The Goal of Literacy Teaching – to Complete or to Make a Change?

A Critical Analysis of Literacy Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms in South Africa

Målet med läs- och skrivundervisning – att klara skolan eller att bidra till förändring?
En kritisk analys av läs- och skrivundervisning i flerspråkiga klassrum i Sydafrika

Nicole Krstic
Nikki Nilsson


Examiner: Anna Clara Törnqvist
Supervisor: Johan Elmfeldt
Preface

Throughout our work with this thesis, we have been equally involved in the planning, researching, composing and editing stages. Some parts initially have been written by one of us but then read and revised by the other; other parts have been co-written. To facilitate our theoretical special interests, Nicole composed the sections on multilingualism and the hegemonic position of English, while Nikki wrote those on literacy and critical literacy. Moreover, we transcribed one interview each. Even when working independently, we have read and commented on each other's work. Hence, we are equally responsible for the whole content of this work.

This thesis is a result of a long process of planning, researching, discussing, travelling and writing. Along the road, which sometimes felt like it would never end, we have had a lot of help. First of all, we would like to thank our supervisor, Johan Elmfeldt, for his valuable advice and support during the academic process of planning and writing this thesis. Thank you for helping us narrowing down our sometimes too broad and slightly unspecific ideas; without your help, we would probably still be in South Africa claiming not to have enough data. Second, we would like to thank Kjetil Torp for helping us with the practical parts of our study, such as finding a school to cooperate with and other practical advice. Thank you for being a friend in a place far away from home. In addition, we would like to thank the principal, teachers and learners of the secondary school in South Africa for welcoming us, for so generously answering our questions, and for participating in this minor field study. Furthermore, we are grateful for the generous financial support from SIDA and Lärarförbundet; without your help, our journey would not have been possible. Finally, we would like to direct our gratitude to Camilla Thurén for introducing us to critical literacy, Cecilia Axelsson Yngvéus and Jonas Sjölander for helping us getting in touch with Kjetil, and Berit Lundgren for providing us with Swedish research material on critical literacy. This thesis would not have been written without your help and support.

To our families, and to all the friendly, open and warm-hearted people that we met during our journey and who, through conversations, helped us get a wider understanding of South Africa, thank you.
Abstract

This qualitative minor field study is conducted in a multilingual public secondary school in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The aim is to analyse the literacy teaching from a critical literacy point of view and to gain new perspectives on how to work with literacy in multilingual classrooms in Sweden. The material was collected over approximately three weeks and consists of participant observations and two semi-structured group interviews with nine learners in total.

The theoretical approach derives from a socio-cultural orientation and focuses on how unequal power relations are represented in language. Our results indicate a focus on individual learning of cognitive skills, for example, answering pre-written questions to a text in the work with reading comprehension. Furthermore, reading is considered important to be able to influence one’s own life and to connect with the surrounding society, as is good knowledge of English, which in turn is developed by reading. English is the language the learners are most used to use in school related activities and the language they feel confident to read in. In addition, the results show social, critical and transformative aspects of literacy. The teachers want to make use of the learners’ experiences in the teaching. Moreover, this goal is occasionally connected to a desire to empower the learners with agency to act for change. However, this desire is limited by the curriculum since it is forcing the teachers to teach at a certain pace.

These results are then analysed by the use of Hilary Janks’ interdependent model for critical literacy by considering the consequences of focusing on any of its four parts – power, access, diversity and design – without any one of the others. We conclude that it is a challenge to design teaching that does not separate, but include cognitive, social, critical and transforming aspects of literacy in Sweden as well. Janks’ model can be used to design a teaching that includes these aspects to a greater extent and thereby create a more inclusive multilingual learning environment. Finally, we suggest that theories about critical literacy should be added to both teacher education and to the steering documents.

Key words: Access, bilingualism, critical literacy, design, diversity, education, English, language, literacy, literacy teaching, meaning-making, multilingualism, power, South Africa, teaching, engelska, flerspråkighet, kritisk litteracitet, kritiskt textarbete, läs- och skrivförmåga, läs- och skrivundervisning, makt, meningsskapande, mångfald, språk, språkundervisning, Sydafrika, tillgång, tvåspråkighet, undervisning, utbildning
Table of Content

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 5
2. Purpose and research questions .......................................................................................... 7
3. The South African context ..................................................................................................... 8
   3.1 A historical background ................................................................................................. 8
   3.2 The hegemonic position of English ............................................................................. 10
   3.3 The school system in South Africa today ................................................................. 11
4. Method and Study Design .................................................................................................. 13
   4.1 Ethnographic approach ............................................................................................... 13
       4.1.1 Journal .................................................................................................................. 13
       4.1.2 Observations ........................................................................................................ 14
       4.1.3 Interviews ............................................................................................................ 14
   4.2 Sample ........................................................................................................................... 15
   4.3 Ethical considerations ..................................................................................................... 16
5. Previous research ............................................................................................................... 17
   5.1 Views on literacy ........................................................................................................... 17
   5.2 Multilingualism ............................................................................................................ 18
   5.3 Towards multilingual learning environments ......................................................... 21
   5.4 Meaning-making in multilingual settings .................................................................... 22
6. Theoretical framework ....................................................................................................... 26
   6.1 Critical literacy ............................................................................................................. 26
   6.2 A critical approach on critical literacy ....................................................................... 28
   6.3 Method of analysis – The interdependent model of critical literacy ..................... 29
       6.3.1 Power .................................................................................................................... 29
       6.3.2 Access ................................................................................................................... 29
       6.3.3 Diversity .............................................................................................................. 30
       6.3.4 Design (/re-design) ............................................................................................. 30
       6.3.5 The interdependency ......................................................................................... 31
7. Results and analysis ............................................................................................................ 33
   7.1 School and classes ......................................................................................................... 33
   7.2 What literacy teaching strategies are used in a South African school? .................. 33
       7.2.1 Learning to develop skills .................................................................................... 34
       7.2.2 Thoughts about reading ....................................................................................... 35
       7.2.3 Teaching for change ............................................................................................... 38
   7.3 What conclusions about the teaching of literacy can be drawn by using critical literacy as an analytic lens? ................................................................. 39
       7.3.1 Asking questions to a text ..................................................................................... 39
       7.3.2 Reading to learn English ..................................................................................... 40
       7.3.3 The petition ......................................................................................................... 42
8. Discussion ............................................................................................................................. 44
   8.1 Literacy and critical literacy ......................................................................................... 44
   8.2 Multilingualism and hegemony ................................................................................... 47
   8.3 What insights do the results provide regarding literacy teaching in multilingual classrooms in Sweden? ................................................................. 49
9. Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 52
10. Appendix .............................................................................................................................. 57
1. Introduction

This study concerns working with literacy in multilingual classrooms. Our interest lies in the relationship between language and power. This interest was triggered by the student demonstrations that took place in South Africa during 2015 and our consequent interest in education in RSA\(^1\), particularly as one of us has visited the country. A widespread explanation for the demonstration was the general discontent with English being the main language of instruction and use at the universities. Our interest in language and power led us to the theoretical field of critical literacy and Hilary Janks, whose research emerges from the multilingual context in RSA and the unequal statuses of different languages in the school domain. We saw similar challenges in multilingual classrooms in Sweden, in general, and in Malmö specifically.

Malmö is a multilingual city, with around 42% of the inhabitants having a language other than Swedish as their first (Vamling, 2015). To highlight the linguistic diversity of the city, public pre-schools – with approximately 140 languages amongst the pupils – held a language festival and other activities (Malmö stad, 2017). Furthermore, multilingualism is a subject that has received a lot of attention in politics, research, education and public debate. One issue regarding education is how to make teaching accessible to all learners in the classroom, and the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE, 2013) states that “Teaching should be adapted to each student’s circumstances and needs” (p. 5). Hence, diverse linguistic backgrounds must be taken into account when planning the teaching. In the introduction of the subject of Swedish (SNAE, 2012), the significance of language is expressed as follows:

> Language is the primary tool human beings use for reflection, communication and learning. Through language people can express their personality and by using fiction, texts of different kinds and different types of media, they become familiar with the surrounding world, their fellow human beings and themselves. (SNAE, 2012, p. 1)

We find it crucial to reflect upon the consequence of some learners having to use a language that they have not completely mastered as a tool for reflection, communication and learning. Moreover, we question how this affects their literacy development. During our education at Malmö University, we have developed a special interest in how to create

---

\(^1\) Acronym for the Republic of South Africa, which we will use sometimes when referring to the country after 1994.
an inclusive classroom that makes room for all the learners’ diverse identities and experiences. The linguistic diversity that we have encountered while doing the practical part of our education has generated an ambition to not only manage, but to use, the multilingual environment as a resource when teaching literacy. It is our experience, however, that even though the utmost goal is to create an accessible, inclusive learning environment, the focus many times tends to be on how to get around the associated difficulties rather than on how to use the multilingual setting as an asset for learning.

In the hope of gaining new perspectives on the matter, we turned to South Africa, whose 11 official languages contribute to a less obvious choice of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) than in Sweden, with only one official language. The observation of a context where the LoLT for the majority is a language other than their first could hopefully provide important insight to our profession. In order to say something about the relationship between power and language in relation to literacy teaching in multilingual classrooms, we decided to use Hilary Janks’ model of critical literacy. We wanted to use her concepts of power, access, diversity and design to reveal and examine difficulties that could be associated with multilingual classrooms. Since the complex relationship between language and power is not confined to RSA, this kind of analysis could contribute towards a greater understanding on how to work in multilingual classrooms in other countries, including Sweden.
2. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of our thesis is to analyse the literacy teaching in a secondary school in South Africa from a critical literacy point of view and to gain new perspectives on how to work with literacy in multilingual classrooms in Sweden. To realise this purpose, we have asked the following questions:

1. What literacy teaching strategies are used in a South African school?
2. What conclusions about the teaching of literacy can be drawn by using critical literacy as an analytic lens?
3. What insights do the results provide regarding literacy teaching in multilingual classrooms in Sweden?
3. The South African context

In this chapter, we will begin with a brief historical background that focuses on language. This is followed by a brief review of the hegemonic position that the English language holds in South Africa. We end with a short description of the education system in contemporary South Africa. The outline should not be considered a complete picture, but a deliberate sample chosen to describe the context in which we conducted our minor field study. In connection to this, a few common concepts in this field of research that we use in our thesis will be introduced.

3.1 A historical background

One issue in the educational debate in South Africa is that the majority of the learners, especially in the township areas, often go through most of their school education with English as the LoLT, although they have native tongues other than English.

The linguistic history in South Africa is that of colonisation and, later, of apartheid. In an article published in *Language and Education*, Peter Plüddemann (2015) argues that although African languages are, and have been, spoken by the majority of people, they were strategically excluded from public domains during the Dutch and British colonisation. This meant that people needed to master either Afrikaans or English in order to maintain contact with the authorities; and at the same time, it created a stigma surrounding the indigenous languages: one that made them less valuable. According to Plüddemann, language planning and language policies were used, e.g. in the education system, to strengthen an English/Afrikaans bilingualism during the twentieth century.

