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Moving beyond artificial linguistic binaries in the education of African Language speaking children: A case for simultaneous biliteracy development

Abstract

Language policy debates in South Africa concern only Black African language speaking children rather than White English and Afrikaans speaking children. These debates construct Black African children as learners with deficits and fail to acknowledge their language resources. At the same time, policy makers fail to critique the unjust system to which they are subjected and of which they are victims. In this paper, I present a brief case study of children belonging to the Stars of Today Literacy Club to show the possibilities and ways in which these children are positioned as competent multilinguals and, in so doing, can resist the prevailing deficit view. The paper has three key aims: 1) to bring to light the racist ideology behind the current implementation of language policy, showing the specific ways in which, it constructs African language speaking children as inherently different from English and Afrikaans speaking children, evidenced by the fact that English and Afrikaans language speakers' medium is not even debated: eventually, English becomes the preferred language of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. 2) To describe how inequality is thus created and entrenched through undifferentiated language in education policies, curriculum, textbooks, and assessments, all of which are based on the unexamined idea of the child being a middle-class English-speaking child. 3) to demonstrate how bilingual children can be positioned as capable, rather than deficient, through hybrid language and literacy practices.

1. Introduction

Post 1994, language debates in South Africa have tended to concern only Black African language speaking children rather than White English and Afrikaans speaking children. These debates construct Black African children as learners with deficits and fail to acknowledge their language resources. At the same time policy makers, academics, educators and parents fail to critique the unjust system to which they are subjected and of which they are victims. There have been no debates in the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) about medium of instruction for English and Afrikaans speaking children: it is assumed that they must be

educated in English or Afrikaans, 'their languages'. These languages are not even referred to as mother tongues because English, and to some extent Afrikaans as well as monolingualism, are an invisible norm. In this paper, I present a case study of children belonging to the Stars of Today Literacy Club to show the possibilities and ways in which these children are positioned as competent multilinguals and, in so doing, can resist the prevailing deficit view. The paper has three key aims: 1) to bring to light the racist ideology behind the current implementation of language policy, showing the specific ways in which, it constructs African language speaking children as inherently different from English and Afrikaans speaking children, evidenced by the fact that English and Afrikaans language speakers' medium is not even debated: eventually, English becomes the preferred language of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. 2) To describe how inequality is thus created and entrenched through undifferentiated language in education policies, curriculum, textbooks, and assessments, all of which are based on the unexamined idea of the child being a middle-class English-speaking child. 3) to demonstrate how bilingual children can be positioned as capable, rather than deficient, through hybrid language and literacy practices.

First, I trace the history of language policy and medium of instruction in South African schooling from 1907-1994 in a fair amount of detail, considering it important to provide a comprehensive context for what is essentially an ideologically based policy and to clearly show the historical interconnectedness of language policy with apartheid ideology. Secondly, I review the current position of language policy (1994 to date) in practice to show how it continues to discriminate against Black African language speaking children by constructing them as emergent bilinguals with a deficit while continuing to advantage White English and Afrikaans speakers, constructing them as competent monolinguals. I then proceed to analyse and discuss the ideologies behind the language policy implementation, relating this to the historical context. Thereafter, I present a case study of the Stars of Today Literacy Club, to demonstrate how we used dynamic bilingualism to challenge the monolingual norm and the English bias in the language policy both on paper and in practice.

2. Historical overview of language in education policy

The social engineering of Black African language speaking children to ensure their perpetual failure in education has its roots in the construction by colonial and apartheid governments of their childhoods. This dates from the colonisation of Southern Africa by the Dutch and the English, and, more recently, the ushering in by the apartheid government of Bantu education in 1953. The marginalisation, exclusion, and erasure of these children from South African citizenship, the denial of their basic right to education, and their positioning as inferior to whites and as servants of whites, was evident in the way discussions about education dating from the early 19th century focussed solely on Dutch and English-speaking children (Alexander, 1989; Christie, 1991). From the mid to late 1800s, right through to 1948, education discussions included language of instruction and focussed on whether Dutch, later Afrikaans, and English-speaking children were to be taught through dual or single medium (Malherbe, 1943). In these debates, the existence of the African Language speaking child was rendered invisible in the ongoing struggle for state power between English and Afrikaner.

