

Critical Literacy and the Language of Difference and Power: A Difficult Concept for First Year Preservice Teachers

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Critical Literacy and the Language of Difference and Power: A
Challenging Concept for First Year Pre-service Teachers

Preamble:

A new direction in classroom practice which gains bureaucratic acceptance within a schooling system, in response to 'changing practical demands and cultural contexts' (Luke, 1994), is only as useful as the ability and willingness of teachers to implement it effectively and accurately in their individual classrooms. There are many variables that may impact this teacher response including economic support, training, timeliness and others. However, when the change is not only one of a 'technical' nature but demands an ideological shift, this teacher involvement is even more vital.

Such is the case at the moment with the national policies on multi-culturalism, social justice and equity and the role of language (eg White Paper on Australia's Language, 1991). These principles are

replicated within departments of education documents throughout Australia, although the regional site of this paper is Queensland. These healthy initiatives make social justice and equity in schooling fundamental to all else. They have included within them, at the school level, programs of language and literacy instruction founded on social, critical literacy a means of access to the 'language and discourse of power' for all students (Queensland English Syllabus, 1994), a possible means for providing balance where inequity exists (Social Justice Strategy, 1994-98).

I want to address this 'new initiative', not from the position of students in classrooms nor that of their teachers, which is the site of so much current research. I consider the question from that of some

preservice teachers and their reaction to making explicit the study of critical social literacy as it relates to socially just schooling. This explicitness serves at least two purposes: 1. it models a pedagogy of explicit teaching of material which has been glaringly absent from all but the occasional classroom until very recently 2. it is an attempt to draw students attention to what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) refer to as implicit models of education which allow the 'prerequisite cultural capital to continue to monopolise that capital' (p.47). This paper is informed by preservice teachers' responses to this challenge involving personal ideologies, the extent to which they can accommodate this change and thereby make the implementation of this new direction at least a possibility.

Introduction

Central to this paper are the goals and expectations set out in Language in Education , (a first year preservice teacher education subject), that students will become critically aware users of language and challenge formerly held notions about language and use. The teaching of a 'critical social literacy' (Christie et al, 1991) to preservice teachers which in turn might lead to a more socially just and equitable schooling model was integral to the subject. However, an ideological challenge to the students' conceptions of language emerged as problematic for many and became an area of significant interest for me. There were issues that went well beyond the reconstruction of how language in use might be conceptualised. One student put it very succinctly : this subject had 'shaken the foundations of life' and 'reshaped' her world, sentiments that reflected the experience of most students in varying ways and degrees.

The ramifications of examining the very language one uses from perspectives not previously considered by most students became an

important part of the subject for all students, not only as future professional educators but on a personal level as well. The extent to which there was understanding and, more importantly, acceptance or resistance (Ogbu,1987; Delpit,1988) of this new construct was vital particularly given the proliferation of 'mushfake' (Gee, 1992) in classrooms where teachers, for a whole lot of reasons often beyond their control, have an inadequate understanding of the latest 'trend' in curriculum materials . The teaching of a social, critical literacy in all classrooms is entrenched in the Queensland English syllabus (1994) but, as yet, few teachers comprehend its potential implications much less its effective implementation .

The question then became: Can we teach social, critical literacy ? This paper supports the possibility and even the desirability but highlights some limitations and concerns for future consideration. I have used some qualitative data from student responses to surveys and other response opportunities, including interviews and anecdotal references. The findings will be reported in a like manner.

The Setting

The campuses of James Cook University are located in Far North Queensland, Australia with the main campus located in Townsville and, the other, a rapidly expanding campus in Cairns. Both campuses offer Bachelor degrees and graduate diplomas in Education on an internal full or part-time basis (as well as graduate study to the doctoral level). The fourth year will be offered in Cairns for the first time in 1995 with consecutive years of study having been added annually since the program began in 1991. This paper focuses on the Cairns campus with some reference to Townsville where deemed significant.

The demographic mix on the two campuses, including factors such as student age, gender distribution and racial origins varies between campuses and this has led to a variation in subject content and teaching making each campus culture quite unique, even though the subjects offered on both campuses share broad similarity in material presented and expected outcomes. There are Centres for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Participation, Research and Studies on both campuses; the regional area which is 'home' to a majority of students at the university has the largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the State.

James Cook University's School of Education has a Strategic Plan and Mission Statement which declares, among other things, that all aspects of its functioning are to be conducted 'within a social justice framework', 'to further the principles of social justice in all its activities' and to contribute to the 'welfare of the region, the nation and humanity, generally'. This very strong commitment to the modelling of a socially just site for study is pervasive in all programs of study and is reflected in the research and publication lists of many of the lecturing staff (see Luke, C.; Luke, A.; Osborne, B.; Gilbert, P.; Gilbert, R.; Davies, B.; Kalantzis, M.; and Cope, B. and many others) who have done extensive work in the areas of gender, media, race, ethnicity and language issues in education with extensive Australian and international citation of their works.

Core subjects:

The core subjects in education programs at the Bachelor and Graduate Diploma levels are founded on a social justice frame supported by a vast corpus of research from within work done here in Australia and overseas. By the end of their first completed credit year, all students must have studied subjects in (i) current issues in Australian education which covers issues of gender, disability and class (ii) communications technology and education explores the impacts of technology and communications on children and schooling (iii) education and cultural diversity which deals mainly with race and ethnicity and (iv) language in education.