Between 1910, when the Union of South Africa was created (South African History Online SAHO, 2017) and 1948, when the Afrikaner National Party came to power, the schools were run by missions, a practice that started in the 19th century. Because missionaries had written down indigenous languages, learners could start school with an initial phase of mother tongue education (MTE). Thereafter, they proceeded to learn mainly through English, but also in Afrikaans. This political strategy, in combination with

---

2 Afrikaans was until the 20th century considered a Dutch dialect and later on it was given the status of an official language in South Africa. For simplicity, we will consistently refer to the language as “Afrikaans”. 

---
low financial support, ensured a poor quality of education for the majority of the people in South Africa (Plüddemann, 2015).

The power of English and Afrikaans was strengthened during the apartheid era (1948-1994), especially with the passing of The Bantu Education Act in 1953. Bantu is a Zulu word that means ‘people’ and it is used today as a linguistic term for a large language group that is spread across the southern part of the African continent. However, during apartheid the word was used to replace the word ‘native’ and is, therefore, associated with the inferior treatment of native Africans by the Afrikaner regime (SAHO, 2016a). The Bantu Education Act took control of native education, which until then had been mostly organized by the church and financed with state-funding. Since the act also shifted the financing from the general budget to a tax paid by the Africans themselves, there was a reduction in the funding because of unequal income levels (SAHO, 2016b). The act “placed education for Africans in the hands of the Apartheid state” (Plüddemann, 2015, p. 189), and it mandated MTE for the first eight years of education followed by a dual-medium education where half of the subjects were taught in English and half in Afrikaans. Although this system benefited the minority of learners that had English or Afrikaans as their first language it stigmatized the majority – indigenous-speaking learners. Both teachers and students protested against The Bantu Education Act after it was enacted. This is commented in an article written 1955, by Duma Nokwe, political activist and later secretary general of the ANC between 1958-69 (SAHO, 2016c):

It was not difficult to /.../ expose Bantu education for what it is - a treacherous attempt to destroy the critical and creative abilities of the African people, and to restrict their ambitions within the narrow confines which the Nationalists design and desire should be the functions of the members of ‘Bantu society’. (Nokwe, 1955, p. 15)

However, there was no change in the education policies until the Soweto uprising of 1976-77. This was a revolt against the use of Afrikaans as the medium for learning half of the subjects since it was seen as the “language of the oppressor” (Plüddemann, 2015, p. 189) by the black majority that suffered from this system. As a result, the MTE was reduced to four years. Thereafter, the school could choose the medium of teaching. For most schools, this meant that English was the LoLT from grade 5 (ibid).
3.2 The hegemonic position of English

The dilemma of English being the LoLT, even though a majority of the learners have other native tongues, is highlighted in Hilary Janks’ dissertation *The Research and Development of Critical Language Awareness Materials for use in South African Secondary Schools* (1995). According to Janks, this dilemma of English being the LoLT contributes to the hegemonic position of English.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, hegemony is a “preponderant influence or authority over others”. Therefore, a language with a hegemonic position is one whose status is unquestioned and affects the value of other languages, which reflects the English language’s significant position as a means of communication in South Africa. The hegemonic position of the English language today is not entirely a direct consequence of the British Empire as a colonial power. English is taught as an Additional Language in countries that were never under British rule. This is confirmed in *Multilingualism* (2012), where Larissa Aronin and David Singleton assert, “it is common knowledge that English is now the dominant language of world communication, trade, diplomacy and upward social mobility” (p. 49). They also question the consequences by asking if English is a “killer language” or if it is “fostering international and intercultural communication” (ibid, p. 49).

Even though South Africa has been under both British and Dutch rule, the former did not target native societies in the same specific way that the Afrikaner Party did, through its implementation of the apartheid acts (SAHO, 2016d). This contributes to how English is looked upon today in RSA, which Plüddemann points out:

/.../it is one of the ironies of history that the pedagogically sound principle of MTE was barely tolerated by African-language speakers, because it was seen to be synonymous with Bantu Education /.../ and a second irony that one oppressive language, Afrikaans, was rejected in favour of another, English /.../ which came to increasingly symbolise not only political liberation but also socio-economic aspiration. (p. 189)

Thus, the English language holds a hegemonic position in South Africa. The use of English as a medium in schools is associated with many difficulties, which is shown by the amount of research in the field (e.g. Madiba, 2013; Makoe & McKinney, 2014; Janks, 1995; Granville, Janks, Mphahlele, Reed, Watson, Joseph & Ramani, 1998). One of the difficulties is the inequalities it creates for learners with different linguistic backgrounds.
The problematic issue is that these learners are taught all their subjects in a language they have not completely mastered. Tintswalo Vivian Manyike (2013) notes that this poses the risk that they spend more time trying to technically decode a text, i.e. struggle to translate and understand specific words, rather than trying to understand the subject in question.

3.3 The school system in South Africa today

In contemporary South Africa, school is compulsory between the ages of 7-15. However, a preschool year is available from the age of six. Equal compulsory education was not granted by law until the enactment of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (National Department of Basic Education, 1996, chapter 2, paragraph 3). Up until then, school was compulsory to the age of 16 for white and coloured children, and to the age of 15 for Indian children, but not at all for black children (Janks, 1995). The National Curriculum Statements consist of documents that describe and regulate what is taught and how to assess learners (National Department of Basic Education, 2017). Each subject has a Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS); in addition, there is a protocol for assessment and requirements for continuation to the next grade. From grade 4, the learners must pass end-of-year examinations to be promoted to the next grade (National Department of Basic Education, 2012a, Chapter 4). This means that even though school in theory is compulsory between grades 1-9, it is not unusual that there are learners older than 15 in grade 9.

Since 1996, South Africa has recognized 11 official languages: English, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, siSwati, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003). The current curriculum, from 2012, is based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), which states, “Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable” (Chapter 2, section 29:2). This indicates that it is school resources that decide what language options the learners have. According to research on multilingualism (e.g.

---

When referring to different ethnic groups, the terms “white”, “coloured” and “black” are used in South Africa and in research concerning the country. The groups are not solely divided by skin colour but are also culturally and lingually heterogeneous, both between and within the groups. For example, Afrikaans was originally a white language but today is widely used by the coloured communities. Due to the size of this study, we will not describe further the various ethno-cultural communities, even though this aspect would be interesting to consider.
Plüddemann, 2015; Collins, 2017; Janks, 1995), this means that it is not until grade 4 that learners get their education in their home language. Thereafter, the LoLT is English.

The terms Home Language and First Additional Language, used in The National Curriculum Statements, are not self-evident but are used both to describe the language’s status for the speaker and as a measure of knowledge. According to CAPS for grades 7-9 for English as Home Language, the definition of a Home Language is that it is “the language first acquired by learners”, and the First Additional Language is “a language which is not a mother tongue but which is used for certain communicative functions in a society, that is, medium of learning and teaching in education” (National Department of Basic Education, 2012b, p. 8). The policy document recognizes that not all schools throughout RSA offer all Home Languages; as a consequence, the term Home Language level states a proficiency level along with the term First Additional Language level. These levels are a scale for assessment, e.g. English as a subject can be taught as either English as Home Language or as English as First Additional Language. It is required that the learner completes two official languages by the end of grade 12, and one of these should be on the Home Language level (National Department of Basic Education, 2012a).
4. Method and Study Design

In this chapter, we will account for the methods that we have employed. We have conducted a qualitative study, and the data is collected from participant observations and semi-structured interviews. To interpret our impressions, as well as to recall our observations, we kept a joint journal alongside the notes we took while we observed. We have been using what Johan Alvehus (2013) calls “an abductive approach” (p. 109), which means that the evaluation of the material takes place parallel with the collecting of the data. This results in a transition between a theoretical and an empirical reflection, which allowed us as researchers to modify our methods during the study.

4.1 Ethnographic approach

We have used an ethnographic approach, but given the time span, it is more adequate to refer to it as a micro ethnography, in accordance with Alan Bryman (2011). This method consists of both participating observations and interviews, and it is characterised by the researchers’ interest in the context of the informants. This interest is manifested by engagement in the environment, regular observations, and both planned and spontaneous conversations that take place during the time spent with the informants. The nature of the research could be set up as either explicit or hidden, which refers to how aware the informants are of the purpose of the researcher's presence (ibid). For this study, we decided to be transparent about the rationale behind our presence. Over a three-week period, we visited a public secondary school, during lessons and breaks. We collected our data with the help of the following tools and methods:

4.1.1 Journal

We kept a joint journal, where we noted our daily activities and included personal reflections. This was done to remind ourselves of thoughts and situations that otherwise may have been forgotten; the approach recommended by Runa Patel and Bo Davidson (2003) is also consistent with the abductive approach (Alvehus, 2013) that we strove to uphold.
4.1.2 Observations

The data we chose to analyse is mainly from lessons that included reading in the subject of English. Even so, we see the rest of the observed lessons and our participation in other school activities – such as break time, morning assembly, and teachers’ meetings – as significant as the main data since it helped us get to know the context in which we conducted our study. Our observations, therefore, gave us an important insight into the new (to us) educational context, and it affected the way we analysed our collected data. During the observations, we took notes separately, which gave us the possibility to compare our perceptions.

Observations can be made in different ways depending on how much the researcher is engaging in the situations that are being observed (Bryman, 2011). Although we chose to mostly stay in the background during lessons, the learners were aware of our roles as observers. In addition to the classroom observations, we interacted with both learners and teachers during our time spent at the school, which meant that we were not strictly observing but also participating in some of the situations. The effect of our presence should be taken into account in the evaluation of our findings, even though there is no way of knowing how it affected the informants’ behaviour.

4.1.3 Interviews

Our initial plan was for each of us to conduct individual interviews with four learners. However, because of our inexperience in conducting interviews, we decided we both should be present during the conversations with the learners. One researcher would be responsible for leading the interview and asking the questions, and the other one would help by observing and, perhaps, asking follow-up questions, depending on the learners’ reactions. This change caused us to reflect on how appropriate it was to hold individual interviews since the uneven power balance might put the informant in a vulnerable position, such as having two unknown adult researchers alone with one child. To even out these power relations, we decided to carry out the interviews in groups because we hoped that this would create a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Therefore, we conducted two group interviews with a total of nine learners from grades 8 and 9.

We wanted to create an environment for open conversation, where the interviewed learners felt they could express their thoughts on our topics rather than a strict question—answer situation. Therefore, the interviews were semi-structured. We had prepared a
number of questions that we wished to ask the learners, but we mainly let them influence the flow of the interview. Each interview was about 30 minutes long and was recorded and transcribed. Although there was no need for an interpreter, it should be kept in mind that the interviews were held in English, which is neither the learners’ nor the researchers’ first language. Therefore, some questions and answers may have been lost in translation.

