CRITICAL LITERACY:
Theories and Practices

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Editor's Preface

As the first on-line number of the Journal of Critical Literacy, this volume aims to portray some of the varied issues that may be included under the term "critical literacy". If, as various theorists have already discussed, literacy is no longer seen as a technology or a set of cognitive skills to de developed in individual minds, but as a socio-culturally situated practice involving the ongoing negotiation of meaning in continuously contested sites of meaning construction, then all literacy in a certain sense ought to be "critical" (ie. arising from crises of various sorts). Even so, this journal proposes to maintain the word "critical" in its title as a token of the social and educational emphasis it attributes to literacy in issues relating to citizenship education, development education, foreign-language education and teacher education as sites of various socio-cultural *crises* in the form of continuously contested meaning construction and negotiation. In this sense the Journal of Critical Literacy is open to proposals of discussions of literacy of various sorts and not merely those familiarly theoretical, academic or pedagogical. In terms of language, it intends to maintain, as far as possible, in the papers written in English, the "idiomatic" (local) or contextual usage of English as a Foreign language by those authors for whom it is indeed a foreign language, avoiding excessive editorial strategies of homogenizing or universalizing the use of English as a means of global information exchange. The editors recognize the problematic, *critical*, issues involved in this and the fact that there are no ready-made solutions, but a need for on-going negotiation with authors and readerships. These will, contextually, be dealt with as they arise.

This volume intends to exemplify this quest for a variety of approaches and reflections on literacy. As such, Norton's paper establishes the connections between educational strategies of developing critical literacy and issues of power and social and educational change; her paper discusses projects of collaborative research in South Africa, Pakistan and Canada. From a related, but different perspective, in post-conflict communities on the African continent, Newell Jones and McCaffery's paper examines the impact of literacy and conflict resolution programmes in building economic capacity and community cohesion. Looking specifically at critical interpretation strategies of students, Monte Mor's paper describes a project of developing critical literacy in Brazilian universities in order to inform future strategies in curriculum development focusing on citizenship education and not just competence in a specific disciplinary area of knowledge. In a related stance, Wielewicki also discusses a project examining how and if students in a Brazilian university read set texts in Foreign Language and Literature Arts courses and how they respond to tasks, assignments and teacher's classroom attitudes, examining the role of their past academic histories in constructing classroom attitudes and behaviors in critical literacy practices. Ferrarelli's paper examines the role of children's literature in developing critical literacy in English Language Teaching, where critical literacy is seen as a practice of negotiating meaning and reading against the grain.

Andreotti's paper discusses the theoretical proposals of the post-colonial critic Gayatri Spivak in relation to critical literacy as an educational practice which highlights issues of language, power and knowledge emphasizing their role in transforming relationships and in developing social responsibility.

If critical literacy is understood as social practice to be negotiated in contested sites of meaning production, Braga's paper focuses on a discussion of attitudes to the social implications of free software and proprietary operating systems in digital literacies and access to information technology in Brazil. Festino's paper looks at the development of critical literacy in Foreign Language Literature classrooms in the related forms of multicultural or trans-cultural literacies as negotiated practices of reading and meaning construction with significant educational import in undergraduate university courses.

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Critical Literacy and International Development

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Introduction

The dominant conception of literacy among governments, policy-makers, and many members of the general public is that literacy references the ability, on the part of individuals, to read and write. While this conception of literacy is useful and important, there are some educators who conceive of literacy in broader, sociocultural and political terms, sometimes referring to it as "critical literacy" (Luke, 1997). Educators who are interested in critical literacy are interested in written text, or, indeed, any other kind of representation of meaning as a site of struggle, negotiation, and change. As Luke (1997) notes, while earlier psychological perspectives conceived of literacy as the acquisition of particular behaviors, cognitive strategies, and linguistic processing skills, more recent insights from ethnography, cultural studies, and feminist theory have led to increasing recognition that literacy is not only a skill to be learned, but a practice that is socially constructed and locally negotiated. In this view, literacy is best understood in the context of larger institutional practices, whether in the home, the school, the community, or the larger society (Fairclough, 1992; Heath, 1983; Kendrick, 2003; New London Group, 1996).These institutional practices, in turn, must be understood with reference to what is called the "literacy ecology" of communities, in which there is frequently inequitable access to social, economic, and political power (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Hornberger, 2003, Kramsch,2002). The complex ways in which families, communities and schools interact and differ in their literacy practices provide significant insights about the ways in which people learn, teach, negotiate, and access literacy both inside and outside school settings (Auerbach, 1989; Delpit, 1995; Hull & Schultz, 2001).

This article addresses three contexts in which I have conducted research within a critical literacy framework in order to explore the subtle connections between literacy, power, and educational change. The research projects, which were all collaborative, took place in schools in Pakistan, Canada, and South Africa. In Pakistan, we investigated perceptions of literacy amongst middle-school students involved in a global education project with Afghan refugee children in Karachi (Norton & Kamal, 2003); in Vancouver, Canada, we studied the appeal of Archie comics for young people (Norton, 2003; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004); in Johannesburg, South Africa, we examined the way in which black secondary school students responded to a reading comprehension passage under two different social conditions (Norton Peirce & Stein, 1995). In this article, I will present the central findings from each of these three research projects, focusing on those insights that might be of relevance to researchers in international development contexts.

The Youth Millennium Project in Pakistan

In this 2001-2002 research study, students in Karachi, Pakistan, took part in a global social action project called the Youth Millennium Project, which is an initiative of the University of British Columbia (www.ympworld.org). In a project which they called "One person, one pencil", 80 middle school students, calling themselves "The Reformers", collected stationery, books, and supplies for a local orphanage serving Afghan refugee children. Part of the project was also to teach the Afghan children "some simple English phrases". We were intrigued by the students' interest in literacy, and their promotion of the English language. We were also curious about the vision of the future held by these students at a time of great social and political instability. We collected data on these issued through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and e-mail exchanges, and our present work in Uganda is informed by the following insights gained.

We were interested to find that the students' conceptions of literacy were consistent with many current theories of literacy in the scholarly literature. The students held the view that literacy is not only about reading and writing, but about education more broadly. "Literacy plays a vital role in the progress of a country," said one, while another noted passionately that "without education our beloved country Pakistan cannot develop." Other students, however, extended this view to include the notion that a literate person has greater ability to reason than one who is illiterate. One student, for example, noted that a literate person "can make better decisions" than an illiterate person, while another said that "if we are not literate we cannot do any work with thinking." The comment by Fariha perhaps summarizes best the views of many of the students:

Literacy is very important because education gives understanding to people. The thinking of an educated person is different and he thinks properly about his country and people. An uneducated person thinks differently. He thinks of taking revenge and fighting with their enemies, but an educated person wants to solve big problems and settle their dispute of territories by arranging dialogues. They realize and analyze the situation and an illiterate person does not have this ability

These same students noted, in addition, that material resources are needed to promote both literacy and development. They pointed out, for example, that what they called the Afghan "childlabours" in their community could not access literacy classes because they were supporting their otherwise destitute families. Conversely, these Pakistani students were well aware of the resources of wealthier countries, noting somewhat optimistically that "we know that in developed countries everyone is educated and goes to school; that is why they are rich and have no problems." For students in Pakistan, literacy must be understood with reference to social, economic, and political power.
Like notions of literacy, the students' responses to the importance of English were complex and best understood in the context of Pakistan's ambivalent status in the international community. In seeking to teach the Afghan children "some simple English phrases," students were motivated by the belief that English is an international language and the language of science, technology, and the media. As one said:

The English language is an international language spoken all over the world and it is the language of science. Therefore to promote their education and awareness with modern technologies, it is important to teach them English.

Students noted that English serves as a common language not only across nations, but within nations, and expressed the hope that knowledge of English would redress imbalances between developed and developing nations. With only a few exceptions, the students demonstrated little ambivalence towards the English language, and perceived it as an important tool for social, economic, and political advancement, both within Pakistan, as well as the international community. When students were pressed to consider whether the spread of English had any negative consequences, only two students noted that a country's native languages could be compromised, and only one noted that the spread of English would be accompanied by the spread of western culture, what he called "a bad sign." In sum, students expressed the hope that a future Pakistan would be one in which all inhabitants were literate, knowledgeable about English, and technologically advanced. They desired a peaceful society, true to the principles of Islam, and respected in the international community.

Insights from these students are best understood in the context of their complex identities in a time of social and political instability, both nationally and internationally. The students value being literate, but recognize that literacy is a privilege. They see themselves as part of a larger community of English speakers, but not as second-class citizens of the USA or UK. They regard themselves as members of the larger Islamic Pakistan nation, but they recognize Pakistan's marginal status in the international community. They desire technological progress, but not at the expense of peace. The research suggests that the struggle for literacy, access to English, and technological progress are interdependent, and reflect the desire of a country in a post-colonial world to engage with the international community from a position of strength rather than weakness. The findings suggest further that English and the vernacular can co-exist in mutually productive ways and that the appropriation of English does not necessarily compromise identities structured on the grounds of linguistic or religious affiliation.

The research raises two central concerns that have particular relevance to international development. First, like Canagarajah (1999) and Luke (2004), I learnt from the Pakistan study that if we wish to understand the meaning of literacy in students' lives, we cannot ignore the imperatives of the material world and the ways in which resources are distributed—not only nationally, but internationally. Canagarajah (1999) makes a compelling case that in developing countries in which there is a daily struggle for food, clothing, shelter, and safety, researchers cannot indulge in theoretical debates and abstract policies, but need to address the material realities of the communities in which we conduct research. Luke (2004), similarly, argues that while we as educators might debate the meaning of critical literacy, we may not do justice to the lived experiences of physical and material deprivation in diverse communities throughout the globe. The students in the Pakistani study made frequent reference to the relationship

between literacy, the distribution of resources, and international inequities. For these students, and many students in development contexts, a community that is literate, skilled in English, and technologically advanced, is also a community that has food, shelter, and peace.

A second concern raised by the Pakistan study was that students might in fact overestimate the benefits that can accrue from the development of literacy and the spread of English. Ahmed's assessment, for example, that people who are educated "are rich and have no problems" may lead to a crisis of expectations. May (2001) makes a convincing argument that there is no necessary correlation between the adoption of English by developing countries and greater economic well-being. Of even greater concern is the ways in which pedagogical and social practices may be serving, perhaps inadvertently, to reinforce the view held by the students that people who are literate are more rational and intellectually able than those who are not literate. If students in Pakistan, and perhaps in other parts of the world, equate literacy with rationality and intellectual ability, while at the same time embracing English as the international language of science, media, and technology, is there a danger that they may consider people literate in English as more rational and intellectually able than those who are not? This is an important consideration for my researchers in international development.

Archie comics and the power of popular culture

In a very different context, young readers of Archie comics in Canada had equally interesting insights about reading, writing, and literacy. Archie comics, which address the lives of a group of adolescents in the United States, are popular in Canada, and indeed, many parts of the world, and are widely read by pre-adolescent children, 60% of whom are girls. In embarking on this research, our aim was not to promote or denounce Archie comics, but to better understand the ubiquitous Archie reader, and to determine if insights from Archie readers might have significance for literacy education. The research was conducted in a Vancouver, Canada, elementary school from 1998-1999, and involved 55 elementary students, aged 10 to 12.

While these children had many of the resources that the Pakistani children lacked, we found that they were subject to an equally interesting set of power relationships in their home and school contexts. Students noted that their parents and teachers were frequently dismissive of their love of comic books, describing them as "garbage" and "a waste of time". Archie readers had incorporated such views in their own understandings of literacy, drawing a distinction between what they called "real reading" and "fun reading". "Real reading", in their view, was reading that the teacher prescribed; it was "educational"; it was "challenging"; but it was seldom "fun". The reading of Archie comics was "fun" because readers could construct meaning, make hypotheses, and predict future developments without trying to second-guess the teacher. The findings suggest that the inequitable relationships of power between teachers and parents, on the one hand, and children, on the other, may limit a child's engagement with text, sometimes rendering it a meaningless ritual. Three related observations from the research are relevant in development contexts.

First, the Archie study suggests that the pleasure children derive from comics, in general, and Archie comics, in particular, is associated with a sense of ownership of the text. It is this sense of ownership that gives children the confidence to engage with comic books both energetically and critically. For Archie comic readers, their goal in debating the merits of characters, events, and stories is not to anticipate other interpretations and critiques, but to draw on their own knowledge and experience to reflect, engage, and defend. However, although the study provides much evidence to suggest that the Archie reading community was vibrant and social, the children's reading preferences received little recognition or validation from teachers or parents. The study suggests that literacy educators need to understand better rather than dismiss those practices that students find engaging and meaningful, whether in or outside classrooms.

