'n "bibliotopia"<sup>5</sup> bestaan nie. Tradisionele rassisme, diskriminasie, etikettering en growwe veralgemenings kom baie minder voor as in die verlede, maar terselfdertyd is daar voortdurend nuwe mutasies en manifestasies van etnosentrisme, wat die ondersoek na stereotipiese voorstellings kompliseer (Paton & Deverell, 1974; Rice, 2005; Mok & Reinsch, 1996). Ignorering of omseiling is die algemeenste vorm van implisiete stereotipering. Dit neem verskeie vorme aan: nie al die feite word gegee nie; die buitegroep se bydrae word verklein; die binnegroep alleen word uitgebeeld as verantwoordelik vir positiewe ontwikkeling en negatiewe, eerder as positiewe menings, word aangaande die buitegroep gegee (Kirkness 1997; Roberts-Schweitzer, 2006).

Daar is tans 'n vakuum in die literatuur ten opsigte van moedertaal-taalhandboeke asook die vergelyking van stereotipering in die handboeke van verwante taalgemeenskappe. Slegs een studie vergelyk moedertaal-taalhandboeke en wel ten opsigte van die vergestaltung van identiteit in Afrikaanse en Vlaamse handboeke (Kusendila, 2003).

## 5. Data-insameling

Akademici is dit eens dat fokusgroepbesprekings 'n ryk beskrywing van kommunikasie oor 'n gestelde verskynsel moontlik maak. Idees kan opgevolg word en reaksies, motiewe en emosies kan grondig ondersoek word – aspekte wat 'n vraelys byvoorbeeld nie doen nie (Creswell, 1994; Mouton, 2001). Volgens Babbie en Mouton (2001:292) skep fokusgroepbesprekings 'n ruimte waarbinne betekenis tussen groeplede onderhandel word, eerder as om te volstaan by individuele betekeniskepping. Vir *outsider*-navorsers is betekenis-onderhandeling waartydens fokusgroeplede verbande tussen hul eie leefwêreld en die handboeke in hulle eie gemeenskappe trek, van onskatbare waarde.

Die fokusgroepbesprekings het onderskeidelik op 12 April 2007 en op 12 November 2008 by die Universiteit Utrecht (Nederland) en die Universiteit Pretoria plaasgevind. Kollegas verbonde aan beide inrigtings het as fasiliteerders opgetree, terwyl ek as navorser deurgaans teenwoordig was. Die fokusgroepbesprekings het ongeveer twee ure elk geduur en is opgeneem en getranskribeer. Die fasiliteerders is volledig en skriftelik ten opsigte van die modus operandi ingelig en is van die nodige apparatuur voorsien om in die fokusgroepbesprekings met die gekodeerde illustrasies te werk.

## 6. Bevindinge

### 6.1 Verslag van die fokusgroepbespreking in Nederland oor Nieuw Nederlands (NN)

#### 6.1.1 Algemene indrukke

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<sup>5</sup> James McCall van *The Centre for Publishing Studies University of Stirling*, gebruik hierdie term in September 2005 tydens 'n aanbieding by die Universiteit Pretoria.

Ten opsigte van die voorblad van *Nieuw Nederlands* was die fokusgroeplede dit eens dat dit 'n positiewe beeld van Nederland as diversiteitsland gee. Deelnemer 1 sê:

*De titel van het boek Nieuw Nederlands wijst op de 'nieuwe' Nederlanders. Het zijn niet meer alleen blonde, blauw-ogige Nederlanders. De jongen lijkt Mediterraans of Turks. Dat is stereotyperend-ontkennend, omdat er 'iets van allemaal' in zit.*

Die titel van die boek (*Nieuw Nederlands*) impliseer ook dinamiese verandering in die sin van Nederlands wat 'nuut' dink en kyk. Die fokusgroeplede het hulle egter van meet af aan in die algemeen sterk teen die gebruik van die visuele materiaal in die handboek uitgespreek. Die algemene probleme wat hulle ten opsigte van die handboek geopper het, gestaaf deur aanhalings uit die fokusgroepbespreking, word nou verskaf:

Geen byskrifte, vrae of opdragte verhelder die gebruik van die foto's nie. Deelnemer 1 beskryf hierdie verskynsel as 'heel irritant.'

Die assosiasies tussen die foto's en die geskrewe tekste is in feitlik al die gevalle onduidelik. Deelnemer 2 reageer soos volg ten opsigte van *Nieuw Nederlands* 5/6:47:

*Mense die in de rij staan en op de bus wachten ... wat dit met dat artikel te maken heeft, dat over de Verlichting gaat, weet ik echt niet.*

Afgesien van die feit dat die verband onduidelik is, is dit dikwels 'n valse voorstelling van wat in die teks voorkom:

*Iemand die leest...in een stuk over analfabeten...* (Deelnemer 3 ten opsigte van *Nieuw Nederlands* 5:90).

Die politieke lading in sommige foto's is onvanpas. Deelnemer 2 verwys soos volg na *Nieuw Nederlands* 5/6:228: *Wat mij onmiddellijk opvalt, is het plaatje om de hals. Een Arabisch jaaltje met een politieke kleur... Dome of the Rock. Jeruzalem, politieke lading, niet verstandig in schoolboeken.*

Die foto's lyk afkomstig vanuit ander lande en min daarvan verbeeld die tipiese Nederlandse werklikheid. Deelnemer 2 sê dat die foto's "samengesteld zijn door iemand die over de hele wereld gereisd heeft."

Wanneer 'n boek inhoudelik slaag (*Nieuw Nederlands* is 'n veelgebruikte boek in Nederland), is dit nie noodwendig geslaagd ten opsigte van diversiteit nie.

Deelnemer 1: *Is het wel verstandig is om een boek volgens multiculturaliteit goed te keuren wijl de inhoud bijvoorbeeld slecht is?*

Deelnemer 2: *Is het boek dan zogenaamd goedgekeurd?*

Die temas wat uit die fokusgroepbespreking gekristalliseer het, word vervolgens bespreek.

### 6.1.2 Anders-as-'ons'

Die fokusgroeplede beskryf sommige van die uitbeeldings as karikatuuragtig, ander as ekstremisties, maar definitief as anders-as-Westers. Met betrekking tot *Nieuw Nederlands* 5/6:187 wat verskillende karikature in (waarskynlik) 'n dokter se spreekkamer toon, beweer Deelnemer 4 dat die uitbeelding van die tradisionele swartman stereotiperingsbevestigend is, aangesien hy heeltemal anders as die ander karikature (almal Westers) sit. In *Nieuw Nederlands*

5/6:228 (die gesprek tussen twee Moslemvroue en 'n Westerling) word die foto, volgens Deelnemer 2, onmiddellik polities gekleur deur die teken van ekstremisme op die sjaal van een van die vroue, wat op 'n ekstremistiese groep wat hulle beywer vir die bevryding van Jerusalem, dui. Ook die foto van die tradisioneel geklede (Tibetaanse?) seuns op die trappe van wat blyk 'n religieuse tempel te wees (*Nieuw Nederlands*, 4:90), beklemtoon dat hulle 'anders-as-ons' is, of soos Deelnemer 1 dit stel: *“dat zijn niet general society; modern versus tradisioneel.”* Die foto van die groep Sjinese mans (*Nieuw Nederlands*, 4:13) is ook ekstremisties, vreemd en onverklaarbaar. Deelnemer 4 meld dat nie-Europeërs wat lees (*Nieuw Nederlands*, 5/6:47), gesien moet word in die lig van die feit dat die verligting geheel en al Europees was. 'n Foto van 'n lesende 'nie-Europeër' by 'n leesstuk oor die Europese verligting, impliseer op Eurosentriese wyse dat 'ons' verligting selfs by 'hulle' uitgekom het.

*Nieuw Nederlands* 5/6:228 beeld 'n gesprek tussen 'n Westerse en twee nie-Westerse vroue uit. Die ouer vrou lyk soos 'n tipiese Westerse vrou (*“zoals mijn oma”* sê Deelnemer 4) wat iets *“maatskapliks”* (Deelnemer 3) met die ander vrou bespreek en *“heel geïnteresseerd lijken”* (Deelnemer 1) in wat die ander vrou te sê het. Deelnemer 4 lewer kommentaar op die mate waarin die Westerse vrou deur die twee ander vroue ingesluit word:

*Interessante foto. Als de twee vrouwen modern aangekleed waren, zou deze foto volgens mensen uit het Weste niet zo interessant zijn. Modern tegenover tradisioneel, jonk tegenover oud. Als een jongere vrouw in de midden had gezeten, dan waren de drie vrouwen vriendinnen...*

Die advertensie van die Nederlandse onderwysdepartement (*Nieuw Nederlands*, 4:27) skep 'n uiters positiewe beeld van 'ons' wat 'hulle' help. Die fokusgroepfasiliteerder lewer kommentaar op die komposisie van die foto: *het is een stereotypering van een vlotte blanke jongen. De compositie is paternalistich. Het ist een geënseneerde foto; een aktiefoto zou beter zijn.*

### 6.1.3 Probleme, primitiwiteit en armoede

'n Volgende tema is die van agterlikheid en onderontwikkeldheid. Visuele voorstellings in *Nieuw Nederlands*, 5/6:17, *Nieuw Nederlands*, 4:146 en *Nieuw Nederlands*, 5/6:167 is uitbeeldings van primitiwiteit, probleme, en armoede. Deelnemer 4 beskryf die implisiete boodskap van die visuele voorstelling in *Nieuw Nederlands*, 4:146 soos volg:

*Ook in heel kleine dorpjes in de townships in Afrika, hebben mensen mobieltjes. Dat is dus niet gebaseerd op de waarheid. Het is de uitbeelding van de achterlijke cultuur van mensen die ver van ons wonen.*

Deelnemer 1 voeg hierby:

*Stereotyperingbevestigend... achterlijke, onderontwikkelde Afrikaan die ons wil nadoen met zijn telefoontje dat niet echt is. Ik doe alsof ik een mobieltje heb. Zo iets van: je kan het wel nadoen, maar je hebt het niet. Zo'n zielig Afrikaansachtig beeld van 'daar zijn jullie allemaal zo'.*

Visuele voorstellings *Nieuw Nederlands*, 5/6:17 en *Nieuw Nederlands*, 5/6:167 suggereer dat die jong vrou en die kinders *“kansarm”* is (Deelnemer 2); dat hulle onderwys primitief is (Deelnemer 1); dat die jong vrou waarskynlik eers op 'n laat stadium in haar lewe die kans kry om te leer lees en skryf (Deelnemer 2) en dat hierdie geleentheid hom as gevolg

van ontwikkelingshulpgeld vanuit die Weste voordoen (Deelnemer 4). Die vraag word gevra waarom die foto van die kinders wat ingedruk langs mekaar op die grond sit, by 'n leesstuk geplaas word wat oor geboortebepkering in China handel. Die enigste antwoord waarmee die groep vorendag kan kom, is dat die foto (ook) op oorbevolking dui:

*Het tradisionele beeld van overbevolking suggereert heel veel bij elkaar. Het duidt op Afrikanen die geboortebepkering moeten toepassen. Men kon toch veel beter een Chinees gezin tonen dat alleen maar twee kinderen heeft.*

#### 6.1.4 Samevatting

Die fokusgroeplede is dit eens dat die visuele voorstellings in *Nieuw Nederlands* nie die werklikheid van 'n diverse Nederland weerspieël nie en dat die foto's wat wel van anders-as-wit mense geneem is, waarskynlik op enkele uitsonderings na, buite die grense van Nederland geneem is. Die feit dat diversiteit steeds as 'n probleem beskou word, blyk uit die 'kansarme' indruk wat deur die meerderheid foto's gesuggereer word.

### 6.2 Verslag van die fokusgroeptbespreking oor Afrikaans ons taal (AOT)

#### 6.2.1 Algemene indrukke

Aanvanklik het die bespreking gesukkel om aan die gang te kom; die deelnemers het nie by die opdrag om stereotipering, veral implisiete stereotipering, aan te dui, uitgekóm nie. Lang besprekings is gehou oor naamgewing in Afrikaans, sonder om by die essensie uit te kom, naamlik hoe naamgewing as tegniek gebruik kan word ter wille van in- of uitsluiting.

Anders as by die Nederlandse fokusgroeptbespreking was daar in die fokusgroeptbespreking onderliggende rassensitiewiteit. Eerstens was daar spanning rondom terminologie. Deelnemer 2 gebruik die term 'swart' en Deelnemer 7 reageer met 'n opmerking dat 'n bepaalde karakter 'bruin' en nie 'swart' is nie, waarop Deelnemer 2 antwoord dat sy die term generies gebruik het. Die spanning is daarin geleë dat bruinmense hulself uit solidariteit met swartmense tydens apartheid van die term 'bruin' gedistansieer het en na almal wat nie-wit is nie, verwys het as 'swart' (Esterhuysen, 1986).

