
Schooled inequalities - a comparison of the language syllabuses for English, Afrikaans and Bantu languages of the 1970s

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Abstract

This paper investigates the literacy practices inscribed in the matriculation syllabuses for Afrikaans, Bantu Languages and English as primary or first language that informed learning and teaching in the 1970s and 1980s. It critically analyses the syllabuses in relation to the underlying literacy paradigms that inform them and in terms of the validated subject positions inscribed for learners and teachers. It argues that for each language the sets of literacy practices must be conceived of as working discursively and effecting relations of power while producing different subjects. It suggests that the validated learners were variously constituted, whether as the globally elite subject, the nationalist subject, or as the deficient learner. Attempts at educational transformation need to be mindful of how these discursive practices were effected, of the kinds of subjects and practices that were normalised, and of their extraordinary resilience.

Introduction

Different literacy practices have developed within particular locations in South African education. They are not simply, however, as apartheid apologists proposed, different but equal. They do very different things and have their roots in their pasts. In order to recognise the implications of current educational practices it is necessary to acknowledge that the discursive practices of the past continue to inform those of the present and to make visible the ideological implications that inhere within them. This form of investigative analysis has been described as attempting a 'history of the present' (Dean, 1994, p.20). In this spirit, this paper investigates the syllabuses which informed literacy practices at matriculation level for primary or first language from the 1970s until the mid 1980s. The central question this analysis responds to is: 'How, why, and in what forms were literacy practices

constituted in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in the 1970s matriculation syllabuses?¹ If literacy practices are understood as situated social practices (Barton and Hamilton, 2000), this analysis accordingly considers how these syllabuses propose specific literacy techniques or practices. Crucially though, it looks to the different kinds of subjects these sets of literacy practices propose and validate.

To this end, in introducing the paper, two anecdotes are narrated to illustrate the kinds of 'lessons' learnt and to motivate the significance of this curricular history. After identifying the Foucauldian framework and the broader context of literacy paradigms, an analysis of the English syllabus is conducted confining the analysis here to the aims of the syllabuses. It is followed by a contrastive analysis of the Afrikaans and Bantu Languages syllabus. This investigation makes it possible to identify the informing approaches to literacy practices inscribed in the three syllabus documents in order to reveal their political and social implications by considering the human subjects they variously constitute and validate.

For educators who are concerned with the possibilities of a transformative education and possibilities for the future, it might seem unnecessary to delve into the past. However, in the course of my research, many conversations and interviews I had with teachers and academics in the broad area of literacy studies have reaffirmed my sense of the importance of a curricular history of literacy practices. Frequently, the opinions expressed related the pedagogies and ideologies of past and (some would think) outdated curricula. It seems they had learnt their lessons well. Consider the following scenarios.

Scenario 1: a discussion with a research assistant. In response to my probing his attitude to the overly complex linguistic items in the Zulu examination that he had translated, I was offered, as though in justification, 'But Zulu is not like English'. It is noteworthy that the syllabus for Bantu Languages (First Language) in the 1970s presents the same idea.

Because the Bantu languages differ so much from the European languages, it is necessary that the Bantu child should not view his mother-tongue as if it were a European language (JMB, 1973, p.144).

¹ While my focus here might be KZN, the findings have a much wider relevance as these syllabuses informed language education throughout South Africa.

Scenario 2: a discussion about a course on Communication (notably not English or literature) for teacher education structured by an English mother tongue speaker. I questioned the nature of texts that would be included. These, I was informed, would be literary. The rationale for this decision was based on 'common sense': literary texts were valuable and would better foster communication skills - this in spite of the significance of information and media culture in contemporary social life. Once again I heard the echo of a 'well' learnt lesson, this time its refrain extending beyond South African borders to England. It repeats the frequently quoted position articulated in the *Bullock Report* (1975) in England and included in the South African English core syllabuses of 1986 and 1993.

Literature brings the child into an encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms. Through these complexities are presented the thoughts, experiences and feelings of people who exist outside and beyond the reader's daily awareness (Bullock Report, quoted in NED, 1986, p.8).

These interactions were two among many in which teachers or academics have assumed that the version of literacy practice to which they ascribe is rational and self-evident – assumptions, I would argue, that cannot simply be dismissed as anomalies. What is striking about them is the persistence of such lessons learnt about literacy practices within the classroom both as learner and teacher.