4.2 Sample

For this study, we wanted the learners to come from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, in order to reflect the diversity of South Africa. Moreover, we wanted the learners to be of the same age group as our future students. Even though we mainly planned to collect data from their English lessons, we, nevertheless, wanted to follow one class during all of their subject teaching and break time. The main reason for this was to establish a relationship with the learners so that they would feel comfortable with us when it was time for the interviews (Bryman, 2011).

These intentions were modified, and our sample became a combination of purposive sampling and sampling of convenience. Our objective concerning age group and subject were met, in general – thanks to our contact person in field – making this a purposive sampling (ibid). However, it can also be viewed as a sampling of convenience (ibid) since our contact person had already established a connection with this specific school. Another factor we had to adjust to was that the teachers who volunteered to participate taught younger learners than we originally had in mind. Analysing observations and speaking to learners from the English lessons is a purposive sampling. The learners in the interviews were chosen on a voluntary basis out of the available classes, which is a sampling of convenience. Since the sampling was connected first to the teachers, second to their English classes, and third to the willing learners in these classes, it could also be called a “snowball sample” or a “chain sample” (Bryman, 2011, our translation).

Since not all teachers were able to participate, it was not possible to join just one class of learners. Therefore, we decided to observe various classes in different subjects to get to know both the context and the learners better. In the end, we chose to mainly analyse lessons that focused on reading and discussing literature in two classes with two different teachers. It was learners from these classes that we later interviewed about reading.
4.3 Ethical considerations

While conducting this study, we had the four basic requirements of ethics in mind: the requirement of information, the requirement of confidentiality, the requirement of access, and the requirement of consent. These are meant to protect the individuals participating in the conducted research and are compiled by the Swedish Research Council as guidelines to ensure that the need for research does not compromise the privacy of the participants (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). According to Bryman (2011), it should be noted that these requirements overlap and complete each other.

To uphold the requirement of information, the participating informants were made aware of our role in their context and the purpose of the study. When entering a classroom to observe, we were introduced by the teacher, and we let the learners know that they were welcome to ask questions at any time during our stay at their school.

To uphold the requirement of confidentiality, the learners, the teachers and the school are kept anonymous. When quoting the learners, we ‘name’ them LA, LB, on to LI. Furthermore, we do not specify what class the learners in the planned interviews belong to. This is to assure that it is not possible to identify who might have said what; only the participants would recognise their own input. We do, however, refer to some spontaneous conversations, besides the planned interviews, by mentioning what class the learners were in; however in those cases the information is not traceable in any way. Moreover, we guaranteed that any personal information we came across would be handled appropriately. To uphold the requirement of access, we ensure that the information we gather will only be used for the stated purpose: our study.

Finally, to uphold the requirement of consent, we made sure that the learners we interviewed understood that even though they had volunteered, they could choose how active they wanted to be. Since the learners were minors, we had concerns about the proper procedure regarding this requirement. During an initial meeting with the principal and the two teachers that had agreed to help us and be a part of our study, we learned that the principal was responsible for the learners during school hours. Therefore, we informed him of proceedings and acquired his consent before taking any action involving the learners. The guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002) state that if a study is not of an ethically sensitive nature, then it is acceptable to let a representative (the principal) of a larger organisation (the school) grant consent on behalf of the participants, as long as the minors are informed.
5. Previous research

In this section, we will account for research of relevance for our study. In an attempt to categorise, the research is presented in four themes. We start with a review of research in the field of literacy and continue with an introduction to research on multilingualism. Thereafter, we present a number of articles discussing issues concerning multilingualism in South Africa. Finally, we give a few examples intended to show how critical literacy can be used to accomplish effective multilingual learning environments.

5.1 Views on literacy

Competing definitions of literacy and competing approaches to teaching it have divided the field of literacy, so much so, that they have been widely referred to as ‘the literacy wars’ (Janks, 2010, Foreword, p. xiii).

In the preface of *Literacy and Power* (2010), Janks argues that the core of the disagreements is whether literacy should be described as a “cognitive skill or a social practice” (ibid, p. xiii). According to David Barton (2007), the technical mode of literacy is representative for many educational practices. This view focuses on individual learning, where the acts of writing and reading are taken apart and divided into a set of cognitive skills and subskills that should be taught in a specific order, one skill following the previous one. Roz Ivanic (2004) identifies “A Skills Discourse of Writing” (p. 227), which she describes as an often-explicit teaching of writing that tends to autonomously focus on skills like punctuation, sentence construction, grammar, and spelling. Both Ivanic and Barton point out that this view on literacy is to be found in documents regarding the teaching and assessment of literacy. This dividing is also described by Janks (2014), who shows that the language and literacy policies in RSA are overly prescriptive and limiting the teachers’ autonomy. Based on these policies, language education tends to separate the acts of reading, speaking and writing, on different days of the week. As a consequence, the teaching loses focus on the meaning-making process, Janks claims.

Barton (2007) points out a paradigm shift in the field of literacy studies, from a psychological and technical view to a social, but he stresses the importance of keeping the psychological as well:

Seeing literacy as a symbolic system immediately straddles the social and the psychological; it is a system for representing the world to ourselves - a
psychological phenomenon; at the same time it is a system for representing the world to others - a social phenomenon. (Barton, 2007, p. 34)

Janks’ (2010) view on literacy is in line with Barton’s – it is both a cognitive skill and a social practice. She describes it as in order to be able to make meaning from a text, you must have the ability to decode the text. The recognition of letters, the understanding of the structure of sentences, and the comprehension of meaning are all cognitive skills, and with Barton’s words: “a system for representing the world to ourselves” (2007, p.34). At the same time, literacy is a part of social practices where literacy is valued differently depending on its function in everyday life (Janks, 2010). In addition, Ivanic (2004) argues that the primacy of the knowledge of linguistic patterns and grammar must be put in relation to “other aspects of writing, the way in which such knowledge is best developed, and the place of explicit teaching in this” (p. 228).

The questioning of the view of literacy as merely a set of cognitive, technical skills is also evident in earlier research. In 1994, the New London Group met to discuss the future of literacy teaching and in Multiliteracies: literacy learning and the design of social futures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) they stress the importance of the same shift as Barton later points out. They want a move from “mere literacy” (p. 5), which they describe as a form of literacy focused on language as a system through which the correct usage of an often singular, national form of language can be taught⁴, to “a pedagogy of Multiliteracies” (ibid, p. 5). They give two arguments for the use of the word multiliteracies. The first argument is that the communication channels through which we create meaning are increasing. Argument number two is a mutual challenge that educators have to face – the merging of global connectedness and local diversity. English is on one hand used as a common global language in commerce, media and politics. It is turning into a world language. On the other hand, it is divided into manifold Englishes, “marked by accent, national origin, subcultural style and professional or technical communities” (ibid, p. 6). Therefore, the teaching of one, standard version of English, using mainly textual mediums, is no longer sufficient.

5.2 Multilingualism

There are a lot of theories and discussions on the definition of multilingualism. One aspect to consider is how good one needs to know the languages in question to claim to be

⁴ Which we understand as the same as the view of literacy as a set of skills.
multilingual. Aronin and Singleton (2012) present different criteria for this on an increasing scale where at one end a person who knows isolated phrases in a language other than their first is multilingual, and at the other end one has to be equally competent in all languages. Furthermore, they discuss the terms first language, mother tongue and native language. These terms are complex and sometimes used to describe the same phenomena. We will use these terms as synonyms when referring to the language that a person initially learns to interact in. A third issue that Aronin and Singleton brings up, is when to use the term bilingualism and when the term multilingualism is more adequate. We will use the term multilingualism (except when referring to research that uses the term bilingualism) since it is stated in the introduction of the National Language Policy Framework that there are 11 official languages in South Africa, and it is concluded that “South Africa is therefore a multilingual country” (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003, 1.1.3, boldface added for emphasis). This correlates with our experience of people in RSA using two or more languages on a daily basis.

We prepared for this study by reading research and articles about critical literacy in South Africa. Since it is a multilingual setting we found it necessary to improve our knowledge of multilingualism to be able to make sense of the research that we came across. This research many times refers to Jim Cummins and his theories concerning second language acquisition. Cummins has done research in the field of second language learning and multilingualism in relation to academic success since the seventies and has coined the acronyms BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Acquisition) as tools to distinguish and understand different types of language skills (Manyike, 2013). According to Cummins’ theory, BICS is the informal language we use in everyday social situations and it takes about two years to learn a second language on this level. CALP, on the other hand, is a formal, academic language, which takes between five to seven years to master (Cummins, 2000). Most of the learners we met during our study have had what is called a successive multilingual development (Aronin & Singleton, 2012), which means that they have had a first language established (in this case Xhosa for the majority) before another (English) was added. In South Africa, the CAPS document uses the words communicative and academic skills when describing the difference between Home Language level and First Additional Language level (National Department of Basic Education, 2012b). This indicates that Cummins’ terms BICS and CALP are valid in this context.
Cummins’ theory has been the subject of critique and in his book *Language, Power and Pedagogy* (2000) Cummins recognises and meets this:

The distinction between BICS and CALP has been misunderstood or misrepresented by a number of commentators. /.../ the distinction was not proposed as an overall theory of language but as a conceptual distinction addressed to specific issues concerning the education of second language learners (ibid, p 73).

The purpose was, thus, to explain that children seemingly fluent in the second language (which was their LoLT), despite of that performed below expectations and even got (wrongly) diagnosed with learning disabilities. Cummins’ research shows that the development of BICS and CALP does not necessarily have to be sequential, but for the multilingualism to be additive rather than subtractive it is important to continue to develop one's first language as well as the added second one in order to be successful academically. Subtractive bilingualism⁵ is explained by Aronin and Singleton (2012) as the development of an added language at the expense of the learners’ first language, in contrast to when the bilingualism is additive, i.e. an extra skill. Manyike (2013) exemplifies this in a simple way:

A common example is the fact that if a child learns an abstract concept in L1, he or she does not have to re-learn the concept when introduced to it in L2⁶. Instead, all that has to be done is to learn the new label for the already existing concept. (p. 190)

But, Manyike continues, if the learners are not familiar with the concept in question then they just learn it by rote without completely understanding it. Cummins (2000) refers to empirical studies conducted over three decades when he states that additive bilingualism has numerous positive effects. He defines additive bilingualism as the result of “when students add a second language to their intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their first language” (ibid, p. 37) and he argues that the benefits are not only on an individual level but work to “increase the collective linguistic competence of the entire society” (ibid, p. 38). As we will see below, there are different opinions on how this is best taught and achieved.