Deelnemer 7: ... *maar sy's nie swart nie.*

Deelnemer 2: *I use black generically.*

Deelnemer 7: *You're not going to get a coloured girl called Lethabo.*

Tweedens het Deelnemer 1 die geldigheid van hierdie studie bevraagteken deur na die handboekkrisis in Suid-Afrika te verwys, wat tot gevolg het dat slegs ongeveer 'n derde van die leerders in Suid-Afrika wel handboeke het (*Radio Sonder Grense-nuus*, 2006): *Is the study about the assumption ... is the assumption of the study that the schools are using textbooks?*

Hierdie opmerking het 'n nuanse aan die fokusgroeptbespreking gegee van 'julle hou julle besig met boeke vir die bevoorregte, eksklusiewe deel van die bevolking (net soos julle in die verlede gedoen het).

Derdens het een van die fokusgroeplede direk na afloop van die fokusgroeptbespreking in 'n e-pos gebieg dat sy nie onvoorwaardelik haar eie interpretasie gegee het nie, maar haar woorde

deurgaans geweeg het, sodat dit nie onsensitief ten opsigte van die ‘ander’ voorkom nie:

*Ek was half geskok in my eie reaksie. Ek was definitief geïnhibeer en het nie gesê wat ek normaalweg sou sê. Ek was bang dat as ek my mening gee, dit dalk as onsensitief teenoor hulle sou oorkom. Ek was heeltyd daarop bedag om te formuleer en te benoem sodat hulle nie voel dat ek kleur raaksien nie.*

Vierdens het een van die wit fokusgroeplede dit vreemd gevind dat daar soveel ‘politieke’ inhoud in ‘n taalboek voorkom, waarop Deelnemer 1 gereageer het met die vraag waarom hy die illustrasies (wat oor menseregte handel) as politieke beskou (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:52 en *Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:653). Volgens Deelnemer 1 is inligting oor maatskaplike opbou en humanitêre beginsels natuurlike en noodsaaklike pilare van ‘n demokratiese staat en het dit niks met politiek te make nie. Hierdie opmerking het gesuggereer dat witmense menseregtekwessies as politieke sien, omdat daar in die verlede so lank geen aandag aan menseregte gegee is nie. Die suggestie word deur Deelnemer 2 ondersteun, wat byvoeg dat sodanige siening (dat menseregte ‘politieke’ is), nêr in Suid-Afrika voorkom.

#### 6.2.2 Aard van die visuele materiaal

Die fokusgroeplede het wel die gebruik van die *butterscotch*-tegniek in die tekste (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 10:6 en *Afrikaans ons taal*, 10:28) bespreek en konsensus bereik dat die *butterscotch*-tegniek kleur op ‘n positiewe manier verdoes.

Deelnemer 7: *Ek persoonlik lees glad nie kleur in die prentjie nie. Party is ingekleur, ander nie. Hulle is vir my dieselfde.*

Deelnemer 5: *Ek dink dit is miskien waardevol, want dit is dalk wat hulle probeer bereik; juis om hom nie uit te sonder nie, ek ervaar nie enigiets negatiefs nie.*

Die groep spreek hulle by meer as een geleentheid sterk teen die groot persentasie illustrasies teenoor die klein persentasie foto’s uit. Kort-kort verwys iemand na die feit dat illustrasies nie so realisties soos foto’s is nie, byvoorbeeld die visuele voorstelling in *Afrikaans ons taal*, 10:28 en dat die verskeidenheid illustrasiestyle irriterend is. Ten opsigte van die visuele voorstelling in *Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:62 is almal egter positief:

Deelnemer 5: *Kyk nou net hoe baie sê hierdie skets. Kyk wat sien jy in hierdie tekening, veral in die volgende gesig. Dis vir my amper meer waardevol as wat ‘n foto sou wees. Ek sien die oë, ek sien amper die gedagtes in die oë.*

Deelnemer 6: *Dis amper ‘n kunswerk.*

Deelnemer 2: *I think ... for me it's diverse. I see diversity because maybe he's Afrikaans (wit), maybe he's black.*

Die groepslede kom uiteindelik tot die gevolgtrekking dat die illustrasies generiese karakters skep sodat mense makliker daarmee kan identifiseer, asook dat mense op ‘n baie meer subjektiewe manier na illustrasies as na foto’s kyk. Die uitbeelding van die emosies van verskillende kultuurgroepe word, volgens die fokusgroeplede, positief en empaties in *Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:186 gedoen. Deelnemer 5 praat byvoorbeeld van die “dierbare Griekwa-tannie” en Deelnemer 1 wys daarop dat die collage verskillende emosies suksesvol uitdruk en dat die kyker se emosionele respons nie deur die keuse van ‘n bepaalde kultuurgroep geraak word nie.

### 6.2.3 Outentisiteit van die voorstellings

Daar word onderling verskil oor die outentiekheid van enkele voorstellings. Lethabo (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:190), die “suksesvolle, passievolle en intelligente” (Deelnemer 5) werker van die versekeringsmaatskappy *Outsurance*, word bespreek. Alhoewel almal saamstem dat sy soos ‘n aangename mens lyk, sien Deelnemer 3 en 4 haar uitbeelding as enkelma met vier kinders as moontlike bevestiging van die stereotipering van ‘disfunksionele’ swart gesinne. Deelnemer 5 dink weer dat dit impliseer dat ‘n enkelma ook as beroepsvrou suksesvol kan wees en dat dit die stereotipe van die ‘perfekte gesin’ deurbreek, omdat daar met verskillende gesinsmanifestasies rekening gehou word:

*... die vreeslike handsome pa en die vreeslike sexy ma en die dierbare blonde dogterjje en die aktiewe seuntjie ... en hulle is nou so happy. En dis irrelevant, want jy kan dit nie gebruik nie, want dis nie hoe dit [die perfekte gesin] vandag lyk nie. So, dit is dalk net ‘n subtile manier om dit aan te spreek.*

Die groep bespreek nog drie voorbeelde wat, volgens hulle, nie outentiek is nie. Eerstens beskou Deelnemer 1 Lethabo se taalgebruik as kunsmatig:

*I was looking at the use of language, and the direct translation of sentences and whether Lethabo would speak like that. I would find it extremely difficult if she speaks like that unless it was translated from English to Afrikaans, and it’s given a particular meaning. But I wouldn’t see Lethabo speaking like that.*

Hierdie siening stem ooreen met Kusendila (2003) se bewering dat ‘n wêreld in Afrikaanse handboeke gekonstrueer word waarin ‘alle mense Afrikaans praat’.

Tweedens wys hulle die ‘fout’ in *Afrikaans ons taal*, 10:15 uit. Die leesstuk vertel die verhaal van mevrou Van der Merwe (‘n tipiese ‘wit’ vrou met ‘n tipiese ‘wit’ van) wat ‘n slang op haar rusbank ontdek, maar in die illustrasie lyk mevrou Van der Merwe soos die swart huishulp. Dit lyk asof die illustrasie doelbewus deur ‘n ‘swart’ gesig vervang is. Deelnemer 6 voeg by dat “the idea is forced; the issue is forced.”

Derdens voel die groep dat daar ten opsigte van sport en vermaaklikheid verteenwoordigende uitbeeldings oor die kultuurspektrum voorkom (byvoorbeeld in *Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:24 en *Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:193). Deelnemer 5 noem dat die visuele voorstelling van *Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12: 91 in die eerste en laaste uitgawes van die boek verskil. Daar is dus doelbewus in die laaste uitgawe ‘n swart sportvrou in die collage ingesit. Deelnemer 1 vra waarom dit nie ‘n Suid-Afrikaanse sportvrou is nie en insinueer dat geforseerdheid ook hier voorkom: *It could have a negative effect. You can’t get black people who are successful in sport. You have to go American.*

### 6.2.4 Afrikaanse taalvariasie

Die groep lewer kommentaar op die verskeidenheid voorbeelde van Afrikaanse variëteite wat in die handboek aangetref word. Daar is heelwat dialoogvoorbeelde van byvoorbeeld Kaaps (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:79), Griekwa-Afrikaans (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:79) en Noord-Kaaps (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:80) asook letterkundige tekste in veral Kaaps, byvoorbeeld gedigte deur die digter Adam Small geskryf. Deelnemer 5 beskou dit as pogings tot herkenbaarheid vir alle Afrikaanse sprekers. Deelnemer 1 het egter ‘n voorbehoud ten opsigte van die variasie:

*If you see white people speaking just one kind of Afrikaans, whilst you portray other people speaking different types of Afrikaans... I would like to see that in the book; do they do that? Do they conveniently see white people as one, above all other people? If white people don't speak the same type of Afrikaans ... if the author is doing that...*

Deelnemer 1 se voorbehoud is dus dat variëteite nie altyd net as “nie-wit” uitgebeeld moet word nie, omdat dit stigmatiserend kan wees, terwyl witmense almal net “op een manier” praat (Esterhuise, 1986). Die groep kyk dan na ‘n voorbeeld van waar twee witmense Noord-Kaaps praat (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:80) wat Deelnemer 1 se voorbehoud ophef. Die gedig deur Boerneef, “Geelkeelkanarie” (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:6), wat geïllustreer word deur ‘n moderne jong swart sangeres, deurbreek ook taalstereotipering.

Die gesprek oor taalvariasie het op ‘n natuurlike wyse oorgegaan in ‘n bespreking oor die verpolitiserings van Afrikaans. Deelnemer 7 haal weer die kwessie van ‘te veel politiek in ‘n taalhandboek’ op:

*Wat vir my belangrik is, wat positief is, is dat ek lank gedink het my Afrikaans is die enigste regte Afrikaans wat ons s'n is, dit word hier goed teëgespreek...Daar is variëteite en almal is aanvaarbaar, maar dan, weer eens: as dit 'n taalkundeboek is, is dit dan nie bietjie te veel nie? Is dit nodig dat dit politiek is? Dis die vraag wat ek vra, want is dit die doel van die boek?*

Hierdie uitspraak lok hewige debatvoering uit. Deelnemer 5 is van mening dat die onderwyser sy taal en vak moet gebruik om leerders op te voed indien daar leemtes in hul herkenning van die geskiedenis is. Deelnemer 1 en 2 beweer dat dit oor meer as geskiedenis gaan, naamlik die geskiedenis van Afrikaans ten einde die taalstereotipering van die verlede te neutraliseer:

Deelnemer 1: *I think the South African context has relevance, because Afrikaans is so highly politicised, and they explain it in relation to June 16, Sharpsville...Political. So, for me, it's exactly that: the story of the relevance, that they do engage... It's not a separate history issue; it's about the history of Afrikaans. If you want to be inclusive, you have to acknowledge that.*

Deelnemer 2: *That's why I think a lot of white people struggle with the fact that there's more black people who speak Afrikaans as a home language than white people. You would never say Afrikaans is my 'huistaal', because we dissociate. I find myself speaking Afrikaans again for the first time at the University of Pretoria. It kind of goes back to ... because we actively dissociate with it and then also I think that certain pockets of communities might see black people who speak Afrikaans as the working class. It will educate you if you speak English. All these issues are going through my mind as I'm saying this.*

Deelnemer 1 bevestig die feit dat bruin sprekers tydens apartheid moedertaalverskuiwing ondergaan het (Engelbrecht, 2003). Die onmiskenbare verskil tussen die uitbeeldings in AOT en die verslag van Esterhuise (1986) aangaande taalstereotipering, dui daarop dat die sosiolinguistiese werklikheid omtrent Afrikaans volledig in die amptelike kurrikulum gereflekteer word (Esterhuise, 1986; Engelbrecht, 2003)

### 6.2.5 Konfrontering met die apartheidsverlede.

Die laaste gesprekstema het gehandel oor die mate waarin die verlede en nasiebou deur die visuele tekste aangespreek word. Verskeie voorbeelde word gegee van die verlede wat “nie vermy word nie” (Deelnemer 5) en van die noodsaaklike bewusmaking van die ervarings van die ‘ander helfte’ Afrikaners (Deelnemer 6), byvoorbeeld die gedig van Antje Krog (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:13) oor ‘n Afrikaanse onderwyseres wat tydens die ‘struggle’ te midde van die onluste probeer skoolhou. Elsa Joubert se roman, *Die swerfjare van Poppie Nongena* (*Afrikaans ons taal*, 11/12:11), word as voorbeeld gegee van hoe die (wit) leerders bewus gemaak kan word van die geskiedenis van ‘nie-wit’ mense. Deelnemer 7 beweer egter (weer) dat daar te veel ruimte in ‘n Afrikaanse handboek aan politiek afgestaan word, waarop Deelnemer 1 antwoord:

*Dis nie ‘n vak op sy eie nie. It’s a voice, maar jy gebruik ander vakke om die taal te steun. Die taal is nie iets op sy eie nie, anders as wat die meeste van ons mee opgegroeï het. Die tegniese gedeelte van die taal wat eintlik baie min vir ons beteken het, anders as dat jy universiteit toe wou gaan. I think the idea here is to make the language a living language.*

### 6.3 Vergelyking van die bevindinge

‘n Vergelykende opsomming van die bevindinge van die fokusgroepbesprekings word in tabel 1 aangebied.