For this reason any attempt at educational transformation needs to be cognisant of such resilience and to recognise that the present holds within it the past. Recent curriculum theorising and understandings of literacy practices propose knowledge not as neutral, but situated. These 'well learnt' lessons that have been constituted as the normal course of literacy practices, and thus become second nature, need to be conceived of as 'restricted and specific rather than being a general and all-inclusive category'. Similarly, the curriculum needs to be understood 'within the terms of cultural transmission and ideological communication' (Green, 1993, p.203). Accordingly, literacy practices need to be conceived of as working discursively and effecting relations of power while constituting subjects of the discourse. The scenarios above provide illustrations of how certain teachers have been constituted as subjects in relation to different processes or literacy practices - processes both invisible and pervasive - that have impelled their responses to texts. It is these kinds of processes that Foucault termed 'modern disciplinary power' or 'bio-power' (1976, p.143). He described power in terms of its

... capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives (1980, p. 39).

Consequently, Foucault proposed a theory of power that was productive rather than repressive. Power thus conceived works through the production of subjects, not by overt domination but by incorporating them, by disciplining them to be 'docile bodies'. This idea that the basic role of disciplinary power was/is to produce human beings who could be treated as docile bodies is a central premise of Foucault's work. He also posited that these docile bodies subjected to discipline imagine themselves to be autonomous individuals exercising free will. In his writings, discourse is discussed as constitutive of social subjects, of the objects of knowledge (or 'truths') and the rules of discursive behaviours (Foucault, 1972).

The discursive practices and sets of techniques that form the focus of this paper are delineated in the Matriculation syllabus documents for English, Afrikaans and Bantu Languages as primary or first language. The literacy practices inscribed within them bear the traces of a broad curricular history and the syllabuses are variously informed by different paradigms or versions of language education.

The paradigms or versions of literacy practices that have emerged historically include Grammar/Skills, Cultural Heritage, Personal Growth and Critical Approaches. Very crudely, the Grammar/skills approach is characterised by a strong focus on grammatical elements and a pedagogy of drill and repetition. The purpose of reading focuses on a familiarity with surface knowledge, in particular narrational detail, authorial information and perhaps the imperative to quote and to identify rhetorical devices. A Cultural Heritage approach proposes a different engagement with literature, one informed by the Leavisite notion of sensibility. Leavis proposed literature as offering a spiritual essence, as a moral and civilising pursuit (see Eagleton, 1983). Here, the focus is on 'close reading' and an interpretive engagement with a canon of literary texts. The Personal Growth version proposes a particular set of techniques that relate explicitly, as the term suggests, to personal development effected within the discursive framework of the universal and rational Enlightenment subject. This version of English literacy practices was simultaneously significant for its progressivism and child-centredness, concerns made manifest in the attention to learners' expression, both spoken and written. Finally, Critical Literacy, not a version of significance in this analysis, refers to those sets of literacy practices that are concerned with the cultural and ideological

assumptions that underpin texts, and with the politics of representation. (See, for example, Christie, 1991, and Morgan, 1997, for more detailed accounts.)

The literacy practices are not simply about approach nor merely about subject content and subject pedagogy. They propose different roles and capacities and thereby validate different moral subjects. Because of length constraints, the present analysis confines its attention to the aims or goals of the syllabus in order to locate the syllabus in relation to the literacy paradigm and the attendant subjectivities. A fuller analysis of the course outlines would provide the detail of how the aims are played out (see Prinsloo, 2002). The analysis of the syllabuses attends to the wording or lexical selections, and to how they constitute the literacy practices and their subjects. The form of analysis draws to some extent on insights derived from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in order to consider the verbal processes (or Transitivity analysis) that indicates the proposed subject roles². For example, at the crudest level, a learning programme that advocated material processes as the outcome of its aims would inscribe practical skills, whereas on the other side of the continuum, if the processes were exclusively mental, it suggests the ideal subject as operating within an intellectual and cognitive realm. Also significant to this analysis are behavioural processes which are classified as being between mental and material processes.

1970s English Higher syllabus

In spite of national syllabus change in 1977, the English (Higher Grade) syllabus (NED, 1973) remained virtually unchanged from the early nineteen-seventies until the mid nineteen-eighties and informed literacy practices for English for both the Indian and white population groups in the province of Natal³. The syllabus consists of three sections, namely the aims, both general and specific, then an outline of the course presented under the headings

² A Transitivity analysis of verbal groups or 'goings-on' enables a differentiation between material, mental, relational, behavioural and verbal processes. Constraints in relation to length preclude more detailed explanation, but this is contained in Halliday (1985); Thompson (1996) provides an accessible interpretation of this approach; Janks (1997) provides an example of its application as critical discourse analysis.