The British victory in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 was a crucial moment in the history of language policy and debates in South Africa. First, it ushered in the Anglicisation policy of the British imperialists that discriminated against the Dutch/Afrikaans speaking people (Malherbe, 1943; Christie, 1991; Heugh, 2001). Secondly, it created opportunities for debates

about education of African language speaking children and the languages through which they ought to be taught. At the start of these discussions, Junod (1905), of the Transvaal Swiss Mission presented a paper at a missionary conference, titled 'The role of Native Language in Native Education'. He suggested two polarized methods for educating the 'Native' child, one "through 'English only'", and the other "through vernacular at the base and English at the top" (1905:3). However, such discussions were soon abandoned as the Dutch citizens of the Transvaal focussed on resisting Milner's Anglicization policy through the Dutch Reformed Church which established schools in the Transvaal in 1907, and in the Free State in 1908. These schools introduced education in two languages (Malherbe, 1943; Heugh, 2001). This opened a pathway to dual medium education as a practical way of showing cooperation between the Afrikaners and the English after the Union of 1910. During this period, a significant number of African language speaking children lived in the reserves where there was no compulsory education (Christie, 1991). While English and Afrikaans speaking children were constructed by the Union of South Africa government at this time as equals, with compulsory schooling, and their languages unquestioned as mediums of instruction in a dual medium education system, African language speaking children were seen as not needing to be educated or taught in their own language. This inequality was one of the key principles on which apartheid ideology was founded.

By the 1940s, the rise of Afrikaner nationalism saw the end of dual medium education and the adoption of parallel medium and single medium education. Dual medium education was perceived to be against the principle of mother tongue education by the Afrikaans nationalists at the time (Malherbe, 1943). In 1951 pronouncements by UNESCO on the value of teaching children in the mother tongue served to intensify the push for single or parallel medium education (Heugh, 2001). This became an opportune moment for the Afrikaner Nationalist government, which came into power in 1948, to combine the use of African languages with the formation of Bantustans, and the ushering in of Bantu education for African language speaking children to consolidate its racialised policy of Separate Development (Maake, 1991; Heugh, 2001). Through Bantu education, African language speaking children were to experience inferior education, and positioned as only able to serve their own communities, with no place in the European community except as a future poorly paid and exploited labour force (Maake, 1991).

The Apartheid government's policy on dual medium English-Afrikaans education in high schools for African language speaking children, led to the Soweto uprisings in 1976. The revolt against Afrikaans came to include both the rejection of Bantu education and African languages that had been used as vehicles for making Bantu education possible and for entrenching apartheid. The result of this revolt was the passing of Act 90, in 1979 which reduced the number of years during which African language speaking learners were to be exposed to mother tongue education from 8 to 4 with an abrupt transition to English medium taking place in Grade 5, and later, in Grade 4 (MacDonald, 1991; Heugh, 2000). Since then, many African language speaking children have experienced a form of subtractive bilingual education, even after the passing of the national Language in Education Policy in 1997 which promotes additive bilingualism, what Alexander (2003a) called Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE). Additive bilingualism, or MTBBE, according to Alexander, means starting education with mother tongue as medium of instruction in the foundation phase and maintaining it in the Intermediate Phase while adding on English as a second medium. Both during apartheid and the post-apartheid period, single medium, and in a few cases parallel medium, schooling became normalised for English and Afrikaans speaking children, while the switch to English

medium education from Grade 4, and the expectation of using the same curriculum, textbooks and assessment, became normalised for most African language speaking children. This situation has in fact reinforced apartheid's idea that African language speaking children do not need to enjoy the same conditions for learning as do English and Afrikaans speaking children.

3. Current language in education policy in practice and the construction of the African language speaking child

Twenty-five years into democracy, African language speaking children continue to experience racism, as well as an inferior education. Though the LiEP of 1997 looks good on paper, *in practice*, the official curriculum and assessment policies, and the pronouncements by the DBE, education researchers and policy makers about poor performance of African language speaking children in local and international assessments, in fact all continue to construct African language speaking children as deficient English monolinguals (McKinney, 2017). The subtractive bilingualism that replaces African languages of instruction with English instruction from Grade 4 means that African language children experience significant discontinuities between the foundation phase and the intermediate phase, and between home and school. The combination of language medium switch, the increase in subjects, the fact that all books and learning materials are provided in English, low literacy in the mother tongue, and poor proficiency in English, sets the African language speaking child up for failure while English-speaking children continue their education seamlessly, without any change to LOLT from Grade 3- 4.