---

⁵ Aronin and Singleton uses the term “multilingualism”, but for clarity we here use the term “bilingualism” used by Manyike.
⁶ Acronyms used by Manyike, meaning first language and second language
5.3 Towards multilingual learning environments

In South Africa, there is a long-running discussion about the best way to accomplish and maintain an effective multilingual learning environment that does not stigmatise or belittle speakers with other first languages than the LoLT. One issue in this discussion is that most learners go through school using English as a medium for learning even though it is not their native tongue. Manyike (2013) derives this fact as a trace from the apartheid era. As mentioned earlier (3.1), the Bantu Education Act meant that all learners got their education in their home language for the first eight years, and then proceeded to learn half the subjects in English and half in Afrikaans. The fact that Afrikaans often is associated with the apartheid regime, could be one of the reasons to the hegemonic position that the English language holds in RSA. Access to English is seen as a factor for success, which, according to Janks (1995), can explain why parents choose English as the LoLT for their children, which in turn strengthens the hegemony itself. In relation to this phenomenon, Janks (ibid) refers to the access paradox\textsuperscript{7}: when giving access to dominant languages, in this case English, it is made on the behalf of other languages, e.g. Xhosa.

The power relations between different languages are also drawn upon by James Collins (2017), who studies the hierarchies of languages and variations of languages in relation to race and class. English and Afrikaans were the prevailing languages in the primary school where his ethnographic study took place and Collins found that the teachers attempted to maintain strict boundaries between the languages as well as maintaining the standard versions of them. Based on this, among other things, he concludes that attitudes towards languages and variations of languages reproduce white supremacy and help maintain social inequality. However, Collins also noticed that the learners of his, as well as of other studies, were “attempting to widen the domain of school language” (ibid, p. 53) by using strategies towards a multilingual learning environment. This is something that Collins points to as a possible ground to build on, as he argues that learners should be allowed to use all their languages during a lesson, even if it is a language-subject.

Another problem connected to when one language (or variation of a language) is allowed to dominate certain situations, is that it limits the possibilities for multilingual learners to continue to develop all of their languages parallelly. In a case study, Manyike (2013) analyses standardised tests in reading and writing by using Cummins’ theory of

\textsuperscript{7} The access paradox is further explained in 6.3.2
BICS and CALP, as well as his acronym CUP, which stands for Common Underlying Proficiency. CUP is described as “a set of language skills and implicit linguistic knowledge” (ibid, p. 190) that are used when learning a language, L1 as well as L2. CUP will provide a foundation for all language learning and if it is further developed it will have an overall positive effect that includes conceptual learning. This is why the learners should continue to expand their L1. The learners in Manyike’s study got poor test results in both L1 and L2 and she concludes that this is due to insufficient development in L1, which leads to inferior development of L2. In terms of CUP, this could be explained by the lack of a proper linguistic tool-kit. Manyike means that this indicates that the learners’ bilingualism is subtractive, and she states that since learners in RSA often use their added, second language as the LoLT, they face a risk to not continue to develop their first language. Instead, it gets lost in the school environment. For optimal development of both L1 and L2, Manyike suggests solutions both in the home environment and in school. It is important that the home environment is language enriched and when it comes to education it is essential that teachers get training in bilingual pedagogy, that the school is print enriched and that the teacher/learner ratios “allow for sufficient interaction in the classroom in both languages” (ibid, p. 200).

Manyike’s research strives to come up with solutions to create successful multilingual learning environments. Plüddemann (2015) is also addressing the outcomes of the language in education policy and its implementation. By assembling already made studies and analysing them with the “onion metaphor” to break down the problem of language in education, Plüddemann suggests a revision of the language in education policies. He states that it is non-successful on an institutional level and, just like Collins (2017) and Manyike (2013), he argues that “all languages should be used as learning resources” (ibid, p. 186).

5.4 Meaning-making in multilingual settings

The views on literacy, and the discussions about language hierarchies and the benefits of multilingual learning environments, presented in the sections above, have resulted in several critical literacy projects (CL is described more thorough in chapter 6). These projects can be seen as attempts to develop strategies for effective literacy teaching that takes advantage of the multilingual classroom. One of these projects is “The Mobile Literacies Project”, presented by Janks in The Educational Forum (2014). Janks explains
that the project was “designed to test the assumption that when learners are allowed to use literacy for their own purposes, to read what interests them, and to design and produce texts for real audiences, their literacy will improve” (ibid, p. 22). Even though the school is where literacy development can take place in poor and rural communities, where there often is a lack of access to printed and digital materials at home (e.g. newspapers, books, and computers), Janks argues that the schools must acknowledge and build upon existing community literacy practices in order to bring meaning that matters to the learners. In the project, learners got to use their knowledge of text messaging to write and design texts for real audiences and purposes.

Another attempt to create meaning-making in a multilingual learning environment, is accounted for by Alison Cleary and Terry Locke (2011). In an article they present Cleary’s case study that was put into practice in a culturally diverse classroom, where the final-year learners were judged as less able and all had English as a second language. The study was part of an extensive project on teaching literature in secondary schools in New Zealand and was designed with the purpose to develop an awareness of how the language in a text work to position the reader. The learners were given texts held together by themes, such as discrimination and the intervening in human life. The main focus during the project was discussion and according to the article ”Alison was encouraging students to identify their own positions in relation to a topic” (ibid, p. 127). One outcome was that when they got to read and discuss the texts from their own social and cultural experiences it made them feel empowered. Moreover, the students built a ground on which they could enact a resistant reading of the texts that they got to read (ibid, p. 127). After the study all the learners achieved better results in the English subject than during the year before.

The anthology *Critical literacy i svensk klassrumskontext* (Lundgren & Damber, 2015), is consisting of recently written articles, based on research in Swedish classrooms, and constitutes good examples of how to use Janks’ model of CL (this model is described further in 6.3). One article is written by Ewa Bergh Nestlog (2015), who does a meta-analysis on a study done in two classrooms, with learners between 10-12 years. The purpose is to understand what possibilities were given to the learners and teachers to reach critical literacy. Bergh Nestlog mentions three factors that matters in order to achieve this: text, subject and the educational practice. Since the school is part of a social practice, where e.g. steering documents to some extent regulate the what and how of the teaching, the teachers’ and learners’ possibilities to power get limited. For example, what genres and language norms that should be seen as dominant, and therefore desirable for the
learners to know, are partly prescribed by the steering documents. However, one way for the learners to engage and to make their voices heard is to participate in, and react to, the dominant literacy practices, in their own texts. According to Bergh Nestlog, the two groups differed in socio-economic and cultural backgrounds that were represented amongst the learners. One group was more diverse than the other, that was more homogeneously “Swedish”. This affected their repertoires, and therefore also their possibilities to participate in and influence existing, dominant genres. One question asked in the article is what possibilities teachers have to create equal teaching to all learners, regardless of cultural and socio-economic background. The meta-analysis shows that possibilities to critical literacy were present in both classrooms but that the possibilities looked different depending on the surrounding social context. In one classroom, critical literacy was present “through the learners’ meaning-making in texts and the educational practice. The learners own power over the texts and the teachers over the educational practice” (p. 106, our translation). In the classroom with many learners of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, critical literacy was present through “the fact that the teacher is enthusing the learners to be active and engaged participants in literacy practices in, and beyond, the school” (p. 106, our translation).

Another contribution to the anthology is written by Anna Lindholm and Anna Lyngfelt (2015) and they claim that all learners benefit from the use of reading strategies – such as questioning, predicting, clarifying and summarising. By turning to Olga Dysthe’s arguments about the positive effects of dialogue in multi-voiced classrooms, they show that “The dialogue can, through conversation and writing, be a central tool for learning when working with texts and meaning-making” (p. 111, our translation). In the study, they examine how a model called dialogic strategic pedagogy (our translation) affects multilingual learners’ ability to interpret fictional texts. Besides social interaction in the classroom, an important part of this model is that the learners reflect upon their own learning on a meta-cognitive level. The material consists of interviews and two tests, one taken before the work with reading strategies and one taken after. The results show that the dialogic strategic pedagogy benefited the multilingual learners and that the gap between high and low achievements was decreasing. In their conclusion, Lindholm and Lyngfelt states the importance of an on-going development of the learners’ first language. They too turn to Cummins’ theories of BICS and CALP, and stress the importance of a, through social interaction and cognitive challenging assignments, continuing development of the context-specific language used for academic studies (CALP).
According to the authors, dialogic strategic pedagogy could be a way for the learners to reach critical literacy since it promotes conversations about how texts are both socially constructed and constructing.
6. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we will account for the main features of the theoretical field of critical literacy, which constitutes the foundation of this thesis. We will also present our model of analysis; Janks’ interdependent model of critical literacy and its four parts: power, access, diversity and design.

6.1 Critical literacy

In previous research, we presented different views on how to define literacy and showed a paradigm shift where a social perspective was added to the cognitive, technical view on literacy. Even though the cognitive perspective is an important part of literacy, research on critical literacy\(^8\) derives from a socio-cultural orientation (Lundgren & Damber, 2015). The focus lies on how norms connected to different factors – such as gender, social class, ethnicity, function, age and sexuality – are represented in the language, and on how these factors are related to power structures (ibid).

Researchers in the field mean that the ability to decode a text and the knowledge of the foundation upon which the written language rest, are no longer enough in order to work and act as an adequate member of a democratic society. (ibid, p. 8, our translation)

Instead, we need to be able to critically read and examine a text to sort out its message and the intention behind it (Lundgren & Damber, 2015). Janks refers to Paulo Freire as the first to question the general understanding of literacy as a set of skills necessary for reading and writing: “He helps us to understand that reading the word cannot be separated from reading the world” (2010, p. 13).

One purpose of CL is to reveal the social interests at work by examining what written, visual and oral texts do to the recipients, by asking questions like: Whose interests are served by what these texts do? Whose interests are disadvantaged? A text is always constructed, which means that the making of the text includes choices of what words, pictures, colours etc. to use and not to use. Something that has been constructed can also be deconstructed (Janks, 2010, 2013). By using CL in the classroom, it is possible to help learners raise awareness about the interests at work by deconstructing the reality they meet in texts, Janks means (2010, 2013). Ivanic (2004) suggests that the resources, such

\(^8\) We will use the acronym CL when referring to critical literacy.
as discourses and genres, used in the construction of a text are socially constructed and
influenced by socio-political factors.

Decisions made by those in powerful positions influence or even dictate the
discoursal and generic resources that a writer can draw on and make use of. Hence
writers are not entirely free to choose how to represent the world, how to represent
themselves, what social role to take, and how to address their readers when they
write, but these are to some extent determined by the sociopolitical context in
which they are writing. (ibid, p. 238)

Therefore, the deconstruction of a text should not be limited to its content. It should also
include a critical description and discussion of the genre and context specific language
used to mediate the content, as well as of through what communication channels it is
being delivered.