The issues related to schools and social construction theory are central to all of these subjects and the 'hegemonic' nature of contemporary schooling (Gramsci, 1971) is foregrounded. Students learn how it is that people are 'marginalised' by virtue of their gender, race, disability, class, language origins, remoteness and ethnicity. In Language in Education close scrutiny is given to how language is used to perpetuate 'the effects of social

hierarchy in the form of caste or class' (Halliday in Maybin, 1994). Studies in the language subject provoke students to consider the social replication of a 'literacy hierarchy which supports political and economic hierarchies, which in turn provoke more literary hierarchies' (Agger, 1992). The equity of a schooling model which ensures children, whose language socialisation in the familial setting reflects a close 'goodness of fit' with school (Heath, 1983) and so a greater likelihood of school 'success' is challenged; so too the pedagogic practices which

allow this are considered.

These, and other related topics present a profound opportunity for students to critique the type of schooling they have experienced personally. This 'new vision' of the power of language will be used to formulate a professional approach to these highly political and ideological issues and will be the footing for the construction of their next three years of study and eventual teaching praxis.

LD 1020:045 LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION:

In the Beginning:

Students came into the Language in Education subject with a somewhat innocent belief that pedagogic methods based on 'naturalistic learning' (Cambourne, 1989) models would assure equally accessible schooling for all. There was an expectation that, perhaps following what Zeichner (1991) describes as the 'developmentalist progressivist tradition', they were here to learn 'how to do it' by experiencing this warm 'supportive and stimulating environment' (p. 21) and so derive how to replicate this warm and 'natural' learning environment in their future classrooms. Their perception of language was 'more the experience of defining the concreteness of their existence, not an experience of dancing with concepts by themselves' (Shor, 1987).

However, the content of the subject for 1994 was meant to challenge students to make 'a great discovery, education is (my emphasis) politics' (Freire, 1987) and not the 'neutral objective arena' (Heath, 1983) they may have perceived it to be prior to engaging in this study. That language is anything other than a harmless means of communication, that there is such a thing as the 'language and discourse of power' and that there are effective ways of analysing texts to determine how the author positions the reader/listener was a revelation in the extreme for most students. These discoveries and others were very important for most and the personal implications for them needed to be considered. (I should point out that throughout this paper, reference to text will be in the linguistics sense, 'the linguistic form of social interaction' (Halliday, p. 38); that is, any example of language in use oral, written or otherwise represented.)

The Subject:

The expressed aims for this subject were three-fold: students would (1) develop an understanding of theories of language structure, development and use and apply these to analyse instances of language use and development (2) undertake particular strategies for reading, writing and analysing academic texts and (3) describe and analyse the specific language demands of schooling and selected key issues facing teachers. It is an introductory subject to the theory and practice of

language in education but goes beyond the study of pedagogics to language as 'social semiotic' and, indeed, schools and teachers as distributors of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1990 in Luke), through language use and literacy instruction.

Students were to do preparation from a collected set of readings on a weekly basis, attend lectures which dealt with and extended this material and participate each week in specific activities to be kept in an Activity Folder which were to be completed with reference to the theory covered previously. These activities were assessable tasks that, along with a mid-term test and final exam comprised the assessment for the subject. Student responses to these are considered below in Student Responses.

The content:

Following is a 'snapshot' of the material from the weekly readings in rough order of presentation. It is important for reflection on this sequence as an emerging, indeed embryonic progression. There is undoubtedly an enormous corpus of material to choose from which might create more and/or better accessibility for students to some of the essence of what it is to become a critical thinker and reader. As a practitioner myself I am well aware of the need to monitor such selection of texts.

The concept of 'communicative competence' was the 'entry point' using a definition of the term not as Chomsky (1965) had in his 'competence as distinct to performance' duality but as the capacity to use language appropriately and effectively to achieve social goals in social contexts within a speech community, as derived from the sociolinguistic model of the 70's (eg Gumperz, 1972). This assumption was extended further to the study of discourse as defined by Gee (1990), with an amalgam of the two approximating 'discourse competence' as described by McCarthy and Carter in *Language as Discourse* (1994).

The Comber & O'Brien (1993) article defined the ideological assumptions and *raison d'être* of critical literacy as described, particularly in the Australian context, by Martin (1991), Cope & Kalantzis (1993) and other genre theorists coming from systemic linguistics and the social critical research of Baker & Freebody (1989); Gilbert (1989); and Luke (1993). These provided an overview of the subject, the 'big picture', of what was to come and where it might lead us.

The material that followed included Kress' *language as social practice* (1988) and then Fromkin & Rodman on morphology (1982), Christie, Martin & Rothery on teaching functional grammar (1991) and Sinclair from the COBUILD series on verb forms and groups. The need for such explicit

work in grammar became particularly important as activity work in text analysis progressed. The way Kress 'unsettles some outspoken assumptions' (p 82) and challenges what people believe as 'the commonsense view' of language caused some critical reflection on some of these previously held assumptions. Intense student discussion revolved around this question of 'common sense' and the implications for children in classrooms.