Second, the Archie research suggests we need a better understanding of why it is that educators are frequently dismissive of popular culture in general and comics in particular. Why did the teachers, many of whom loved to read Archie comics as children, dismiss them as "garbage" once they reached adulthood? By what process did this transformation occur? How did they, like the children in the study, gradually learn that a "good" reader is one who reads difficult chapter books, consults the dictionary, avoids comics—but seldom has "fun"? A number of tentative explanations can be offered. Reading assessments, for one, encourage the use of particular kinds of texts, and teaching performance is frequently assessed with reference to student performance on these tests. Educational publishers, for another, may reap greater rewards when chapter books are ordered by the dozen, particularly when accompanied by teacher guides and homework sets. It may also be the case, however, that as we grow from childhood to adulthood, we lose touch with the central interests of young children, and as we become distant from childhood pleasures, particularly of the popular cultural kind, our ignorance turns to fear. In order to re-establish control, we retreat to the rituals and practices that are familiar in schooling, sometimes sacrificing a focus on learning and meaning making.

Third, Luke & Elkins (1998), have raised the question of what it will mean to be a reader and writer in the 21st century. They suggest that what is central is not a "tool kit" of methods, but an enhanced vision of the future of literacy. Indeed, as scholars such as Kress (1993), Stein (2004), and Kendrick (2003), have noted, we need to rethink the very notions of reading, literacy, and learning. The written word, while still important, is only one of the many semiotic modes that children encounter in the different domains of their lives. From drama and oral storytelling to television and the Internet, children in different parts of the world are engaging in diverse ways with multiple "texts". The challenge for literacy educators is to reconceptualize classrooms as semiotic spaces in which children have the opportunity to construct meaning with a wide variety of multimodal texts, including visual, written, spoken, auditory, and performative texts. Scaffolding such a curriculum is a theory of meaning making in which children are not only the users but the makers of systems of communication.

Resistant readings in South Africa

Struggles over conceptions of literacy, and the effects of power on the construction of meaning, are also the subject of my research in South Africa. One particular research project, conducted in 1991, focused on the pre-testing of a reading text that was being considered for inclusion in a pre-admissions test to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. The passage in question, drawn from a local newspaper, described police action against a group of monkeys that had eaten fruit from the trees in a white suburban neighbourhood of Durban. The piloting of the text, which we called "The Monkeys Passage", was undertaken by my Wits colleague, Pippa Stein, with a group of black students in an inner-city Johannesburg school. We found that the students had very different interpretations of the text when the conditions under which they read it changed. Under test conditions, the students read the passage as a simple story about monkeys stealing fruit, but in the communal discussion following the test, the students read the text as symbolic of apartheid injustice. The two questions we sought to address in the research were as follows: Why did the students fare well on the reading test, even though they objected to the content of the reading passage? Why did the meaning of the passage shift so radically from one social occasion to the next? Such questions are highly relevant for research on reading and assessment practices in development contexts.

The first issue we needed to address was the fundamental paradox that the test-takers generally performed well on the test, despite the fact that many of them objected strongly to the content of the text. In order to address this paradox, we found work on genre analysis particularly helpful. Drawing on Kress (1993), we made the case that a "genre" is not the more conventional notion of oral or written "text type" as, for example, a sonnet, term paper, interview, or prayer. Rather, like Kress, we made the case that a genre is constituted within and by a particular social occasion which has a conventionalized structure, and which functions within the context of larger institutional and social processes. In this formulation, the social occasions which constitute a genre may be formulaic and ritualized, such as a wedding or committee meeting, or less ritualized, such as a casual conversation. The important point is that the conventionalized forms of these occasions and the organization, purpose, and intention of participants within the occasion give rise to the meanings associated with the specific genre. Furthermore, as Kress has demonstrated, the increasing difference in power relations between participants in an interaction has a particular effect on the social meaning of the texts within a particular genre. In essence, in genres where there is great power difference between the participants, the mechanism of interaction, the conventionalized form of the genre, is most foregrounded, while the substance of the interaction, the content, is least foregrounded.

The standardized test is a particularly powerful genre in that the test event is characterized by strict time limits in which test takers have little control over the rate of flow of information in the activity. The test takers are expected to be silent at all times and observe rigorous proctoring procedures. Both test makers and test takers recognize that the purpose of the test is to discriminate between readers of varying levels of proficiency with reference to a criterion established a

priori by the test makers. The expectations are that the background knowledge of the test takers has little relevance to the items being tested, and that the test makers decide what an acceptable reading of the test should be. Thus the relationship between test makers and test takers, a manifestly unequal one, has a direct bearing on the social meaning ascribed to texts in the standardized reading test (cf. Hill & Parry, 1992, 1994).

In the test situation, when Pippa Stein was introducing and administering the test, there was a great power difference between Stein and the students: She was the "test maker", an English speaking professional from prestigious Wits University, while the students were the "test takers", non-English speakers from a marginalized inner-city secondary school. In this context, the mechanism of the interaction—the conventionalized form of the test event—determined to a great extent how the students "read" the text. They understood that they were expected to comply with the dictates of the genre, and reproduce the test maker's reading of the text. "It was just about monkeys"; "It was easy" "I hope we get a passage like this in the matric exam", the students said. The students were less concerned with a critical analysis of the text, than with how "easy" it was to ascertain a "legitimate" reading of the text—a reading that would give them the kind of marks needed for university entrance. Thus, although the students were critical of the text, their identities as test takers helped them perform well in response to it.

The answer to our first question helps us to address our second question: "Why did the meaning of the passage shift so radically from one social occasion to the next?" The answer to this question, we argue, is a function of the changing identities of the students. During the test event, the students were powerless test-takers; during the communal discussion, however, the students were informed, powerful, community members. After the scripts had been duly collected and handed in, the power relations between Stein and the students altered dramatically. Stein sat informally on a desk, inviting comment and criticism. She was no longer the test maker and the students test takers; she was no longer the expert and they the novices. In this context, it was Stein who was the novice and the students the experts. Further, students were no longer isolated and silent: they interacted with one another animatedly; they debated, argued, and laughed together. They had the time to reflect and critique. On this more egalitarian social occasion, the substance of the interaction—the content of the text—became more foregrounded than the mechanism of the interaction, and there was no longer a single, legitimate reading of the text. Students could draw on their background knowledge and experience to analyse the social meaning of the text, and there was place for multiple readings.

Of relevance to research in development contexts is the central finding that the meaning of a reading passage can shift in the context of different social occasions, shifting identities, and changing relations of power. The research supports the view that literacy cannot be understood apart from relationships between people, in a given time and place, with differential access to resources. During the second social occasion, the value ascribed to the Monkeys Passage was complex and contested. For some students—most students—the Monkeys

Passage was positioned as a text reflecting race and class interests at the expense of less powerful interests. "It's about black people, who are the monkeys 'on the rampage' in white people's homes." "It's about who owns the land." "It's about violence in our society", said the students. For others students, the text remained a simple story about monkeys.

Critical literacy and international development

In his recent work on literacy and development, Street (2001), argues persuasively that if literacy projects and programs are to be effective in diverse regions of the world, researchers need to understand the uses and meanings of literacy practices to local people themselves. In a similar spirit, Canagarajah (1999), drawing on his research in Sri Lanka, argues that understanding the "politics of location" is central to understanding the literacy practices of a given community. The work of Street and Canagarajah is indicative of the increasing interest in development amongst educators in the broader field of literacy, in which there is also an emerging but vigorous scholarship on linguistic and educational developments in Africa (Kwesiga, 1994; Makoni & Meinhof, 2003, Openjuru, 2003; Parry, 2003). While there is recognition that "development" is a contested category (Rogers, 2001, p. 204), there is general agreement that improvements in education, health, agriculture, transportation, and economic and political life are important indicators of development. Further, there is general agreement that the participation of women and girls is central for development to advance (Duflo, 2003; Papen, 2001; Parry, 2004; Robinson-Pant, 2001). What is lacking in the research literature, however, is a more comprehensive understanding of how literacy is related to development, and how women and girls can become more active participants in development initiatives.

Conclusion

In this article, I have drawn on my critical literacy research in Pakistan, Canada, and South Africa to make the case that literacy is not only about reading and writing, but about relationships between text and reader, student and teacher, classroom and community. Archie comic readers in Canada and test-takers in South Africa have suggested that in contexts in which relationships are equitable, learners have greater access to literacy and are more able to engage actively with text; where relationships are inequitable, access to literacy is limited and engagement with text ritualized. They have also suggested that parents and teachers should not be dismissive of the range of texts, including oral, written, drawn, or performed, that learners find appealing. Further, literacy learners from Pakistan and South Africa have reminded us that material resources are central to literacy development and that relationships of power structure engagement with text. The appropriation of the English language represents a particular challenge in this regard. In sum, the central finding from our transnational research is that literacy for all is about equity for all. Such insights have important implications for future research on critical literacy and international development.

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Rebuilding Communities: the contribution of integrated literacy and conflict resolution programmes

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"Possibilities for both individual and collective action to promote forms of economic and social development …….geared towards combating poverty and deprivation and towards the enhancement of social justice and equal opportunities – this is the agenda for social transformation." (Mayo 1997:3)

Introduction

This paper explores the processes involved in developing and implementing integrated literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding (LCRP) programmes in conflict and post-conflict contexts. It is our contention that when transformative models of literacy and a process model of conflict resolution and peacebuilding are combined the resulting synergy adds value to each. Transformative models of literacy based on the theories of Paulo Freire, REFLECT and New Literacy Studies move beyond the technical acquisition of deriving meaning from sound-symbol associations to be socially and politically oriented. The acquisition of literacy impacts on the individual, the society and the wider political framework. Similarly, process models of conflict transformation and peacebuilding extend beyond finding solutions to specific issues of conflict to understanding the root causes of tensions and developing collaborative relationships.

This paper draws on experience in Guinea, Sierra Leone and South Sudan, exploring the educational frameworks behind transformative models of literacy and conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It explains the context in which the projects operated and identifies key outcomes linked to a sustainable livelihoods framework. It explores the interplay between cognitive, psychodynamic and societal factors and provides insights into factors influencing the relative success of the different projects. We conclude that integrated literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding (LCRP) programmes could play an important role in contributing to the reconstruction of post-conflict societies.

Projects and Context

The projects were managed by Education for Development, a small UK-based NGO, in partnership with in-country NGOs. The first project (1999 - 2001) took place in refugee camps at Forecariah, Guinea, just inside the border with Sierra Leone. The conflict in Sierra Leone throughout the 1990s resulted in

approximately two thirds of the population being displaced, creating the largest refugee population in Africa. As the fighting intensified internally displaced persons fled across the borders to neighbouring countries. Guinea hosted a large population of as many as one million refugees at a time. At the outset of the project it was estimated that the Forecariah Prefecture, 50 km from the border with the Kambia District of Sierra Leone, contained as many as 60,000 refugees (UNHCR 1999: 119). The project involved a range of activities including literacy and numeracy, conflict resolution, agricultural production and skills development.

The second project (2000-2002) was in two rural areas of Sierra Leone, Kambia and Bo. Literacy and numeracy were combined with conflict resolution and peacebuilding as one strand of the project. The other strand was extending income generation activities, through vocational training and agricultural improvement.

Kambia was held by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the project in Guinea and at the outset of the project in Sierra Leone..Fighting continued with between the RUF and both Sierra Leonean and Guinean Government forces. 80% of all buildings in the Kambia region were destroyed. In mid 2001 the government re-established control over the area and the project office, previously based in Freetown was able to move to Kambia though the area was still unsafe. Reconstruction began and the rebuilding of the local hospital, school and other administrative buildings started. The official refugee repatriation programme began in July/August 2001.

Bo is the second largest town in Sierra Leone and the regional commercial centre. The NGO working in Bo had its headquarters in Freetown and had first starting working in Bo in 1994 where it set up a training centre. This was destroyed by the RUF during the war. At the beginning of the project, the area around Bo, was controlled by the RUF but an arms amnesty enabled DI to recommence its activities.

The population of Bo had burgeoned during the war as people had fled from the countryside into the town. As the war ended, UN peacekeeping forces, NGOs and various agencies moved in to an already severely overcrowded town, creating even more overcrowding and problems of a different kind.