Another purpose of CL is to create agency and social change. Ivanic (2004) means that
more modern views on literacy include the image of the writer as a free agent with the
power to challenge the writing norms by using less privileged discourses and genres or
to mix them and make new ones. According to Janks (2010), the focus on critical writing
is an important contribution to research on CL, that earlier mostly concentrated on critical
reading. By including critical writing when working with CL in the classroom, the work
does not stop with the deconstruction of a text, but gives the learners agency and
empowerment to reconstruct it. Hence, they have the power to reconstruct, or expand, the
reality presented in a text. In rewriting the word, they can also rewrite the world, to
paraphrase Janks. Since the word ‘write’ tends to direct the focus on written texts, Janks
uses the word ‘design’⁹ instead.

The word ‘design’, unlike the word ‘write’, does work across multiple modalities,
multiple forms of meaning making or semiosis - you can design a text, a style of
dress, a page, a poster, furniture, a room. (Janks, 2010, p. 18)

By deconstructing and redesigning the reality they meet in a text, learners can both
acknowledge unequal power structures and rewrite themselves as acting subjects.

Our understanding of CL mainly comes from Janks’ research and we use her
interdependent model of critical literacy as the method of analysis. Janks (2010) have
developed and refined the model to make it accessible and useful for teachers working in
different contexts. The model can be used to analyse and evaluate educational practices

⁹ See 6.3.4 for further explanations on Janks’ use of the term.
and documents such as curriculums, language policies and criteria for assessment. It can also be used to analyse research data or current events.

6.2 A critical approach on critical literacy

Janks (2010) admits that CL has limitations and challenges. CL is a rationalist activity and this leads to a challenge tied to the process of identification. How can one be rational and critical towards a text that is questioning beliefs that are close to one’s identity? Janks states that “identification is a non-rational process that affects our desires below the level of consciousness” (ibid, p. 221). When an issue is tied to identification the ability to critically look upon it disappears and can only be possible once you have recognised this unconscious identification, Janks claims. However, we can never anticipate “which texts are dangerous for whom or how they will impinge on the diverse and multiple identities and identifications of the students in our class” (ibid, p. 221).

Another difficulty is, Janks means, when a subject is tied to the learners’ desires. Although learners can learn to produce reasonable deconstructions of texts to reveal unequal power structures, it does not necessarily mean that the critique is transformative. For example, although the learners may be able to critically discuss the sexualisation of women in commercials they may still have a favourite model that they wished to look more like. Since one of the main purposes of CL is to create agency and social change this is a challenge worth to consider.

Beside these challenges, we see another challenge with CL as a method in teaching. Although it can be useful in order to make the learners aware of powerful structures and how the parts of these structures are connected and influence each other, we should not forget to ask what this means for the enjoyment and amusement of reading. If the learners have to question everything they read, can they enjoy it? On the other hand, maybe the school should be a place where critical analysis and discussion is given priority over enjoyment? Or as Janks states at the very end of Literacy and Power (2010), “Critical literacy work in classrooms can be simultaneously serious and playful. We should teach it with a subversive attitude, self-irony and a sense of humour” (p. 224).
6.3 Method of analysis – The interdependent model of critical literacy

To analyse our material, we are going to use Janks’ framework for CL education. The framework consists of four parts: power, diversity, access, and design (redesign). Janks (2013) points out that the parts are not new, but distilled from a range of different areas, such as critical discourse analysis and socio-cultural and critical approaches to literacy. However, her theorisation of their interdependence is new and was developed by reflecting upon the effects of focusing on any one of these parts without any one of the others. “For example, in simple terms what does a pedagogical approach that takes power seriously but fails to consider questions of access, or diversity, or possibilities for redesign look like?” (ibid, p. 225).

Due to the size of this study we are aware of the risk that an analysis consisting of the whole model could lose some of the deeper aspects that could have been made visible if only parts of the model had been in focus. However, since the importance of considering the interdependent relationship between power, access, diversity and design is the very argument of the model, we have used all four parts as an analytic lens.

6.3.1 Power

Language is a powerful medium through which relations of domination are being maintained and reproduced. Looking at language and meaning-making in relation to power recognises how it “works to position readers in the interests of power” (Janks, 2010, p. 176). A text is always constructed and the writer has made choices of what perspectives and interests to foreground. This means that other things have been left out. To raise awareness of the interests that are being served and, maybe more importantly, to bring out what has been hidden in silence the text must be deconstructed by asking important questions: “Why did the writer or speaker make these choices?” and “Who is empowered and disempowered by the language used?” (Janks, 1995, p. 314).

6.3.2 Access

Access can be discussed both in relation to language and meaning-making, and to resources needed to enable the possibility of education. Where we are born in the social and economic hierarchy affects our possibilities and our chances in life. Therefore, it is
important to ask what people need access to and who is getting this access (Janks, 2010). When discussing access in relation to language and meaning-making, Janks (2000) refers to the access paradox:

If we provide students with access to dominant forms, this contributes to maintaining their dominance. If, on the other hand, we deny students access, we perpetuate their marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise the value and importance of these forms. (Janks, 2000, p. 176)

These dominant forms are not restricted to language as in English, Xhosa or Swedish but include dominant discourses, genres, literacies, knowledges, etc. An important question for teachers to consider is raised by the access paradox. How can we help learners gain access to dominant forms and at the same time promote and value the diversity of their own languages and literacies (ibid)?

6.3.3 Diversity

In a multilingual classroom, the learners’ identities are multiple and different from each other’s. They identify with, and are being positioned to, different social categories such as gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, etc. Depending on their social identities they also belong to different groups, communities and discourses that affect their ways of being and how they read and write the world (Janks, 2010). When learning to master a new discourse, new ways of thinking and being in the world will appear and this will have effects on a learner’s social identities. It is therefore important to take the diversity into account in the classroom and to reflect upon the practice that the learners are a part of.

6.3.4 Design (/re-design)

Design is the part of the model that is about production rather than reception of text. If the three first parts are about deconstructing a text to make visible and to interrogate power relations, this part is about letting the learners produce, and rewrite, texts themselves. Through writing, or writing back to power, agency is possible. Janks gives a number of reasons as to why the means of and control over text production is a central part of CL:

The ability to produce texts is a form of agency that enables us to choose what meanings to make; construct texts gives (sic!) us a better understanding of how texts are constructed /…/ It helps us to think about how we are positioning ourselves and our readers by the choices we make as we write /…/ It enables us to
think about how to transform texts that we have deconstructed to remake the world.  
(Janks, 2010, p. 156)

In addition to designing and redesigning texts, this part of the model is about designing lessons and teaching materials, curricula, language policies etc.

6.3.5 The interdependency

The following table shows how the four parts of the model are interdependent by initiating the consequences of focusing on any of the parts without any one of the others. We will use Janks’ model when analysing our results, but the way we will present the analysis differs. Mostly it will be presented in running text. However, in 7.3.2 the table will be used as a compliment to display the analysis.

Table 1 Janks interdependent model of critical literacy (Janks, 2013, p. 226).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power without access</th>
<th>This maintains the exclusionary force of powerful discourses and powerful practices.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power without diversity</td>
<td>Power without diversity loses the ruptures that produce contestation and change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power without design or redesign</td>
<td>The deconstruction of powerful texts and practices, without reconstruction or redesign, removes human agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access without power</td>
<td>Access without a theory of power leads to the naturalisation of powerful discourses without an understanding of how these powerful forms came to be powerful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access without diversity</td>
<td>This fails to recognise that difference fundamentally affects who gets access to what and who can benefit from this access. History, identity and value are implicated in access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access without design or redesign</td>
<td>This maintains and reifies dominant forms without considering how they can be transformed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity without power</td>
<td>This leads to a celebration of diversity without any recognition that difference is structured in dominance and that not all discourses/genres/languages/literacies are equally powerful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity without access</td>
<td>Diversity without access to powerful forms of language ghettoises students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity without design or redesign</td>
<td>Diversity provides the means, the ideas, the alternative perspectives for reconstruction and transformation. Without design, the potential that diversity offers is not realised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/redesign without power</td>
<td>Designs or redesigns that lack power are unable to effect change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/redesign without access</td>
<td>This runs the risk of whatever is designed remaining on the margins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/redesign without diversity</td>
<td>This privileges (sic!) dominant forms and fails to use the design resources provided by difference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Results and analysis

Since the setting of our study was initially unfamiliar to us, we had to get to know it before continuing with our actual study. We will, therefore, treat these impressions as part of the result and begin this chapter with a brief description of the setting. We then aim to answer our two first research questions by dividing the rest of the chapter into two parts: the first part is mainly descriptive, while the other is more analytical.

7.1 School and classes

The setting for this study is a secondary school located in a township in a small town in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The school is supplied books by the Department of Basic Education every fifth year, according to one of the teachers (Observation, NK, 6/3). Most of the other materials – such as pens, pencils, and workbooks – are provided by the learners themselves. However, the learners are provided with daily meals.

The school consists of six low buildings placed in a rectangular shape around the school yard. One of the buildings is used for storage and another contains administration offices and the teachers’ room. The rest of the buildings are mainly classrooms, but also toilets, a computer lab and a kitchen, where lunch is prepared. Each classroom has a door leading straight out to the yard, which has one part covered in concrete. This is where the morning assembly takes place. The remaining part of the yard is mainly covered in grass. An exterior corridor that runs alongside all the buildings provides shade on hot days.

The school has around 600 learners, aged 12-19, in grades 8-12. Some classes consist of up to 50 learners, and each class has its own classroom equipped with different types of benches and seats. All classes are mixed-gendered and have two class representatives that are assigned extra responsibilities. The majority of the learners have Xhosa as their native language, and the subject of English is taught as First Additional Language.

7.2 What literacy teaching strategies are used in a South African school?

In this section, we will answer our first research question by categorizing our findings into three themes: learning to develop skills, thoughts about reading, and teaching for change.
7.2.1 Learning to develop skills

Our material, both observations and interviews, presents examples of a focus on individual development of different technical, cognitive skills. When we look at our observation notes, we see that certain methods were used while working with reading comprehension during the lessons. The teachers emphasized the importance of understanding the texts, and one of them showed us a test that consisted of questions about the content and knowledge of specific words from the text (Observation NK, 7/3). Lesson activities seemed to prepare the learners for assignments of this kind.

During the lessons, a text was often read aloud, one stanza at the time, and words from the text were explained. As a main reason for reading aloud, one learner informed us during one of the interviews that “it helps us pronounce words properly” (Interview 1, LD, 01:57). The words, or phrases, were written down on the blackboard and explained with synonyms, and the learners were supposed to write down the glossaries in their notebooks (Observations NK & NN, 6/3). This way of working with reading comprehensions was confirmed in the first interview:

NN: So, how do you work with the texts, in class, do you read it? Do you read it alone [on your own] or do you read it together?  
LD: Sometimes the teacher chooses someone to read to the class, and then after that, the teacher is going to explain or someone reads alone and tell the teacher what she or he understands about the story. (Interview 1, 20:39)

Another tool used to help the learners understand a text was questions regarding its content. The questions asked were mostly a type with answers that could be found explicitly written in the text. However, the understanding seemed to get reduced to the pre-written questions, which the following observation can be an example of. During one lesson, the task was to read a text and then answer the questions in the textbook. One learner started this task by reading the questions first and then searching the text for the answers (Observation NN, 8/3). The learner did what he thought was expected of him: he answered the questions. Doing this changes the focus in this task from understanding the text to answering questions from the textbook about it.