Subsequent readings included Catherine Wallace's work on critical language awareness in EFL classrooms and the reader's questioning of the text and author intent (1992). This was followed by Wells' work on language and learning (1986), Hammond (1992) contrasting the features of spoken and written texts and then Heath's article, What no bedtime story means in Schieffelin and Ochs (1986).

Some time was spent on Frank Smith's (1978) models of reading and comprehension with particular attention to his stress on the importance of non-visual information for prediction in reading. This

was tied back into the previous material and extended to take in Cazden's work on teacher questioning and lesson structure (1988) and teacher control of knowledge as sourced in Barnes (1976). This led into considerations of gender and teacher talk and the control of topic in conversation based on gender from Graddol and Swann (1989) and work done in Australia by Freebody and Baker (1987) on gender construction in children's first school books.

This was followed by a series of readings that included issues of ethnicity (Singh, 1989) and second language speakers of English (Gibbons, 1991), dialect and regional variation, Torres Strait Creole and language instruction in schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These included work by Luke (1986; 1991), Shnukal (1984), Kale (1991) and Gray (1985).

These readings presented students with the opportunity to consider a heteroglossic view of aspects of language and literacy of which they had never previously conceived. As the theories were considered in the schooling context, students were able to more clearly appreciate that literacy, for example, may represent far more than simply the ability to make meaning from texts; that literacy is not only part of what it is to be a member of a particular socio-cultural group but may, in fact, be part of how that group defines itself and that 'the discourse of literacy cannot be abstracted from the language of difference and power' (Giroux, 1991).

I should reiterate that all of these students would have studied material either in the same semester or immediately following this one that dealt with issues of social justice and equity from a range of standpoints including gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language

origins and so forth. This deluge of rather provocative deliberation, along with the issues referred to above as some of the language content ran the risk of inundating students with a 'discourse of despair' (Giroux, 1983).

However, it is just this potential for 'despair' which makes the language subject of such importance. Incompatible with such a notion of despondency, the language subject suggests 'a critical theory of curriculum and pedagogy in which hope becomes practical and despair unconvincing' (Giroux). The other subjects of study present material from a variety of positions and informing research as to 'what' is occurring and 'why' this might be so; the language subject presents a way of seeing 'how' it may be that this is so as well as a 'how' for discussion of these occurrences and possible change.

There is a great deal of cross-fertilisation across these subjects and it is the uniqueness of the Cairns campus, to which I refer above, which allows this to occur. The numbers of students here are relatively small as is the lecturing staff. We are in continuous dialogue about subject content and make explicit occasions where we either guest lecture or co-lecture in other subjects than our 'own' when topics such as gender are being discussed for example. This allows students to see the 'inter-textual nature' of some of the content and how it all comes together to inform pedagogics.

The Issues:

a) technical detail

A number of issues became evident early in the subject. The question of

'common sense' caused confusion over how one could define some of the metalanguage used to develop a critical language awareness strategy. These were resolved by defining items in context of the readings for the subject so that Discourse, for example, was defined by Gee's usage (1990) as 'getting the whole role right' and that in Discourses 'language has no necessary pride of place' (p.xv) above all of the other things such as 'appearing to think and feel the right way and have the right sort of values'. Each term or reference was defined in the same manner so that we were all conversant with a commonality of meaning as contextualised by the relevant sources. (These can be referred to in Appendix "A" which includes a reference list of prescribed and recommended readings.)

In the first week students were given a feature article from The Bulletin and asked to do a simple piece of critical discourse analysis. The task was to realise how lexical choice is used to construct a

representation of the world, or " glossification" (Mey, 1986), and this was to have been done by charting the nouns, verbs and adjectives as well as metaphors which stand out and 'textually construct' the realities created by the text.

This was fine for some and impossible for others. Those who had been to school prior to the deletion of grammar from the curriculum simply had to revisit those experiences and, with a little practise, it all came back. The recent school leavers had no grounding in word classification and grammar and so were unable to complete the task without a great deal of extra tuition and study. Obviously, if one is to do text analysis in this way one must have some foundation in the 'tools' of dissection, in this case some grammar.

The progression of activities involved syntactic classification and choice which have the same inherent problems associated as above. It is very difficult to determine how the use of passive or active verbs, mood choice, modals and verb tense plus use of pronouns in text organisation can construct possible meanings (Derewianka, 1990) when the skills haven't been developed.

So, a couple of 'technical issues' like those referred to above need to be made explicit; if we are to ask teachers in classrooms to work with children to see how the author is positioning the reader by the use of textual devices, for example, the teachers need to be conversant with things like the grammar. They in turn must assure that children are provided with the necessary instruction appropriate to the task. This may seem so simplistic as to beg mentioning, but I suspect it is some of this apparently ' taken for granted stuff ' that gets in the way of teachers not being able to do what it is that curriculum writers expect them to do. It is one of the many things which, as part of 'teachers' work intensification ' (Apple, 1986), is either over-looked completely or 'done' in a one day in-service, never to be re-visited again.

b) ideological challenge

Simultaneous to the apparent technical challenges referred to above were issues arising that were far more critical for students. The concept of questioning what may actually be happening when we use language beyond a 'simple' bit of unambiguous communication of thoughts, that 'language is not an empty set' (Luke, 1992) but rather a most significant social positioning agent was very powerful to all students. Each one came to realise that, contrary to the notion that ' we are what we eat ' , we are far more accurately defined as 'we are what we say, think, read and do', in other words, the 'language club' to which we belong.