³ The syllabus, obtained from the NED files of the seventies in the State archive in Pietermaritzburg is undated. Consequently, it is referenced as 1973 somewhat arbitrarily, but using the year of the official national core syllabus which informed this provincial syllabus.

Spoken English, Written English and Literature, and finally the examination, both oral and written, the latter consisting of three papers.

It will become clear that this syllabus is informed and responds to the debates and literacy practices in the United Kingdom in the late sixties and inscribes a Personal Growth approach. An interesting tension between freedom and control runs through this syllabus, one identified as inhering in the Personal Growth version of literacy practices. Hunter (1988) noted this paradox of techniques that encouraged self-expression while acting as a mechanism of ethical self-surveillance. While this version is celebratory of the individual and his experience and displays a reluctance to appear explicitly didactic, it is equally clear about what constitutes appropriate practices – the ‘well-regulated liberty’ described by Donald (1992, p.1).

General Aim

In its opening words, where the role of the teacher is identified as to ‘promote... development’, the syllabus declares its concern with the development of the learner, not with any subject or discipline knowledge or skills. This approach foregrounds the pastoral intention subsumed within the literacy practices (see Hunter, 1988; Green, 1993, etc.) and unashamedly proposes it as a moral technology: ‘General Aim: to promote the pupil’s intellectual, emotional and social development’ (1973, p. 1).

That the syllabus both responds and defers to developments and debates in the UK is explicitly signalled in the quotation from Frank Whitehead that is deployed to validate the principle of the aim. Whitehead is deferred to as an authority, an influential and published English ‘English’ educator.

We need to have brought to clear focus in our minds the way in which a child's acquisition of his native language is inseparably intertwined with his developing consciousness of the world in which he is growing up, with his control of his inner phantasies and the feelings they give rise to, and with his possession of the values by which he will live his life in the civilization he forms part of. (Frank Whitehead, 1966, *The Disappearing Dais* (Chatto & Windus - 1966). (1973, p. 1)⁴

What is significant both in the quotation and the position it validates is the emphasis of the affective realm. While Whitehead draws attention to the ‘child’s’ acquisition of his ‘native’ language, he stresses that the acquisition of

⁴ The use of the masculine pronoun is employed throughout these syllabus documents and is therefore deliberately retained in discussing them.

language is interlinked with a person's subjectivity. The 'control' that is identified, of feelings and fantasies, proposes the techniques of self, the self-disciplining, in relation to a particular set of moral values. These relate to the 'civilisation he forms part of'. The references to 'native' language and to 'civilisation' are significant: Whitehead was writing in England for teachers. That this 'Englishness' is transposed to the Natal context unself-consciously indicates the extent to which the Enlightenment discourse and subjectivities were normalised as a universalising subject position for English speakers/learners. The moral discursive framework of Personal Growth is inscribed as 'truth'.

Specific Aims

The ethical stance proposed is further announced in the four specific aims. Below is a list of the specific aims (omitting the elaborating comments that suggest how to effect the aim):

- (a) To increase the pupil's capacity to observe, to discriminate, to see relationships, and to order his thoughts coherently: ...
- (b) To help the pupil to understand himself and his own emotional and moral responses, so that he may live more fully and consciously and responsibly: ...
- (c) To extend, through increasing his capacity to communicate with others, the pupil's mental and emotional world: ...
- (d) To extend the pupil's mental, emotional and cultural experience: ... (NED 1973, pp.1-2).

There is logic inherent in the ordering of these Specific Aims that work to the fulfilment of the General Aim above, of intellectual, emotional and social development. In the first place (Aim a) the learner needs particular cognitive capacities to 'observe', 'discriminate', 'see' (relationships), and 'order' (thoughts). These cognitive abilities then underpin the second specific aim of helping the learner to intelligently ponder or consider his or her own emotional and moral responses (Aim b). In turn, to communicate these understandings, it is necessary to have and to develop communication skills (Aim c) which in turn make it possible to extend her or his mental, emotional and cultural experience (Aim d). Interestingly, the aims present no reference to subject or discipline knowledge or skills, but rather they assert the pastoral

intention and the moral imperative for living self-perfecting and responsible lives.