The war in Sierra Leone had been particularly vicious. Participants in the literacy project experienced atrocities first hand. Most had fled from the rebels, many had their homes and villages razed to the ground, some had been raped, many witnessed limbs being hacked off and people being burned alive. Trauma was everywhere. Indigenous social structures as well as physical infrastructures had broken down as the rebels took control. The task of rebuilding communities physically and psychologically was enormous. However during the period of the project hope was beginning to return. Elections were being planned. These were held in May 2002, five months after the project ended. A possible return to normality was in the air.

The third project (2000-2005) in South Sudan was primarily in Mundri and Mvolo counties but towards the end of the project was extended to Pochalla County on the border with Ethiopia as part of the emerging Sudan Basic Education Programme (SBEP). South Sudan had seen two decades of conflict between the government forces in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) of the south. The partner NGO was seeking assistance to develop literacy and numeracy programmes for the vast number of adults who had received no education during the war. The possibility of opportunities for employment with international agencies and NGOs was one motivational factor.

During the project Southern Sudan remained in a high state of tension with intermittent but concentrated action by government forces including aerial bombing and fighting with the SPLA. In 2002 despite peace talks, Mvolo and Mundri counties saw the return of direct conflict with groups of SPLA deserters terrifying communities, looting homes and small businesses and leaving a trail of destruction and fear. Local people fled their homes for several weeks, seeking safety in the bush. Access by road deteriorated, bridges collapsed and towns became inaccessible. Eventually the framework peace agreement was signed in Naivasha, Kenya on May 26 2004 suggesting that peace may be in sight. On January 10 2005 a peace deal was signed in Nairobi between the government in the North and the SPLA of the South amid great rejoicing. However, though fighting had ceased and the process of rebuilding begun, the peace was still very fragile.[1] At the end of the war there was virtually no infrastructure - few roads, no tele-communications, no electricity and no education system (Newell Jones 2003).

This paper draws on the experiences in all three countries where each project was undertaken in partnership with a local NGO. The partnerships were effective in delivering the inputs in all three projects. However a particularly strong and on-going partnership developed between Education for Development and the Sudan Evangelical Mission (SEM) in South Sudan.

Livelihoods Approach

While the projects did not explicitly adopt a Livelihoods approach, the impact of combining literacy and conflict resolution as well as the skills training and agricultural training in Sierra Leone places the projects within the Livelihoods paradigm. This recognises the indirect impact of literacy programmes on local economic activity and the engagement of participants in local decision-making activities as a result of an increase in their self-esteem and confidence. (DFID 2002: 11). It relates to the poverty reduction strategy enabling people to address issues, 'have a voice in meetings, access and analyse information and engage with outsiders and officials more effectively' (DFID 2002: 11). The Livelihood framework enabled the impact on the communities of the integrated LCRP to be assessed holistically and in relation to their life strategies.

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[1] John Darang, formerly leader of the SPLA, and after the peace was signed Vice-President of Sudan, was killed in a helicopter crash in July 2005. The impact of this on the fragile peace remains to be seen.

One critique of adult literacy is the difficulty of encapsulating the wide ranging impact of literacy programmes on individuals and societies. The outcome of a literacy programme can be measured in purely technical terms as the improvement in reading and numerical skills on a reading scale or the percentage of those who pass a test and gain a literacy certificate.

The Livelihoods approach involves a number of strategies aimed at improving the lives and opportunities of poor communities and individuals. Cahn (2002) and Brockley and Fisher (2003) outline the history of the sustainable Livelihoods Approach. It was first referred to in 1987 in the report of an advisory panel of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and in the Publication Food also WCED and was gradually adopted by a number of government and non-government organisations such as DFID, UNDP, Oxfam and CARE. Most writers on Livelihoods refer to Chambers and Conway's definition (1992) in which

> "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets." (Chambers and Conway 1991)
..

This definition has been used by many, though adaptations to it have been made (Carney 1998:4, Scoones 1998:5, Farrington et al 1999:1). Brockley and Fisher (2003:187) outline four main components. The first is the 'vulnerability' context. Wars and civil unrest are not specifically mentioned but are the key vulnerability in the post-conflict contexts under discussion, compounded by other vulnerabilities. The second is 'capital' assets which they list as natural capital, financial capital, physical capital and human capital. There is also considerable literature on 'assets'. DFID 1998 and Carney 1999 include a fifth asset, namely social capital. Moser (1996) identified labour, social, economic, infrastructure, housing and household relations. Bebbington (1999) refers to "produced, human, natural, social and cultural capital" 1999:2021. He argues that a framework is needed that bridges "the more materialistic (cf World Bank 1990) and the more hermeneutic and actor-centred (cf Chambers, 1987, Scoones and Thompson 1984) notions of poverty and livelihood." Livelihoods are not only dependent on resources and access to resources to make a living but also the ways in which a person's assets and capabilities "give meaning to a person's world" (Bebbington 1999: 2022). This draws on Sen's idea of what people are able to achieve in terms of their ability to engage with and change the world:

> "The well being of a person may plausibly be seen in terms of a person's functionings and capabilities. What he or she is able to do or be (e.g. the ability to be well nourished, to avoid and escape morbidity and mortality, to read, write and communicate, to take part in the life of the community, to appear in public without shame." (Sen 1999, cited in Maddox 2005:6)

Education, according to Sen, increases a person's functionings and capabilities and enables him or her to act upon the world. This concept combined with Freire's "reading the world" to understand and act, brings literacy firmly into the Livelihoods framework and enables the outcomes to be assessed in terms of increased personal and communal agency.

The key elements from the Livelihoods Approach have been recognising the indirect impact of the LCRP programmes on local economic, social and peacebuilding activities and the engagement of participants in local decision-making activities. A livelihoods framework has been developed within which to discuss the impact of the projects.

Learning Theory

The approach to learning adopted was within the livelihoods paradigm, drawing on the knowledge and experience of the participants, aiming to develop their agency as well as their reading, writing and calculating skills. The integration of literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding (LCRP) evolved through a process of collaborative enquiry from 1999 to 2005 across the three literacy and conflict resolution projects in Guinea, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. This process was informed by evaluation feedback from stakeholders, discussions with facilitators and among members of the project Quality Assurance Teams with reference to theories of learning, models of adult literacy and approaches to conflict resolution. Three questions were central to the development of the approach;

- o What is the underpinning theory of learning?
- o Which approach to LCRP is most appropriate to the context and also fits well with approaches to adult literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding?
- o What kind of team of facilitators is most likely to succeed in developing, implementing and sustaining a community-based programme?

On the surface one might consider conflict resolution/peacebuilding and adult literacy as requiring different approaches to learning with some overlap, for example using stories gathered through trauma healing activities as reading materials or writing activities. However, it was crucial to have a coherent approach to working with groups which underpinned the programme within which facilitators might use different techniques for adult literacy and conflict resolution activities.

The framework offered by Illeris' Tension Triangle (Illeris 2003, 2005) provides a useful model within which to discuss the challenges faced and the rationale for the approaches adopted.

Building from a constructivist standpoint, Illeris bases his model on two assumptions. Firstly that learning includes a dynamic combination of two processes; an internal process of acquisition at the level of the individual, of making sense of new knowledge and skills in the context of existing knowledge,

and an external process of the learner interacting with his/her environment which may be social, cultural and/or material (Illeris 2002: 19). Secondly, that all learning events have elements of three dimensions; cognitive, associated with the acquisition of knowledge and skills, psychodynamic, associated with motivation and emotion, and societal, associated with communication and interaction with the outside world (Illeris 2002:19). The balance of these dimensions differs radically between different approaches to learning and different contexts require a unique mix of the three elements.

These dimensions are represented in what Illeris calls a 'Tension Triangle' (Fig.1).maps some of the major theoretical models of learning onto the tension triangle, with Piaget in the cognitive corner, Freud in the psychodynamic corner and Marx in the societal corner (Illeris, 2002: 137). Illeris places the communities of practice of Wenger (1998) in the centre of the triangle. Whilst recognising that the precise positions of individual theorists might be contested, the Tension Triangle provides an alternative perspective to selecting an approach to learning.
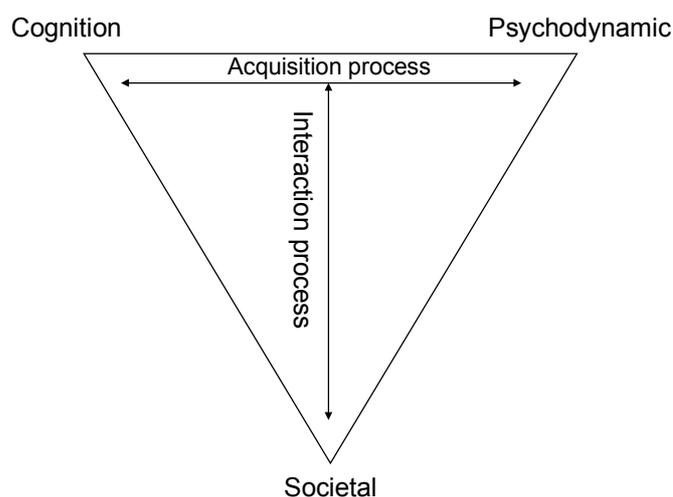
Fig. 1 Tension Triangle (Illeris 2003)

Underpinning theory of learning

In the conflict and post-conflict contexts of the projects, Illeris' Tension Triangle mirrors many of the competing tensions. Traditionally, the adult literacy, conflict resolution and community cohesion elements each exert pressure towards different corners of the tension triangle, leaving the challenge to develop a coherent and balanced approach.

At the outset of the projects, adult literacy was perceived by local NGOs and community groups as an essential building block for personal development and employment. Existing approaches to adult literacy found in Guinea, Sierra Leone

and South Sudan tended to be traditional and primer based. Teaching materials were drawn from primary school curricula and teaching methods were didactic, relying heavily on rote learning. The approach to teaching focused heavily on the acquisition of knowledge and skills enabling people to adapt to their context; hence traditionally the teaching of adult literacy was perceived primarily in the cognitive corner of the Tension Triangle.

However, although the teaching of adult literacy was perceived as primarily through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, the expected outcomes were seen in more transformational terms. Literacy was perceived, at the individual level, as providing status; a passport to having one's voice heard at community meetings. Local communities perceived the acquisition of literacy as a crucial element in peacebuilding in order that communities could be better informed, less subject to propaganda and more able to engage in informed debate. This was particularly evident in Guinea and Sierra Leone, where the activities of the RUF in promoting the conflict were perceived by many, including Richards, as led by 'an educated and embittered leadership' in a country where educational opportunities for the majority of the population had reduced dramatically (Richards 1996: 28). Local communities, therefore, saw the benefits of adult literacy in transformational, societal terms as well as more adaptive and cognitive terms.

The emotive and societal aspects to learning were also reflected in some of the new post-literacy reading materials being produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and Action for Churches of South Sudan (ACROSS) in English and mother tongue languages. The stories tell of the trauma experienced and the difficulties in reconciliation and rebuilding communities. However, it was not clear how the approach to using these materials, with a high emotive content, was expected to be different from using functional literacy materials on animal husbandry.

The approach required for effective integration of literacy with conflict resolution and peacebuilding would be different from an integrated literacy and vocational training programme, where the focus on the acquisition of technical knowledge and skills would probably require a greater focus on cognition and less on the emotive and societal elements.

Literacy:Methodologlogy and Methods

Conflict and post-conflict contexts requires a transformative approach to education, probably with stronger societal elements and more explicit recognition of the psychodynamic aspect to learning, than in other more stable contexts.

The approach developed drew heavily on the work of Freire (1970, 1980) and incorporated techniques from Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Chambers 1983, 1997, 2002), REFLECT (Archer 1996) and transformative conflict resolution. It was also informed by thinking from New Literacy Studies (Street 1993, 1995, 2001) and 'Literacy for Livelihoods' (DFID 2002),

Freire

For many, Freire's work radically altered the concept of adult literacy. From being a technical and neutral process of coding and decoding, it became critically analysing and 'reading the world'. This was in line with the wish in Guinea and Sierra Leone, that the communities should become more informed and less subject to propaganda from extremists groups. In order to enable those learning literacy to see the reality of their oppression, Freire 'codified' realities into images, pictures, photographs or key generative words such as "revolution" or "work". In LCRP the pictures or words may be, or may represent, "anger", "trauma" or "conflict". These provide the entry points for dialogue and debate. A word or short sentence is then attached to the image and this becomes the reading text. Freire also saw dialogue as an essential part of the process:

> "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world…….. It must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation: it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another……… It is a conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind." (Freire 1970: 69-70)

The key contribution of Freire's work to LCRP was commitment to engaging participants in the emotive and societal processes of 'reading the world'.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is an established body of participatory practice, developed by Chambers (1983, 1997, 2002). With a strong societal element and a practical focus specifically developed for complex and diverse community groups, PRA provided a strong basis for community involvement in LCRP programmes.