' Selective tradition' is defined by Beyer (in press cited in Taxel,

1994) as 'sanctioning forms of knowledge, interpretations of events and perspectives or world views that are tied to the interests of those with social, economic and cultural power in the wider society' . Finding that this ' selective tradition ' is intrinsic to so many children's books as well as textbooks used throughout schooling, opened many student eyes. They examined how the material in many books used in schools actually defined what it is to be a child, for example. Books which portray childhood as a joyous time with Mom, Dad and the kids spending every week-end happily playing at the beach tells the child in whose home this doesn't happen that something isn't right about his or her family life. All of a sudden what it means to be a child becomes different for that child who, until coming to school, thought that his or her own life was alright, or, more likely, didn't think about it much at all !!

The contents from a selection of textbooks were also examined and the ' selective tradition' described above was consistent in the great majority in varying degrees, depending upon publication date as a significant variable. The attention to text selection took on a whole new meaning in this context. For the many who, when they first came into the course, believed that it didn't matter what children read so long as they were reading, times had changed; that if it was written in a history textbook then it must really be what happened was reconsidered. This subject was, for some, analogous to the child referred to above; they thought that the way they had always used language before coming to university was of little importance, if they thought about it at all. The departure from this analogy occurred when students realised that the expected 'selective tradition ' of how teachers ' do language and literacy ' in classrooms had changed, in the extreme for some. They too responded in different ways, much as children in schools do when confronted with a book that shows ways of 'being a child', not represented by a white, middle-class nuclear family.

Data Collection:

Much of the data I have used is anecdotal and represents attitudinal changes described by individuals although some is based on apparent transition evident in written responses to assessed tasks. I have also used responses to questions from a pair of questionnaires which students completed on two different occasions; these are only used to support anecdotal, journal and personal interview accounts and do not attempt to make claims of a statistical nature .

One was a typical instrument used by many staff to get student responses to various aspects of subjects after the completion of study in the subject. It is a rather blunt instrument at best but does allow students to respond to very specific questions about subject details

and is administered immediately upon completion of the subject. Lecturers customise the instrument by choosing from a range of questions to get responses to queries in areas of specific interest to them. The response rate of 67 % was reasonably high because it was administered during class near the end of semester.

The other was a questionnaire which I developed and which has an even less keen edge than the one described above. This was circulated nearly one semester after the students had completed the subject and was an attempt to measure students' perception of their own attitudinal change

about language and its use particularly for them and their view of teaching. There was considerable room for extended response to many questions which allowed for reflection on ideas not confined to just those which I may have considered as possible to a given query. The students on the Cairns and Townsville campuses completed this survey at my request. The response rate from Cairns was just under 30 % while Townsville was slightly less.

The Findings :

There was a distinct clustering of reactions to the challenges presented by this corpus of literature, the ensuing discussion and engagement in activities. The first indications of this came from informal discussion with students and led me to attempt a means of isolating one trend from the others. I have classified them into four groups as sorted by indicators which I describe below and for which I provide sample reference points:

1. the Euphorics :

- relief at making a substantive 'discovery' confirming that what they sensed intuitively was occurring in schools and life was indeed the case but which their prior experiences hadn't enabled them to articulate
- realising the expansive body of research that exists upon which they can draw for support; a heuristic view of knowing and learning
- finding, in a Whorfian sense, the language and terminology to describe, indeed a way to understand what they intuitively knew was occurring
- reinforcement of a belief in a better way of 'doing schooling' with social justice and equity as fundamental was a real possibility and that critical language awareness was integral to this
- confidence in their 'right' to deconstruct texts and reconstruct

meaning that is personally useful from their subjective standpoint

- that there may be multiple meanings and realities generated by different individuals' experiences with the same piece of text

2. the Resisters : this group included two sub-groups :

(1) the true detractors

- a sense of threat caused by the extent and depth of questioning of the status quo

- I was taught in the 'old way' and it worked for me syndrome

- believers in the 'good teaching is caught not taught' discourse as critiqued by Zeichner as a traditional yet not all that unusual perspective

- too much theorising and not enough teaching

- felt manipulated by social justice protagonists

(2) the already doers

- those who wore what I call 'rose coloured blinkers'; they knew how it should be done and they were going to do it; resistance by denial

- 'anyway I know where I stand in regards to all that stuff' sorts of reaction, meaning 'for those who don't know all about 'doing social justice' that's okay but I have it all sorted out'; a very difficult attitude to disrupt

- 'gender, no problem, my mate and I have it all sorted out, she even mows the lawn'

3. the Emancipated :

- this group were representatives of the ' other ' (Singh,1994), marginalised sectors of the population that included women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (who were also women) and a few people who had an apparently effective competence in English but who were raised in family homes where language other than English was dominant and only learned English later in life and felt inadequate in their use of it

- an Aboriginal woman said: ' I always thought it was my fault, that there was something wrong with me. Now I know it was how school was structured so that I couldn't succeed, even with all the 'you beaut' programs for us Aboriginal children.'