Tabel 1: Vergelyking van fokusgroepbesprekingbevindinge

| <b>NIEUW NEDERLANDS</b>   | <b>AFRIKAANS ONS TAAL</b>  |
|---|--|
| Voorblad en titel getuig van diversiteit.; verder min foto’s waarin ‘anders-as-wit’ voorkom | Voorstellings verteenwoordig deurentyd die totale kultuurspektrum in Suid-Afrika               |
| Geen kontekstualisering of didaktiese integrering van visuele materiaal nie.                | Uitstekende didaktiese integrering van visuele materiaal, vroe en aktiwiteite.                 |
| Slegs foto’s word gebruik.  | Te veel illustrasies en te min foto’s boet geloofwaardigheid in.                               |
| Verskille tussen ‘ons’ en ‘hulle’ word beklemtoon.  | Ooreenkomste eerder as verskille tussen diverse Afrikaanssprekendes word beklemtoon            |
| Politieke en religieuse lading in sommige foto’s.   | Menseregteknessies en politieke inhoud word verwar.  |
| Ekstremistiese, karikatuuragtige foto’s poog om te vermaak.                                 | <i>Butterscotch</i> -tegniek verdoesel rassensitiewiteit.                                      |
| Verrassingstegniek deur ongewone situasies wat van die tipiese Westerse norm afwyk.         | Outentiekheid van sekere tekste word bevraagteken.   |
| Paternalistiese uitbeeldings toon agterlikheid en onderontwikkelde buite Nederland.         | Geforseerdheid van rolmodelle, asook die indruk wat geskep word dat almal net Afrikaans praat. |
| Ignorerings van die tipiese Nederlandse diversiteitswerklikheid                             | Rassensitiewiteit en polarisering in fokusgroepbespreking.                                     |
| Konstruering van ‘n positiewe beeld van Nederland en Nederlanders.                          | Die apartheidsverlede word openlik bespreek.   |

Die fokusgroepbesprekings het in 'n groot mate die dilemmas en diskrepancies onderliggend aan die sosiale operasionalisering in Nederland en Suid-Afrika geïdentifiseer. Op grond van die fokusgroepbesprekings is die vlak van interkulturaliteit in Afrikaanse handboeke veel hoër as in Nederlandse handboeke. Sensitiewe kwessies (veral rondom politiek en godsdiens) word aangespreek (waarskynlik) weens doelbewuste beleidsinisiatiewe van uitgewers en onderwysdepartemente. So geslaagd is die diversiteitsuitbeelding in die handboekreeks dat 'n anti-rassistiese en utopiese staat (Montgomery, 2005) daardeur gekonstrueer word, wat soms geforseerd voorkom.

In teenstelling hiermee, kom daar in die Nederlandstalige data veel meer teenstrydige kodes voor, byvoorbeeld beskaaf/primitief, ontwikkel/onontwikkel, religieus/nie-religieus. Eurosentriese perspektiewe is waarneembaar in die feit dat verskille eerder as ooreenkomste tussen wit en ander Nederlanders beklemtoon word. Strategieë soos ignorering, verkleining van die buitengroep se bydrae en negatiewe eerder as positiewe inligting oor die buitengroep dra by tot die ideologiese voorstellings in die handboekreeks.

## 7. Slot

Daar is min, indien enige ooreenkomste tussen die dogterstale Nederlands en Afrikaans se hantering van diversiteit in moedertaal-taalhandboeke. Die visuele materiaal in die boeke suggereer dat Afrikaans inderdaad sy koloniale mentaliteit ontgroeï het, maar dat Eurosentriese perspektiewe nog ongehinderd in Nederlandse handboeke figureer.

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# Examining bias in a test of academic literacy: Does the *Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL)* treat students from English and African language backgrounds differently?

**A B S T R A C T** Responsible test design relies on close examination of a number of parameters of a test. After finding a clearly argued, rational basis (construct) for the ability being tested, then articulating this in detailed specifications for subtests and item types, and subsequently setting benchmarks for both test reliability and item productivity, there remains, after the results become available, a number of further dimensions of a test that need attention. This article examines one such dimension: that of Differential Item Functioning (DIF), asking whether there is, in the case of the test under consideration, bias towards a certain group of test-takers (testees), so that they are unfairly disadvantaged by some of the items or task types in the test. The test results across four different years (2005-2008) of a large group of first year students, the bulk of the intake at one South African university, are analysed. The fact that there are variations in DIF across the different years and across different task types (subtests) calls for specific explanations. The findings suggest that one would do well to examine test results in depth, in order to avoid conclusions that may be fashionable but inaccurate. However, the argument returns to the defensibility of the test construct, and what should legitimately be included in that, and, by extension, measured.

**Keywords:** test design, subtests, item types, Differential Item Functioning (DIF), bias, test results, defensibility, measurement

## 1. Tests must be theoretically defensible and socially accountable

Many recent studies (e.g. McNamara & Roever, 2006; Shohamy, 2001a, 2001b, 2004) have alerted test developers to the political, social and cultural prejudices that may unwittingly be built into the tests of language ability that we design. Test developers cannot today claim to be ignorant of how, historically, tests have sometimes served to reify cultural and social biases. The context of this article is therefore the broader case that must be made not only for the theoretical justification of language test design, but also for the social accountability that attaches to each responsibly designed test.

In a number of studies and analyses of the *Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL)* and its Afrikaans counterpart, the *Toets van Akademiese Geletterdheidsvlakke (TAG)* (Van der Slik & Weideman, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009; Weideman, 2003, 2009; Weideman & Van der Slik, 2008), we have described how, in terms of empirical analyses and defensible theoretical assumptions and argument, language tests such as these might be rationally justified, how they might be refined, and how their developers might become socially accountable. In addition, Van der Slik (2008) has specifically examined gender bias in these tests. Similarly, the question of the equivalence of tests across different years has also been addressed (Van der Slik & Weideman, 2007). Furthermore, a groundbreaking validation study of the test (Van der Walt & Steyn, 2007), that could potentially serve as a model for others to do similar studies, has also contributed to the detailed analyses and information currently available about these tests, that are now administered to some 31000 students annually on the various campuses of the four universities that have been using them over the past six years. This collaboration among the University of Pretoria, North-West University, the University of the Free State and Stellenbosch University has recently been formalised into a partnership, the Inter-Institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA).

We have undertaken the analyses referred to above for two main reasons. First, the tests affect the lives of ever larger numbers of students: their results are for the most part used to channel first year students into appropriate academic literacy interventions, but in the case of one institution even higher stakes decisions relating to access are in part based on them. Second, we believe that complacency remains the number one enemy of responsible test development. Responsible test design relies on close adherence to a number of design principles (Weideman, 2009), and an equally close examination of a number of parameters of a test.

The first step in responsible test design remains finding a clearly argued, rational basis (construct) for the ability being tested (cf. Van Dyk & Weideman, 2004a), then articulating this in detailed specifications for subtests and item types, and finally setting benchmarks for both test reliability and item productivity (Van Dyk & Weideman, 2004b) to guide the piloting process. After this, there remain, once the tests have been administered and the results become available, a number of further dimensions that need attention. How should the results be interpreted? Since no test is perfect, how can those who have potentially been negatively affected by the level of inconsistency of the measurement be given a second chance? What advice should be given to the administrators who wish to use the test results to enable them to treat fairly and with care everyone whose ability has been measured?

This article examines one such further dimension: that of Differential Item Functioning (DIF), asking whether there is, in the case of the test under consideration, bias towards a certain group of test-takers (testees), so that they are unfairly disadvantaged in comparison with others by some of the items or task types in a test. It is only one of a number of measures to ensure the fairness of test results, but a highly specific and important one, that we thus wish to draw attention to here.

## 2. Research questions

In this article we will therefore address several research questions: 1) To what extent does *TALL* display Differential Item Functioning (DIF)? 2) If DIF is identified, can it be linked to the specific content of the item? 3) To what extent do English first language students and students who have one of the African languages as a first language perform differently on the tests and their constituting subtests and items? 4) If the analyses reveal significant heterogeneity, and if the topic or content does not explain the observed differences, is there another, more plausible explanation? 5) What lessons can be learnt from the outcomes?

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Population and context

In January and February of every year between 2005 and 2008, the academic literacy of virtually all new undergraduate students of the University of Pretoria, the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses of North-West University, and Stellenbosch University was tested through the administration of the *Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL/TAG)*. At two of these institutions, students are allowed to sit for either the English (*TALL*) or Afrikaans test (*TAG*), and so have the freedom to choose whichever language they feel more comfortable with in the academic environment.

Students are also invited to provide background information on their gender and their first (or home) language. A preliminary check of these data reveals that, besides students who have Afrikaans and English as their first language, one of the participating institutions attracts substantially more students whose first language is an African language, than do the others. Since virtually all of these students take the English version of the tests, we will restrict ourselves to the data of those who wrote *TALL* at that institution.

### 3.2 Description of the sample

Information made available by the student administration of the institution whose data are being used for the analysis shows that the main first year students' African languages in 2004 were Xitsonga (2%), IsiZulu (3%), Sesotho (3%), Setswana (5%), and Sesotho Sa Leboa (7%). These proportions would have remained more or less steady, and the Sotho-speaking group (at 15% of total enrolment in 2004) would have remained the majority, in subsequent years. In total, 15,192 students participated (cf. Van der Slik, 2008 for a detailed description). Students whose first language is unknown or who have another language than those mentioned before (Portuguese or French, for example) were excluded from the analyses. This applies to 1,428 students, so the results of 13,764 candidates are available for further analyses. Though everyone in the total sample wrote *TALL*, the English version of

the academic literacy test, by choice, the sample is therefore made up not only of those who have English ( $n = 7430$ ) as a first language, but also of a group who have an African language ( $n = 4400$ ) or Afrikaans ( $n = 1934$ ) as a first language.

### 3.3 TALL and its design

The 2005 and 2006 versions of *TALL* consist of 120 scoring marks, distributed over seven subtests or sections (described in Van Dyk & Weideman 2004a; 2004b, Weideman 2006), six of which are in multiple-choice format:

Section 1: Scrambled text (ST)

Section 2: Interpreting graphs and visual information (GVI)

Section 3: Understanding texts (UT)

Section 4: Academic vocabulary (AV)

Section 5: Text type (TT)

Section 6: Text editing (TE), later renamed to Grammar & text relations (GTR), which will be the label used subsequently in this article

Section 7: Writing (handwritten; marked and scored only for certain borderline cases)

The 2007 and 2008 versions of *TALL* and *TAG* each consist of 100 scoring points, distributed over the first six subtests or sections mentioned above, all of which are in multiple choice format. Section 7 (20 scoring marks) was omitted from 2007 on; borderline cases, who are identified by statistical means, are allowed to take another test, the results of which are used to decide if the students indeed have risk associated with their level of academic literacy, or have adequate levels of academic literacy.

Students have a limited time (60 minutes) to complete the test, and they earn a maximum of 100 marks (some items count 2 or 3 marks instead of 1). The time restriction to complete the test has been deliberately chosen by the test designers. It is considered to be one way of distinguishing between academically literate and academically less literate students. In addition, it has to be emphasized that for the same reason the most difficult part of the test has also purposely been placed at the end of the test. We return to a discussion of this design decision below, as well as in the conclusion.

### 3.4 Analyses

Two kinds of analyses were performed. T-tests were used to check if students who have English, Afrikaans and African languages as their first languages performed differently on the total tests (a Bonferroni adjustment was made for the number of comparisons). In addition, DIF analyses were performed by means of the Mantel-Haenszel statistic in the TiaPlus package (CITO, 2005). The Mantel-Haenszel DIF statistic is calculated by first partitioning students into different subsamples by language. Those whose first language is one of the African languages thus form the first group, while the language of the second group is Afrikaans, and that of the third English. Then, four different subgroups of approximately the same size according to their levels in mean ability scores on the entire test are made up for each language subsample. Finally, the ratio of the odds of success of the different language groups is calculated and the averages of these ratios across each score level are determined. DIF values in the 0-1 interval imply that the item is more difficult for the group in the first subsample. DIF values around

I imply that the test item has approximately equal difficulty across subsamples or language groups, and DIF values greater than unity mean that the item is more difficult for the group in the second subsample. Z-scores are used to check significance. We would like to emphasize, however, that due to the large number of testees used as a total sample, even small differences may turn out to be significant.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Discussion

Table 1 shows the mean scores broken down by first language for *TALL*, while Table 2 shows the T-values for the differences between the three first languages involved.

It is quite obvious that in the years 2005-2008 students whose first language is one of the African languages performed significantly worse than those whose first language is English or Afrikaans. In most cases, the Afrikaans speaking students did not differ significantly from the students whose first language was English. Interestingly, however, the trend is in the direction of Afrikaans speaking students outperforming the English speaking students, and in one case – the 2007 test – this difference is significant. One possible explanation for this perhaps counter-intuitive result might be that Afrikaans speaking students are for the most part from formerly privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, while the English speaking students come from more heterogeneous socioeconomic backgrounds, but we have no real evidence that this is so. Another, more plausible explanation may be that a good number of those Afrikaans first language students who voluntarily chose to write the test in English might have felt more comfortable with English as an academic language because they finished secondary school in English, an enduring trend among middle class pupils (not only among Afrikaans, but also African language speakers). A third, related reason might be that those Afrikaans first language students who chose to write the test in English might have been pressurised when they enrolled by their faculty administration to write the test in English. At this institution, it is well known that the faculty that attracts the top students requires them to write the English test. So the Afrikaans students who wrote the English test may very well be among the top students of the intake of a particular year. The observed trend of English speaking students gradually being outperformed by Afrikaans speaking students nevertheless has to be kept in mind, because it is in line with observations yet to be made.