The switch from monolingual African language instruction to monolingual English has led to the children being constructed with a deficit, as passive/agentless, as failures, as having low levels of comprehension, as unable to decode, as needing remedial assistance, as non-readers, and as non-producers of meaning. They are referred to by educators as children with no language, signalling that these children are not proficient in any of the languages they speak, read or write. This view has resulted in the push for English from earlier on as set out in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011). In fact, CAPS presents itself as policy which normalises and entrenches the abrupt switch to English medium immediately after foundation phase, thus rewriting the Language in Education Policy through the back door (McKinney, 2017). CAPS neither supports home language education nor bilingual education. It is biased towards English from Grade 4 and it has the support of many parents who are under the impression that learning through English is best. Blommaert (2005) argues that inequality occurs whenever there's "a difference between capacity to produce function and the expected or normative function" (2005:77). Simply put, the gap between ability to make meaning and proficiency in English for African language speaking children, together with the lack of educational materials and literature to support and valorise the use of African languages as mediums of instruction, creates and perpetuates deep inequalities in our education system.

It is therefore not uncommon for people to argue that there are no materials in African languages, or that African languages do not possess the capacity/vocabulary for teaching content subjects even though historically these languages were used to teach content subjects up to Grade 8 (Heugh, 2000). The continued absence of reading materials in children's home languages, written by African language speaking writers, means that children continue to be exposed to a form of colonial and apartheid education. Readers written by missionaries during colonial times and apartheid, and currently by English speaking writers, continue to be impoverished in terms of relevant content, and fail to reflect children's lived experiences in

township and rural settings (Maake, 1991). These writers conceptualised/conceptualise the material through white, English speaking and middle-class lenses. As a result, translation of this material is based on English source texts as determinants even for how African languages should be written, and which ideas are normalised. Mkhize (2016) argues that, in many cases where African language literature exists, “textual production (fiction and non-fiction) has historically been heavily bent towards conservative themes, in which cultural pride, propriety and identity take centre stage – that is, a literature that speaks to ‘Good Bantus’” (2016:147).

Thus, instead of supporting instruction in children’s home languages, together with bilingual education, with the materials for this purpose, CAPS elects to solve educational inequality by offering all children of South Africa the same curriculum, materials, teacher training, and language of teaching and learning, regardless of the socio-cultural context within which children live and with which they engage daily. The switch to English medium continues despite the well-documented challenges that African language speaking children experienced during apartheid when switching in Grade 5 (MacDonald, 1991). I argue that the fact that African language speaking children from Grade 4 are forced to use the same textbooks as English home language children clearly advantages English speakers and disadvantages emergent bilinguals.

4. Language ideologies and the construction of deficient monolinguals

It is important to make visible, and to analyse the history and the mechanisms that construct African emergent bilinguals as deficient monolinguals, and which construct their language resources as problematic. McKinney (2017:18) argues that who makes policies and the curriculum, as well as their language ideologies matters. Monolingual middle class English speakers who continue to be entrusted with the responsibility of crafting the curriculum and education policies, and with writing textbooks, often with no consultation with teachers and learners “are often unable to see beyond their own limited language experiences” and tend to calibrate the curriculum based on their socio-cultural and linguistic experiences and practices (Reed, 2006; Bua-lit, 2018). The construction of African language speaking children as English monolinguals in language in education policies, in curriculum and assessment policies, in learning materials, and in pedagogy, is largely informed by policy makers’ beliefs about what counts as good language use, and what counts as best in terms of languages for teaching and learning (Blackledge, 2000; Makoe & McKinney, 2009; McKinney, 2017). Since policy makers currently belong to the dominant classes in society, and thus to the classes which control the country’s economy, their beliefs and ideas about what is good language use tend to be imposed on the rest of society (Nomlomo, 1991). Alexander (1989) and Makalela (2015) argue that the views of this dominant class about what languages should be used in education, and what counts as good language and literacy learning, are largely influenced by Eurocentric and colonial ideologies that came with the formation of nation states in Europe. According to this historical perspective, the diverse regional varieties of language were homogenised by missionary linguistics in favour of one ‘pure’ – and fixed - single standard language.