In contrast to this, one learner questioned the text, which implies that reading can go beyond the pre-written questions from the textbook. This ability seemed to be linked to the learner’s own experiences: “How can a thin man beating a heavy person?” (Interview 1, LA, 29:56). For this learner, this situation was too illogical to be believable. Another example is when the same learner criticised a text and its message by saying that
sometimes people in stories say the wrong things: “Like, if your friend bullies you, bully him back. So, it’s not right” (Interview 1, LA, 10:50). The feeling for what is logical and right was based on experiences, which indicates a critical approach to reading.

Furthermore, our material shows a wish to work with process writing. However, in connection to a lesson where the learners worked with the writing of a letter, the teacher told us that, unfortunately, there was little time for this since the classes were too large. The curriculum forced the teachers to keep a certain pace, and they had to adapt to these conditions (Observation NK & NN, 6/3). During the first interview we asked the learners if they read each other’s texts:

NN: Do you get to read each other stories?
Everyone: NOOO! (laughter)
NN: Why not?
LC: Because maybe someone is gonna laugh at us. (Interview 1, 21:37, p 7)

According to this answer, they do not seem to be used to working with peer feedback.

7.2.2 Thoughts about reading

Mmm, but reading is very important because in your life; if you don’t know how to read, you cannot do anything. If you find a job, there can come letters, all the letters of the house, those needed to be paid for those who rent. So, you have to know how to read. (Interview 2, LI, 1:50)

This was one answer to our question about the learners’ thoughts about reading. When we asked about the purposes of reading in school, one learner said that it was a way to achieve their goals and another that it was needed in order to get a job: “You don’t have money, you are poor and there’s a poster there in the street say /.../ if you want a job you must conduct this number or go to this address, if you cannot read you cannot read that, so you will remain poor forever” (Interview 2, LE, 2:30). They express an understanding of the importance to take control of their own lives. Both the learners and the teachers declared that a good knowledge of English is necessary to reach higher education and to get a job. One of the teachers encouraged the learners to develop their English by reading a lot: “How many times must you read? Because it is the best way to learn English, to read! You must go to the library with your parents. You must be bookworms!” (Observation NN, 13/3). This attitude was present in the interviews with the learners as well. One example was in the opening of the first interview when we asked what they thought about reading:
For me reading helps me speak English fluently. Because when [we] are little in our homes we spoke Xhosa, so we grew up speaking Xhosa. Now at school English is our second language so we need to pass English, so by reading my English becomes fluent. (Interview 1, LB, 00:50)

Thus, reading can help one influence one’s own life, as can a good knowledge of English, which is developed by reading. In addition to being a medium for success, English was seen as essential for communication beyond the interviewees’ familiar surroundings. This advantage was mentioned in the dialogue about the purposes of reading that followed the quote above:

LD: [To] be able to speak English with the whites.
LB: To be able to communicate with others, because I believe that English is an international language, where different people can connect by speaking English. So, English is the main language... (Interview 1, 03:00)

Through our conversations with the learners, we could sense some cynicism towards the use of English in their everyday life. For instance, some of the participants of the second interview had noticed that other learners did not always like it when they heard them speak English during break time:

Many people they don’t like to speak English, because they’ll tell you that we have our own mother’s language. So, when people saw us, my friends speaking English, walking around the school, they starting to laugh. Like, something’s funny. So many people don’t like to read, and they don’t want to speak in English. I don’t know why, the reason. (Interview 2, LI, 03:30)

The reaction of their peers supports this sense of cynicism and adds an ambivalent attitude to the advantages of using English in communication with others. Another example of this ambivalence appeared in a conversation we had with a couple of boys in grade 10 (Journal, 6/3). The conversation was initiated by the learners and started with one of them, somewhat defensively, explaining that he did not know English as well as he did Xhosa, and he wondered why they had to have English as the medium of instruction. A second boy interrupted and shared his point of view. His explanation was that because of the number of languages spoken in RSA, there is a need for a common language; and by using English, people from different communities can do business and communicate with each other.

An issue that evolved was another relation between English and the act of reading. Despite the questioning that was our interpretation of the situations above, the majority
of the learners seemed to prefer to read in English, since reading in their native tongue presented a greater difficulty.

LD: Sometimes I read magazines or newspapers…or the poems cause there’s a lot of poems in my home.
NN: Ok, so you have a lot of poems in your home. And, is everything in English that you read?
LD: Yes
LB: Cause Xhosa poems are, joha, very hard!
NN: Why are they hard?
LD: They’re big words, you don’t even understand them, you’re going to need a dictionary!
LB: For example, they say [words in Xhosa] you know. And those words are hard.
NN: Is it words that you don’t use often?
Everyone: Yes!
LB: It’s deep, deep Xhosa. It’s ancient Xhosa
/,/.
LB: Because now, we just learn Xhosa…
LD: We don’t learn the deepest. (Interview 1, 22:35)

When discussing this, the learners showed great engagement and a will to make us understand the difficulty they faced. This inspired us to ask the same question during the second interview as well:

NK: Is it easier or harder, which is easier, which is harder?
Several learners: Xhosa is harder.
LE: English.
(Short discussion between the learners about which language is harder to read in.)
LG: Xhosa is those words like, [saying words in Xhosa], hard words, but English is just smooth, it’s smooth you know. English is the, I think it’s the best language…
(Others agreeing)
LG: Xhosa is kind of hard. (Interview 2, 06:07)

The boys in grade 10 too declared that they found it easier to read in English simply because they had read more in English than in Xhosa. In another informal conversation during a lunch break, the learners told us that they only read in Xhosa when they had the subject Xhosa10 (Observation NN, 6/3). Another example is from the first interview, when a learner answered the question “Do you like to read?” with: “/.../ for me it depends on which language I read in, because I don’t like read in Xhosa, but English, yeah I’m proud and confident of English /.../” (Interview 1, LB, 2:03). It seems like they find Xhosa difficult to read and that they mainly use the language as a means of oral communication in everyday life.

---

10 Xhosa was taught on home language level at this school (see 3.2 The school system in South Africa today)
7.2.3 Teaching for change

In conversations with each other, and with us, the teachers showed concern for the learners’ lack of confidence in themselves and their ability to impact their own lives. This was visible when one teacher found inspiration in the title of a text that they worked with in class and gave a speech about the educational journey being truly one’s own. According to this teacher, one cannot inherit grades and school certificates, or knowledge and skills. Rather, one must learn and earn such things (Observation, NN, 6/3). We found this very inspiring and borrowed the words of this teacher when giving an inspirational speech to the 12th graders. This speech was something that the principal suggested we take on board when we asked for a way of showing our gratitude towards the school. His hope was that such a speech could encourage the learners to work hard to try to reach higher education. We noticed that his sentiments were very much prevalent amongst the other faculty members.

The importance of mediating ‘post-apartheid’ values and the ‘black is beautiful’ message to the learners was often present during the lessons. One example of this was when the teacher was going through the questions to a text the learners were currently working with. Since the pre-written questions to the text asked about discrimination, the learners were encouraged to illustrate discrimination in their own lives. One learner pointed out that the darker your skin, the higher the risk for discrimination. The teacher seized the moment and answered with a pep talk based on facts about black pigmentation. The learners were told that they should be proud, and in excitement they all shouted out in one voice: “Black is beautiful!” (Observation, NK, 8/3). The teacher further linked the text with the learners’ everyday life when the state of the school toilets was brought up. The learners complained about the lack of toilet paper, which forced them to use paper from their copy books instead. As a consequence, toilets became clogged and foul-smelling. Furthermore, as cubicle doors had been removed, learners had no privacy. The teacher inspired them, therefore, to become engaged in the issue and to act for change. With the title “Discrimination Dirty Toilets”, the class representatives were to compose a petition individually that was to be presented to their peers before one final version was handed to the school principal (Observation, NN & NK, 8/3).
7.3 What conclusions about the teaching of literacy can be drawn by using critical literacy as an analytic lens?

We will now apply Hilary Janks’ interdependent model of critical literacy to a few examples from the three themes above. The concepts of the model are intertwined and are equally important when trying to understand a social practice. We will, therefore, use all four parts to try to gain a deeper understanding of the observed multilingual literacy practice, thereby attempting to answer our second research question.

7.3.1 Asking questions to a text

Cognitive skills are essential in order to understand a text (Janks, 2010); and as presented in the theme learning to develop skills, much attention was given to reading comprehension. When designing the teaching so that the work with pre-written questions was used as a tool to help learners develop skills, the teachers provided access to skills ascribed value to complete school. If giving access to these skills do not include discussing why they are important, the awareness of their socially constructed value and how they are influenced by socio-political factors is not visible (Ivanic, 2004). As the curriculum and the goals of education have been constructed by someone, they should, therefore, be reflected upon and questioned. The curriculum represents power that affects the possibilities there are for the teachers to design the teaching. The work with process writing could provide possibilities for the learners to redesign their own written texts with the help of feedback from the teacher. If they got to read each other’s texts, the learners’ diverse experiences could be an asset in the work with literacy. One of the teachers explicitly expressed a desire to work with process writing but felt limited by the curriculum and its prescribed pace.

Since a text is designing the reality in a certain way (Janks, 2013), the method of working with pre-written questions may limit the understanding of the world to the content of the text. What then happens to the diverse readings of the text? If only giving access to the skills needed to complete school, the teaching fails to take into account the diversity in the classroom. Asking your own questions to a text and getting access to your peers’ reading of it is a way of negotiating the meaning of a text. To get access to diverse readings would give greater access to the power of reconstructing the text and the constructed reality presented in the text. By merely working with pre-written questions,
the focus is on the individual learning of a specific skill and the social aspect of literacy is left out.

7.3.2 Reading to learn English

When talking to learners about the reasons behind and purposes for reading, they repeatedly came back to the importance of knowing English. They meant that reading was needed to be successful in life, as was having good knowledge of English, which in turn was acquired by reading. Hence, the English language is described as high value in the observed practice not only by learners but by teachers. The fact that English is also the LoLT in this school contributes to its ascribed value. Mastering it represents power and gaining access to a successful future of diverse possibilities.

Both the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) and the National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003, 1.1.3) describe South Africa as a multilingual country. Although the country’s 11 official languages are recognised as being equal, in practice English is ascribed more value. For example, as English is the LoLT in this school, the learners need to master English to pass end-of-year examinations. It can be said that the knowledge of English increases the learners’ opportunity to redesign their future. Moreover, it can be said that by giving access to the language in power its value remains unquestioned and its position is maintained by the system. This affects the native languages and their value. If the value of the English language is not discussed in school, a redesign towards the multilingual, diverse RSA described by the constitution and the language policy might not be realised.