Also, a general descending trend in average scores can be observed over the years. However, this does not necessarily mean that the average academic literacy has decreased over the years, since the trend might also be explained by increasing difficulty levels of the test (cf. Van der Slik & Weideman, 2007). Future research should resolve this relevant issue more definitely, yet some intriguing findings, seemingly pointing to a gradual decrease in English academic literacy over the years 2005-2008, will be presented in the following tables.

### 4.2 Differential Item Functioning

By means of TiaPlus (CITO 2005), DIF analyses were performed with the Mantel-Haenszel statistic for the results of *TALL* in 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. However, since the mean scores of Afrikaans and English speaking students differ so little, we have decided to present only the Z-scores associated with the DIF statistics of the English and the other African language speaking students (see Table 3).

Table 1: Mean scores on TALL of first year students who have an African language, English, or Afrikaans as their first language

| Study | African Languages (1) |       |       | English (2) |       |       | Afrikaans (3) |       |       |
|-------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
|       | <i>n</i>              | Mean  | SD    | <i>n</i>    | Mean  | SD    | <i>n</i>      | Mean  | SD    |
| 2005  | 1050                  | 56.41 | 19.10 | 1416        | 81.41 | 11.73 | 473           | 81.20 | 11.63 |
| 2006  | 1198                  | 49.35 | 17.97 | 1479        | 74.21 | 14.32 | 517           | 74.48 | 13.99 |
| 2007  | 1054                  | 44.07 | 17.76 | 2127        | 68.55 | 17.19 | 415           | 71.37 | 14.88 |
| 2008  | 1098                  | 46.50 | 16.93 | 2408        | 69.03 | 17.84 | 529           | 70.60 | 15.56 |

Table 2: T-values of differences between mean scores on TALL of first year students who have an African language, English, or Afrikaans as their first language

| Study | 1 versus 2 |           |                         | 1 versus 3 |           |                         | 2 versus 3 |           |                         |
|-------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|
|       | <i>T</i>   | <i>DF</i> | <i>p</i> <sup>[1]</sup> | <i>T</i>   | <i>DF</i> | <i>p</i> <sup>[1]</sup> | <i>T</i>   | <i>DF</i> | <i>p</i> <sup>[1]</sup> |
| 2005  | 39.62      | 2462      | < .001                  | 26.13      | 1521      | < .001                  | .34        | 1887      | > .05                   |
| 2006  | 39.83      | 2675      | < .001                  | 28.31      | 1713      | < .001                  | -.37       | 1994      | > .05                   |
| 2007  | 37.39      | 3179      | < .001                  | 27.72      | 1467      | < .001                  | -3.12      | 2540      | < .01                   |
| 2008  | 35.23      | 3505      | < .001                  | 27.60      | 1625      | < .001                  | -1.87      | 2935      | > .05                   |

[1]: with Bonferroni adjustment

Table 3: Z-scores of associated Mantel-Haenszel DIF statistics for English and African language speaking students

| Items <sup>[1]</sup> | 2005     | 2006     | 2007    | 2008 |
|----------------------|----------|----------|---------|------|
| ST 2                 | -2.62**  | --       | --      | --   |
| AV 1                 | --       | -2.75**  | --      | --   |
| AV 2                 | --       | -2.83**  | --      | --   |
| AV 4                 | --       | --       | -2.66** | --   |
| AV 6                 | --       | -3.15**  | --      | --   |
| AV 8                 | --       | -3.38*** | --      | --   |
| TT 1                 | --       | --       | -2.73** | --   |
| TT 3                 | --       | -3.83*** | --      | --   |
| UT 3                 | --       | -2.62**  | --      | --   |
| UT 6                 | -5.75*** | -2.64**  | --      | --   |
| UT 7                 | -5.43*** | --       | --      | --   |
| UT 8                 | -3.86*** | --       | --      | --   |
| UT 9                 | -4.45*** | --       | --      | --   |
| UT 10                | -3.02**  | --       | --      | --   |
| UT 12                | -3.56*** | -3.93*** | --      | --   |
| UT 14                | -2.69**  | --       | --      | --   |
| GTR 1                | --       | -3.08**  | --      | --   |
| GTR 2                | -3.63*** | --       | --      | --   |
| GTR 3                | -2.68**  | -3.44*** | --      | --   |

|        |          |          |         |    |
|--------|----------|----------|---------|----|
| GTR 4  | -4.17*** | -3.51*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 5  | --       | -3.64*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 6  | --       | -4.36*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 8  | -4.15*** | -4.09*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 9  | -4.97*** | -4.24*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 10 | -4.17*** | -3.25**  | --      | -- |
| GTR 11 | -4.20*** | --       | --      | -- |
| GTR 12 | -4.70*** | -4.54*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 13 | -4.75*** | -3.37*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 14 | -5.28*** | -3.61*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 15 | -4.67*** | -5.10*** | -3.04** | -- |
| GTR 16 | n/a      | --       | -2.66** | -- |
| GTR 17 | n/a      | -4.06*** | --      | -- |
| GTR 18 | n/a      | -4.04*** | --      | -- |

Note: \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001; negative values imply students whose first language is English outperform students whose first language is an African language; n/a: not applicable; --: not significant

[1]: Item number and acronym of the subtest (see above, the section on *TALL* and its design)

Some quite interesting conclusions can be drawn from the results presented in Table 3. First, if DIF occurs, it flags that English speaking students perform better than students whose first language is an African language when total test performance is considered. Second, for some yet unexplained reason, DIF disappears rather abruptly as years go by. In Table 3, it should be noted, we have presented the Z-scores associated with those items in which DIF has indeed been indicated. These Z-scores are measures of the level of significance of the DIF occurring. In fact no significant DIF occurred in 2008, whereas in 2007 only four items displayed DIF. We return to this peculiar outcome at the end of this section when we discuss Figure 2. Third, it seems that what used to be called the Text editing (TE) subtest, and what is now entitled the Grammar & text relations (GTR) subtest, is particularly susceptible to DIF, at least in 2005 and 2006. Remember, however, that the candidates had only a limited amount of time to complete the test and that this subtest traditionally is the final one to complete. Perhaps less academically literate students were unable to complete the test, or due to time pressure made more guesses at the end than the more academically literate students. So, the occurrence of DIF might not be the result of item bias of some sort, discriminating against students whose first language is not English, but may be the result of purposely introduced time restrictions.

There are at least two additional observations that support such an interpretation. When one takes a closer look at the DIF statistics for the 2005 test, it seems that in addition to the Grammar & text relations (GTR) subtest, the Understanding texts (UT) subtest is rather susceptible to DIF, while in 2006 this applies to the Academic vocabulary (AV) subtest.

This is peculiar. Why would a test exhibiting DIF in 2005 not do so in 2006, and the other way around? There appears to be no other reason for this than that in 2005 the UT subtest preceded the GTR subtest, while in 2006 the AV subtest preceded the GTR subtest almost immediately. So an obvious explanation seems to be that in both cases these subtests were situated at or close to the end of the test and that DIF may have been occasioned by time restrictions, and

not by the (presumably biased) content of the items. Note in this regard, as well, that the final items of the subtest are more susceptible to DIF than the first ones. So, again time restrictions to complete the test seem to be largely if not solely responsible for the occurrence of DIF.

A final observation that supports such a conclusion is the following. When one examines the test scores of the students, it is immediately apparent that many of them were unable to complete the test, since they left many questions unanswered at the end. The outcomes presented so far, however, have been calculated in such a way that missing answers have been interpreted as incorrect answers. When one repeats the analyses presented here, but now excludes these missing answers, it results in a picture that is rather different from the one presented above. It shows instead that *all* DIF statistics display a reduction in strength. Moreover, when missing answers are excluded rather than counted as incorrect answers it transpires that in 2005, 14 instead of 19 items displayed DIF, in 2006 7 instead of 22, and in 2007, none instead of 4. Figure 1 illustrates why DIF decreases when missing answers are excluded from the analyses.

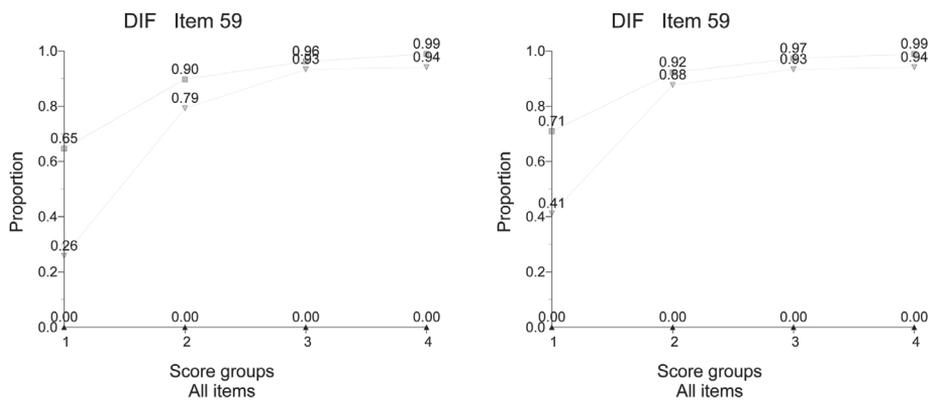


Figure 1: Grammar & text relations (GTR) item number 14 (Question 59, TALL 2005) if missing answers are counted as incorrect (left panel) and if they are excluded from the analyses (right panel).

Figure 1 can be read as follows. The TIAPLUS package has divided the testees into four score groups. Score group 1 (1) contains the 25% lowest scoring testees on all the 60 items of TALL. Score group 4 (4) consists of those 25% who scored highest, while score group 2 and 3 fall in between. The top line (whose scores are generally higher than those of the bottom line) represents those with English as first language. The bottom line represents those whose first language is an African language, and whose scores are generally lower. It seems quite obvious from comparing the left and the right panel in Figure 1 that a substantial number of the incorrect answers in the lowest scoring group is due, however, to some of them having given no answer at all. In case these missing answers are included and counted as incorrect, only 26% of the lowest scoring group answered this item correctly (see Figure 1, left panel). If, however, the missing answers are excluded (Figure 1, right panel), 41% of the lowest scoring group answered this item correctly, and accordingly the Z-score associated with the Mantel-Haenszel DIF statistic is reduced from  $Z = -5.28$  (see Table 3) to  $Z = -3.61$ .

Although we have presented here only the outcomes for GTR item 14 in 2005, the general picture that emerges from all items displaying DIF in 2005, 2006, and 2007 is in accordance

with Figure 1. That is: DIF decreases when missing answers are excluded from the analyses. Several observations could be made when inspecting Figure 1, but we will restrict ourselves to – in our view – the most salient one: DIF seems to occur almost exclusively because the 25% of those who have an African language as a first language who achieved the lowest score (score group 1), performed much lower than the 25% lowest achieving English speaking candidates. However, the remaining scoring groups of those with an African language as first language, on the one hand, and the English first language group, on the other, are almost similar to each other regarding their average scores. What does this mean? In our view it signifies that the items are doing exactly what they were supposed to do, i.e. making a distinction between less and more academically literate students. The primary reason why the lowest achieving African first language students score lower than their lowest achieving English first language counterparts seems to be that they more than others either gave no answer at all or were guessing to a larger degree. The validity of this conclusion is strengthened by the observation that not content but rank order in the test is associated with the occurrence of DIF.

But why are there decreases in the number of items displaying DIF over the years and why do we not observe DIF at all in 2008? Not answering the final items of the test was even more prevalent in 2008 than it was in 2005, 2006, and 2007. A good 29% of the candidates gave no answer for the final items of the test in 2008, while only 14% did not do so in 2005. We think that Figure 2 gives at least a provisional answer. In Figure 2 we present the pre-final item of the Grammar & text relations subtest, in the same way as we did in Figure 1, i.e. with and without the missing answers included.

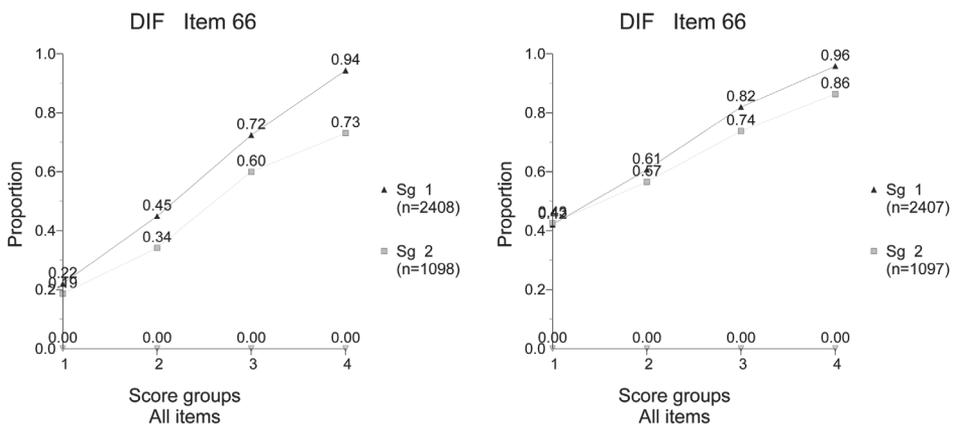


Figure 2: Grammar & text relations number 17 (2008) if missing answers are counted as incorrect (left panel) and if they are excluded from the analyses (right panel).