Moving to how this should be achieved enables a consideration of the subject positioning of teacher and learner, as well as the strategies to effect such discursive work.

The role of wise and generous patron can be identified in the choice of verbs used in the specific aims that define this role: 'increase', 'help', 'extend'. The pedagogy invoked is evident in the explanatory gerundive phrases: 'providing opportunity and motivation' (twice), 'offering help ... and constructive criticism', 'encouraging' (four times), 'stimulating', 'giving insight', 'fostering', 'making him aware', and one exception, 'training' for sensitive and intelligent reading (NED, 1973, pp.1-2)⁵. The teacher's role is a supportive and nurturing one that assumes a learner capable of particular behaviours. The syllabus identifies what would be poor pedagogic practice, the drill and repetitive tasks of the skills-based paradigm: 'The teacher's task is not to be thought of in terms of providing a series of classroom exercises, but of creating opportunities for the extension and enrichment of experience' (NED, 1973, p.1). What the teacher wishes to impact on are 'capacity', 'responses', 'states of mind', his 'world' and 'experience', connoting intellectual, emotional and cultural realms. These are further signalled through the adjectives 'emotional' (four times), 'moral' (twice), 'mental' (twice) and 'cultural'.

The syllabus and its accompanying pedagogy accordingly anticipate behaviours of the learner that are identified by the verbs. By listing them, it becomes strikingly evident that these are primarily mental processes as is noted in the table below.

⁵ The processes are material ones synonymous with 'teaching'.

Table 1: Processes for learners in Specific Aims (1973 English syllabus)

Aims	Verbs	Process
Aim a	observe	mental
	discriminate	mental
	see (relationships)	mental
	order (thoughts coherently),	mental
Aim b	understand (himself and his ... responses)	mental/verbal
	live (fully, consciously, responsibly)	mental (taking adverbs into account)
	observe and discuss (states of mind, emotional reaction, moral values)	mental/verbal
	explore (own feelings and states of mind)	mental (metaphorically)
Aim c	achieve (communication)	verbal
	read (attentively)	behavioural
Aim d	read (sensitively, intelligently)	mental or behavioural

If the validated learner subject of this syllabus engages in mental process (many of them would be classified as higher order thinking skills) these mental behaviours are invoked in relation to the emotional and moral world of the learners, in line with the injunction to self-govern, to subject the self to a particular moral scrutiny. Interestingly, this focus relegates questions of content knowledge or tangible outcomes of learning to the margins. In line with the Personal Growth paradigm, the touchstones are experience, enrichment and individual development in order to live according to the explicit normative moral imperative, ‘fully and consciously and responsibly’. The emphasis is on the ‘whole child’, on nurturing the ‘child’s’ personal growth. Literacy practices become the vehicles for their achievement effected through the modes mentioned, almost incidentally, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

A significant discursive strand inheres in the final clause of the fourth aim, one that speaks to the perception of the value and role of English:

by making him aware of the various roles of English as a world language in science, technology, literature, diplomacy, etc. – (cf. the Changing English Language: b. Forster, pub. Macmillan) (NED, 1973, p.2).

Here, the imagined identity of Englishness proposes a global subject, but one who is explicitly an elite one. English enables access to those avenues that connote progress within the free-market economy (science and technology), refined taste (literature) and leadership in international domains (diplomacy). Englishness proposes social and global mobility.

English syllabus in summary

The 1973 English syllabus inscribes a Personal Growth version of literacy practices. It is notable for its emphasis in relation to the productive aspects of literacy practice, namely speaking and writing, while simultaneously downplaying formal language teaching, and leaving literature remarkably unchanged. Its pedagogical strategies attempt to engage the learners willingly, to propose a discipline by means of which they become self-governing subjects. This is framed within an acceptance of a particular notion of civilisation, of an English cultural heritage and a canon of literature to fit. The form of responsibility proposed is that of the well-regulated and normative subject of the Enlightenment. This subject is positioned as outside class, while contradictorily and simultaneously aware of the cultural capital afforded by English. There is sense of the subject as constituted with the assumed entitlements of the global elite, 'aware of the various roles of English as a world language in science, technology, literature, diplomacy, etc.' (1973, p.2). This syllabus would not have been out of place in England, Canada, Australia or other globally advantaged ('civilised') countries.