Central to PRA is the role of the facilitator in supporting participants in the process of uncovering and analysing their community and identifying the key challenges facing it (Chambers 2002). The facilitator is encouraged to let go of the desire to 'teach' and instead focuses on the processes taking place within the group; the level and balance of involvement, the energy and engagement, the nature of decision making, and factors influencing inclusion and exclusion of individuals and sub-groups. S/he brings participatory techniques, for example mapping, transect walks, sorting, ranking and matrices, and introduces them in ways which actively encourage democratic participation and explicitly explore diverse perspectives (Chambers, 2002). The role of the facilitator is to enable the group to work collaboratively using the full range of knowledge and experience within the group to inform decision making. 'Handing over the stick' to participants and actively seeking complexity and diversity are essential characteristics of the PRA facilitator.

Three key tenets underpin PRA namely, self-aware responsibility (which includes reflection and critical awareness), equity and empowerment, and diversity (Chambers 2002: 4). Although these trip easily off the tongue, they have led to

intense debate around the nature of power in groups and the development of techniques to enable the less powerful, or "lowers" to be heard (Chambers 1997, 2002).

Particularly relevant to LCRP was the commitment to involving both 'uppers' and lowers' in community activities and consultation, the practical participatory tools, the explicit recognition of power and effective facilitation as opposed to 'teaching'.

REFLECT

Archer (1996) combined the theoretical frameworks developed by Freire with the techniques and research methodology of PRA in the ActionAid literacy programme entitled REFLECT – an approach to enable non-literate people to acquire literacy and numeracy skills in the context of community development and empowerment. REFLECT rejects the concept of the centralised curriculum and promoting instead as series of activities relevant to the local context. Participants also play a role in determining the process and activities of the literacy circle. REFLECT is possibly the most 'development' orientated of the new literacy models. The aims and outcomes of successful REFLECT programmes are captured below:

> "As well as sustaining their new found literacy skills, the Loko Kendra (People's Centres) provide members with a space in which to develop and sustain their problem analysis capacity and take action to bring about positive and empowering change in their lives."
> (Zaki Hasan 2005)

REFLECT makes explicit the links between PRA-based activities such analysis, problem solving and action and literacy acquisition and empowerment.

New Literacy Studies

New Literacy Studies takes an ethnographic approach to literacy, focusing on communicative practices, how and when communication takes place, how oracy and literacy are used and suggests programmes should be rooted in the literacy and numeracy required in the community. Street has argued the concept of 'literacies' rather than 'literacy'; that different literacy practices develop in communities according to their cultural, religious and communicative practices (Street 1995: 10-11). Street has developed the idea of literacy 'practices' and literacy 'events' (Street 1993, 2001) and stressed the importance of ethnographic research as the basis from which to develop literacy programmes (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Maddox 2001). New Literacy Studies methodology can lead to an emphasis on functionality, on the practical need for and use of literacy and numeracy skills and adaptation to circumstances rather than action for change. Yet in rejecting literacy as a neutral skill, Street conceptualises literacy as 'an ideological practice, implicated in power relations' (Street 1995:1).

The key elements from New Literacy Studies for LCRP were the societal locus of literacy practices and events, the value of analysis of communicative practices in communities as an integral aspect of literacy programmes, the concept of multiple literacies and the power implications of different literacy practices.

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding are widely used, contested terms. Peacebuilding is defined by Fisher et al (2000) as 'undertaking programmes designed to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past and to promote long-term stability and justice' (Fisher et al 2000:14). As the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution has developed, different approaches have emerged. One continuum has problem-solving, outcome-focused models at one end and dialogue-based, process models at the other (Burgess et al 1997: 4). Another consideration is the balance between western models and indigenous practices.

Explicit recognition of the approach to peacebuilding has been as important as discussions around approaches to literacy. The approach required to develop an integrated programme with a solution-focused model drawing primarily on western conflict resolution practice would be vastly different from a process focused approach where engaging in dialogue is promoted, indigenous practices and faith-based healing are draw upon and the role of the individual in transforming the situation is central.

The term conflict resolution is often criticised as being narrow, implying that conflict is negative and "is a short term phenomenon which can be 'resolved' permanently through medication or other intervention processes" (Burgess et al 1997:1). Conversely, the broad definition of conflict resolution by Schellenberg as 'any marked reduction in social conflict' includes 'conscious settlement of issues in dispute' as well as reductions due to other factors (Schellenberg 1996:9).

Our approach, guided by our partner organisations and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), was in line with Lederach's (1995) model of conflict transformation. Lederach's (1995) recognises conflict as a naturally occurring and complex phenomenon which transforms individuals, relationships and communities. Further transformational changes at the individual and societal levels are often required to move through times of violent conflict into times of more effective dialogue and co-existence.

This is reflected in WANEP's Operating Principles

> "People and their transformation are crucial to peacebuilding. Transformation instead of ad hoc management or resolution of conflict is at the core of WANEP's philosophy. We believe people are the agents of their own change. Conversion instead of manipulation or coercion iscentral to WANEP's transformative philosophy." (WANEP 2002: Operating Principle 5)

Core components of the approach to peacebuilding include enabling participants to understand and analyse the root causes and stages of their conflict, engaging parties involved in exploring their conflict related behaviours and selecting and implementing appropriate actions which might involve conventional or traditional approaches. The approach is processed-based, as opposed to solution-focused, enabling individuals and communities to engage in dialogue around their experiences, challenges they face, how they feel and the kinds of emotional responses which they experience. In contexts such as Guinea, Sierra Leone and South Sudan, where the trauma experienced by the communities and facilitators is both deep and recent, trauma healing at a personal level needs to be included in any conflict resolution and peacebuilding programme.

The process oriented approach in Conflict Transformation which relies on dialogue and communities identifying their challenges linked well with PRA and the REFECT approach to literacy. Valuing indigenous conflict resolution methods links to New Literacy Studies approaches of explicitly identifying and building on existing communicative practices.

Integration in practice

The integration of literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding was initially pragmatic. Opportunities arose during the training of facilitators to add either an element of conflict resolution and peacebuilding to a literacy session or vice versa. It gradually became increasingly evident that there was a synergy between the processes that went beyond the pragmatics and opportunities for training or the compatible personalities of the trainers to a deeper theoretical level and paradigm. This was manifested in the cross fertilisation of methods. For example both PRA and REFLECT use situational analysis to enable the literacy participants develop an understanding of their situation in order to analyse and address it. This is frequently done by "mapping" the community – recoding the key physical structures and the key resources in the community; this is sometimes preceded by a "transect walk". In other words walking around the community or village to observe what is going on and recording it in the literacy circle. This inevitably engenders the dialogue recommended by Freire and with REFLECT leads to the initial reading vocabulary – a text creating by the literacy participants from their own actions and observations, as Allan says co investigating

> "their reality, to test the validity of existing knowledge and to create new knowledge in the process." (Allman 1988:97)

This model of investigation was developed in many different ways in REFLECT through "mapping" timelines, seasonal calendars, resource maps, Venn diagrams of power structures, seasonal harvest or work maps, charts of income, profit and loss. These were easily related to pre and post-conflict tensions. Maps of communities demonstrated new land allocations or seizures, increased pressure on natural resources such as water from displaced incomers, numbers of female headed households, lists of destroyed buildings. Calendars identified potential

seasonal trigger points for conflict and Venn diagrams identified power groupings within the communities Similarly the methods normally used in REFLECT to analyse a peaceful situation were used to analyse a pre-conflict or tense situation (McCaffery 2005).. One outcome of the projects was that community mapping and "transect walks" were added to the conflict resolution and peacebuilding training [2].

The Freirean practice of generative words and codifying was again quickly adapted. "Anger", "peace", "loss" are all words that generate emotions and dialogue. Emotive words that resonate in the lives of the participants are retained more easily than "neutral" words even though they may be technically more difficult. While emotions had to take precedence over the technicalities of encoding and decoding, the words were used to generate more words and sentences thus not only extending the exploration of emotive and painful situations but increasing the vocabulary and developing self expression.

Learner Generated Materials

Learner–generated writing initially arose in the literacy field due to a shortage of reading texts, but linked with the wider movement of worker and community writing as participants in literacy circles recorded or recounted their stories and experiences to the interest of fellow participants and facilitators. This resonates strongly with conflict resolution and the process of "telling the story" of "being heard". Whereas in the literacy circle the listener is important as validating and affirming the story teller's experience, in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding setting the listener is "bearing witness" at a deeper level and the telling of the story is both a cathartic and healing experience. As Freire states "breaking out of silence is essential." (1970: 69). Mace's statement that writing makes individuals visible and affirms existence (1992: xviii) encapsulates the psychological impact of "telling the story".

In a similar way the negotiation processes involved in conflict resolution are also mirrored in literacy. Hearing and appreciating the different perceptions of a conflict are an important process in the resolution. In the literacy circle telling the story of your community unrelated to conflict is an interesting exercise. Telling the story of your community before, during and after conflict is to recount your perception of events, to tell your side of the tale.

Outcomes; Reading, Writing and Calculating

One of the key challenges of the projects was balancing the desire to provide high quality training in trauma healing and conflict resolution for all facilitators with the need to also equip them with the skills and experience to facilitate groups in order to assist literacy participants develop their skills in reading, writing and calculating using transformative approaches to literacy. This model of learning was a challenge for some, particularly ex-teachers, who had previously

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[2] Personal communication with the Director, WANEP

only experienced a didactic approach in which teachers are the source of all knowledge. Two, ten day integrated literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding training courses were provided for each project. The training aimed to model practice and a particpatory and experiential approach was adopted. A LCRP Guide was developed for facilitators to enable them to use the exercises experienced in training in their own practice in their literacy circles (Doe et al.2004).

In some instances the literacy participants were at very different levels and facilitators had little experience of multi-level teaching which they found an immense challenge. In the project in South Sudan it was decided to organise circles at different levels of literacy acquisition. Table 2 shows the four different levels of LCRP circles developed from experiences in the projects and the Interagency Language Round Table Scales (ILRS). In South Sudan the acquisition of new skills was demonstrated by progress in participants' work and in progression from one level of class to another.

Table 2   Levels of LCRP circles

BEGINNERS People who have never been to school or who know only a few letters and/or a very few words. Could do mapping, could tell conflict stories or do a peace calendar. Can do many of the activities which need people to give their views and discuss. May be able to write a few words afterwards, with the facilitator's help. Beginners should be encouraged to make links with their everyday life both in the peace-building / conflict resolution and also in the literacy skills they acquire.
STAGE 1 People who know the alphabet and can recognise the letters. Can usually think of some words which start with each letter and can read and write some words. By the end of stage 2 they can read and write simple words in their mother tongue and some also in English. Can discuss and work in groups. Can add and subtract with one or two numbers. Could do mapping and most of the activities in the LCRP Guide and could probably write a few words on their own and sentences with help afterwards. Stage 1 learners should be encouraged to make links with their everyday life both in the peace-building / conflict resolution and also in the literacy skills they acquire.
STAGE 2 People who have completed stage 1 or who had some schooling.. People who can read quite well in their mother tongue and/or can read and write simple sentences in English. Can usually do addition and subtraction quite well and some simple multiplication and division. Can do mapping, peace calendars and many other activities and can write short sentences on their own after the discussion. Can tell and write simple sort stories on conflict or hopes and fears for peace. Stage 2 learners should be encouraged to use their skills outside the classroom.
STAGE 3 People who have completed stage 2 and those with a reasonable level of schooling. Can read and write well in their mother tongue, including quite difficult text. Can read and write well quite confidently in English, although may struggle over some words, or may need to read more than once to understand properly. Stage 3 learners can usually write short stories on their own and engage in discussions about a wide range of issues. Should be encouraged to write about them afterwards in their own words, rather than copying. Stage 3 learners should also be encouraged to use their skills in their everyday lives, maybe being the secretary of a community group or another activity which uses their reading and writing as well as their peace-building and conflict resolution skills.

Facilitators identified the need for a stage four level for those who had completed stage three. Unfortunately, there was no other educational provision available for them to progress on to, although this will be introduced through the emerging Sudan Basic Education Programme.

English and mother tongue were integrated in the LCRP programme as all participants wanted to learn English as well as their mother tongue. This desire was strongest in the towns where INGOs were present and there were likely to be employment opportunities. During the training in Pochalla the multi-lingual context was striking. On occasion words were written in five languages Annuak, Dinka, English, Amharic and Arabic which involved the three different scripts.