The top line again indicates those with English as first language, and the bottom line those with an African language as first language. It can be added that the picture that emerges from Figure 2 is representative of the remaining items of TALL 2008. When Figure 2 is compared to Figure 1, at least three observations can be made. First, the various scoring groups from either the English or African language group behave in much the same way, which, of course, is to be expected since no significant DIF was found. Second, the lower the achievement of a scoring group is, the more it refrained from answering. The lowest scoring

groups in Figure 2, for example, answered GTR item 17 correctly in around 20% of the cases, when missing answers were included in the calculation (Figure 2, left panel). However, their proportion correct answers doubled to .43 when missing answers were excluded from the calculations. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it seems that in 2008 a substantially larger number of students whose first language was recorded as English are indicated as being less academically literate, compared to the numbers in 2005. This provides at least a partial explanation why DIF occurs less and less frequently as compared to the outcomes displayed in Figure 1. The finding that the proportion of missing answers has more than doubled since 2005, finally points into the same direction.

## 5. Conclusion

Rather than signalling item bias, i.e. pointing to undeservedly discriminating against the lowest achieving students who have an African language against the lowest achieving students whose first language is English, DIF flags that *TALL* is doing validly what it is supposed to do: distinguishing less academically literate students from more literate ones. The primary reason for the occurrence of DIF is not the biased content of the items, but because they are situated at the end of the test, a test that students less capable of handling the demands of academic discourse at this level are also less able to complete than those who can more competently and fluently handle the demands of cognitive processing and language associated with tertiary education. So the question that is raised in the title of this article can be answered with an emphatic “no”.

Should a time limit be imposed on such tests? There are cases of other South African tests of academic literacy that we know of where there is virtually no time limit on the completion of the test, and where testees are given anywhere between 2:5 and 3 hours to complete a test that is usually slightly longer in terms of number of items than *TALL*, which has a time limit of an hour. The declared purpose of such tests, however, has always been to determine whether those from disadvantaged backgrounds have the potential to deal with tasks that are challenging from the point of view of the language to be employed academically by them, something that *TALL* does not set out to do, since “potential” is such a theoretically problematic construct. One may argue that such a lack of time limit might be appropriate for that purpose (though, given the analysis here, we are now more sceptical about that assumption, which has never been tested empirically), but that, in the case of *TALL* a limitation on time is entirely appropriate, and is theoretically defensible. One’s fluency in and ability to handle academic discourse has to be part of one’s level of academic literacy.

We should also note that the time limitations set in the case of *TALL* were not randomly determined, but the outcome of careful piloting. Several adjustments were made, and are in fact still being made, during the piloting process of each of the tests in question. The limitations, in other words, are justifiably related to what is being measured by this test of academic literacy.

Hunter and Schmidt (2000:151; cf. too Koch & Dornbrack, 2008) present a strong case as to why professionally developed tests such as *TALL* may be free from item bias. Despite allegations from certain quarters that cognitive ability and educational achievement tests are predictively biased, especially against cultural groups such as minorities, research has consistently shown

that there is no bias at the level of total test scores. They (2000:153) find the hypothesis that individual items in such tests are biased to be inconsistent with the findings of large testing organisations. Rather, findings of biased items can be attributed to statistical or mathematical errors resulting from statistical procedures that are not founded on substantive theory. Kline (2004: 559) emphasises that measurement bias should be made at the test level, since this is the level at which decisions about individual persons are made. She advises using caution before simply removing or revising items that show DIF, a view not shared by De Beer (2004:53) who advocates the identification and elimination of DIF for the purposes of improved test construction.

In their study on bias in cross-cultural assessment, Van de Vijver and Poortinga (1997:30) maintain that bias is not considered to be an inherent property of an assessment instrument, but that inferences drawn from scores can become biased. They (1997:33) caution that valid intergroup differences in average scores can be confounded with bias, particularly where the cultural distance between two groups is large.

We should thus be wary of using DIF analyses to jump to a fashionable conclusion. As Lumley and Brown (2005:838) point out, item bias or DIF exists only where the differences in test scores are unrelated to the test construct, the ability being tested. In the case of *TALL* the results indicate that English speaking students perform better in terms of total test performance than do students whose first language is an African language. The difference in performance can be attributed in part to the time restrictions imposed on testees and the rank order of test types. A further contributing factor may be related to the fact that the English first language group was representative of heterogeneous socioeconomic backgrounds, including persons from formerly privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. We are of the opinion that the differences noted in the analyses of *TALL* are related entirely to what is being measured and that the test design is justifiable and fair both from a theoretical perspective, as well as in respect of its social accountability.

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## Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Colleen du Plessis, our research assistant, who unearthed a number of further studies that shed light on a topic that, we believe, is often misunderstood.

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# Teaching social skills in the language classroom

**A B S T R A C T** Bullying has become a major problem in schools worldwide. It might escalate to serious forms of anti-social behaviour, therefore the teaching of social skills are important in the school as a whole. The language classroom is the ideal place to teach social and communication skills. In the whole language approach, combined with content-based teaching, the teacher can choose a theme, like 'bullying' and include specific language skills in the lesson. The class could for instance discuss the theme, debate the contentious issue, write a dialogue about the theme and dramatise it. By engaging with an issue in this way, learners not only learn social and communication skills, but also various language skills. Learners learn best when they are engaged in their own learning; when the learning material is part of their life world and they are interested in the topic.

**Keywords:** Bullying, social skills, communication skills, whole language approach, integrated language teaching, theme-based approach

## 1. Introduction

Bullying has become a major problem in schools. It might escalate to serious forms of anti-social behaviour, therefore the teaching of social skills are important in the school as a whole. The language classroom is the ideal place to teach social and communication skills. In the whole language approach, combined with content-based teaching, the teacher can choose a theme, like 'bullying' and include specific language skills in the lesson. The class could for instance discuss the theme, debate the contentious issue, write a dialogue about the theme and dramatise it. By engaging with an issue in this way, learners not only learn social and communication skills, but also various language skills.

As part of Vygotsky's theory of learning, social constructivism holds the tenets that knowledge is constructed through meaningful interaction between what one already knows and what is new. The kinds of past experiences as well as the ways these experiences are organized influence the construction process. Reflection plays a major role in organizing and converting past experiences into knowledge. Critical theory and critical studies as link to social constructivism would expect a person to be able to turn the new understandings into action and thus to

change oppressive conditions (Haley & Austin, 2004:20). Social constructivism is a learning theory that holds that truth, meaningfulness, and knowledge are created by social realities, but at the same time also create social realities (Haley & Austin, 2004). In this article the researcher will use a literature study to explain how social realities could be changed in the language classroom, by using an integrative language approach with content based teaching, to teach learners social and communicative skills with the view of handling the contentious issue of bullying.

Language as such is generative and constructivist. According to Chomsky (1965 in Bertrand & Stice, 2002:46) “studying a simple paragraph yields a rich system of interrelationships and cross-connections that are all consistent with a very subtle system of layers of grammatical rules. The human brain constructs meaning through its knowledge of how language works, how it can be used and not used... Indeed, if we have to learn all the rules for our language directly, that is, by being taught each one separately, it would take forever. No such system of learning can account for all the sound-meaning relationships that all of us have internalized about our language”. The researcher believes that whole language teaching within an integrative approach will help learners to obtain language skills such as reading, writing and speaking through debates, dramatisations, comprehension reading, the reading of books and the watching of DVD’s with a specific theme such as the handling of bullying as a social skill.

## **2. Bullying as anti-social behaviour**

Bullying has become a major problem worldwide in schools. It is considered the most prevalent form of youth violence and might escalate to serious forms of anti-social behaviour (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Smith, Cousins & Stewart, 2005).

“Bullying is usually defined as a form of aggression in which one or more children intend to harm or disturb another child who is perceived as being unable to defend himself or herself” (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005:101; Smith, Cousins & Stewart, 2005). There is, thus, a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. The behaviour happens repeatedly (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). “Bullying occurs within a dynamic relational context, and the roles children play within bullying relationships as bullies or victims consolidate over time... Bullying ... can be sorted into two categories: direct bullying, which involves physical and verbal attacks on victims, and indirect bullying, which typically involves covert activities intended to isolate and marginalize victims (e.g., spreading rumors and excluding individuals from peer groups)” (Smith, Cousins & Stewart, 2005:740). Rivers, Duncan and Besag (2007:4) divide bullying into “... direct-physical aggression (hitting, pushing, kicking), direct-verbal aggression (name-calling, labeling, threatening), and indirect or relational aggression (telling tales, spreading rumors, social isolation)”.

Bullies usually have problems processing social information and often interpret behaviour of other people as antagonistic even without real reason. Parents of bullies mostly use power-assertive techniques to manage others in their lives. Bullies often imitate the parents’ aggressive behaviour, because according to what they observe, it works (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Caregivers of bullies often lack warmth, involvement, clear limits and boundaries. Parents of bullies often have violent parenting styles and use aggressive behaviour for disciplinary

action. Bullies want to be either popular or in control. They are seen as popular, confident and having lots of friends, but in essence they are anti-social, and not empathetic, and have a need to exercise power and control over others. They are hypersensitive to criticism and unable to handle frustration. Bullies can talk their way out of trouble or rationalise their behaviour easily, however, they often perceive themselves as unloved and uncared for and doubt their support systems (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008).

Victims of bullying, on the other hand, are mostly passive or submissive and only occasionally aggressive. They usually have poor communication and problem solving skills, initiate conversation less than other children and lack assertiveness skills. Victims often do not report bullying, because of poor self esteem and a lack of assertiveness skills. Parents of victims are over protective and inhibit the development of conflict resolution skills in their children (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Children from such homes feel insecure. Consequently children often become victims, because of their level of self-esteem and social development. Passive and shy children are often victims of bullying behaviour, because they do not stand up for themselves. Victims believe that they deserve to be bullied or that the bullying is their own fault. They find it difficult to get out of the victim role. Many victims feel that adults are not on their side, because teachers and parents often perceive it as part of growing up (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008).

Therefore there are communication problems and a lack of social skills on both sides of the bullying relationship - on the side of the bully and of the victim. Many role players, like parents, teachers, peers, pastors and counsellors, can do something about the prevalence of bullying. In this article the role of the teacher and specifically the language teacher as eliminator of bullying by teaching social skills with language skills, is emphasised.

### **3. Social skills**

Peterson and Gannoni (1992:3 in Sonnekus, Van As, Gouws & Venter, 1998) define social skills as “the ability to organize cognitions and behaviours into an integrated course of action directed toward culturally acceptable social or interpersonal goals”. Social skills help people to give and receive positive social awards, which may increase social involvement and positive interaction. The lack of social skills may come to the fore in aggressive, negative behaviour, which negatively influence future interactions.

The realistic assessment of social conventions, as well as the accurate perception of external and internal cues and empathic role taking, are essential for any person to survive in the outside world. Studies on accurate perception strongly suggest that non-assertive individuals lack social skills, because they are less sensitive to external cues and they misjudge the amount of anger communicated to them by assertive or aggressive individuals. Victims of aggressive behaviour often react subjectively and do not display assertive behaviour. Learners need skills inculcated in them to enable them to handle conflict situations. They need to learn to assess any situation, to make appropriate reasonable decisions and how to integrate adaptive and accurate discriminations into their decisions (Rakos,1991). It is, therefore, very important to integrate social skills into the whole school to assist those learners who struggle with relations and communication.

As bullying can be considered a real problem worldwide in schools, it needs to be addressed to ensure that children feel safe and secure. The teaching of social skills could possibly prevent many of the problems that lead to bullying. Most of the bullying prevention programmes (e.g. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program; The Bullying Project; Bullybusters) emphasise the importance of whole school involvement in programmes with a special focus on the development of social skills (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). The teaching of social skills could be done in all subjects/learning areas, but in this research the focus is on language teaching as a means of learning social skills.

Social skills are essential in building support structures, especially for victims of bullying. Every victim of bullying has “a lack of strong self-esteem and a lack of assertiveness skills and the social skills that tend to go with solid self-confidence” (Greenberg, 2004:31). Victims reward bullies by crying, failing to defend themselves and by responding passively and non-assertively. Learners need to get ideas on how to handle the problem of bullying and an opportunity to practice these skills in all classes in their school. Teachers can help to build self-esteem by emphasising personal strengths in learners. Learners must learn to replace negative statements about themselves with positive statements. Social skills, including listening, having conversations, asking to join peer groups and assertiveness training are important in this regard. Assertiveness skills would include ‘confident body language, relaxation skills, positive thinking and verbal strategies for dealing with [issues such as] bullying’ (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008:135

How can assertiveness skills and self confidence as part of social skills be developed in the language classroom? One way of teaching social skills will be to concentrate on communication skills.

There are three types of communication skills included in social skills which should be noted by all teachers in a school, but especially by the language teacher seeing that communication is an integral part of language teaching. These are passive, aggressive and assertive communication skills. If learners could learn to communicate assertively, they should feel more confident and will better handle problem situations like bullying. The language teacher could through various interventions that will be discussed in the next sections, enable learners to stand up for themselves.