Analysis of 1970s Afrikaans and Bantu Languages syllabuses

A contrastive analysis of the two core syllabuses for Afrikaans (JMB, 1977, pp.1-9) and Bantu Languages (JMB, 1973, pp.144-153)⁶ which informed Bantu language literacy practices during this period enables certain critical insights. The decision to treat them as separate (as in the case of the English syllabus) was driven by the documents themselves. In the process of analysing them as discrete sets of syllabuses, it became clear that this particular pair of syllabuses revealed exceptional similarities in content and phrasing.

⁶ The JMB core syllabus (1977) has been used to analyse Afrikaans literacy practices which were informed by the same syllabus from 1969 until 1987 with slight amendments. This national syllabus informed and constrained the provincial version. At this time, there was a single aggregated syllabus for all Bantu Languages.

Originally, an analysis of the Bantu Language syllabus (in English) had been conducted before addressing the Afrikaans syllabus. A sense of something uncannily familiar about the Afrikaans syllabus led me to acquire an Afrikaans version of the Bantu Languages syllabus. A comparison of the Afrikaans version of the Afrikaans and Bantu Languages syllabus revealed exceptional similarities, something that was not immediately evident in translation and which is a significant realisation.

That significant sections of the two syllabuses are similar not only in content, but are actually identically phrased in the Afrikaans version, demands explanation. That this could be the result of a collaboratively produced syllabus is not in accord with the spirit and practice of education and curriculum practices that related to black education in this period of history. Curriculum change was handled at Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) level, neither noted for participatory practices along racial lines (see Trumpelman (undated) for an account of the composition of the JMB, etc). Rather, one needs to be mindful of the stated role of the Afrikaner in the CNE document of 1948 (in Behr 1988). Clearly the perceived role of the 'Boer nation' as 'the senior white trustees of the native' as yet in their 'cultural infancy' (the terms used in the CNE document) influenced syllabus construction. These syllabuses indicate that such influence extended to the very phrasing. The approach to literacy practices for Afrikaners and black South Africans was devised in relation to a declared political agenda of Afrikaner nationalism. The approach, as will be evident in the analysis, posits itself as 'scientific', in line with the scientism of Fundamental Pedagogics (Morrow 1989, Enslin 1984). Because English literacy practices were directed by the white English speakers, English escaped such immediate control.

Both papers are similarly structured and, like the English syllabus, consist of three sections, first, an introductory section or commentary, then a course outline, and finally the requirements of the three-paper examination. In spite of the similarities, the two syllabuses in question contain significant differences as a result of the omission or inclusion of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. This combination of similarities and differences begs the question of the discursive work intended and its implications in relation to the constitution of learning subjects and the range of intellectual competences proposed.

This discussion focuses on central themes that emerge, namely, the identification of the approach as scientific and as academic, and then on the aims of the two different syllabuses and their implications. It concludes by considering the nationalistic thrust of the Afrikaans syllabus.

A 'scientific' and academic approach

Both syllabuses share an insistence on a 'scientific' approach to literacy practices, which therefore assumes that language operates as a system of rules that are completely knowable. The field of study, whether Afrikaans or Bantu Languages, is accordingly composed of the two fields of linguistics and literature. This scientific approach is reiterated in the quotes (with my emphases) taken from both the syllabus documents.

This syllabus also assumes that a beginning has already been made in the lower standards in secondary school with a scientific approach to the two chief fields of [M]other-tongue as a subject: namely linguistics and literature (JMB, 1977, p.1; 1973, p.144).

It is striking that 'Mother tongue' is capitalised in the Afrikaans syllabus, but not in that for Bantu Languages.

Primarily, however, it has its own academic and scientific aim: drawing attention to problems connected with language and literature, stimulating probing thinking, resulting in intelligent interest and insight into language and literature (JMB, 1977, p.1; 1973, p.144).

The emphasis on 'knowledge' and 'facts', and 'control' imply an instrumental approach to language and literacy education. It proposes a mechanical and structural approach that stresses mastery of rules - an approach in line with Fundamental Pedagogics with its insistence on a 'scientific' approach to 'didactics'.

This 'scientific' approach is considered as important in its role to ensure appropriate entrance standards for university. The goals to which mother tongue literacy practices conspire include an emphasis on the role of the syllabus in terms of university entrance and academic study is assumed to be in line with this scientific approach.

Syllabus aims

If there is a consistency in the ‘scientific’ and ‘academic’ thrust of the syllabuses, it is in the implicit and explicit aims of the syllabus that the differences inhere.