As described in section 7.2.2, there are, however, examples of questioning the value ascribed to the English language, both in school and as a means of communication in everyday life. To question the position that English holds is to deconstruct a powerful practice, and this could, if maintained, lead to a redesign towards a multilingual South Africa. If not, this can be seen as an example of when there is power without redesign.

The learners stated that they find it easier to read in English than in e.g. Xhosa. Reading is an activity mostly reserved for English, and they seem only to read in Xhosa during lessons in Xhosa as a subject. By saying that they need to read to learn English to get a job, or reach higher education, the learners demonstrate an awareness of a lack of power of their native tongue. This is further strengthening the view of English as necessary to complete studies and school, and it argues that the school practice is reserved for the
English language. Other variations and languages cannot compete within the same practices, which means that they do not possess the same power.

This analysis can be applied in Janks’ interdependent model for critical literacy as follows:

| Power without access | According to the constitution and the language policy, the 11 official languages are equal. If the school practice is reserved for the English language, i.e. English is needed to complete school, school is not accessible in other languages.
The learners express that they find it easier to read in English than in e.g. Xhosa. Reading is an activity mostly reserved for English and they seem to only read in Xhosa during lessons in Xhosa as a subject. If you cannot master English, you have less access to education. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power without diversity</td>
<td>The English language is described high value in the observed practice and this affects the way native languages and other variations are looked upon. E.g. the knowledge of Xhosa is not enough to complete school and to succeed in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power without design or redesign</td>
<td>The learners are deconstructing the powerful practice of English as medium in school and as necessary to complete school. If this questioning of the value ascribed the English language is not maintained, a move towards a redesign of this practice is not possible. In addition, this would mean a decrease in the learners’ agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access without power</td>
<td>There is access to the English language but if its value is not discussed in school, by both learners and teachers, the power to redesign is decreasing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access without diversity</td>
<td>The learners get access to education, but since English is the LoLT only those who master that specific language gets access. Learners that do not master English on the acquired level will struggle more to complete school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access without design or redesign</td>
<td>There is access to the English language but if its value is not discussed, a redesign towards the multilingual RSA described in the constitution might not get realised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity without power</td>
<td>The 11 official languages are recognised as equal by the constitution and the language policy, but in practice the English language is ascribed more value. English is the LoLT in this school, and therefore the learners need to master English to complete end-of-year examinations and to eventually graduate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By saying that they need to read to learn English so that they can get a job, or reach higher education, the learners express an awareness of a lack of power of their native tongue.

Other variations and languages cannot compete within the same practices and this means that even though the many languages in RSA are officially recognised as equal, they are not holding the same power.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity without access</th>
<th>The many languages in RSA are officially recognised as equal but if the school practice is not accessible in more languages, education might remain reserved for those who have enough knowledge of English to complete school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity without design or redesign</td>
<td>Most of the learners have other mother tongues than English, and they are by the constitutions and the language policy ascribed the same value as English. In theory, they can choose one of the 11 official languages as LoLT, but without a practice that is designed to make this possible this is not a real option. The learners cannot use their diverse linguistic backgrounds to complete school since English is the LoLT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/redesign without power</td>
<td>The value ascribed English states a risk for a design in any other language to not be able to work for change. This could be a text written to affect the everyday lives of the learners, e.g. a petition written in Xhosa, or education designed so that the teaching was held in another language in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/redesign without access</td>
<td>The constitution and the language policy have designed a multilingual RSA, but English is, in the observed practice, needed to complete school. If the education is not accessible in more languages the redesign towards a multilingual RSA is not realised. The constitution and the language policy are not accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/redesign without diversity</td>
<td>The constitution and the language policy have designed a multilingual RSA, but if the learners’ diverse linguistic backgrounds are not taken into account in school, the design is not realised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.3.3 The petition

Literacy development is promoted when learners get a chance to work with projects where they can read and write for their own purposes. When working with a text, the teacher can use the learners’ experiences and, in that way, make them relate to it (Janks, 2014). The poor condition of the toilets was a real problem that affected the learners’ everyday life. Furthermore, the task of writing a petition had a real audience, the
principal, which, according to Janks (2014), is important when it comes to improving the learners’ literacy. In the light of this, we have chosen to further analyse the situation that lead to the task of creating a petition. Since we were not able to follow up on the task, and, therefore, do not know if it actually was written, we will apply the aspects of power, access, diversity and design on a hypothetical level.

For instance, when it comes to power, it was given to the learners by the teacher through the suggestion of writing the petition. This enabled the learners to influence their surroundings. However, if the petition was not finished, or not read by the principal, then we could argue that the learners lack power. Diversity is present since all the learners had (at least in theory) the opportunity to express their thoughts on the state of the toilets. But as the class in question was one of the larger ones, with more than 50 learners, we must assume that it was impossible for all of them to speak their minds. The aspect of access could be said to be about the learners’ access to the specific genre that writing a petition constitutes. It could also mean that the learners have access to the accepted language a petition should be written in, whether it is the actual language e.g. English, Swedish, Xhosa, or the specific discourse tied to a genre, e.g. a petition. Finally, design in this example would be the actual petition; and the existence of design depends on whether or not petition has been created.

The fact that it was only the class representatives who were assigned the task to actually write the petition may have had consequences that can be made visible by applying the four aspects. Firstly, it can be assumed that most of the learners lacked access to the writing event. Secondly, it can be suggested that the diverse experiences that they represented were not encouraged to be used as resources in the making of the petition. Thirdly, even though the learners were given power by the deconstruction of an actual problem, the absence of the redesign prevented them from acting for change.
8. Discussion

In this chapter we will discuss our results and our analysis in two parts: literacy and critical literacy, and multilingualism and hegemony. Finally, our last research question will be answered by connecting our study to our own social context, i.e. the multilingual classrooms we will be teaching in.

8.1 Literacy and critical literacy

A discussion in previous research is whether literacy consists of cognitive skills, or social practices, and according to more modern views it is both. However, it is stated that the development of individual, technical skills is a common focus in literacy teaching, both in practice and in documents that regulates the teaching and assessment of literacy (Barton, 2007; Ivanic, 2004; Janks, 2014). This correlates with our results since it seems as the aim of the teaching was to give the learners access to skills needed to complete school, e.g. the ability to comprehend a text. To stimulate this skill, the teaching tended to focus on pre-written questions from the textbooks. We see a risk of change in the purpose of using the questions – from a tool to reach understanding to a goal itself, like in the example with the boy who first read the pre-written questions and then searched the text for the answers.

On the road towards meaning-making, questions can nonetheless be used as a reading strategy. Lindholm and Lyngfelt (2015) claim that the use of reading strategies has a positive influence on multilingual learners’ abilities to comprehend texts. A question of relevance is whether pre-written questions have the same positive effect as the learners’ own questions. On one hand, pre-written questions can teach the learners that questions can be used both as a strategy to reach understanding, and as models of how questions could be constructed. In that case, it can be argued that by answering questions the learners are given access to the content of the text and to a skill ascribed value in school. On the other hand, if the meaning-making gets reduced to pre-written questions, the focus of the text is directed by them. The understanding of the text is thereby limited to what is asked for, to what someone else (the constructor) thinks is important to know. Therefore, and to avoid the risk of turning answering the questions into a goal instead of a strategy to create meaning, we find it important to also engage the learners to ask their own questions to a text.
According to research on CL, critical reading is important. In our first interview, one learner used previous experiences, logical reasoning and ethics, while questioning a text. The learner’s own opinion on bullying was shared in the statement that people in stories sometimes say the wrong things. By criticising the message, this learner showed the ability to read against the text and to negotiate meaning, which in CL is an important part when interpreting texts. This example can be compared to the case study presented by Cleary and Locke (2011) where the learners were given possibilities to identify their opinions of a topic by using their own experiences in the work with texts.

Previous research shows a need for change in the teaching and development of literacy. More social aspects of literacy need to be added to the individual learning of different skills. Even though we perceive that the individual learning of cognitive skills was more explicitly taught, we also saw that the teachers occasionally used the learners’ diverse, or common, experiences in the work with literacy. For example, when discussing discrimination the teacher drew connections between the text and the learners. This gave the learners a possibility to reflect upon their own lives in connection to the topic, i.e. discrimination, and they started to deconstruct the practice to which they belong. The strategy of building upon the lives of the learners was sometimes connected to a wish to influence their futures and engage them to act for change, which is one of the purposes in theories of CL.

However, in order to draw meaning from a text, the learners must have the ability to decode it, as Janks (2010) points out. Hence, cognitive skills, such as the recognition of letters and the understanding of the structure of sentences, matter when interrogating a text and its social effects. The petition makes a good example of a literacy teaching where both cognitive skills and social aspects of literacy are being used. In this case, the actual text was not deconstructed but the pre-written questions to it evoked the deconstruction of the everyday lives of the learners and unfair conditions were made visible. The idea of writing a petition, thus, takes its starting point in a real situation, for a real purpose. This means that cognitive skills are important in order to have the ability to make their voices heard in a powerful way. The learners need to have knowledge of how a petition should be designed to achieve the purpose of writing it, which requires the ability to understand the structure of this type of text. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the social effects of the text is important as well. A petition is written to engage in political questions and is often written by individuals or organisations, so it can be argued that the purpose of a petition is to write back to power. This purpose is visible in the assignment to write a petition to
the principal, who is the one that holds more power in this case. If the learners are aware of the powerful changes that they can accomplish through writing a petition, they will probably give their best in the making of it. Another possible consequence would be an improvement of the learners’ literacies, which, according to Janks (2014), is what happens when learners get to use literacy for their own purposes.

Besides being aware of the social value of a text, it is important to recognise that this value is socially constructed. Moreover, this applies to the language used in a text. Ivanic (2004) means that a writer is never totally free to choose how to construct the text since the resources a writer can use are dictated by the socio-political context in which the writer belongs. For example, what genres and language norms that should be seen as dominant, and therefore desirable for the learners to know, are partly prescribed by the steering documents. According to Bergh Nestlog (2015), this limits the teachers’ and learners’ possibilities to influence the education, which is testified by Janks (2014) too, who claims that the language and literacy policies in RSA are limiting the teachers’ autonomy by being overly prescriptive.