- women who saw that their life choices were pre-determined to some extent by the sorts of things that happened to them early in their lives

- NESB students who came to similar realisations of how little power they had to have it any differently while they were at school

4. the Receptors :

- these students, mainly younger school-leavers, just wanted to know if 'this was going to be on the exam'

- little individual and personal thinking, always appeared to be looking for 'the answer'

- willing to take on any role they were asked to play so long as it could be learned from 'a script'

- had a great deal of difficulty working as independent learners responsible for constructing their own meanings from the literature

- very uncomfortable with negotiating meaning or anything else for that matter

All four of these descriptors not only reflect attitudes to the subject content as students in the subject but attitudes which cross over into and include their private lives as well. Each response category needs to be considered in terms of cause and effect and the implications for preservice teacher programs.

The Euphorics were generally in the age groups from '21 to 29' and '30 to 39'. They had been out of school for at least five years and a number had done one of two things; one was to have spent some time in tertiary study over a variety of disciplines and the other was that they were currently or had recently worked either as a teachers' aide in schools or in some capacity in the child care industry. There were others, of course, but regardless of their recent experience they had

tremendous zeal for the subject

They became very excited by what they were hearing from lecture one and as the semester moved along their heads nodded more and more vigorously. They took the message to all and sundry sharing their new-found revelation with mates, family friends and any others who would listen, I suspect. They related stories to me of how they challenged every piece of text, whether it was conversation, written or otherwise to the point of becoming boorish, perhaps. However, their enthusiasm did border on the euphoric and hence their name.

The Resistors also came from the 'older' group generally but theirs was a different experience. They, like the other group, went home and shared their days experiences with important people in their lives but were met with some different reactions than the euphorics. One member of this group told me of trying to explain to her husband some of the material related to gender which we had recently discussed. He was more than disturbed at 'the sorts of things that place was filling people's heads with' as he put it. This put the woman in a very difficult position of reshaping an ideology at the risk of familial disharmony. It doesn't mean, of course, that we should stop teaching such material but indicates the need to be aware that there are a whole lot of possible reasons for resistance and/or acceptance.

Other types of feed-back from the resistors included a description of the content as 'a prime example of political correctness'. The attacks on political correctness as attacks on multi-culturalism argument (Taxel, 1994) seemed to be well supported by this sort of debate. The idea that "I was taught to read and write without all this" and "what Australia needs is for everybody to be Australians first" and other such arguments are clearly demonstrations that 'education is political', certainly here in Australia.

There were a range of attitudes expressed which were not quite so politically founded, however. These came from people who had looked at and engaged with the information, to some extent, and found it wanting in terms of their personal philosophy of teaching. They didn't necessarily reject it out of hand but will need a fair degree of support and modelling over their next three years of study for the ideology to become convincing. They felt this social critical literacy 'stuff' to be more of a knee-jerk reaction to more significant social problems, that it required a 'leap of faith' which they were not, as yet, ready to make. These students required lots of good hard evidence before they would consider any new idea, regardless of its nature.

The 'rose coloured blinker' set are a worrisome group because conscious and explicit consideration of a belief needs to be done with a degree of open-mindedness which I discuss further below. This group didn't see themselves as Resistors at all, quite the contrary in fact; they saw themselves as 'doing' all of this in their lives already. They couldn't step aside and look at the material without judging it in terms of themselves and their actions and beliefs and this sort of denial is problematic.

I cite the following example of this 'syndrome', which was shown to me by a graduate student who is developing a professional training package for teachers in social critical literacy as part of his project. Prerequisite to being involved in the trial group was a declaration that emancipatory social justice underpinned their classroom cultures. A group of teachers made such a declaration but on closer scrutiny there were found to be many instances in several classrooms of social

replication at the expense of marginalising some students. The 'rose

coloured blinkers' prevented them from seeing what was really a part of the 'hidden curriculum' of their classroom, twenty-five years after Postman and Weingartner (1969) warned us of the potential for it to exist .

The Emancipated probably provided for me the greatest satisfaction of all. Several people in the class experienced a real and legitimate sense of liberation from a long-standing view of themselves which was not representative of who they really were. For most of their lives, these people blamed themselves, maybe not overtly but in terms of willingness to assume a role in life that was defined for them by experiences which they had seen as beyond their control.

For example, the Aboriginal woman who spoke of her life-long belief that her lack of success at school was her fault. Try as they may, teachers didn't ever reach her in the same way they did other children in her class but the fault must have lie with her was the view of life she had held since childhood. She, like several others in this group, also certainly had a foot in the euphoric group because of the load lifted from them by way of this new understanding. She could now see that what had occurred had a whole lot to do with language socialisation variability and that there wasn't a 'wrong' way of doing it but there were certainly some that 'had a better goodness of fit' than others (Heath,1986).

People had this sense of freedom from various standpoints including race, class, language origins and gender. One particular woman who had spent most of her adult life raising her children and managing a household and had in the recent past just begun work as a part-time teachers aide had a very positive experience. She had almost no self-esteem, if that's possible, prior to coming to study and felt totally inadequate to deal with these very complex intellectual challenges early on. By the end of the semester she found herself to be a very strong person, identifying closely with the gender equity issues and saw a very positive transformation, after a bit of rocky ground at first, with her spouse and their new-found respect for one another as people.