Though single medium or parallel medium schools uphold the principle of Mother Tongue Education, and can be described as bilingual schools because two languages are taught as subjects in the schools, they offer a weak form of bilingual education in comparison to dual medium education, exposes children to two mediums of education (Malherbe, 1943; Heugh, 2000). However, despite dual medium education being a stronger form of bilingual

education, historically it tended – and continues – to apply only in classrooms where there were equal numbers of learners speaking Afrikaans and English, and this required teachers to code-switch from one language to another to expose each group of children to their own mother tongue as well as give them access to the other language (Malherbe, 1943). The notion of dual medium education, however, evolved and informed ideas about an additive bilingualism approach in the Language in Education Policy of 1997, or Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (Heugh, 2001; Alexander, 2003a) for schools attended by many Black African language speaking.

Though the principle of the Mother Tongue at the base is noble in both single medium, parallel medium, and dual medium education, it still fails to account for multilingualism and multilinguality (Pluddemann, 2010) in primary schools, where children speak different languages, or varieties of the named languages, and where they are expected to develop bilingual competence in home languages and English in order at a later stage to learn through English. Malherbe's 1943 study accounted for many bilingual children in Afrikaans and English-speaking families and demonstrated that, with mother tongue at the base and dual medium at the top, the principle of mother tongue could still be honoured, while at the same time children could be exposed to two languages. The fact that African language speaking children continue to transition to English medium in grade 4, assumes the continued hegemony of the English language and Anglonormativity - "the expectation that everybody should speak English and if they don't, they are deviant or even deficient" (McKinney, 2017:12). While bilingual education for African language speaking children means learning in their home language and in English, multilinguality usually involves children speaking in the varieties of the named languages in which they learn (Pluddemann, 2010). For Xhosa speaking children, for example, these varieties include dialects such as isiBhaca, isiHlubi and isiMpondo, as well as urban varieties of isiXhosa and English (Nomlomo, 1993). Schools, however, insist, for example, on standard isiXhosa and standard English varieties and look less favourably on the non-standard varieties (Nomlomo, 1993). In their efforts to give children access to standard languages, schools often undermine and devalue children's non-standard varieties. This works to maintain dominant monoglossic language ideologies and the use of the principle of mother tongue or non-standard varieties to get to the standard form of the language or to get to English proficiency.

Language practices of bilingual or multilingual learners in daily life are much more heteroglossic than would be expected in formal learning situations, or within the curriculum, and in assessment policies. As a result, many children engaging in heteroglossic language practices are viewed as linguistically deficient. Thus, the question to be asked is, how do we then legitimise all languages and all varieties without giving more power to one language or variety? How do we align language policies, the curriculum, texts, and assessments with everyday practices and uses of language, and succeed in calibrating education to the needs of African multilinguals? How do we view children's multilingualism and multilinguality as a resource rather than a problem?

5. Third spaces and multiliteracies for African language speaking children's literacy learning

Working within a sociocultural perspective, I draw on the concepts of third spaces and multiliteracies to demonstrate how I began to challenge the deficit positioning of African language children. Third spaces are spaces 'in between' and beyond two binaries, conceptualisations and discourses that are often thought as separate and uncombinable (Anzaldúa, 1987;

Bhabha, 1990; Gutierrez et al., 1999). These spaces are characterised by hybridity, and dynamic and shifting perspectives which also transcend traditional binaries of first spaces or second spaces (Bhabha, 1990). Because third spaces allow for multiple perspectives, inhabitants of these spaces often encounter ambivalence, assuming multiple identities, including being monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and being in a state of perpetual transition (Anzaldúa, 1987). The purpose of hybridity is not about being able to trace two original moments from which third space emerges; rather hybridity is a third space which enables different positions to emerge (Bhabha, 1990). The mixing of different perspectives and ideologies in one space should be viewed positively as it leads to a 'third element', 'a new understanding or a new consciousness' which transcends our differences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez & Tejeda, 1999). Thus, bilingual or multilingual children do not operate as separate monolinguals but occupy a linguistic third space with one linguistic repertoire consisting of all the languages they speak (Cummins, 2010; Flores & Garcia, 2013). The space they occupy is known as a translanguaging space (Li Wei, 2017). Garcia (2009) defines translanguaging as "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages" (Garcia, 2009:141).

I also draw on the concept of multiliteracies which challenges written language as a sole means of communication, and which encourages plurality of languages in learning spaces (New London Group, 2000). Scholars in multiliteracies propose multimodality as a mode of communication, plurality of languages, and a multiliteracies framework for pedagogy. Multimodality refers to the integration or orchestration of the many ways in which children make meaning. These include linguistic, audio-visual, and performative meaning making (Stein, 2004; Newfield, 2011; Bock, 2016; Kress, 2007).