In both syllabuses it is stated that :

Under normal circumstances, scholars who have attained the matriculation level should not have difficulty with the pronunciation and writing of regular Afrikaans words/the mother tongue (JMB 1977, p.1; 1973, p.144).

However, in the Afrikaans syllabus, this is included following the statement that language usage ‘is not the main objective of the mother-tongue as a subject in the secondary school’ and that ‘correct attitude towards usage habits’ will have been already established in the primary school. In contrast, in the Bantu Languages syllabus no reference is made to suggest usage as something that should already be established prior to this paragraph. Rather, it is differently anchored by its preceding paragraph (discussed later), that constitutes, it will be argued, Bantu languages as ‘other’, and the learner as deficient. Thus framed, the quotation reads as the attainment goals for matriculation, namely to have no difficulty with ‘the pronunciation and writing of the mother tongue’, rather than that which learners already possess. For Bantu language, usage is proposed as a central goal.

Two other sets of difference need to be teased out, firstly the explicit aims of the Afrikaans syllabus, and second, the account of the nature of Bantu languages and its implications.

The aims of Afrikaans

Where the 1970s Bantu Languages syllabus has been identified as extremely vague in terms of goals and subject matter and lacking detailed specification (Snyman, 1986, p.128), three explicit aims preface the Afrikaans syllabus commentary. In the table that follows, the (implied) roles of the learner are listed. The role of the learner is expressed as to ‘know and understand’, both mental processes. The goal or object of such ‘knowing’ is consistent with the ‘scientific’ approach and consists of bodies of factual knowledge and content: ‘language study of Afrikaans’, etc. The behavioral processes of read and write, and verbal processes of speak, qualified by the adverb ‘correctly’, imply here

processes that lean to the material rather than to the mental. Such word choice contrasts with that of the English syllabus insistence on observing, discussing and exploring.

Table 2: Learner processes identified in the 'Aims' for Afrikaans (JMB, 1977, p.1)

Learner process	Goals/phenomena
know and understand (<i>mental</i>)	language study of Afrikaans, the structure of the language, functional tools
	Afrikaans literature, genres, historical development, tools used in literature
use (<i>material</i>) speak (<i>verbal</i>) read, write correctly (<i>behavioural</i>)	language

All three aims locate this syllabus as a Grammar/Skills version of literacy practice. Language study is foregrounded by identifying it as the first aim, and the articulation of a structural approach and its attention to grammatical minutiae signals its consistency with the Grammar/Skills approach. The second aim identifies knowledge and understanding of Afrikaans literature as a goal. Literature here is knowable in relation to genres, its historical development, and literary devices. The aim to ensure knowledge differentiates it from the interpretive 'enrichment' focus of Leavisite Cultural Heritage. Furthermore, the emphasis on correct speaking, reading and writing of standardised Afrikaans locates it similarly as Grammar/Skills version of literacy practices.

Interestingly, there is little contradiction between the approach identified in the aims and the comments in the remainder of the syllabus. This syllabus remains one strongly grounded in a transmission paradigm, that proposes knowledge as fixed. It also alludes to a nationalistic cultural heritage strand ('historical development'). The ideological intent of this heritage is directly nationalistic rather than proposing liberal humanism or personal growth. That it is related to a defensive approach to the language and culture will become more explicit in subsequent discussion of Afrikaner nationalism.

Bantu languages as (m)other tongue

What the Bantu Languages syllabus lacks in clarity of definite aims is compensated for by explicit announcement of the perceived nature of Bantu languages, constructed here, it is argued, as ‘other’ rather than mother tongue.

It is widely acknowledged that mother tongue speakers enter school with a wide knowledge of and proficiency in their language, as expressed in the following quote :

Pupils bring to the class-room a native speaker’s knowledge of, and intuitions about, language and its place in society. In this sense the task of the [mother tongue] teacher is not to impart a body of knowledge, but to work upon, develop, refine and clarify knowledge and tuitions that his pupils already possess. ... He is unlikely to find the central concerns of the specialist in Linguistics, the explicit, formal and analytical description of the patterns of a language, immediately relevant to his needs (Doughty et al, 1971, p.11).

As the mother tongue is the model of language that is internalised, it is only when attempting to acquire an additional language that a learner needs to identify ways in which the additional language differs from the internalised model of the mother tongue. Thus, in order for an English mother tongue speaker to acquire Bantu Languages, it would be necessary for her or him to view this language as different to English, and that it would have a ‘peculiar’ character different to that which is already known. However, in the Bantu Languages syllabus the reverse assumption is made. Consider the statement:

[T]he Bantu child must not view his mother tongue as if it were a European language.