The evaluations reported that the participants in the literacy circles had made considerable progress in learning to read and wirite.

Numeracy proved more difficult and was most successful when applied to practical situations such as the materials for reconstructing buildings or the size of agricultural plots and their yield.

Methods for recording progress on an individual basis were limited and require further development. Interruptions in classes due to outbreaks of violence meant that attendance, and hence progress, was often erratic. However, most LCRP participants progressed from one level to the next in six months to one year.

Participants reported changing their practices using their enhanced literacy, conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills in many ways. Many of these parallel literacy enhanced practices elsewhere and a few examples will suffice such as

- taking on the role of secretary for a local women's group
- keeping simple accounts for an income generating project
- reading notices on public notice boards or newsletters
- reading books on health, farming etc
- obtaining employment with local NGOs
- writing letters to displaced family members

Certain new activities were specific to the conflict resolution and peace building element and the post-conflict context such as

- talking and writing about their experiences in the conflict
- reading stories of others from the conflict
- reading information about forthcoming elections
- reading the framework peace agreement for South Sudan

The stories and experiences recorded or written during the training courses were remarkable. In Sierra Leone individual stories of war experiences as well as moral folk tales were produced. In Pochalla the history of the conflict was recorded by four different groups, each with their own perspective and experience of the conflict. One group was able to recount and record from 1956

and Sudan's independence from Britain and another younger group started their story in 1991 when refugees returned from Ethiopia.

Each of the projects had specific goals and targets relating to both literacy and numeracy and other "livelihood" related activities. The number of people attending the different elements of each programme exceeded expectations in all cases, though it is difficult to make comparisons as each project was different

In Guinea 800 men and 600 women were involved. The turnover of facilitators was higher than elsewhere and circles were interrupted by a major cross border incursion which led to may refugees returning to Sierra Leone just as the circles had started.

In Sierra Leone large scale "peacebuilding drama events" sometimes attracted audiences of over a hundred people. Altogether 3,850 were involved in the two year project over a third more than the targeted number. The higher numbers were in all four categories of participants, ex-combatants, young women especially abductees, disabled people and unemployed youth. The number of people engaged as facilitators, 39, was comparatively high as there was a high turnover of women facilitators in the Kambian region.

During the project in South Sudan 2,430 people were involved in different ways (840 men: 1590 women) exceeding the target by 37.5%. As well as 695 people who attended LCRP circles, the number included 29 local facilitators and 36 volunteers helping the circles. Others involved were Payam (county) advisory committees, members of other NGOs and those who attended " peacebuilding drama events" carried out in each payam. This also included a significant number of disabled people.

Community Impact

As stated earlier, a sustainable livelihoods approach was adopted to identify and evaluate the impact of the project. The LCRP Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (fig. 3) has been adapted from the DFID Livelihoods Framework and incorporates two parameters from Church and Shouldice's work on evaluation of conflict resolution interventions. These were 'focus of change' (Church and Shouldice 2002: 35), which links with livelihood assets, and 'tiers of influence' (ibid: 39) which recognises the 'tiers' within society where the project has impacted. This framework enables us to see the extent to which the outcomes of the project have worked to reduce some of the factors contributing to the high vulnerability context.
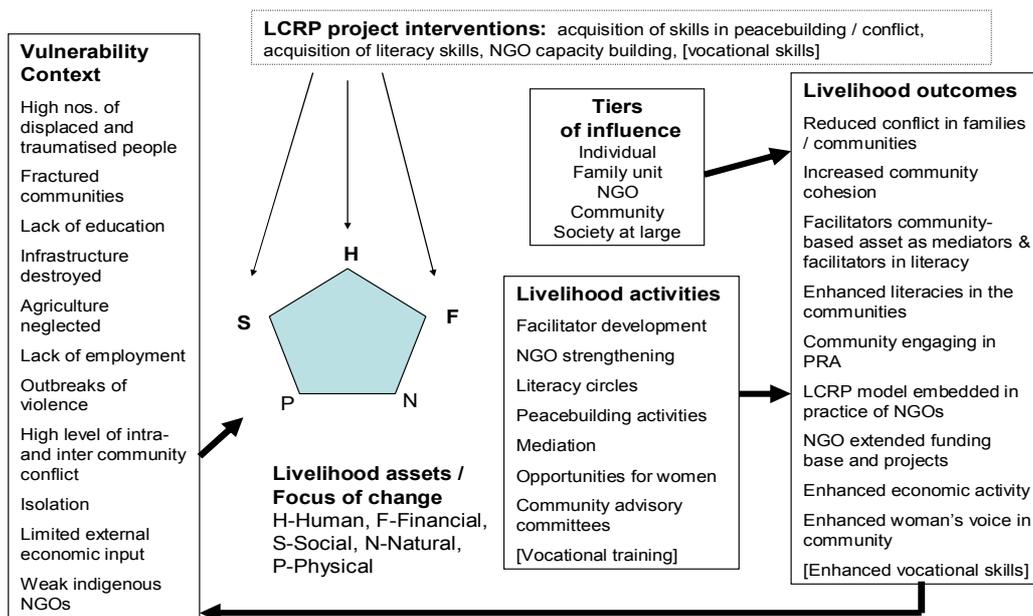
Fig. 3   LCRP Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
Adapted from Carney et al. (1999) and Church and Shouldice (2002)

The vulnerability context in each of the project areas was high, with high levels of displaced people, limited support structures, poor infrastructure, failing crops and on-going outbreaks of conflict. These were factors outside the control of the project. However, the fractured communities and high levels of domestic violence and low levels of literacy were, to some extent, within the remit of the project and featured strongly in the livelihoods outcomes and increases in assets discussed below.

The livelihood activities are the activities which took place within communities as a result of the project and which would be likely to influence the livelihoods of individuals and groups, including activities where the intended outcomes are to reduce tension and conflict. This is recognition that conflict stifles much of the community-based economic activity, for example where there are substantial conflicts over land this is likely to reduce the crop yield. Hence reducing community conflicts enables local economic activities to be enhanced.

Vocational training is in brackets as this was included in the Guinea and Sierra Leone projects. Although individuals gained from the acquisition of skills including gara-dying, tailoring, baking and construction, numbers were quite small and these activities were not sustainable after the end of the grant. The approach to vocational training was different from that of literacy and conflict resolution. It focused on the transfer of knowledge and skills and was undertaken by local crafts people or training providers.

The livelihoods outcomes were wide-ranging and considerable, with the 'focus of change' being primarily on increases in human, social and financial livelihood assets. There was also some increase in physical livelihood assets; community

resource centres were established, NGO offices and training facilities built and in two cases vehicles were purchased. The DFID sustainable livelihoods framework also recognised the importance of institutional development, which was a core aspect of each of these projects and is addressed separately below.

The increase in human assets was particularly evident in relation to the facilitators and to a lesser extent LCRP learners who took on new roles, for example secretary to a women's group. The evaluation reports recorded that most facilitators perceived themselves, and were perceived by the community, as having acquired a valuable set of skills which enabled them to reduce tension, promote peaceful relationship, mobilise communities and to teach LCRP at a variety of levels. Some facilitators became more skilful in mediation, some became highly participative in their teaching, whereas others remained more formal teachers, and quite a number left the partner NGOs and established other NGOs. With very few exceptions, facilitators experienced a substantial positive change in their status in the community.

The increase in social assets was considerable, although it is difficult to measure and often involved affective changes, for example 'feeling more confident'. Some of these changes had direct links with the literacy tasks people were undertaking. For example being able to read notices led some to feel more informed and involved in their community, for others they felt sufficiently confident to apply for a job. Sometimes the links were less obvious but just as valuable, for example a woman in South Sudan said 'Now I can write my name I was asked to be the chair of the Women's Group. People listen to me now and my voice is heard.'

Participants (and facilitators) valued using writing as a technique for bearing witness to their own trauma and to moving along the path towards healing their own distress. Many expressed a feeling of relief from having shared some of their story, of being 'heard' and having their experiences authenticated through the process of having them written down. Both men and women said that previously they tended to only share their experiences within their own gender. Many stated that they had rarely felt truly heard by those of the other gender and that this was a valuable process. The process of listening to another person's story sufficiently to be able to help them write it or to write it for them, in itself encouraged high order listening.

The social value of the reductions in conflict cannot be understated. Communities reported fewer domestic conflicts, fewer arguments in business, with local market traders saying they were able to mediate or avoid local conflict or find alternative ways of dealing with it. Community leaders reported that the mediation of the facilitators had resulted in a decrease in tension and conflict. Women's groups identified decreases in conflict among women at the water pumps and tension between neighbours. They also reported being more self-sufficient in terms of resolving tensions internally without having to resort to approaching community elders, which increased the community perception and standing of the group within the community.

Another social asset arising from the projects was the establishment of the community based advisory committees which brought together different members of the communities to work together. The NGOs attempted to ensure a good cross-section of the community which frequently provided a forum for women to engage with community leaders or brought together people with competing agendas. The projects, therefore acted as 'community stabilisers, focal points of networks and threads of continuity' (Newell Jones 2004).

Adopting a livelihoods approach has highlighted a range of ways in which the project has promoted increases in the financial assets of communities.

At an individual level a small number of learners gained employment as a result of developing their personal literacy and confidence. These people and their families enhanced their income directly. Many others reported that they were more effective in their income generating activities, for example kitchen gardening.

The facilitators were paid a salary and each provided with a bicycle. All facilitators reported using their salary to pay others in their communities for other tasks in order to allocate more time to their role as facilitator, for example cutting grass for construction, digging their kitchen gardens, harvesting their crops, mending their bicycle, animal husbandry. The relatively small amount of funds being paid out in salaries was being recycled immediately in the local economy

This increased funding will feed into the local economy through employment, purchasing equipment and services. Including the "tiers of influence" identifies one of the limitations of the projects. The livelihood outcomes were strong at the level of the individual, family unit, within the NGO and within local communities, however, they were more patchy in the wider society. For example, in Mundri and Mvolo counties in South Sudan, conflict was reduced with the local indigenous Moro community, but remained as high between the Moro and the Dinka herdsmen, who had not been involved directly in the project. However in Pochalla a Dinka leader, an ex-SPLA soldier, was involved and there appeared to be considerable respect between himself and the Annuak participants. On the other hand, the impact of the integrated literacy and conflict resolution programme was evident at a national level with the NGO being one of the implementing agencies for the Sudan Basic Education Programme, funded by USAID.

Organisational Development

Capacity building of partner NGOs is a key factor as to whether the increased livelihoods assets are sustainable in the medium to long term. This is particularly so in areas in conflict as local NGOs often play a role as "community stabilisers, focal points of networks and threads of continuity" on which international donors depend as their presence is often abruptly interrupted (Newell Jones 2004: 11).

Partner NGOs developed transferable organisational skills which considerably strengthened their ability to secure future funding in all but one instance. These included financial accountability, participatory approaches to community-based

work, ability to compile needs analyses, project plans and reports, extending skills in monitoring and evaluation, project management and gender. The development of these areas was one of the factors which led to SEM expanding its funding base so successfully and securing its place as an influential NGO engaged in consultation on emerging policy with the Education Ministry for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the administrative body for South Sudan during the interim period. The extended role of SEM includes both establishing new centres of adult literacy across a wide geographical area of South Sudan and also supporting other NGOs who would be delivering the programme, but who did not have the expertise in literacy.

The most important attribute of any organisation is the staff and even more so in conflict / post-conflict contexts which are subject to outbreaks of violence and where the NGOs have few material possessions. A key indicator of success is the extent to which coherent, stable teams are established as they are the 'living repository' of the LCRP approach, as it becomes institutionally embedded.