The Receptors really seemed to represent the product of the 'banking' model of education (Freire, 1970). They saw learning as something that was the same for everybody, that there was a body of knowledge that they had to learn and thinking didn't play a big part in that process; that the 'facts' only had to be transferred from my account, my bank of knowledge, to theirs and the transaction would be complete. They were willing to take a piece of text and look for specific bits of information or, for example, when presented with this quote " the discourse of literacy cannot be abstracted from the language of

difference and power" (Giroux in Mitchell and Weiler, 1991) they would attempt to paraphrase it as the task. To go beyond this, to seek a deep meaning or to make a personal meaning of this text was a concept that was very difficult for some, seemingly impossible for others.

This group were almost solely under 21, had come directly to university from senior and seemed representative of a group who had at least some degree of success at high school. What it does do, however, is confirm the fact that very little has changed in schools for quite some time within this context and in any dramatic and meaningful way. The big difference between these recent graduates and the type of school experiences described by the 'older' group who had completed school up to thirty years previously was that the new students hadn't done any grammar. This had, as I said, technical implications in the subject but did little to impact on deeper issues.

The suggestion by Zeichner (1993), that 'responsible preservice teachers ask why they are doing what they are doing in classrooms in a manner that goes beyond questions of immediate utility' is a somewhat restricted perspective, constrained by the term 'responsible'. It doesn't regard the very real experiences provided above as some examples of resistance, often by quite 'responsible' people. Jesse Goodman, in Tabachnick and Zeichner discusses Dewey's (1933) three prerequisite attitudes for reflective teaching as (1) open-mindedness (2) responsibility and (3) wholeheartedness. The second, responsibility is described as 'a desire to synthesise diverse ideas'. This is fine so long as it goes with the open-mindedness and wholeheartedness but, as evidenced, this was certainly not the case in this subject and one wonders if it ever would be so in a diverse group of people.

Goodman then proceeds to describe what she calls 'exposure', that all preservice teachers should 'be exposed to ideas that run counter to the premises that underlaid their own elementary (sic primary) education'. The students in this subject had all the 'exposure' they could handle in thirteen weeks but I suspect my dear friend and Masters supervisor Tom Tillemans was right when he declared that 'exposure ensures nothing but sunburn'. There is obviously much more to be considered other than exposure.

The Implications:

The description of my findings are, as I advised above, generally anecdotal and qualitative. The application of subjective data, as provided by informants, and the application of a label to define those classes is congruent with the 'subjective-objective dimension' described by Goetz and LeCompte (1981, p. 54, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985), that is to 'reconstruct the categories used by subjects to

conceptualise their own experience and world view'. This is what I have attempted to do by providing a range of 'subjective descriptors' which in turn allowed me to make some wider-ranging generalisations, while still maintaining a degree of rigor in terms of the individual differences which must exist.

I would like to consider this question of 'rigor' and refer to the dialogue journal between Ira Shor and Paulo Freire in their *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987, pp 76-95). They challenge the 'authoritarian dimensions of the traditional approach' and 'rigor' as contextualised in that model. The corollary is that students who experience education defined by such rigor will define it in the same authoritarian way when they become teachers. A more useful concept describes a 'critical rigor' that encourages one to assume ones' own direction while maintaining a respect for the potential audience and accurate representation of informant details.

Several generalisable ideas useful to preservice teacher educators can be made safely, I feel, from the results of this study, albeit from a very small sample in a regional site. The first and most pervasive of these deals with the question of resistance. The importance of our 'primary discourse' as a 'base within which we accept or resist later Discourses' (Gee, p.108) and the learning of a variety of 'secondary discourses' has real implications. It is one thing to ask a group of preservice teachers to consider a different pedagogic model for teaching spelling, let us say. It is a whole different experience, a distinct secondary discourse, that asks them to reconstruct their view of a major ideological position like views on multi-culturalism or homosexuality, for example.

Another major issue is the power disjuncture between the student and the mark-awarding lecturer; there can be an 'assumed' acceptance of the discourse, a pretence to subscribe to the social justice model, for example, which may give the appearance of ideological support. The resistance to such 'secondary discourses' and this counterfeit version is one factor in the 'proliferation of mushfake' in classrooms to which I referred above. I don't purport to have an answer for overcoming this problem, other than to allow people the freedom to present their subjectivities without fear of retribution of some kind, like loss of grades. This, of course, leads one to a bigger issue which is the reconstruction of the educational model which minimises the need to have one person judging the level of change which has occurred in another in terms of learning. However, as long as the school 'is an institution that has the goal of changing people's values, skills and knowledge bases' (Heath, 1983) to a common measurable 'oneness', this is likely to remain.

The question of 'teachers going through the motions of following a

discourse of 'mushfake' is a very disconcerting one for me. There are a lot of exceptional teachers working harder and longer than ever before, I suspect, and the level of teachers' work loads are ever-increasing (Apple,). However, there are instances of mass scale 'mushfake' occurring and the ramifications are sobering.