Leaving to one side the implied infantilisation of the learner implicit in the reference to the ‘child’, it begs the question: what possible reasons should he have for doing this?

‘[H]e must be taught that his mother tongue has its perculiar (sic) character’ (1973, p.144).

Yet, a mother tongue is always normalised for native speakers, and additional languages are ‘peculiar’ to those acquiring it. The table that follows lists the imperatives for the ‘Bantu’ learner on the left-hand side. That which s/he must learn is listed on the right-hand side to correspond with the imperatives. The use of passive forms and/or the imperative mood inscribe this position as an unassailable truth, while not disguising its autocratic tone.

Table 3: Constitution of Bantu Languages as 'other'

the 'Bantu child' ...

should not view	his mother tongue as a European language
should be taught	that his mother tongue has peculiar (sic) qualities
is to be taught	his mother tongue is much more bound up with form in its system of writing it does not follow the European languages it has its own sound system its literature reflects both the traditional culture and the modern way of life
(it is imperative to) be taught from the outset	grammatical concepts which pertain to his language
must be fully versed in	the official orthography
above all ... must be taught	to respect his mother tongue

If Bantu Languages are constituted in their peculiar otherness, the learners are similarly constituted as deficient. They view their mother tongue as a European language, they are not versed in the official orthography, and do not 'respect' their mother tongue, for they have to be taught these matters. The goals that these deficient learners should aspire to are also not pitched very high. They are required to develop 'an adequate ability to control the language by thinking and reasoning it' - all of this in spite of the fact that it would be not unreasonable to assume that formal education is not a prerequisite for any group to pronounce their mother tongue.

The syllabus effectively frames language practices for Bantu Languages from the position of non-mother tongue speakers. This extraordinary reversal and discursive construction of Bantu Languages as 'other', and subsequently referred to as 'the vernacular' in the 'Composition' section, has its roots in the broader processes whereby Bantu Languages were transliterated to written languages. That they were approached by colonial settlers, and frequently missionaries, as foreign languages and transliterated by Europeans has insinuated itself into the literacy practices so that for first language speakers,

the methodologies and approaches continue to derive from foreign language teaching (Nokaneng, 1986).

The instrumentality and functionality of approach is in strong contrast to the approach of English (NED, 1973) in the seventies. It is uninformed by concerns for personal growth or communicative competence, or social critique. Like the Afrikaans syllabus, it remains tied to the transmission and teacher-centred approach that informed the approach to literacy education from the turn of the century and proposes a lower set of competences than the equally conservative Afrikaans syllabus.

Afrikaner nationalism

That teachers are enjoined to instil and nurture a sense of nationalistic Afrikaner loyalty and identity is explicitly flagged at several moments in the syllabus. This occurs in the aims that precede the commentary, with the focus on historical literary movements. Subsequently, the section dealing with vocabulary insists on dealing with two elements of its etymology, relating to Dutch and English. It asserts that :

the mother-tongue should not just be dealt with synchronously, that language is not just something of the here and now. The Dutch context from which Afrikaans originates and in which it is written must emphasise and deal with important similarities and differences between Afrikaans and Dutch (JMB, 1977, p.2).

This Dutch heritage is validated for the cultural heritage it provides. A Nederlands literary work is also included in the literature section. In contrast, a more wary note informs the dealings with English, bringing to mind the language struggles that occurred to defy the Anglicisation policies historically.

Under borrowed things, not all borrowed things ought to be dealt with. Of current interest in our bilingual country, however, is the influence of English on Afrikaans (phonetic system, vocabulary and syntax), and attention should be devoted to the desirable and undesirable influences (JMB, 1973, p.3).

While the vocabulary focus is on the European roots, no mention is made of those languages which significantly contributed to the formation of Afrikaans as a language of Southern Africa, namely, 'the indigenous Khoekhoe, and enslaved people of African and Asian provenance' (Roberge, 1995, p.68). The omission of linguistic indebtedness to other races is consonant with the racial ideologies of the government of the day.

That teachers should foster a chauvinistic delight in Afrikaans is suggested in the slightly cautiously worded injunctions to use these as topics of scrutiny and written exploration.