There were marked differences in the success of developing core teams in the different NGOs. Heron's model (fig. 3) (Heron 1999: 261-373) highlights some of tensions. On the vertical axis are the 'shared goals and a plan', which are supported at the level of the individual in the selection, training and support of individuals, the 'person and tools'. These were the explicit key features of the projects which were negotiated from the outset in all projects and where there was mutual agreement. The horizontal axis reflects the organisational culture and systems, with 'roles and rules' being the "social structure which specifies members' working functions and inter-relations" (Heron 1999: 362), and 'power and control' referring to "who is doing the managerial decision-making" and "what procedures they use in doing it" (Heron 199: 362).
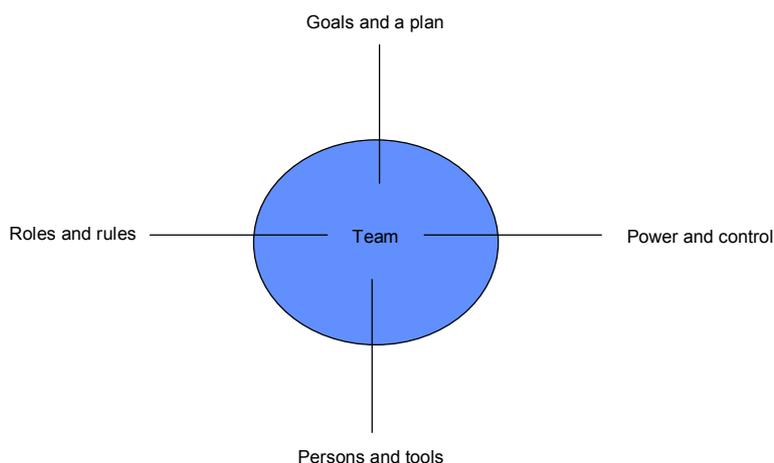

Fig. 3 Tensions, teams and organisational culture (Heron 1999)

Clearly where these two axes are in balance and the beliefs and values underpinning them are shared, they complement each other; whereas if they differ significantly, tension will result. Education for Development was able to influence the vertical axis as these were the component parts of the project. However, attempts to influence the horizontal axis were less successful.

In the first projects the organisational culture and power relationships were not considered sufficiently in depth prior to entering into partnerships with NGOs, resulting in one instance, with a serious mismatch which detracted from the impact of the project. Within Heron's terminology this NGO might be described as "Power-bound" (Heron 1999: 373) where there was an oppressively strong hierarchy and ethos of control, which distorted the relationships within the team. There was a particularly high turnover of women facilitators, which resulted in a team where the men had developed expertise, whereas the women had attended fewer workshops and were usually less confident and less informed about LCRP. The resulting team had a strong, highly competent core of men, but the women were always on the periphery, being allocated less responsibility and remaining in subservient roles. Another NGO had poorly defined roles and rules and a weak power and control component. The project progressed well, but the NGO internal structures were not sufficiently robust to capitalise on the success and secure further funding.

Following these experiences, greater attention was paid to ensuring the organisational culture reflected the values underpinned by those of the LCRP programme. In the case of SEM, in South Sudan, in particular, the organisational values and practices were collaborative, non-discriminatory, and supportive. The manager attended all the training playing an active, but not dominant, role in this and in the management of the project. This resulted in a balance of Heron's two axes, a high level of trust and commitment to the organisation by all facilitators, a low rate of attrition and sharing of responsibility by male and female facilitators. The project was highly successful despite the on-going conflict for much of the project and, perhaps more importantly, there was a synergistic relationship between the project and SEM which has resulted in the LCRP approach being embedded in the work of SEM.

This process was not without its challenges as one NGO was unwilling to meet the level of financial reporting and their practice in relation to women facilitators was unacceptable.

Conclusion

The positive outcomes resulting from the integration of literacy with peacebuilding and conflict resolution gave rise to considerable reflection and analysis regarding the reasons for the level of success within the very limited timescales of the project funding. It is our contention that the Livelihood paradigm, the theories of learning and the transformative models of literacy adopted integrated with the process of conflict resolution at both a theoretical and a practical level to create a holistic and hermeneutic methodology able to draw on and develop the potential of all involved Incorporating conflict resolution and peacebuilding into any literacy

programme in post-conflict contexts is essential as both facilitators and participants will come traumatised from fractured communities with high levels of tension. In a livelihoods approach then enabling people to reduce the tensions in their communities is an essential step towards reducing the vulnerabilities and strengthening the assets. We contend that integrated LCRP programmes should be essential elements in programmes of post-conflict support as they can play an important role in contributing to the reconstruction of post-conflict societies.

Acknowledgements

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Investigating Critical Literacy at the University in Brazil

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Introduction

Where should the locus of critique be situated in the academic development of the university student? This issue is often understood as denotative of a dichotomy between theory and practice, when theoretical studies have for long indicated the need of conciliation between the two. Based on this concern and due to the fact that international[1] and national[2] evaluating agencies demonstrate that more attention should be paid to young pupils' reading ability, this present research investigates Brazilian students' interpretations as a form of discourse (texts and contexts) and tries to explain these in terms of local circumstances.

Literacy rates in Brazil have grown in the last decades[3]. It is acknowledged, however, that some of the literate[4] population are only "functionally illiterate", an allusion to what De Castell, Luke & MacLennan have described as "functional literacy" (1989: 7-13). The term "functionally illiterate" refers to readers whose reading ability is limited to a literal comprehension of a text; this is a residue of a period when literacy was conceived as the teaching of reading and writing and seen to produce a cognitive disposition defined as a "state or condition of those who are able to read and write" (Soares 2004:20). As is largely known, technological society has contributed to the shift in the meaning of reading. If the term literate used to be applied to characterize one who was able to read a simple message and decode his/her own name in the past, it has nowadays been applied to describe the individual who uses reading and writing within and for a social practice (De Castell, Luke & MacLennan 1989). This view has led to studies that advocate the development of various literacies – visual, digital, multicultural, for instance – as a way to commit to an educational process in which the teaching of reading is inseparable from the teaching of cultural ways of seeing, describing, explaining, as defended by Luke & Freebody (1997). These authors claim that the readers should be asked to understand textual representations, values, ideologies, discourses, demonstrating positions about social issues and a view of the world. In addition, readers should understand that the act of reading is related to knowledge distribution and power in a society. There is a need for local research into the kinds of literacy used by present-day Brazilian university level students who, previously, as fourteen to sixteen-year-old students, were the subjects of national assessments of literacy carried out in Brazil.

The need for reviewing literacy in Brazilian schools was the main motive for designing this specific investigation. It should be explained, though, that this investigation is part of a research project of a Brazilian research team[5] in which two well-known State universities in Brazil are involved: the University of São Paulo (USP) and the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). Three professors[6] of these two universities lead studies in literacy, multiliteracies,

multimodalities and hypermodality. Their research is based on the founding premise that the insufficient literacy results of readers at the level of basic schooling are possibly related to inadequate literacy development work carried out with university level students where priority is given to a content that possibly does not meet the needs of the new educational needs, new knowledges and new abilities of a technological society. In this sense, there is an expectation that, in the near future, the Brazilian team's research may lead to new discussions and proposals for changes to the reiterative vicious cycle that links the levels of basic and university education.

For the specific investigation into students' interpretative practices, the methodological procedures preferred were those of discourse analysis. As research tools, diversified texts were used: journalistic reports from both the written and the electronic press, fictional movies and documentaries, comic strips, advertisements, and short stories. However, in this article, only two texts were selected for depiction and analysis: one refers to a documentary and the other to a short story. In both cases, the students were required to write their interpretations of the texts, as well as their critique, and their description of their probable learning from each specific reading. Some students were also interviewed when clarifications about their meaning-making were required. The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. Afterwards, the students' interpretations were analyzed. The analysis was based on the notions of habitus by Bourdieu, awareness by Freire (2001), the hermeneutic studies that contrast interpretive tendencies and the exercise of suspicion by Ricoeur (1977), and the theories of critical literacy that propose reading as a cultural and social practice by Luke and Freebody (1997), De Castell, Luke & MacLennan (1989), and Soares (2004).

Ninety students aged eighteen to twenty-two years old participated in the research. They integrated two groups of a Literature and Language course of a university in the city of São Paulo (Brazil) and had not participated in a critical literacy project before.

This investigation aims to understand how Brazilian young readers interpret, having critical literacy as a parameter of what should be expected from the investigated subjects. It will describe readers at the initial stages of the university system. Hopefully, the article may corroborate the reflection of others in the same research area.

Theoretical Assumptions: Interpretive Habitus and Critical Literacy

The analysis of the students' interpretations will firstly be based on the concept of linguistic habitus by Bourdieu (1996). This author sees habitus as a learned disposition to communicate in accordance to what is required in certain situations. The structures of the linguistic market are deemed responsible for the permissions, censures, sanctions that are inherent to situations of communication. In Bordieu's view (1996), the social conditions of production and linguistic circulation may generate consensus (a type of linguistic habitus). The practice of consensus – due to its converging characteristic – becomes a useful

artifice in comprehension, considering that it requires convergence of meanings in the diversified and even divergent interests of the agents or groups that participate in the communication market of a particular social or cultural group. The author shows how words – work, family, mother, love, for instance – which are commonly and frequently found in the communities that communicate in a common language belong to an inherently polyssemic social context. Because of the ideological nuances that these words convey, they have different meanings among their users. Thus, although these words admittedly have official meanings, they may have different interpretations in the daily life of their users.

For this reason, Bourdieu (1996) complements, it should be understandable that the concepts of work and family, for example, do not mean exactly the same throughout a whole society: domestic work is often not seen as a job; families that do not conform to the the standards (broken families, single parents) of what a family should be like in a particular community may suffer social prejudice. In the author's perspective, a standard language conceals the symbolic domination of the linguistic habitus through its pretense impersonality, anonymity and neutrality. This might make language users unconsciously seek a standardized means of making their means of communication socially acceptable: by adopting, for instance, socially acceptable and authorized concepts.

The studies by Bourdieu (1996) explain the intrinsic paradox in language and communication. In a similar fashion, an intrinsic paradox is observable in the process of reading and interpretation. On the one hand, there is a search for a common nucleus that guarantees communication; on the other, the interpretation of what is communicated – due to its inherent polysemy – may not guarantee exactly the same meaning for all interlocutors in a particular community. In the same manner in which language users adopt a standardized manner (a common nucleus) to make their communication viable, interlocutors interpret communication following a similar form of presupposed standardized reasoning. This would explain why it is possible to refer to an interpretive habitus (an allusion to linguistic habitus) in communication. For Bourdieu, the language structure is permeated by hegemonic social, political and cultural forces, and the individuals' interpretive habitus is developed by filters that are generated and ruled by the values of the hegemonic power structure of their societies. These filters are thought to prevent the language users and interpreters from perceiving the intrinsic power relations in language and communication. This reasoning explains why theories of critical literacy claim that traditional views of reading see reading as not being tied up in the politics and power relations of everyday life in literate cultures (Luke & Freebody, 1997 p. 185). According to this claim, when reading is fundamentally seen as a problem internal to individuals, the reading processes systematically write out the social nature of reading, and thus produce readers who are vulnerable to and collusive in ideological forms of regulation (Luke & Freebody, 1997 p. 206). Thus, such theoretical studies cast doubt on the outcomes of traditional literacy efforts and highlight what should be investigated in efforts aiming at promoting new forms of literacy development.

A critical revision of older paradigms, as indicated by Bourdieu (1996), had already been advocated by Freire (2001) when referring to the development of

literacy and awareness in Brazilian education in the seventies and eighties. For Freire, changes in society – those that aim at diminishing social distance and inequalities as in the prerogatives of a democratic praxis – are closely related to the development of critical awareness. According to the Freirean theories, it is the conscious mind that makes it possible to unveil social reality, promoting an understanding of how it is constructed as well as revealing the constructed nature of its naturalized meanings, and the interests and power relations which imbue the structures of this social reality. Thus, in a certain sense, it may be said that Freire's views (2001) show similar concerns to Bourdieu's (1996) such as in the latter's explanations of the notion of habitus. By deconstructing the linguistic habitus, Bourdieu shows, from a critical perspective, how communicative relations are woven and constitute a given social reality.

Freire states (2001 p. 27) that the linguistic process within a literacy program may culminate in a practice that leads to "the taming rather than to autonomy of man". According to Freire's views, in the first and undesired process (taming), men – as communicators – are made objects of a literacy that allows no agency; in the second (autonomy), men would be the subjects of the process, and as such, would have agency in the construction of their social reality. In this case, Freire claims, awareness becomes a requisite or an inherent condition for critical reflection and action. This theory inspired renovated critical literacy projects in present-day Brazil, having been first referred to by Freire himself (2001 p. 89) as a process that should involve literacy and "post-literacy". Although the term "post-literacy" was later criticized due to its conveying of two separate literacy moments, its proposal for intrinsic political and cultural action was highly acknowledged in literacy projects.