Consider the following as an example of something which I believe actually happened in many Western countries over the past two to three decades. In Canada through the 70's and 80's the wholesale endorsement of the 'language experience' or 'whole language' model of literacy instruction occurred. Nearly every local School Board in the country decided that the 'answer' lay within this pedagogic method and so all schools adopted this practice practically overnight. What transpired ranged in degree from near total disaster to moderate success, not the salvation of the social need for more, better literate populations touted by its supporters.

When close scrutiny is applied to the sequence of events which took place in the implementation of this new pedagogy, a number of things shared the responsibility for the mediocre outcomes. The failure of school boards to effectively prepare teachers for the implementation expected of them and written into curriculum documents was the basis of the failure to produce the goods. Teachers were provided basic one or two day in-service sessions, handed a reading list and syllabus guides were placed in schools. Beyond that, they were pretty much left on their own to fill in the gaps; this is not an unusual circumstance which any teacher will verify, I'm sure.

There were other factors as well which impacted on the 'whole story' which includes teacher, parental and other pressures being brought to bear against this momentum. Some communities got totally behind the movement and provided a real impetus to see it entrenched in classrooms for their children, others saw the converse occur. The reason for this often had to do with the extent that people were informed. This same degree of information or the lack of it is what caused many teachers to behave as they did.

The result was a bit of a melange of a variety of elements taken from the model as a complete 'whole'. There were teachers who used Big Books, others who allowed invented spelling, others still who had 'shared book experience' sessions everyday and all thought they were running a whole language classroom. What is integral to this information is that very few people were actually doing it 'right';

there was mass 'mushfake' happening across the country.

What is very disturbing about this is that teachers were being asked to make a pedagogic shift, from a typical 'bottom up', skills-based method of teaching to a different model. They weren't being asked to make a

major shift in their view of society and how people are constructed by their life experiences as the social justice ideal proposes. If people, for a whole lot of possible reasons, reject a change in technique, how do we promote a change in ideology or fundamental belief?

Concluding Remarks:

There is one single practice which, if it gained support by a number of schools in regional locations, has the potential to overcome some of the problems; however I believe this may be a short term solution that doesn't deal with deeper issues. The trouble with resistance and other grounds for mushfake is the failure of the decision-makers to convince people of the benefit to them of doing whatever it is they wish to have them do in an appropriate and effective way and then offering sufficient professional development to ensure that it can be done. The same is true for the preservice education programs at universities. It is very difficult for me to convince students that social justice and equity is alive and well when both of us know that there is an enormous inequitable distribution of power in the assessment policy at university.

We need to make a range of procedures available to ensure the type of 'critical rigor' to which I refer above is in place so that students do make the most of what is available to them and become open-minded, responsible and wholehearted participants in the process. In turn, schools must make a commitment to assuring this training is available to all staff and that sites of 'quality best-practice' are highlighted. Recognition of excellence is a sufficient reward for most professionals and may take many forms; money is one of the most popular, I have found.

In conjunction with this network of model behaviour is the use of preservice teachers as in-class providers of information to teachers who have been in the profession for sometime. The preservice student, during school experience, is in an ideal position to share the most current thinking in relation to the material provided in policy documents to teachers as a part of their courses of study. These policy documents are generally informed to a great extent by academic research and university students should be experiencing the most current of this at all times. The partnership is a natural.

The big picture, when one looks at it shows a whole new way of looking at schooling and preservice teacher training in which there are some significant shifts in power and the hierarchical nature of things. The revamped status quo becomes a totally new view of the world. A recent meeting, held in the eastern US, brought together some top academics working in the area of socially just and equitable education, including five Australians out of the group of ten. This group propose a whole new way of defining schooling, based on the changing nature of citizenship and the type of world these children will grow into. Part

of this new model redefines the responsibilities of schooling and the role it should play in people's lives and the way meaning is made. The process will be a long one, no doubt, but one worthy of pursuit at all cost.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the many hurdles described by the students in this subject as well as the joy and freedom available to

students by experiencing something which gives deeper meaning to life for them and which they can take into their profession to share. Resistance is an ever-present option as part of people's right to hold opinion. However, the motivation to participate in a 'society in which everyone has an opportunity to govern and shape history rather than be consigned to its margins' (Giroux, 1991) was seen as a powerful 'why' for participating in the discourse of critical language awareness for many. The message is strong, we need more and better believers working in classrooms who have a well-grounded understanding of critical language awareness and less mushfake will be assured.

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APPENDIX 'A'

James Cook University of North Queensland - School of Education

LD1020 COURSE READINGS

WEEK 1: GEE, James P. 1990. Introduction. In James P. Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. London: Falmer Press, pp. xv-xxi.

WEEK 1: COMBER, Barbara & O'BRIEN, Jennifer. 1993. Critical literacy: Classroom Activities. *Critical Pedagogy Networker* 6(1-2), 1-11.

WEEK 2: KRESS, Gunther. 1988. Language as a social practice. Chapter 4 in Gunther Kress, Ed., *Communication and Culture*. Kensington, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, pp. 82-104.

WEEK 2: FROMKIN, Victoria & RODMAN, Robert. 1982. Morphology. Chapter 4 from Victoria Fromkin & Robert Rodman, *An Introduction to Language*. 3rd Edition. New York: Holt-Rinehart & Winston, pp. 110-127.