In our study, one of the teachers wanted to work with process writing but uttered that there was no time for this since they had to adapt the teaching to the pace forced by the curricula. It can be argued that the teachers, by adapting to the curricula, provided access to skills needed to complete school and it is possible that this was at the expense of the social and transforming aspects of literacy. The access paradox (Janks, 2000) in this example can be explained like this: by adapting to the curricula, the teachers supplied the learners with access to skills ascribed value by the curricula. This contributes to a maintenance of their value. In addition, it can be argued that this is done at the expense of social and transforming aspects of literacy. If the learners were denied powerful forms (eg. skills, languages, genres etc.) needed to complete school it could lead to a continuing “marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise the value and importance of these forms” (Janks, 2000, p. 176). Nevertheless, we would like to claim that if social, critical and transforming aspects of literacy are left out, this too could lead to such a marginalisation.

Lundgren and Damber (2015) mean that the learners need strategies to critically read and examine texts to function as an adequate member of a democratic society. They need to be able to see the social interests at work. To achieve this, more modern research on literacy teaching suggests a couple of things. To begin with, the learners should get access to diverse readings of a text by social interaction in the classroom and get to design texts
that have functions in their own lives. Furthermore, they should get to interrogate the social effects of texts, deconstruct the value ascribed skills needed to complete school, and discuss that this value is socially constructed and influenced by socio-political factors. In addition to this, learners should get opportunities to critically discuss language, genres and knowledge that holds a hegemonic position, as well as the culturally diverse variations of these forms (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Janks, 2010; Ivanic, 2004). If the teaching would give access to this, the learners could use their diverse readings to gain a wider understanding of a text, themselves and the world. Finally, by using other reading strategies, such as questioning, predicting, clarifying and summarising, in interaction with each other and the teacher, they would together have the power to negotiate meaning. Literacy teaching could then be a powerful combination of cognitive, social, critical and transformative aspects, leading the learners both towards completing school, and to make a change.

8.2 Multilingualism and hegemony

In the interviews as well as during our observations, we noted that both learners and teachers considered good knowledge of English as important in order to finish higher education and/or to get a good job. It was with Collins’ (2017) words an Anglophone learning environment, since the LoLT was English. The reasons for this are many. Some have to do with the colonisation of South Africa centuries ago, and some are connected to the view of English as a world language, which is addressed by Aronin and Singleton (2012). In the conversation with the boys in grade 10, the many times taken for granted opinion of English as the best option for communication becomes visible. In order for the many different communities to interact, a mutual language is necessary. However, if the hegemonic position of the English language is not questioned it can have a harmful effect on the way the native languages are looked upon. The boy that started the conversation showed a consciousness of the power held by the LoLT. He questioned that they have to learn in a language different than their native and his defensive attitude indicates that he is aware of the disadvantage this could mean.

Our material shows that English is the language that the learners are most used to use in official situations and this could confirm the opinion that it holds a hegemonic position which is stated in several of the articles and theories that we have read (e.g. Janks, 1995, Manyike, 2013). There is a risk of a devaluation of the native languages and of different
varieties of English if they are not given access to the same practises and contexts. If the languages cannot compete within the same practises they are not holding the same power even if they are described as equal by National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003). As noted by Collins (2017), attitudes towards languages are also maintaining social inequalities, which the language policy is supposed to counteract by for example “promote the equitable use of the 11 official languages” (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003 2.1.1).

The majority of the learners that we encountered had Xhosa as their native tongue which might mean that they did not get their education in the language they know best. However, some learners declared that they found it easier to read in English than in their native tongue. Their explanation was that written Xhosa is very hard and that English is a language that they had read more in. They felt that English is more suitable to read in: “English is just smooth, it’s smooth you know” (Interview 2, LG 06:07). One explanation to this could be that communication by the written word was not an original practice in the indigenous communities and that most of the African languages were not written down until the 19th century, as stated by Plüddemann (2015). This meant that the use of English had no counterpart. The act of reading is, for the learners in our study, more connected to the English language than their native language. Moreover, our results suggest that in addition to being used in the private sphere, Xhosa has value as a cultural expression. This according to the dialogue amongst the learners, considering who writes in Xhosa and why. The poets use deep ancient Xhosa that is not accessible for common speakers but requires specialisation.

A homogenous emphasis in the research is the importance of a continuing development of the learners’ native tongues. Manyike means that it would be productive to develop the native tongue simultaneously with the second language by referring to the concept common underlying proficiency (CUP). If learners develop either of their languages the CUP increases and is further a tool to develop the other language. This in turn could influence the position of the English language. If the native languages get the possibility to develop, they could compete for a place in domains that today are held by English. Consistent with this is Jim Cummins’ (2010) explanation of the two stages of language acquisition, one basic for everyday situations (BICS) and one academic and abstract (CALP). One problematic issue with the school domain being reserved for the English language is that its use as the LoLT risks slowing down the development of the learners’ native tongue so that they don’t reach CALP level. When one of the learners in
the interviews says to be “proud and confident of English” (Interview 1, LB, 2:03), it could imply that the learner’s development of Xhosa has slowed down. In the light of Manyike’s research, this would mean that the multilingualism is subtractive rather than additive, and that the progress of the added language (English) decreases. Of course this is not something that we can give a detailed presentation of because our Minor Field Study have a different focus, and the limited time that we spend with the learners is not enough to make such an implication.

It can be said that the knowledge of English increases the learners’ opportunity to redesign their future. It can also be said that, by giving access to the language in power its value risks to remain unquestioned and its position is maintained by the system which affects the native languages and their value. This is an example of the access-paradox. On the other hand, if the learners get the opportunity to further develop their native language, this can impact their acquisition of English positively, leading to a reciprocal learning situation. To achieve this kind of upward spiral of learners’ multilingualism it could be fruitful to encourage methods such as code-switching and translanguaging.

8.3 What insights do the results provide regarding literacy teaching in multilingual classrooms in Sweden?

Both through the practical parts of our education and our observations in South Africa, we have perceived that great importance is being ascribed to the mastering of separate skills associated with literacy. This seems to be connected with the curriculum and other steering documents since they, according to the teachers in our study as well as previous research, are limiting the possibilities to plan the teaching. In Sweden as well, we have to consider steering documents and national tests, when planning the teaching and assessing the learners’ achievements. One problem with promoting cognitive aspects of literacy over social, critical and transformative aspects, is that the former does not take into account the diverse classrooms where the teaching takes place. Another is, that the former is not consistent with the emancipatory qualities of the other aspects.

It is a challenge to design teaching that does not separate, but include cognitive, social, critical and transforming aspects of literacy. During our study we have seen this being realised in several ways, for example: the promotion of various emancipatory values, the will to link the teaching to the learners’ experiences, and the desire to inspire the learners to act for change. Janks’ model of critical literacy can be used as an effective tool to
analyse and design this kind of teaching to a higher extent. Power, access, diversity and
design can be valuable aspects to consider in order to avoid reproducing unequal power
relations and norms connected to different factors – such as gender, class, ethnicity,
function, age and sexuality. Finally, this could lead to the creation of an inclusive
classroom where all the diverse identities and experiences of the learners can be equal.

As mentioned in the introduction, it is our opinion that it is inevitable to consider that
many learners have to go through school using a language they do not completely master.
To make the education equivalent for all learners, which the Swedish Curriculum for the
upper secondary school (SNAE, 2013) states, it is therefore a necessity to take the
learners diverse linguistic backgrounds into account when planning and practicing
literacy teaching. If we are aware of the complex process of mastering a second language,
then we can provide our learners with strategies they can use in the work with literacy,
instead of making them feel insufficient. It is our responsibility to make sure that the
multilingual learners language acquisition is additive and that they continue to develop
their first language. To provide access to context-specific terms in more than one
language might, for example, help the learners in their work with texts. The use of more
than one language in the classroom is a possibility for those with Swedish as their native
tongue as well. English is taught at a very early stage in school, as well as encountered
on TV, in literature and used for communication on social media, and the knowledge of
the language is therefore widespread and of good quality.

In contrast to South Africa’s eleven official languages, Sweden only has one. This
make the choice of the LoLT to appear as given. Nevertheless, if we take a step away
from the monolingual way of teaching literacy, the multilingual setting can instead be
used as an asset in the development of cognitive, social, critical and transforming aspects
of literacy. To do this, however, teachers need strategies and tools. Although critical
literacy is one, research on the method being used in a Swedish context is relatively new
and mainly made on younger children.

During the work with this thesis we have come across the relatively fresh research
concerning translanguaging, and Gudrun Svensson recently published a book on the
subject in Sweden (see Transspråkande i praktik och teori, 2017). It is our believe that
translanguaging could be another method used to improve, as well as to simplify, the
learning of literacy. However, we believe that both CL and translanguaging could provide
helpful strategies in all subjects, not only the language subjects. In order to work with
these methods, we feel that it is important to include knowledge of them when educating
new teachers. In accordance with the conclusions made by Collins, Manyike and Plüddemann, we suggest a revision of the steering documents, for example by adding aspects of CL and translanguaging to them. For further research we believe it would have been interesting, and fruitful, to conduct a case study or project in an upper secondary school in Sweden, where critical literacy and translanguaging were brought together and used as tools to create inclusive, multilingual literacy teaching.
9. Bibliography

Printed


Electronical

Cleary, Alison & Locke, Terry (2011). Critical literacy as an approach to literary study in the multicultural, high-school classroom. *English Teaching: Practise and Critique*, 10:1, 119-139 Link:


National Department of Basic Education (2017). *National Curriculum Statements Grades R-12*. Link:  

Nokwe, Duma (1955). *Bantu Education in Action* via South African History Online. Link:  


South African History Online (2016a) *Defining the term ‘Bantu’*. Link:  

South African History Online (2016b) *Bantu education and racist compartmentalizing education*. Link:  

South African History Online (2016c) *Biography: Duma Nokwe*. Link:  

South African History Online (2016d). *A history of Apartheid in South Africa*. Link:  

South African History Online (2017). *The union of South Africa 1910*. Link:  

Swedish National Agency for Education (2012). *Swedish*. Link:  
https://www.skolverket.se/polopoly_fs/1.174571!/Swedish.pdf (2017-09-14)

Swedish National Agency for Education (2013). *Curriculum for the upper secondary school*. Link:  

https://www.academia.edu/16866021/Malm%C3%B6s_spr%C3%A5kliga_landskap_The_linguistic_landscape_of_the_city_of_Malm%C3%B6_in_Swedish (2017-09-14)

**Our material (available on request)**

Interview 1, 2017-03-16, audio file and as a transcribed document.

Interview 2, 2017-03-16, audio file and as a transcribed document.

Observations, 27/2-14/3, notes taken separately during classroom observations and later inscribed in an electronic file for easier access. Observations are still personal and marked by initials (NK and NN).

The Journal, 27/2-14/5, joint journal written continuously with reflections and updates on our progress and experiences.
10. Appendix

Interview questions

We want to talk to you about reading and the literature that you read.

- What do you think about reading?
- What do you think are the purposes of reading in school?
- **What literature do you read...**
  - ...in school?
  - What do you think of the literature that you have to read?
  - Why do you think you’re reading these texts?
  - What is the literature about?
  - Who is the literature about?
  - Are the texts real/realistic?
  - ...at home?