From the viewpoint of critical literacy projects, much should be done to disrupt the conservative interpretative habitus that is still maintained in the positivistic educational environment in Brazil. In this sense, the studies by Ricoeur (1977) provide reflections that corroborate and shed light on the issues of reality construction and interpretation experienced in current South-American societies. As he explains in his discussion of the restoration of meanings and demystification of meanings, Ricoeur (1977) believes the former is built by a rational but ingenuous faith that overlooks historicity and subjectivity in its attempt to "restore" meanings that have been given. The latter, however, enables the emergence of suspicion in its attempt to demystify the meanings that have been socially and culturally consolidated. When interpretation is practiced as suspicion, the reader or interpreter should learn to unmask, as Ricoeur (1977) proposes, or should understand that meanings are always built within contexts. This proposal seems to agree with the objectives of a social practice of reading in which the readers are expected to identify the institutionally purpose-built repertoires of 'selves' represented in texts, as Luke & Freebody (1997, p. 194) claim.

The Research Tools: a documentary and a short story

The documentary. Brazil: Beyond Citizen Kane[7] is a documentary that resulted from a four-year research in Brazil, built mainly from interviews, testimonies, statistics, and historical data. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was

interested in investigating high audience rates in Brazilian television, considering that a particular Brazilian television station – Globo – had registered from eighty to a hundred per cent audience in some of its programs for two decades. Such a record was seen as a very unusual phenomenon when compared to European standards in which seventeen per cent is considered a highly satisfactory rate, according to Simon Hartog (1992). The research reconstructed the history of television in Brazil, identified Brazilians' preferences on TV screens ("novelas", shows and the news) and analyzed the audience phenomenon in Brazil.

The documentary maker and researcher attributed the Brazilian station's success to its investments in high quality technology and human resources (hiring specialists in TV images and technologies, experts in computation, and experienced actors as well). He concluded that the Globo station maintained close relations with the government by supporting it, regardless of the political changes that occurred in Brazil during decades. The documentary is named after Roberto Marinho, the TV station's owner, in an obvious allusion to the movie Citizen Kane by Orson Welles, showing, however that Marinho represented an improved version of the tycoon created by Welles. Marinho owned an even more powerful and widely reaching medium – a television station.

The short story. Love Constant Beyond Death[8] is a short story written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and was selected for the investigations of the already mentioned critical literacy project in the Brazilian university. It is widely acknowledged in Brazil that the contexts created by Garcia Marquez, as well as his characters and plots, resemble those of Brazil. It was then expected that this characteristic could possibly generate a sensation of familiarity among the Brazilian university students, thus raising their interest in the reading of the fictional short story.

In the summary written by a student, one of the research subjects, Death Constant Beyond Love "is about Senator Onesimo Sanchez, a politician that had only six months and eleven days left before his death. The senator was married to a German woman and had five children. While the politician was campaigning for his reelection, in a village called Rosal del Virey, he met Laura Farina, the love of his life. Nelson Farina, Laura's father, was his enemy. In the past he had in vain begged Sanchez to help him get an identity card which would place him beyond the reach of the law. Nelson never forgot this; he found a way to revenge the refusal and at the same time obtain the document he needed: by sending his pretty daughter to Sanchez. Knowing Sanchez, Nelson was sure that the politician would succumb to his daughter's beauty. This in fact occurred. However, Laura wore a padlock when she met Sanchez and carried a message from her father. It explained that if Sanchez wanted to open the padlock, Nelson could send him the key, with one condition: he would exchange the key for the document he needed. The senator felt in disadvantage but wanted to keep Laura with him".

Students' interpretations about the documentary and the short story: a critical literacy analysis

The research with the university viewers revealed surprising data. The content of the documentary made the students realize that there might be other readings of Brazilian reality, meaning that events in national history that sounded familiar and ordinary so far could appear different if seen from another perspective: such as from an unofficial version of these events. Two of the documentary statements highlighted by the students illustrate their perplexity. The first: When the inflation rate was 30 to 40% a month, a Globo news transmission says 'Monthly inflation index published – savings accounts pay 30 to 40%'. So they take the negative side of the inflation rate and put it in a positive light (Beth Costa, a journalist who worked for Globo, stated this in the documentary, explaining how "facts" were manipulated by the TV station); the second: I like to see the news on TV Globo: the world is in chaos, but Brazil is in peace (statement by General Medici, president of Brazil during the military dictatorship).

Most of the students felt appalled and disappointed to learn that they were not conscious of such a high level of manipulation by television in Brazil: I didn't know about the unofficial version of our history (Student 7; 62 other students wrote similar statements). It is amazing to see how manipulated the audience is, the interests attended to are not truly those of the viewers' (Student 58). Also, in spite of the emphasis on critical awareness they had been exposed to at school in the years after the military regime, many pupils asked Why don't we study these facts in High School History classes? In addition to their reflections, students came to know that the documentary had been forbidden for public showing in theaters or auditoriums in Brazil when it was launched, and this, unexpectedly for them, represented censorship in the 90's (historical registers clearly recognize censorship in Brazil in its dictatorship decades, from the 60's to the 70's).

At a subsequent moment, more disappointment was registered in the students' writings: In the world of business and globalization only power and political interests are important (Student 31). This statement represents the feelings expressed by the viewers when they found out the reason that had led the British Broadcasting Corporation to produce the documentary about the Brazilian television: the Globo station owner's interest in purchasing a TV station in Spain. Experts say that a new strong competitor in the field of television, such as Globo, in Europe, could represent a threat to the BBC. By revealing the unsavoury reality and motives behind the Globo station, the documentary could serve the purpose of undermining the credibility of the Brazilian station in the eyes of European public opinion, which was the intended audience of the documentary.

The students' registers indicated their tendency to believe that a documentary does not require interpretation considering as its expected function to show reality as it is, a view that conflicts with the understanding that this genre actually conveys reality as it is seen by particular movie producers. The students' reports on the impact the film had on their critical perspectives demonstrated that they discovered they had a "distorted" image about their own social surroundings; and in this sense, the absence of information may represent a manipulative strategy to privilege the construction of a certain social image, disguising the power

struggles present in social relations. In a certain sense, the documentary functioned as a literacy activity whose effects resemble hermeneutic "disruption", a term that refers to the dissolution of a consolidated naive belief, thus demystifying pre-established meanings, and allowing the exercise of suspicion, as proposed by Ricoeur (1977). The notions the students had of truth were found to drastically require revision, revealing that what sounded to them like true reality could well be unmasked and interpreted as someone's perspective or one representation of reality among several possible representations.

As for the interpretations in Garcia Marquez's short story, a convergence of interpretation was observable in the readings provided by the students, which showed influences of social ideologies related to religious beliefs, family values, and concepts of love while interpreting the fictional text. The convergence lies in the three characters chosen as the main ones and the nucleus of the story: Nelson's need of counterfeit documents, his offer of his own daughter (Laura) to the senator and the senator falling in love with her. The descriptions of the characters express the students' consensual views of the struggles for power represented in Garcia Marquez's story: political (related to a political campaign), persuasion or seduction.

The divergent readings were found in some of the students mentions of the relationships of politicians. Some cited his wife as the mother of Sanchez's children and nearly ignored Laura's role in the story. Some readers understood that Laura was the politician's great love whereas others saw the relationship between Laura and Sanchez as a temporary love affair. Some readers interpreted that Sanchez and Laura had a sexual relationship and others did not believe this really occurred. As a consequence of this reasoning, some students read that Sanchez conceded to Farina's blackmail as a way to get the key of the padlock, others did not even cite this passage.

One interpretation of the students' converging views could be understood in terms of Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1996). The young readers provided meanings in accordance with their interpretive habitus produced within their social environment. This could be observed in their convergence to read following traditional values that informed what should gain central attention in their reading strategies and what should be peripheral. However, possibly because new values have desirably or undesirably been assimilated in society through time, some destabilizing interference may be perceived in the dominating hierarchy of older, traditional values. This is visible in the divergence in the students' interpretations mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Another analysis of the convergence in the students' views may be explained in terms of Ricoeur's (1977) theories of hermenetics. He states that the strand that seeks the preservation of traditions plays a remarkable influence in one's daily exercise of interpretation. In this strand, standardized social, moral and family values, for instance, would function as a way to provide parameters for the thoughts, beliefs and behaviors of certain social groups. Thus, the people in these groups would learn how to produce interpretations considered to be right and adequate, and this would result in the preservation of pre-established

meanings and thus guarantee the preservation of the groups' traditions. The author adds that meanings in interpretive strategies cannot always be uniformly apprehended, though; and this fact would allow certain levels of changes – transformations – in traditions from one generation to another. As depicted in the students' readings, preservation and transformation are, then, socially identifiable in both the convergence and divergence of meaning making.

The premises of preservation are also present in the underlying readings of "crime and punishment" or "betrayal and divine punishment" in certain students' interpretations. They demonstrate that a senator who had a wife and children and happened to get involved with a young girl during his political campaign would find his fate in his own death and consequent separation from his beloved. For these students, illicit relationships should be avoided, due to their representing a threat to solid marriages and consequently to the status quo itself. A mixture of religious belief and social value seems to predominate in these interpretations: certain students appear to reject and deny attitudes that do not follow a religious standard or the acceptable, expectable, correct patterns of social behaviors.

The views related to transformation would be seen in the interpretations of the students who ignored the information about Sanchez's official marriage and concentrated on his involvement with the young Laura. This could also mean that some readers refute the mainstream social parameters and value the relationship that represents illicit or unauthorized transgression. Perhaps, from the perspective of these young readers, a "transgression for love" should be permitted or socially accepted.

In terms of critical literacy expectations, the absence of references to the great similarity between the contexts created by the Colombian author and those available in Brazilian society was very apparent. This aspect, that had been the researcher's main reason for selecting the short story, had not called the attention of the targeted readers. These readers were expected to notice the mutual interferences between the personal and the political, the public and the private fields, depicted by the author in the play of interests between the characters Sanchez, Nelson and Laura. The readers were also expected to perceive the exchange of favors for votes, by the politician, the political benefit required by Nelson Farina in exchange of the offer of his own daughter to the politician; and Laura's accepting to participate in the deal proposed by her father. The attitudes of the three characters seem to reveal a remarkably corruptive environment in the plot. Besides this observation, the description of the physical context in the short story greatly resembled the context of Brazil: the tropical climate, the small village and its villagers who desired to be patronized and financially "adopted" by influential politicians who would be allegedly interested in helping the "underprivileged". No critique of the paternalist-and-poverty relation as a concept of politics itself appeared in the students' interpretations. The Brazilian students were certainly capable of – but did not – identify the fictional characters of the story with real characters ones in the country's political scenario; the same applied to the settings where the story takes place. This means the university readers should have been capable of identifying connections between the characters in the story and the familiar behavior of real

political characters in Brazil who during election seasons visit small towns, make promises, attend to small solicitations as a means of keeping control of their electorates and winning over new voters. A possible awareness of these similarities could have shown how interpretations are tied up in the politics and power relations of everyday life in literate cultures, as in Luke & Freebody's perspectives (1997 p. 185), already mentioned above. However, the fact that such expectations were not reached, and such connections were not perceived by the students should be seen as evidence of what should be focused on and reinforced in a critical literacy educational program.

Conclusion

Research findings may provide analyses from diverse perspectives. In the case of this investigation, the first findings seem to indicate that, at that beginning stage of their university studies, the students investigated showed greater familiarity in meaning-making when the text was literary (thus, considered fictional). At that university stage, it was found that the research participants seemed to have developed a certain interpretive reasoning that concentrated on the identification of the main conflict of the story, the "tone" of the plot and the main characters. They described that Death Constant Beyond Love is mostly about "a politician that falls in love with a young girl during his campaign" or "a senator that meets the woman of his life a few months before his death". Almost all of them undoubtedly read it as a love story and identified the same three main characters of the romantic and conflicted plot. The students also clearly identified the power conflicts involved: political (though restricted to the senator's campaign), persuasion and seduction, but they did not identify corruption.

The divergences in the interpretations of the short story lie in the less obvious information in the story (the senator's wife and children, for example) or in the ambiguities constructed by Garcia Marquez, as a creative characteristic of his works: whether the senator's feelings towards the girl were or were not true love; whether the couple's relationship was consummated or not. Nevertheless, both convergences and divergences convey religious beliefs, family values, and love concerns and very little or no social and political perspectives, such as the identification of the similarities between the socio-political issues in Brazil and another South-American countries, for instance.

This difficulty in making interpretive connections at a political contextual level may probably be attributed to the emphasis given to the way reading and interpretation are taught or practiced at Brazilian elementary/secondary levels. It is known that this task is practiced mostly through literary texts. In school contexts, the identification of what is called the central focus is often emphasized in the reading of fictional texts such as the short story by Garcia Marquez's , where students are required to identify main conflict, plot, tone, and characters, but do little to relate the content of the literary narrative with their own social context.