Passive or non-assertive communication or behaviour does not help to meet the individual’s needs. Passivity is connected to learned helplessness and an external locus of control. Passive people do not stand up for their rights and allow others to take advantage of them by not being able to say ‘no’. They are afraid to upset others. Besides this, they often communicate a message of inferiority, because the wants and needs of others become more important than that of their own, so they become victims easily by submitting to the demands of others. This boils down to the violation of one’s own rights by failing to express honest thoughts and feelings (Kolb & Griffith, 2009; Lloyd, 1995; Weaver,1993; Verderber & Verderber, 1992).

People who use aggressive communication on the other hand, use power, language and position to coerce others to do what they want them to do. Aggressive communication implies a lack of respect for the rights of others. Aggressive behaviour is often judgmental, dogmatic, fault finding and coercive and aggressive people lash out without regard for the situation or the feelings of the other person. Aggressive behaviour can be active or passive; direct or indirect;

honest or dishonest, but it always comes from a position of superiority and disrespect (Kolb & Griffith, 2009; Lloyd, 1995; Weaver, 1993; Verderber & Verderber, 1992).

Assertive communication, however, meets needs in a constructive manner. Assertive communicators express their thoughts, feelings and needs in a clear manner, making good eye contact. They are confident, direct and honest and realise that they have choices in how to handle problem situations. They respect the rights and viewpoints of others. Assertive behaviour communicates respect for the self and others. An assertive person wins by influencing, listening and negotiating to get others to cooperate willingly (Kolb & Griffith, 2009; Lloyd, 1995; Weaver, 1993; Verderber & Verderber, 1992). "Assertiveness is the ability to share the full range of your thoughts and emotions with confidence and skill. It means speaking and acting in a way that communicates who you are and what you want. You can be assertive without infringing on the rights of others..." (Weaver, 1993:398). To be assertive means to stand up for your rights, but this can only happen when you know and believe in your rights. Assertiveness builds self-confidence and self-esteem (Sonnekus et al., 1998).

#### **4. Language teaching approaches**

Social and communicative skills can be taught in the language classroom by using a content-based or theme approach.

According to Snow and Brinton (1997) content-based and theme-based instruction are the same – they imply a sequence of topics tied together with one overall theme, which forms the basic structure of the curriculum. In the primary school one gets content-area themes (drawn from e.g. social studies); calendar related themes (e.g. seasons); conceptual themes (e.g. abstract themes such as courage); biographical themes (e.g. famous people); or current event themes. In secondary school themes will for instance revolve around science, social science, literature and vocational issues. Themes must be conceptually important and relevant to the specific group being taught. It should be context bound.

Consequently the theme should be part of real life situations that could necessitate communication. This approach is part of communicative language teaching. Learners are motivated by communicating in a meaningful way about meaningful themes/topics. The teacher's role changes and he/she becomes more of a facilitator, observing what happens in the classroom. Teachers know that by merely teaching rules from pre-set texts, learners do not really learn to apply language skills in everyday situations. The learners are more actively involved in the learning situation when the learning forms part of everyday life. The language activity is placed in a true-to-life communication situation (e.g. role-play and simulation) and the learner responds to the situation by using language, developing language skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing, but also by learning social skills appropriate to the situation (Nieman, Swanepoel & Venter, 2004).

The thematic approach often implies that the same theme be tackled from different angles or in more than one discipline/subject/learning area (see Snow & Brinton, 1997). This way of teaching requires a tremendous amount of effort and coordination, but is worthwhile, because learners learn more easily in a holistic approach where the same themes are covered in different contexts.

Apart from teaching across disciplines with a content/theme approach, one could also apply the theme/content-based approach to whole language teaching (Snow & Brinton, 1997). Integrated language teaching or the whole language approach functions at its best when the teacher follows a theme approach, as in content-based teaching.

The whole language approach has its roots in the writings of Rousseau and Pestalozzi in the eighteenth century, both of whom encouraged a holistic approach to all education (Snow & Brinton, 1997). Shannon (1991 in Snow & Brinton, 1997) points out that the current whole language approach has its historical roots in student-centred education and social reconstruction, thus, always taking the learners' experiences into consideration during teaching. Learners have to be enabled to look critically at their social reality.

Wessels and Van den Berg (1998) describe the whole language approach as follows:

- Reading and writing are acquired through reading and writing texts for real life purposes.
- All the various language components work together (e.g. spelling, phonics, comprehension) in the use of real life texts and not through artificial exercises to establish particular grammatical aspects in the minds of learners.

Consequently, language teaching should be based on integrated language teaching. The different components, such as composition, prose, poetry and grammar should be taught in an integrated way (Nieman *et al.*, 2004). "The whole language approach encourages the learner to use language in a functional and focused manner in integrated discourse. Therefore, from the very start of the lesson, the teacher and learners are using language authentically" (Nieman *et al.*, 2004:202).

Language skills are integrated in the language lesson when learners speak to each other by for instance debating a contentious issue, listen to each other respond, as well as read and write texts on the issue. "Communicative competence, which includes grammatical, sociolinguistics, discourse, and strategic competence, means that students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge about the rules of language, social norms for language use through performing communicative acts and to use strategies for developing and maintaining conversations or written discourse". Therefore, it is important to use language for authentic purposes where learners function in social interaction in a specific context (Haley & Austin, 2004:13). Learners must listen, speak and write in the 'real world'. The teacher should, with the help of the learners, identify themes that are part of the learners' life worlds. Within activities based around the theme, learners should learn language skills, but also social and communication skills necessary to survive in their everyday world.

## **5. Teaching social skills in the language classroom**

As mentioned earlier use of an integrated language approach, which is theme based, is the ideal way to teach social and communicative skills, as well as language skills. The research done here is on handling the issue of bullying through the teaching of social and communicative skills in the language classroom.

A whole school approach to the problem of bullying incorporates the help of every teacher in the school, including the language teacher. The development of curriculum materials for the

implementation of social skills would include the use of content-based language teaching with a theme such as ‘bullying’ and the teaching of social skills such as empathy building, friendship-making and assertiveness (see Edmondson & Hoover, 2008). It could for instance be done by using role-play, as well as reading stories on ethical matters such as self-respect, respect for others, self-control, kindness and generosity (Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonagy & Dill, 2008). “One comprehensive bully prevention program, *Steps to Respect*, includes literature-based lessons that fulfill both language, arts and social and emotional objectives” (Committee for Children, 2004 in Hall, 2006:231). Lessons include problem solving skills and assertiveness training with an increasing awareness and knowledge of bullying through the use of real case studies. By dividing the class in small groups to discuss the issue and to give feedback, learners practice important communication, as well as language skills (Hall 2006).

Salmivalli (1999 in Salmivalli, Kaukiainen & Voeten, 2005) suggests three steps in curriculum based preventative and intervention work against bullying, namely (i) raising awareness by discussing the theme with the whole class, indicating that people often behave differently from what they think is right in a group situation; (ii) encouraging self-reflection, by discussing the different roles in bullying (bully, victim and bystander); and (iii) discussing anti-bullying behaviour, especially as individuals within a group.

## 6. Debates/discussions and interviews

Teachers can use short skits about common bullying situations in school to start classroom discussions about the phenomenon. The whole class should engage in discussions and activities related to bullying so that learners who might otherwise watch passively become empowered and voice their opinion (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Debates are a good way of developing language skills, because it consists of controlled arguments by informed persons with opposing views with the purpose of persuading the audience (Bertrand & Stice, 2006). In a theme-based approach learners would also learn valuable language skills with the social skills.

A scenario that could be discussed with older learners could be the following (Hall, 2006:232):

John is frustrated and sad. Every day he comes to school, other students tease him. Some call him names, while others talk about him and spread rumors. One boy even pushes him and threatens to beat him up. He’s tired of coming to school and wants to drop out.

Learners should discuss the scenario, get facts from it, ask open-ended questions (use who, what, when, where and why) and form hypotheses for each question for example (see Hall, 2006:233):

- (1) Why is John frustrated and sad?  
John is frustrated and sad because others are picking on him.
- (2) Why do students tease him?  
Students tease him because they don’t like him.
- (3) Why do students call him names?  
Students call him names because they are mean and jealous.
- (4) Why do others spread rumors?  
Students spread rumors because they don’t want John to have friends ...

- (5) Why does the boy push and threaten him?  
The boy pushes John because John is smaller than him.
- (6) What does John do when these things happen?  
John ignores the other students, pushes back, or teases back.
- (7) What can John do when these things happen?  
John can ignore them, tell the teacher, or fight them
- (8) Why does he want to drop out of school?  
John is tired of people picking on him.
- (9) What will happen if John drops out of school?  
John will go to jail or will not get a good job.

The teacher could then ask the learners to identify the most important question e.g. *'What can John do when this happens?'* Learners should then use different resources such as the internet, books, articles, or interviews with teachers, parents, community leaders, pastors or counsellors to answer the question in more detail than the hypotheses given. The teacher should have resources available in the classroom and possible questions for an interview should be discussed (Hall, 2006).

Interviewing is a good way for learners to get to know and understand issues around them in the real world. They acquire language skills, because they get experience in talking to people they may not know, asking questions and organising material so that they can present it to the class. They learn to become active listeners. "Interviewing helps build self-confidence and gives learners practice in both oral language (asking questions) and written language (taking notes)" (Bertrand & Stice, 2002:87-98). The actual words of the interviewee, as well as impressions and perceptions of the interviewer are of value. Learners can write out their report (with comments and observations added in brackets) and then present it orally. The presentation could take the form of a television interview if the dialogue is transcribed.

Afterwards the possible solutions should be discussed and learners should practice the necessary skills required, for example assertiveness skills. Positive skills/answers should be practiced, such as saying in an assertive tone 'I would appreciate if you could stop picking on me!', and negative advice such as 'Hit the bully and he or she will leave you alone!' should also be discussed (Hall, 2006).

It may be necessary to teach assertiveness skills to help learners acquire verbal and emotional defense mechanisms. Children need to use 'I' messages when confronted with a bully (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008). Language teachers need not take on the role of counselors to help learners distinguish between submissive/passive, aggressive and assertive communication. It is always better for communication to use assertive words and phrases. In assertive communication one would use clear, direct requests or directives instead of hinting, or using indirect/direct commands. Learners should learn to use 'I' instead of 'you' messages (e.g. 'You need to stop immediately with your nonsense' (aggressive communication) in comparison to assertive communication 'I would really appreciate it you could stop saying the things you say'). Learners should learn to express thoughts, feelings and opinions reflecting ownership (e.g. 'He makes me really angry' – denies ownership in comparison to an 'I' message reflecting ownership – 'I get angry when he bullies me') (Lloyd, 1995).

## 7. Role play and dramatization

“Classrooms should be structured to promote kindness, cooperation and communication ... Positive social interaction should be reinforced through role-playing, literature, writing, and various other assignments” (Adamski & Ryan, 2008:25;26).

According to Wessels and van den Berg (1998:145-147) role-play empowers learners in the following ways:

- They are exposed to everyday situations that occur inside and outside the classroom.
- They acquire social skills, the ability to conduct small talk and interact with people.
- Role-play helps them to become fluent speakers.
- Role-play maximises learner talk-time.

Assertiveness skills can be acquired through role-play. Ideally easy scenarios should be used for children to practice appropriate reactions. Learners and the teacher as facilitator should discuss how one would react aggressively, passively and assertively and why assertive behaviour is better than the other two ways of communicating. Examples that one could use is:

*Sipho has taken Thandi's pen without permission.*

*Thandi called Jane 'names' in front of other learners.*

*John threatens you into giving him your maths homework answers.*

To ensure the development of good listening, writing and speaking skills, the teacher should find material that challenges learners to find solutions. The teacher could for instance read a letter from a magazine or newspaper on the issue at hand (e.g. 'bullying'). The selected letter is re-written as a dialogue by learners and then acted out by learners as the 'writer' and 'dr Misery'. Learners can debate a possible solution to the problem in groups and compare the solutions. The class could then write a letter to explain possible solutions (see Wessels & van den Berg, 1998). Any oral text on an issue such as 'bullying' can be dramatised by learners.

Dramatisation helps with the following (Wessels & van den Berg, 1998:162):

- Learners usually enjoy the activity and learn in a playful way.
- Drama provides an outlet for self-expression.
- It helps learners to become more socially aware.
- It helps with fluency in speech.
- Learners gain self-knowledge, self-respect and self-confidence.
- It teaches children to co-operate with others.

By using drama, learners learn to listen to each other, to speak their mind, but also to use critical thinking skills to create solutions to problems in scenarios. They become better observers and learn to comment on issues. Learners can conduct interviews with each other, where the interviewee plays a role of for instance the 'bully' or the 'victim' in a bullying scenario or the class can conduct a court case to decide whether the bully is really guilty of the accused behaviour. They can even write and shoot a film on a theme like 'bullying' (see Wessels & van den Berg 1998).

### 7.1 Puppets

“Teachers of young children can act out bullying scenarios using puppets to play the roles of victim and bully. As children mature into adolescence, teachers can encourage children

to develop scripts that depict bullying and use puppets to act out the scenarios (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008:134). The use of puppets removes the storyteller from direct contact with the audience. It is easier to express emotions and feelings in such an indirect way. Decision making, cooperative planning and problem solving are some of the skills learners will learn to use when doing a story with puppets (Bertrand & Stice, 2002).