I draw on the four aspects of the multiliteracies framework for pedagogy, namely, situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformative practice. Situated practice means that we teach children drawing on their lived experience, including language practices. Overt instruction means that we recognise that, children's existing knowledge, that knowledge needs to be extended and enhanced. Overt instruction allows learners to gain explicit information, encourages collaborative efforts between teachers and learners, develops conscious awareness of what is being learnt and gives learners metalanguages to talk about their learning (New London Group, 2000). It also enables me to transcend the binary in Cummins' earlier distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) cited in Baker, 2006, by exposing children to both simultaneously. In addition to situated practice and overt instruction, the New London Group (2000) proposes a pedagogy that values critical framing, arguing that it enables learners to develop their ability to be critical and to recognise injustice based on unequal power, and ideology. This then forms the basis of the fourth aspect of the multiliteracies framework: 'transformative practice', a reflective practice which develops from critical framing and results in learners producing new practices embedded in their own goals and values (New London Group, 2000). Below I present a case study of an established third space in the form of a literacy club called #Stars of Today Literacy Club. I draw on the data I collected as part of the club's three-day special holiday programme to show how multilingual children made use of their semiotic resources to display capabilities that are often invisibilised.

6. Methodology

I present a brief case study of a literacy club where I worked with emergent bilinguals to build a culture of literacy. Using a sociocultural perspective on language and literacy, through which I seek to understand children's uses of language and literacy in their daily lives and then calibrate their literacy learning to these, I established a literacy club which the children named the 'Stars of Today Literacy Club# (STLC#)'. The club is conceptualised and set up as an established physical, social, linguistic and conceptual third space (Gutierrez et al., 1999; Flores & Garcia, 2013; Canagarajah, 2013) encouraging dynamic, shifting and hybrid language practices and activities. Thus, the club normalised children's multilingualism and multimodality as legitimate language and literacy practices. It comprises between 30-60 children from a primary school in Khayelitsha, where I knew a teacher from training for the Nal'ibali National Reading for Enjoyment Initiative in 2012. Children were recruited across from Grades 3-6 (9-12-year olds) because I was interested in how age boundaries could be transcended, thus creating a third space for learning in recognition of the children's sociocultural lives where young children learn from their older peers. I recruited fellow facilitators through Facebook and word of mouth. These facilitators are also a hybrid of multilingual visual artists, storytellers, teacher trainers, teachers, and university students studying language and literacy or Early Childhood Development and who contribute their skills and expertise, thus making the vision of multiliteracies possible by integrating song, stories, art, performance, and reading and writing, and heteroglossic language practices.

The children and the facilitators have, on a voluntary basis, been attending the club every Saturday since 2015 from 10h00am to 12h00pm. Initially my role was that of the founder and lead facilitator of the literacy club, a role which included leading the planning for Saturday bilingual and multimodal literacy sessions with fellow facilitators, guided by a third space concept and multiliteracies framework. I sought children's literature and stationery donations and trained literacy club facilitators by modelling heteroglossic practices and multiliteracies practices to both the facilitators and the children.

In researching children's language and literacy practices at the STLC# I draw on methodological and interpretive tools of linguistic ethnography. Copland and Creese (2015) define linguistic ethnography "...as an interpretive approach which studies the local and immediate actions of actors from their point of view and considers how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures" (13). Linguistic ethnography makes visible those mechanisms in which every day linguistic practices are connected with social life and shows how these reproduce each other through everyday activities (Copland & Creese, 2015). At the STLC# I collected data using ethnographic data collection tools which included participant observation methods, field notes, audio and video-recording, still photographs, and a collection of visual and textual artefacts made collaboratively by the children and facilitators. For the purposes of this paper, I elected to analyse data from an audio and video recording as it clearly illustrates the children's capability using multilingual and multimodal practices. I analyse the discourses and practices produced at the STLC# by drawing on the theoretical concepts of linguistic third spaces (Flores & Garcia, 2013) third space (Gutierrez et al., 1999) as well as multiliteracies (New London Group, 2000).