WEEK 3: CHRISTIE, Francis, MARTIN, James R. & ROTHERY, Joan. 1991. Teaching functional grammar. In Francis Christie et al. *Teaching English Literacy*. Vol 2. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education & Training, pp. 69-75.

WEEK 3: SINCLAIR, John. 1990. Verb forms and the formation of verb groups. From the Reference Section, John Sinclair, Ed., *Collins COBUILD English Grammar*. London: Collins ELT, pp. 446-461.

WEEK 4: WALLACE, Catherine. Critical language awareness in EFL. Chapter 3 in Norman Fairclough, Ed., *Critical Language Awareness*. London: Longman, pp. 52-92.

WEEK 5: WELLS, Gordon. 1986. Language and learning. Chapter 4 from Gordon Wells & John Nicholls, Eds., *Language and Learning: An Interactional Approach*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 21-39.

WEEK 5: HAMMOND, Jennifer. 1990. Is learning to read and write the same as learning to speak? Chapter 2 from Francis Christie, Ed., *Literacy for a Changing World*. Hawthorne: Australian Council for Educational Research, pp. 26-53.

WEEK 5: HEATH, Shirley. 1986. What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. Chapter 5 in Bambi B. Schieffelin & Elinor Ochs, Eds., *Language Socialization Across Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 97-124.

WEEK 7: SMITH, Frank. 1978. Reading - from behind the eyes. Chapter 2 in Frank Smith, *Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13-35.

WEEK 7: SMITH, Frank. 1978. Comprehension. Chapter 5 in Frank Smith, *Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.76-98.

WEEK 8: GRADDOL, Diane & SWANN, Joan. 1989. Conversation: The sexual division of labor. Chapter 4 from Diane Graddol & Joan Swann, *Gender Voices*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 69-94.

WEEK 8: CAZDEN, Courtney. 1988. Variations in lesson structure. Chapter 4 from Courtney Cazden, *Classroom Discourse*. Portsmouth: Heineman, pp. 53-79.

WEEK 8: BARNES, Douglas, 1976. The teacher's control of knowledge. Chapter 4 from Douglas Barnes, *From Communication to Curriculum*. London: Penguin, pp. 109-138.

WEEK 9: SINGH, Michael Garbutcheon. 1989. A counter-hegemonic orientation to literacy in Australia. *Journal of Education (Boston University)* vol. 171, no. 2, 35-56.

WEEK 9: FREEBODY, Peter & BAKER, Carolyn D. 1987. The construction and operation of gender in children's first school books. Chapter 5 in Anne Pauwells, Ed., *Women and Language in Australian and New Zealand Society*. Canberra: Australian Professional Publications, pp. 80-107.

WEEK 10: MONTGOMERY, Martin. 1986. Language and regional variation: Accent and dialect. Chapter 3 from Martin Montgomery, *An Introduction to language and society*. London: Methuen, pp. 61-78.

WEEK 10: LUKE, Allan. 1986. Linguistic stereotypes, the divergent speaker and literacy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies (UK)*, vol . 18, no. 4, 397-408.

WEEK 10: SHNUKAL, Anna. 1984. Torres Strait Island students in Queensland mainland schools, I & II. *The Aboriginal Child in School*, vol. 12, nos. 3 & 5.

WEEK 10: KALE, Joan & LUKE, Allan. 1991. Doing things with words: Early language socialization. Chapter 1 in Elaine Furniss & Pamela

Green, Eds., *The Literacy Agenda*. Portsmouth, NJ: Heineman, pp. 1-16.

WEEK 11: GIBBONS, Pauline. 1991. Planning for a language for learning. Chapter 2 in Pauline Gibbons, *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. New Rozelle: Primary English Teachers Association, pp. 9-25.

WEEK 12: MALCOLM, Ian G. 1982. Verbal interaction in the classroom. Chapter 5 in Eagleson, M, Kaldor, S. & Malcolm, Ian G., Eds., *English and the Aboriginal Child*. Canberra: Curriculum Development Centre, pp. 165-192.

WEEK 12: KALE, Joan. 1991. Controllers or victims: Language and education in the Torres Strait. Chapter 6 in Richard Baldauf & Allan Luke, Eds., *Language Planning and Education in Australasia and the South Pacific*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 108-126.

WEEK 12: GRAY, Brian. 1985. Teaching oral language. Chapter 9 in Michael J. Christie, *Aboriginal Perspectives on Experience and Learning: The Role of Language and Education*. Geelong: Deakin University Press, pp. 87-104.

WEEK 13: QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 1989. P-10 Language Education Framework. Brisbane: Queensland Department of Education, pp. 2-29.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

COVER SHEET

WEEK 2: Lexical Classification (Activity #1)

WEEK 3: Syntactic Classification (Activity #2)

WEEK 4: Syntax and Modality (Activity #3)

WEEK 5: From Home to School (Activity #4)

WEEK 7: Critical Reading and Text Analysis (Activity #5)

WEEK 8: Transcript Analysis (Activity #6)

WEEK 9: Textbook Analysis (Activity #7)

WEEK 10: Transcript Discussion [see course readings, Kale & Luke, 1991, p. 14] (Activity #8)

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ON LIBRARY 24 HOUR RESERVE for further study, examination preparation:

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