The use of puppets would also enhance the following skills (Wessels & van den Berg, 1998):

- It improves self-confidence.
- Language usage improves.
- Learners learn to think about an issue and to handle it creatively.
- It helps with concentration and with smaller children it helps with hand coordination.
- Bigger children practice their writing skills, especially the writing of direct dialogue when writing a puppet play.
- Working with a theme such as ‘bullying’ may include discussions/debates, literature (reading books/articles or Internet sites), drama and practicing skills.

## 7.2 Stories

Learners can act out scenarios, watch videos/DVDs and read books/poems on the selected theme (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). Reading stories develops a learner’s imagination and stimulates creative and critical thinking. Stories about virtues such as ‘empathy’ develop moral values. Movies could have the same purpose.

Storybooks on bullying might help bullies and victims to identify with characters and they might either learn to stand up for themselves or to feel empathy (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008). Books like *My Secret Bully*, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, *Nobody knew what to do a story about bullying* or *Crash* could be read aloud in class and debates could follow. Movies/DVDs like *Odd Girl Out*, *Bullies are a pain in the brain*, *End the silence: stop the bullying or Cliques*, *Phonies*, and *other Baloney* could be shown and discussed with great success (Adamski & Ryan, 2008).

## 8. Conclusion

All of the preceding ideas on how to inculcate social and communicative skills in learners, also have the advantage of teaching many language skills in an integrated way. Good teachers know that learners learn best when they are engaged in their own learning. Learners engage with learning material if it is part of their life world and they are interested in the topic. Learners learn best when they are in pursuit of something they want to know or learn about. “Engaged learners are motivated, strategic, knowledgeable, and socially interactive” (Bertrand & Stice, 2002:xviii).

For survival in this world, young people need to learn specific skills. Social and communicative skills are important for learners to say what they think and how they feel. If learners can learn these skills in the language classroom in an indirect but content-based way, it will be to their advantage when confronted with contentious issues like bullying.

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# Foundation Phase teachers: The 'battle' to teach reading

**A B S T R A C T** There is evidence that learners attending South African schools have reading problems. This article is an attempt to gain insight into some of the possible reasons why learners in Grades 1 to 3 fail to become proficient readers. Research was conducted in the province of Gauteng with Grade 1 to 3 teachers at 11 schools. During this mixed method research it became clear that due to many problems teachers 'battle' to teach reading properly. These include the home language spoken by the learners and the teachers, the reading methods used in the classrooms and the lack of reading materials in the classrooms. Research needs to be done in South African schools to advise individual schools about their language policy and the teaching of reading. The findings of this research can also be used to pave the way for well-planned in-service teacher training on the teaching of reading.

**Keywords:** reading, teaching reading, reading methods, Foundation Phase teachers, home language, classroom practices

## 1. Introduction

A young child is usually keen to learn to read, especially when entering the so-called 'big' school. Will there be a competent reading teacher at school? Is there a parent, caregiver or sibling at home who can help him or her to master the difficult task of learning to read? For many young learners learning to read only happens at the formal school where it is in the hands of the Foundation Phase classroom teacher to teach the acquisition of reading skills.

From research reports it seems as if the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase is not effective, with the result that many young learners attending South African schools have a reading problem. In the latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) done in 2006, South Africa's score was the lowest of the participating countries (TEACH South Africa, 2010:2). This was confirmed in 2008 in a national report on the results of 1 000 Grade 3 learners. This report indicated that eight out of every ten learners obtained less than 50% for mathematics and language skills. The report indicated that 35% of Grade 3s country-wide obtained between 0% and 34% for literacy, which included reading. When it is taken into

account that literacy constitutes the foundation for studies from Grade 4 onwards, this is indeed a bleak picture (Rademeyer, 2009:6).

The reading research that is available in South Africa indicates that in general learners' reading skills are poorly developed. This applies from primary school through to tertiary level (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:47). Fleisch (2008:98) states that primary education in South Africa is in a crisis and he bases his viewpoint on a range of cross-national studies. However, these studies often provide few real insights into the generative mechanisms, the underlying reasons or causes that link children's experience with language in their school context to their failure to become proficient in reading and mathematics (Fleisch, 2008:98).

This article is an attempt to provide, albeit on a small scale, insight into some of the possible reasons why learners in the Foundation Phase fail to become proficient readers. During a research project that was done at schools in eleven informal settlements and at two inner-city schools in Gauteng, the issue of reading methods and problems that teachers experience to teach reading to the young learners was investigated. The research shed some light on some of the reasons causing the poor reading performance of young learners. This article seeks to explain some of the reasons and to discuss some ways of addressing this complex issue.

## **2. Facilitating early reading development**

Before young learners start learning to read, teachers need to prepare them to ensure that they are able to learn to read. This entails various activities related to the acquisition of literacy which in the past were often referred to as 'reading readiness' activities. The choice and use of reading methods constitute the other important aspect in the teaching of reading.

### *2.1 Early reading development*

Many young learners come to school without the tools they need to begin the complex task of learning to read. These tools include knowing how to listen, how to decipher non-verbal messages or how to follow directions independently. Usually these learners were not exposed to pre-reading activities as part of their development in becoming readers. Pre-reading is characterised by a child's ability to listen to a book or story being read aloud and, eventually, to be able to retell a favourite story by turning the pages in a book and 'reading' the pictures. Children may not have well developed concepts of print and they may not realise that the story comes from the words and not from the pictures. They do, however, know that the story is somewhere between the two covers of the book. Emergent reading comprises children pointing to words in the text and some 'power' words. These words include their own names and the names of familiar people. In this stage concepts of print become more sophisticated and children realise that letters differ from one another and that they are different to whole words (Sonderman & Farrell, 2008:86).

Pre-reading activities play an important role in preparing young learners for learning to read in a Grade R class. Some of these learners are not taught in their home language and are exposed to multilingual situations when they enter school. There are also many young learners in South Africa who did not have the benefit of attending a Grade R class where learners are introduced to pre-reading skills. Young learners who come to school 'without all the necessary

tools to begin the complex task of learning to read, as well as to write, will depend on the teaching abilities of a highly qualified classroom teacher who can make use of what they do bring: their cultural schemas (Dorr, 2006:138).

## *2.2 Teaching reading*

Teaching reading usually revolves around two issues, namely the decoding of the text and comprehending when reading. Decoding refers to those abilities used for reading whereby written signs and symbols are translated into language. Comprehension deals with the understanding of the text during which process meaning is assigned to the text as a whole. A skilled reader is able to use both decoding and comprehending rapidly and simultaneously (Bohlmann & Pretorius, 2002:196).

These two issues also relate directly to the two best known methods used to teach reading, namely phonics or the phonic approach and the look-and-say or the whole-word approach. Phonics is regarded as an important cueing system that young learners use along with other kinds of information to make sense of written words (Dahl & Scharer, 2000:584). The phonics approach regards reading as a 'bottom-up' approach, which requires the reader to learn individual letters and letter features first, followed by digraphs and other multi-letter units before single words are read. The relation between sounds and symbols in texts is therefore important. In this approach there is a strong link between phonemic awareness, the ability to process words automatically and fast, and reading achievement (Wallace, 2001:23).

The look-and-say approach to reading is seen as a 'top-down' process. Reading is concept-driven and the meaning comes first. Readers first read words, then sentences and eventually stories. This approach relies on a learner's visual memory and a learner is lost if he or she does not recognise a word. Individual letters or sounds are not recognised, but rather the shape of the word (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:91). Many teachers opt to use the phonic approach and the whole-word approach when teaching reading, but this necessitates good planning.

The language experience approach to teach reading is also a whole-word or whole-sentence approach. The language experience approach allows learners, and especially second-language learners, the opportunity to rehearse speaking and talking before they read and write. This approach, which could be of value in many South African classrooms, integrates reading and writing with some kind of life experience of the learner. Four steps are used in the language experience approach: experience, description, transcription and reading (Gordon, 2007:97). Because learners provide their own phrases and sentences and eventually their own stories, they find the text relevant and interesting and they usually do not experience problems reading it (Diaz-Rico, 2008:171). The language experience approach could thus be established as an 'inside-out' approach to reading, as Gregory (1996:94) refers to it. The language experience approach actively involves the learner and places him or her in control of his or her own learning. Its aim is to draw upon the language, knowledge and experience of the learner as the basis for initial reading material (Gregory, 1996:100). This approach enhances learners' self-concept when they see that their stories are important enough to be written down, discussed and read. It uses young learners' personal cultural schemas (Dorr, 2006:138, 145). The knowledge and cultural schemas that children bring to school are becoming increasingly varied – not only locally but also globally – and teachers need to take cognisance of this trend.

Clearly it is not an easy task to teach reading. This is particularly true of the South African context where there is such great variety in the backgrounds and cultures of the young learners as well as in the infrastructures of the schools.

### **3. Research method**

A mixed method approach was used in the research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14, 16) state that the time for mixed method research has come. When quantitative research coming from a positivist stance is mixed with qualitative research that argues for the superiority of constructivism, it leads to a mixed method approach that has pragmatism as its philosophical partner. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2006:23) argue that although the mixed method approach cannot provide perfect solutions, it can incorporate the strengths of both research methods.

The research was done in schools in areas in Gauteng where people are not affluent and therefore the teacher is usually the only person who exposes young learners to literacy and reading. A random selection was made of schools in informal settlements and inner-city schools. A total of eleven primary schools were included in the research project: 10 departmental schools and one peri-urban private school, funded by a church community. Altogether 30 Grade 1 to 3 teachers participated in the research. An attempt was made to interview one Grade 1, one Grade 2 and one Grade 3 teacher from each school, but at two of the schools it was not possible.

In the three of the schools the learners represented all the ethnic groups of South Africa and they were thus speaking all the official languages of South Africa. In the other eight schools the home languages of the learners were isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi or Setswana. There were children from Zimbabwe and Mozambique in all the schools and most of them do not speak any of the South African official languages. In ten of the schools one third of the learners were from neighbouring countries, and in one school up to 50 per cent of the school population were from such countries. Therefore, the learners spoke many different languages, including languages that South African teachers do not speak.

Of the 11 schools that participated in this research project, only two schools had Grade R classes. With the exception of a group of the learners in the two inner-city (former model C) schools, the learners came from very poor socio-economic backgrounds and many of the teachers referred to the plans that the schools were putting in place to feed and support these learners. Teachers stated that due to the majority of these learners' domestic backgrounds, stories are not read to them at home and most of them had not held a book before the day they entered school. Some of the teachers mentioned that many of the learners did not know how to hold a pencil when they came to school for the first time.

The research comprised interviews and classroom observations of language lessons. During the interviews, the researcher asked the teachers semi-structured interview questions and then completed the questionnaires. The questions covered the teachers' biographical information, the reading methods used in the classroom, learners' reading problems and the availability of books for reading. This information provided the researcher with quantitative data. Any additional information that the teachers added was written in the open space provided for that purpose in the questionnaires. For instance, the teachers were asked to explain the following: how they teach reading, the reading problems (in more detail) or what help they

would appreciate to enable them to teach reading better. This provided the researcher with rich additional information. During classroom visits, systematic field observations were made about the classroom and, more especially, about the materials that could be used to teach reading and writing, as well as about the teachers' methodologies when teaching literacy. A checklist was kept for these details, but additional information was also recorded. This included aspects such as the availability of reading materials or wall pictures with words that can be read. Where possible, the researcher listened to the learners reading. The additional information and field observations provided qualitative data. An analysis of field observations enables a researcher to constitute elements of the statistical data and to establish whether there are patterns or trends that can be isolated (Mouton, 2001:108).

From the data certain themes that had an influence on the teaching of reading to the Grades 1 to 3 learners arose. The themes are: the home languages spoken by the learners and teachers respectively, the reading methods used, socio-cultural factors, reading motivation and the use of readers and other types of reading materials. Two good examples of practical ways to enhance the teaching of reading also emerged from the data.

#### 4. Findings

In this section various findings that could possibly influence the teaching of reading in Grades 1 to 3 will be discussed. It includes the influence of the home language of teachers and learners, the reading methods used in the classes that were visited, classroom practices that were observed and the teachers' years of experience.

##### 4.1 Home languages spoken in the schools

Teachers' home language: The home language of the 30 teachers is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Home language of the teachers

| Home language | Frequency | %     | Cumulative frequency | Cumulative % |
|---------------|-----------|-------|----------------------|--------------|
| Sepedi        | 15        | 50.00 | 15                   | 50.00        |
| Sesotho       | 1         | 3.33  | 16                   | 53.33        |
| Setswana      | 1         | 3.33  | 17                   | 56.67        |
| isiZulu       | 9         | 30.00 | 26                   | 86.67        |
| isiXhosa      | 2         | 6.67  | 28                   | 93.33        |
| Other         | 2         | 6.67  | 30                   | 100.00       |

The teachers involved in this research project, like many South Africans, spoke more than one South African language. They mentioned that they therefore often used code switching to explain to those learners who did not speak the language of instruction used in the classroom. In the eight schools where there were only black children, a South African official language was the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) for Grades 1 to 3 and in the other three schools English was the LOLT. The question arises whether these teachers really know the other languages that they are using. Do they know all the structures and concepts? Is their

pronunciation correct? Are they able to provide learners with the necessary support and structures to enable them to understand what is being taught via their home language and, eventually, via the language of instruction? For instance, not one of the 30 teachers indicated that they spoke Tshivenda or Xitsonga as their home language, and therefore children speaking these languages as their home language could not even be assisted by using code switching. This also applies to the learners from Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The two teachers (in the former Model C schools), who did not speak any of the African languages used in South Africa, could therefore not rely on code switching to provide support via the home language of their learners.