7. Changing deficit stereotypes of multilingual learners: A case study

In this case study, I illustrate the ways in which children's play and language are powerful pedagogical resources for learning language and literacy, and how these have been drawn on for meaning making, thus constructing and positioning the children as competent bilinguals. The case study demands of us to shift our theoretical and pedagogical lenses from viewing African language speaking children as monolinguals with a deficit to children who are critical thinkers, competent and creative language users, translators and interpreters, and creative bilingual composers amongst other roles and identities. The Grade 3 to 6 children participating at STLC#, and the rest of the children in the school, experience subtractive bilingualism. They learn English as a First Additional Language from Grade 1, and then transition to English medium in Grade 4. The CAPS curriculum expects them to learn two languages separately from Grade 1 and constructs them as multilinguals with separate monolingualisms in their heads. Although their teachers codeswitch at least in oral language to explain concepts to them, children are not allowed to mix languages or speak in any of the varieties of those languages or write in two languages. Teachers do not regard code switching as a legitimate practice and often reprimand children for drawing on their own linguistic resources (Nomlomo, 1991). Later, in Grade 4, the children are exposed to, and experience, an Anglonormative ideology as they are expected to become English monolinguals.

The STLC# draws on hybridity as a resource, and facilitators model dynamic bilingualism (Garcia, 2009), draw on the situated practice aspect of the multiliteracies framework to legitimize the children's linguistic resources and to encourage languaging for learning (Guzula, McKinney & Tyler, 2016). They also draw on children's translation and interpreting skills as forms of translanguaging that position the children as competent multilinguals.

The data analysed demonstrates that African language speaking children are most often translingual and will draw on their full semiotic repertoire for meaning making when this is allowed. The data that shows STLC# members as embodied bilinguals, who are competent users of an expanded repertoire and competent and creative translators.

Children as competent bilinguals with embodied communicative competence

As a way of drawing on children's socio-cultural resources and their conceptualisation of language and literacy, facilitators organise activities based on the children's expectations of the literacy club. At the beginning of the club, the children expressed that they wanted to sing, play, read and write, tell stories, dance, do art and make videos and audio recordings together. Their expectations were in sync with the multiliteracies conceptualisation of literacy that combines plurality of language use and multimodality (New London Group, 2000). A literacy club day usually begins with gamesongs or musical games (Harrip-Allin, 2011) played indoors or outdoors depending on the weather, followed by activities that include reading, writing, art, storytelling and drama. During play, facilitators play together with the children, and games are introduced either by children or by facilitators. Drawing on the critical aspect of the multiliteracies framework, I introduced a game called 'The Lion Hunt'¹ as a text to work from to help children to develop a critical perspective of texts. Though in this example I focus on one child, Noni's full linguistic repertoire, at the club we also raise an awareness about mechanisms in which educational inequality is produced (Delpit, 1988, Janks, 2010) by

¹ 'The Lion Hunt' draws on the rhyming text of David Axtell's children's book, "We're going on a Lion Hunt" and Helen Oxenbury's well-known children's picture book "We're going on a Bear hunt".

exposing children to an expanded repertoire that includes powerful standard language use in isiXhosa and English. The game is a call and response game with action movements. The first part of the game goes like this:

We're going on a lion hunt

I'm not scared

Got a gun by my side (touching hips)

Bullets, two (showing two fingers)

We come to some grass

Some tall grass (bending and raising hand to high above the head)

We can't go over it, (showing with hands)

We can't go under it

We can't go around it

We have to through it

Let's go...swish, swish, swish (moving the grass to the side with hands)

It is repeated in the second and third parts with grass being replaced with mud and a cave. After playing the game, I introduced critical framing to children by explaining to them that sometimes, different people interpret verbal and non-verbal communication differently. I explained that even the games we play, such as the 'Lion Hunt', can be heard positively or negatively by different people. I made two columns on the board and wrote 'good' on one side and 'bad' on the other. I wrote down all the things that the children thought were positive or negative about the game. In the session that followed this, the following Saturday, I started by reviewing the work we did the previous week. I asked Noni to summarise what we thought was good about the game. Noni started off by talking about what was 'good', and in her talk, she drew on the semiotic resources afforded by the game to make her point.