There is nothing that prevents this creative writing from dealing with the content of Afrikaans as a subject, and it is advised that compositions are written on that. (JMB, 1973, p.3)

There is again nothing that prevents the text of the comprehension test from dealing with material from the study of the subject of Afrikaans, and the use of such material ought to be encouraged. (JMB, 1973, p.4)

That this linguistic chauvinism was enacted is evident in the examination papers referred to in conclusion.

Afrikaans and Bantu languages in summary

This contrastive analysis has identified a strong linkage between the Afrikaans and Bantu Language syllabuses for a period of about a decade and a half (1970s to mid 1980s). This move has been linked back to Fundamental Pedagogics and its fixation on science to justify knowledge and education. In both syllabuses, authority lies with the teacher, with science, and in the selected texts. The authoritarian approach gives no space to personal growth and the insistence on a fact-based, non-interpretive approach privileges doctrinaire thinking. However, the differences are more salient and these relate to the politics of identity of the day.

Conclusion

This contrastive analysis of three language syllabuses of the 1970s, those that inscribed the literacy practices in Natal at that time, indicates the very different discursive work inscribed in each. The discussion in this paper has been confined to the syllabuses while alluding to practice. That these discourses do play out as entrenched literacy practices can only be gestured to here. I offer three essay topics (in translation) taken from the Matriculation papers of this period to gesture to how different kinds of imaginary repertoires and subject positions are proposed. While it must be acknowledged that no single essay topic could be representative of a set of literacy practices over an extended period, these topics are interesting precisely because of the

implausibility of one being set to examine either of the other languages and this points to the discursive work effected.

Essay topics

Afrikaans 1: Natal Education Department, 1983

South Africa, the powerhouse in Africa.

(In your answer you can refer to the mineral wealth, economic prosperity, military might, scientific and cultural achievements, among others, of the RSA.)

Zulu 1: Joint Matriculation Board, 1983

A dialogue about a burglar who has failed to get well-paid work and a Christian who works for little money - about their ways of survival.

English 1: Natal Education Department, 1983

'Fashion: a despot that the wise ridicule and obey'.

The Afrikaans syllabus is constituted in its discursive role to promote and ensure Afrikaner Nationalism, informed by the Afrikaner sense of the God-ordained, superior *volk*, conveniently bolstered by the policy of 'own affairs'. Such validated racial superiority enables such subjects to imagine themselves in roles of economic and social leadership, bolstered by the doctrinaire forms of thinking practised.

In contrast, 'Bantu' learners and their mother-tongue are constituted as deficient. It is paradoxical that in spite of such assumed inadequacy, they are not encouraged to look outwards, but in line with own affairs to look to their own ethnic group. The syllabus is in accord with a separate development position, anxious that the Bantu learner 'learn to respect his mother tongue', an admonition not delivered to the Afrikaans learner. The limiting set of literacy practices similarly encourage doctrinaire thinking and a parochial imagination.

If these differences are then teased out, they are simultaneously inscribing differences in the cognitive capacities or levels of achievement anticipated of these differently constituted learners. If the literacy programmes for Bantu subjects should focus on their ability to speak and write in their own language and to recall factual detail in the prescribed texts for literature, the Afrikaans programme assumes the learners' abilities to use their language and proposes the development of higher cognitive skills. This is also flagged in the literature syllabus which calls for appreciation and a greater range of understandings, including literary movements.

The English syllabus of the period, with its Personal Growth thrust, again proposes a different moral and desiring subject. Central to this approach is the ordering of significant personal experiences through language in the interests of the development of the fuller person. It might encourage engagement with social and political issues, but this is effected in such a way that action is confined to personal expression. It simultaneously effects a moral surveillance in its focus on sensibility and personal development, proposing a global subject of emotional and moral maturity within an Enlightenment framework. At the same time it proposes a worldly subject, not a South African one, with an assumption of entitlement and equipped for social, economic and global mobility.

While these are the validated subject positions inscribed in the 1970s syllabuses, and while these inscriptions become more obscured in the 1980s and subsequent syllabuses, they provide an extraordinary source of the discursive work relating to the politics of South African identities. They offer very different 'imagined communities' (Andersen, 1983). That this was the case then would be interesting. It is necessary to bear in mind how literacy practices engage values and attitudes and in Barton's words 'are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people ... rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals' (2000, p.8). What is of import now relates to the productive nature of such discourses that have proposed and validated particular literate subjects many of whom form the teaching corps in the twenty-first century. While the state might hand out different syllabus documents to teachers, their specific repertoires of thoughts, understandings, attitudes, values and practices are yet rooted in their own literacy histories.

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