In a multilingual context, code switching has a role to play and it could help to relieve learners' anxiety. But too much code switching may interfere with language acquisition and use (Diaz-Rico, 2008:112). If code switching is used in the classrooms that were visited, the question could be asked whether it was fair to use it to support some of the learners in their home language, but not all the learners in the class.

*Learners' home language:* The issue of home language also relates to the learners' particular home languages, because the language of learning and teaching is not always the learners' home language. As far as the home languages of the learners are concerned, many problems were raised by the teachers. One Grade 1 teacher indicated, for instance, that in her class of 40 learners they were speaking seven different home languages, namely isiZulu (the language of instruction), Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiXhosa and Sepedi, as well as a language spoken in Zimbabwe and yet another spoken in Mozambique. If it is the policy of the Department of Education that learners in Grades 1 to 3 should receive tuition in their mother-tongue, the question may be asked in which language the learners in this class should receive tuition.

Another problem raised by teachers is that some learners 'do not know their home language'. Often a family is uncertain as to which language could be regarded as their home language, because the father and the mother speak different languages. It therefore happens that a learner does not know much about the home language in which he or she is supposed to be taught, because some fathers insist that their children be taught in their (the fathers') home language. However, it is often the case that a child could have been speaking only his or her mother's home language at home, and therefore the father's home language, which becomes the language of instruction in school, is virtually a new language to the child.

This problem of being taught in a 'new' language also applies to schools where children do not speak one of two the official South African languages that are used for instruction in a particular school. The children from neighbouring countries also have to face this new language problem.

In the four inner-city former Model C schools, learners were taught only in English and some of the learners who had not been exposed to English before also had to face a new language as their language of instruction. It is said to be important for young learners to learn to think and function in their home language up to a cognitive academic language proficiency level before being able to transfer to a new language system (De Wet, 2002:119). One therefore cannot help but wonder what happens to those learners whose home language has not been developed and who have not yet mastered the language of learning and teaching.

It was encouraging to learn from teachers that there was an ‘eagerness to learn English’ among the learners. One teacher remarked that the learners in her class found it ‘fun to learn English’.

#### 4.2 Reading methods used

Table 2 represents the reading methods that the Grade1 to 3 teachers used to teach reading.

Table 2: Reading methods used by the teachers

| Reading method                    | Frequency | %     | Cumulative frequency | Cumulative % |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------------------|--------------|
| <b>Phonics</b>                    | 15        | 50.00 | 15                   | 50.00        |
| <b>Phonics, whole words</b>       | 3         | 10.00 | 18                   | 60.00        |
| <b>Phonics, read syllables</b>    | 3         | 10.00 | 21                   | 70.00        |
| <b>Phonics, words, sentences</b>  | 5         | 16.67 | 26                   | 86.67        |
| <b>Phonics, basic sight words</b> | 2         | 6.67  | 28                   | 93.33        |
| <b>Whole-word approach</b>        | 2         | 6.67  | 30                   | 100.00       |

From Table 2 it can be noted that of the 30 teachers who were visited, only two indicated that they used the whole-word approach to teach reading, while nobody mentioned the language experience approach. The majority of teachers used phonics to teach reading. The teachers used the phonics approach to the teaching of reading in various ways.

Some indicated that they first used phonics and then introduced words, basic sight words and sentences. Three of the 30 teachers indicated that they taught phonics and then used syllables when the learners started reading. When the learners read during the classroom visits, however, it became clear that more than three teachers allowed their learners to divide words into syllables when they read. This resulted in slow, word-for-word reading and the meaning of the text could be lost. The researcher knows that without true comprehension, reading becomes senseless. The psycholinguistic approach to the teaching of reading is based on the premise that ‘[a]ttaching meaning to and understanding the text are the foundation of reading’ (Joubert *et al.*, 2008:85).

Phonics has a role to play in the teaching of reading when it comes to the learning of basic words, including frequently used words and words with an unpredictable spelling, such as the, *would or night* (Diaz-Rico, 2008:175). Phonics could be of value when a phonetic language approach is used, but it has limitations and could result in jerky word-by-word reading; the sounding out of each word; a reduction in reading speed; mechanical reading with the emphasis on correctness, resulting in a lack of comprehension; and learners not using clues to unlock unfamiliar words, while it also does not encourage independent reading (Joubert *et al.*, 2008:90-91).

It is important for young learners to become fluent readers, because of the relationship between fluent reading and improved comprehension. If automaticity with regard to skills such as word recognition could be developed, then readers could focus their attention on comprehension.

This means that readers who have good word recognition skills will be able to read fluently and with improved understanding (Schwaneflugel *et al.*, 2006:499).

For English second-language learners, the use of phonics when learning to read does not make sense either. Phonics relies heavily on decoding and for second-language learners decoding is particularly difficult, because they do not hear the language in the same way as do first-language speakers. Gordon (2007:93), for instance, makes the following statement about learners who learn English as a second language: 'At least initially, language learners perceive English words as a jumble of odd sounds. Parsing words into individual sounds with the purpose of assigning letters to these words is particularly challenging for a child who is beginning to learn English. No wonder a writer described the English she first heard as a young child upon coming to the United States from another country as an incoherent stream of "cranky wails and cries".'

The challenge to master the sound system of English was mentioned by teachers. One teacher remarked that 'the emphasis should be on the sounds and not on the letters' because, as another teacher stated, the learners are 'confusing the alphabet'.

During the interviews, some teachers raised the issue of reading and other teaching materials not being available in the various African languages. This applies to the eight schools where the languages of learning and teaching were African languages. According to some teachers, the language used in some of the materials written in the African languages is sometimes incorrect. One teacher remarked that they did not have 'enough African language books' and a colleague said that they had only 'non-African and old books'. Although the teaching of mathematics did not form part of this research project, some teachers mentioned that the 'language of mathematics' posed the biggest problem of all, because many mathematical concepts had not been translated into the African languages and therefore English words were used. The researcher noticed that in many classrooms (including Grade 1 and 2 classrooms) in these eight schools, all the pictures used were pictures with words written in English underneath the pictures, although English was not the language of instruction in these classes. So the young learners in these classrooms did not see words in their home language on the walls of their classrooms.

It was encouraging to note that many teachers were aware of the poor socio-economic background of the majority of their learners. They explained the steps that the teachers and the schools were taking to assist these learners with meals and clothing. However, none of the teachers mentioned the multitude of socio-cultural factors that could influence their learners' academic progress at school.

Socio-cultural factors could play an important role in hindering learners in their attempts to master the art of reading because, one may ask, if the context of what has to be read is incomprehensible, how can the reading itself be comprehensible? If, for example, the well-known *Janet and John* series that originates from Britain is used, do the learners understand the socio-cultural contexts of these readers?

#### *4.3 Classroom practices*

It was noted during classroom observations that many of the learners read word-for-word, sounding out most of the words. This is very typical of young learners who have only been using the phonics method to learn to read. But this type of reading slows down the whole reading

process which leads to failure to comprehend what has been read. If one cannot understand what is being read, reading becomes senseless.

Two important issues that can be found in most of the literature on reading and literacy acquisition, and which were not evident during the researcher's visit to the schools, are socio-cultural factors and the motivation to read. Teachers should never neglect motivating their learners to read, because motivational processes constitute the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading (Guthrie, 2008:2). Socio-cultural factors should also be attended to in schools and classrooms, because they have a strong influence on learners' literacy achievements. This pertains especially to those learners whose home language is different to the school's language of learning and teaching. In three of the classrooms of the eight schools where the LOLT is not English, it was observed that there were beautiful pictures of for instance all types of animals on the walls, but underneath the pictures the words were written in English and not in the learners' home language.

In eight of the schools there were only readers for each learner and no other reading materials. Sometimes there were not enough readers for each learner and they had to share a reader. The teachers did not make appropriate or additional reading material for their learners. Big Books that can be used for shared reading and to demonstrate reading by the teacher were for instance not seen in many of the schools.

#### *4.4 Examples of best practice*

During the school visits various teaching practices were observed. One Grade 3 teacher with 37 years of teaching experience and who taught in an overpopulated classroom demonstrated the use of phonological awareness in an excellent way. She illustrated to the learners how one could 'play' with a word in isiZulu. She showed them that by adding prefixes and suffixes, new words could be formed. She was the one teacher who, during a reading lesson, asked thought-provoking questions, such as: 'Why do you say that?' 'What do you think will happen next?' or 'What do you think will happen if ...?' The expertise of this teacher and other teachers with similar experience is of great value and should be utilised, not only in the teacher's own school to train her peers, but also during in-service teacher training sessions.

At one of the inner-city schools that were visited, there were elderly persons from a nearby retirement home who had been involved in a reading project at the school. A group of the elderly people came to the school once a week. Each child in the school had a graded book, selected under the guidance of the class teacher. Each child was given the opportunity to read individually to one of the elderly people in the reading project. In this way, every learner got an opportunity to read a few pages aloud to an adult once a week. The adults kept a record of each learner's progress. What is of great importance, is that every learner had the opportunity to read and was motivated and supported by an adult.

#### *4.5 Teachers' years of experience*

Twenty-eight of the teachers who took part in this research project had many years of experience in the teaching profession. Only one teacher had only one year of experience, but she had been teaching pre-schoolers before; another had two years of experience. The rest had six or more years of experience as teachers in the Foundation Phase and the average number of years of experience for all these teachers came to 13 years.

It is often said that in South Africa – and in Africa – the one available resource at people's disposal that is not being used, is people. The 30 teachers in this research project have years of knowledge and experience that are not being utilised to provide peer support in their schools or for in-service teacher training for under-qualified teachers.

From the data obtained via the questionnaires, interviews and field observations, it was clear that the teachers who were targeted in this research project grappled with numerous problems. These problems include the many different home languages spoken by the learners and teachers, teachers not using a variety of reading methods, the lack of socio-cultural issues in the reading materials, a lack of reading motivation and insufficient readers and appropriate reading materials. The majority of the teachers indicated that many of learners in their classes experienced reading problems. Four teachers mentioned that they needed to have a remedial reading teacher for their learners. The teachers were also faced by other problems such as overcrowded classrooms. It became clear during the classroom visits that the majority of the teachers really tried to make their tuition successful. However, it was impossible to do justice to every learner in an overcrowded classroom with learners who spoke a variety of home languages and with limited reading resources.

## **5. Conclusion**

Investigation into the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase revealed that it requires teachers to have sound knowledge about various aspects related to the acquisition of this important skill in the academic life of learners. Pre-reading skills and various reading methods were discussed. Additional factors such as reading motivation and young learners' cultural backgrounds and the language spoken at home were also investigated. Reading cannot be done in a vacuum and therefore reading materials have to be considered as well.

The results of the research project revealed that there are certain requirements and skills that the teachers of reading should attend to. Teachers need to be flexible and well trained in the use of various reading methods because the circumstances and the learners that they teach require this. Since the socio-economic circumstances of most of the young learners are not conducive to the acquisition of pre-reading skills, they are not exposed to reading activities at home. At school the teachers have to attend to pre-reading and emergent reading[0]. It was surprising to see that so many home languages were spoken in one class in some of the schools. This makes consideration of the learners' socio-cultural background when teaching reading even more important. Reading is not only a cognitive process; the affective domain also plays a role in reading acquisition. The absence of reading motivation in most of the schools will have to be attended to. The same can be said about enough and relevant reading materials in the home languages of the learners in the schools where home language instruction is done.

Much in-service teacher training is being carried out in South Africa. However, it is vital to consider *what* is being taught during in-service training. When it comes to the teaching of reading, researchers and objective experts should find out from teachers what they need to be trained in. Teachers should have an input in the in-service training provided so that it suits the needs of teachers in certain areas and schools. Teachers who are regarded as experts in the teaching of reading such as the one teacher referred to in the discussion of the research,

could train and advise their peers. Teachers should be trained to reflect on their own teaching and especially on their teaching of reading. They can learn to answer questions such as: What works? Why does it work? Why can some learners not master certain reading skills? Am I considering the socio-cultural background of my learners?

Teachers could also be assisted in developing improved and more appropriate reading materials for their learners. In a classroom where a variety of languages is spoken and where learners come from a variety of cultures, environmental print could be used. When environmental print is used children read about things that they are exposed to in their personal environment, such as the shops in their environment, the advertisements on taxis and buses, and street names.

From the side of government, research should be conducted into language issues in schools, as one language policy does not fit all schools. The many languages spoken in one classroom have an influence on all the learning that takes place and on the acquisition of reading. Support and guidance should be provided to schools that have to educate the children of the many so-called 'foreigners' from other African countries. These learners cannot simply be dumped on the schools with no additional assistance.

When young children enter the world of formal learning in the 'big' school, there should be a reading expert in the form of a competent teacher to introduce and guide them along the avenue called life-long reading.

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