Table 1: Noni conceptualises the semiotic repertoire

Original	Translation
<p>Xoli: ...Okay, ngubani okhumbulayo? Siye sathi zintoni ezigood ngala game? Sithe zintoni esizithandayo ngayo? Zintoni ezilungileyo ngayo? Hayi kaloku siyathetha tyhini abantu bandijongile nje, bandijongile nje abantu balibele ngoku. Sithe la game igood ngoba kutheni? Noni?</p>	<p>Xoli: ...Okay, who remembers? What things did we say are good about that game? What did we say we like about it? What are the good things about it? No, we have to speak hey, people are just looking at me, they have forgotten now. Why did we say that game is good? Noni?</p>
<p>Noni: Ngoba ukuba umntu akayazi ukuba ukuhamba over it mhlawumbi njengoba sithetha ngeEnglish uyabona ngezandla ba we can't go over, it, we can't go under it, we can't go around it uyabona okay uover nguntoni, u-under yintoni, uaround yintoni and then.... (inaudible)</p>	<p>Noni: 'Because if a person doesn't know what walking over it means, maybe because we speak English s/he can see through the use of hands that 'we can't go over it', 'we can't go under it', 'we can't go around it' and see what 'over' means, what 'under' means and what 'around' means and then...(inaudible)</p>
<p>Xoli: Ukuba ngaba... umntu... akamazi ...uover it nhe, uyabona ngezandla nhe... ngezandla, naxa usithi under...under it nhe? Utshilo nhe?</p>	<p>Xoli: 'That if...a person...doesn't know...what 'over it' means, hey, s/he can see through the hands, hey...and when you say 'under'...under it, hey? You said so, hey?</p>
<p>Noni: E-e</p>	<p>Noni: 'Ewe, Yes'</p>
<p>Xoli: Nobani omnye?</p>	<p>Xoli: 'And what else?'</p>
<p>Noni: noaround it</p>	<p>Noni: 'And around it'</p>
<p>Xoli: noaround it... noaround it, nhe? Uyabona ngezandla naxa usithi... ngezandla. Sathi igood loo</p>	<p>Xoli: 'and around it'...'and around it, hey? You can see through the hands when and when you...through the hands .We said that is good, hey? That teaches us what is meant by spoken words, isn't it? I think Noni expressed it so well, so clearly hey? Everybody is clear, hey?'</p>
<p>nto nhe? Iyasifundisa loo nto ukuba kuthethwa ukuthwani andithi? I think uyibeke kakuhle kakhulu uNoni, ngendlela ecacileyo. Wonke umntu ucacelwe nhe? (Audio Recording: 05 March 2016 04:00-05:33)</p>	<p>(Audio Recording: 05 March 2016 04:00-05:33)</p>

Drawing on the overt instruction aspect of the multiliteracies framework, by writing down word for word Noni's response on newsprint, I recognized, acknowledged, and affirmed her linguistic repertoire. I also demonstrated to her what a bilingual text looks like and created a linguistic third space that affirmed her linguistic resources. I did this to disrupt monoglossia, to valorise her sociocultural resources and to encourage all the children to draw on their linguistic resources for meaning making. As Noni and I discuss the 'good' aspect of the game, Noni demonstrates that she can't make the point without using both languages. She begins her response in isiXhosa but draws on specific English vocabulary to make her point about the game's semiotic affordances.

Noni's response positions her competently, drawing on her linguistic repertoire for participation and for making a very important conceptual point about affordances that the game provides for languaging, participation, and inclusivity (Guzula, McKinney & Tyler, 2016). It has been argued by multiliteracies scholars that there are limitations implicit in the exclusive use of language as sole means of communication (New London Group, 2000; Stein, 2004; Newfield, 2011; Kress, 2007). Noni's competent argument about people's ability to draw on

their full semiotic repertoire in meaning making positions her as intellectually and linguistically competent. Through her argument, she defies the negative stereotypes associated with children who have a multilingual repertoire. Though she is still a child in primary school, she makes similar arguments about communication as multimodal and multisensory to arguments made by theorists of communication.

8. Conclusion

Noni's case study above shows an instance of a multilingual child - and children - as being competent users of their full linguistic repertoire. It demonstrates how teachers can recognize, acknowledge, affirm, and build lessons from children's sociocultural resources. Through her use of her full linguistic repertoire, Noni showed herself able to express a highly sophisticated conceptual point about the affordances of the game of the Lion Hunt: through translanguaging she explained how the actions and gestures mediated the English words. This example shows that, by moving beyond the false binary of mother tongue or English medium instruction, and by teaching bilingually, we can pay attention to issues of power and marginalization. This contributes to the view of an African child, not as a monolingual, but as a child having a multilingual identity. By allowing children to draw on their full semiotic repertoire, we begin to open pathways for meaningful learning, self-conception, identity, representation of what exists and what it means to be an African language speaking child, a concept that goes beyond colonial representations and even 'traditional' representations both of which wish to freeze the growth and creativity of the children.

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