As for the reading of the documentary, the students demonstrated less confidence in construct their own meanings for it, concentrating on the registering of their learning of its content. Out of the three tasks assigned (summarizing, critiquing, writing about their learning from the text), very little critique was found in their reading of the documentary and much surprise was registered by the students about what they came to learn from Brazil: Beyond Citizen Kane. The hypothesis that may be raised in relation to the students' interaction with a "real-life-based" text was that the strategies that characterize this genre – the reconstruction of reality through historic data, images, testimonies, for instance – confer credibility to the text in such a way as to make it apparently irrefutable to the eyes of the spectator. As a result, these strategies would prevent the viewer from exercising suspicion and learning to unconceal what is not apparent, as in Ricoeur's hermeneutics (1977), or to break codes and develop his/her own resources as text participant, user, analyst and critic, as Luke and Freebody propose (1997), or to develop awareness and reconstruct his/her reality, as Freire advocates (2001).

In the meaning-making analysis of the two texts, Bourdieu's notion of habitus can be identified in the interpretive habitus that is developed in the young viewers. The students probably apprehend the idea, informed by the linguistic market or social practices in which they are situated, that fictional texts, such as a short story, represent a created world that requires interpretation, while a non-fictional text, such as a documentary that is "committed to reality", requires certifying or recording a particular situation, fact or "reality". This hypothesis helps to explain how viewers interacted with what is called "non-fictional" texts. It has, at the same time, been taken to the wider research group as a relevant datum that demands deeper and further analysis.

One could conclude that textual critique in schooling should be situated at all levels of the students' development. The fact that many of these university students lack these critical practices but become teachers in elementary and secondary schools indicates the gravity of this situation and how its negative aspects may be multiplied and reinforced in the school system. If awareness, critique, and a critical sense of citizenship are to become the focus of pedagogical practice at the basic levels of schooling, the development of critical literacy and education of university students who are to be future teachers in the school system may make all the difference.

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NOTES:

1. PISA- Programme for International Students Achievement. According to a PISA report (2000-2001), Brazilian students were ranked thirty-second in their ability of reading critically.
2. The Paulo Montenegro Institute
3. The illiteracy rate in Brazil decreased from 9% in 2001 to 7% in 2005. Source: Paulo Montenegro Institute and NGO Ação Educativa, Brasil. 2005.
4. 68% of those who completed elementary and secondary levels in Brazil show limited ability of reading: restricted to titles, short phrases, short texts, localizing explicit information and information that requires little inference. Source: Paulo Montenegro Institute and NGO "Ação Educativa", Brasil. 2005.
5. The Brazilian research group, together with colleagues from Australia, South Africa and Greece, takes part in a larger international research, led by Ilana Snyder (Monash University, Australia). This international research aims to produce cross-cultural studies of young people's engagement with new technologies and the implications for education.
6. Denise B. BRAGA (UNICAMP), Lynn Mario T. MENEZES DE SOUZA and Walkyria MONTE MÓR (USP)
7. Produced by Simon Hartog. England:BBC. 1992
8. Garcia Márquez, G., Innocent Erendira, USA: Harper, 1976; UK: Penguin, 1996
9.

Reading Foreign Literature At University Level In Brazil: Developing Critical Readers

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In this paper, I will discuss the concept of institutional histories. I mean by that the perceptions that the students acquire through the relationships established during their academic lives; these relationships, instead of being specifically related to learned knowledge, are related to survival strategies in the university. The notion I develop here of institutional histories is similar to what is conventionally called the hidden curriculum by Samuel Bowles and Hervert Gintis. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993). According to this idea, the hidden curriculum would be composed of the aspects that, without being explicit in the official curriculum, contribute, in a tacit way, to relevant social behavior. Nowadays, it seems that this concept has become outdated, since the objectives of capitalist societies are explicit, and not implicit, in the curricula (Silva 1999b).

In this analysis of the institutional histories of the students, I am interested in the social relations that are established in the university, for I believe that they are relevant to meaning production, interfering in the contents offered by the disciplines and in the transformations that the students imprint onto the knowledge acquired through such contents. These social relations are not considered, in this paper, as simply positive or negative. They exist and set relationships into motion, and need to be understood in the interests of establishing a fairer and more just society. I do not believe that unequal situations are motivated only by economic issues, but that they represent one of the aspects of their causes. In this sense, I do not see power in the way it is analyzed by the economic-reproductive model of education, according to which power "becomes the property of dominant groups and operates to reproduce class, gender, and racial inequalities that function in the interests of accumulation and expansion of capital" (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993:70). I prefer to see power in a more Foucaultian perspective, that recognizes not the binary positions of subjects, as oppressors or oppressed, but the changing positions of decentered subjects. In this perspective, power would not be a one-way force, but a multi-faced energy working in and from all directions.

I consider that discussing education, power and economic relations is a delicate matter. Recognizing that positions of power and truth are historic and, as a consequence, transitory, seems to indicate the opposite direction of the ideals of education, mainly when we consider the perspective of those who, in Marxist terms, "maintain power", such as university teachers. Theories of truth as changing are scaring, for although they do not propose the concession of power, they are even more empowering, in my opinion, than theories that look for power. Unveiling power/knowledge relations, post-structuralist theories, such as that of Foucault in particular, show that power is always there; as such power depends on the positions the subject occupies in the discourse, revealing sometimes

more, sometimes less, power. The issue, here, is what can we do in terms of education in this perspective? What is the role of education, if it is not empowering individuals, or, in other words, helping students to gain power? Silva (1999a) tackles the issue affirming that a critical education believes that it is possible, through a critique of ideology, to perceive how knowledge is contaminated by ideology, and thus attain a non-mystified understanding of the social world. Yet, if we consider a post-structuralist perspective, still according to Silva, we have to recognize, first, that all forms of power/knowledge are linked to power. Secondly, power relations are complexly omnipresent, are not restricted to a single center and do not portray the world simply in terms of oppressors and oppressed. The oppressive or free nature of a discourse should be historically analyzed, changing the focus of analysis of power forces, whose sources cannot be easily or simply identified anymore; also the means through which these forces exercise power should be taken into account.

Based on the notion of power/knowledge discussed here, I believe that the main objective of a critical education should be to help students to recognize the power they already have to transform knowledge in meaningful ways in order to change their realities, thus contributing to the building of a better society. In other words, I believe it is possible, through critical education, to help students to exercise agency. By agency I mean a reflexive and transformative action; this takes into account means of self-reflection about individual and social experiences and histories, involving critical thought and action. Agency is not solely based on human self-determination: it is ideologically marked, instructed by ideological discourses that, at the same time, make possible and restrict meaning production by the agents, acting in the time-lag (Bhabha 1994) of significations. In this way, we cannot polarize teachers and students as subjects and objects of the educational processes, but as agents that negotiate experiences.

Based on this theoretical discussion, in this paper I analyze the institutional relations between university teachers and students of an Arts course in Brazil that aims at producing English teachers. In this research, which is part of a wider ethnographic project, I look at the ways the students produce meaning through reading literature in English in class. A such, I obsreve classes and interviewed students and teachers of eight groups of literature in English classes from two different universities in two medium-sized cities in Brazil. It is interesting to notice that, in one university, the course takes five years to be accomplished, and in the other, four. They offer basically the same disciplines on the English language, literatures in English, Portuguese language, literatures in Portuguese, Linguistics, Literary theory and criticism, and subjects related to pedagogy, teaching mother and foreign languages, besides the teacher-training period. The courses are part-time, either in the mornings, afternoons or evenings. Most students work, as teachers or in other occupations, while they study.

Aiming at a reading of the ways the students establish relationships in the institutions, the interviews developed with them, which reveal their institutional histories, were classified into four groups: the students and their self-image, the students and their classmates, the students and their teachers, the students and their professional perspective.

Students and their self-image

Throughout the experience the students acquire in their academic lives, they develop an image of themselves and their classmates as students. According to a certain stereotyped version of themselves, the students anticipate certain attitudes. For one student, for example, the reading assignments are, by definition, not interesting because they are assignments: When you are forced to do something, it seems that a barrier is created; you don't see it positively. Later, when you are forced to read, after you have read, then you think, that was OK, but in the beginning… (S61). For S61, it is natural for the students to resist whatever is imposed on them; this does not mean that they disagree with the assignments, but that their first reaction is one of resistance.

Besides this motive for resistance, another motive is that of grading, as S21 mentions: If It's graded, we do it, if not, we don't. The students, according to this opinion, must be forced to participate in the discussions through the reward or penalty of grading. This seems that if they are not graded or penalized, interest in a task will not occur.

Students here seem to do only what is strictly necessary, at the last minute, if they have no other choice. This idea is reinforced by the teaching assistant of the group, who says that the students look for help only just before tasks and tests which are to receive grades, generally saying that they do not have time to do all the tasks required. Institutional pressure, according to a great portion of the students, is the solution, as S36 puts it:

> I think that students are problematic, they seem to be motivated only by profit; it seems that the idea that people only work through pressure still persists, isn't it? As language is a complicated issue, sometimes, if there is no pressure, if people are not exposed to speak, the oral papers… it's a little anguishing, but I think people also grow more than if they are left alone… comfortable, under no pressure, don't they? In the beginning, it would be even ridiculous, but people end up feeling the positive results.

For this student, pressure is beneficial, even if it ridicules people. This opinion is shared by another student, S40, who says that teachers should base their discussions in the classroom solely on assignments: students who have not completed their reading should not be taken into consideration in class. We cannot forget, however, that, if several students do not complete their reading assignments, the reason may be that they were unable to do so either through lack of time or lack of required knowledge such as the linguistic knowledge required to read a text in a foreign language.

S40 is a proficient student, with no difficulties with the foreign language. For her, reading in the foreign language is, for sure, faster and easier then for the majority of her colleagues. The teacher is often compelled to privilege not the student who is "lazy", but the one who knows less and needs more attention. Sometimes, it is difficult for the teacher to decide what kind of attitude s/he should take when

students do not read: to submit them to pressure, if they are lazy, or to offer extra help, if they lack knowledge.

The excerpts quoted above present a not at all positive stereotype of the students we are analyzing. It seems that Brazilian Arts students resist their teachers' suggestions only because they come from teachers and are formatted as obligations; students seem to do what is minimally demanded from them and will do it at the last minute, if the task is to be graded. In short, students seem to work only under pressure. Such pressure, still according to the students themselves, must be imposed by the teachers because students, after experiencing it, feel attracted to what they were forced to do and show positive results.

A stereotyped vision, in my view, disguises differences that may be significant to people's attitudes. Stereotypes hide prejudice that is taken as natural behavior, and if they are exposed and discussed, they can be overcome. If students believe that students in general only work under pressure, they justify irresponsible attitudes towards the teaching/learning process. They appear to believe that the responsibility for decisions in the learning process and for its rhythm is the teacher's task; the students seem to believe that their role should be to resist, no matter to what.

The role of the teacher here is extremely important, not only to impose pressure onto the students, but to dismantle the myth of the unmotivated student. The teacher may try to discover pleasurable and meaningful relations between the students and literature and awaken in them their roles as transformative intellectuals (Giroux 1997); that is, as intellectuals who recognize their social and political responsibility and are also responsible for their own intellectual work. The transformative intellectual does not believe that s/he will transform the world by revealing the truth that will be responsible for beneficial changes. S/he assumes her/his own political and social responsibility, and tries to understand what happens around her/him, searching for solutions at the same time that he/she questions pre-established forms of truth. Such a position, open to changes, to re-evaluations, to a view of contingent agency, does not match the students' stereotype of themselves as non-participating subjects, such as we have seen above. If, on the contrary, they can be made to see themselves as transformative agents, and not passive subjects, perhaps the students will try to modify their attitudes to this new posture.

Students and their classmates

In the same way that the students develop an image of themselves, they develop images of their group as a whole, and this will encourage or limit their interventions in class, and their roles in meaning production. Some students see their group as problematic, inferior to themselves in individual terms. S30 says that the students in his group come to the university without the basic knowledge necessary to learn about literature, and adds that he would not trust his classmates to teach his own children.

This student refers to his classmates' lack of knowledge in a very negative way. For him, they bring no positive contribution to the course, for they do not know "anything". He also says that as he is older than his classmates he is more mature and more prepared for the classes. It seems that S30 is correct in many points. In fact, the students in his group, in general, lack the knowledge necessary to understand the topics that are discussed in class and end up taking more time to acquire the information than the amount of time the institution believes necessary. Such a situation inhibits the rhythm pre-established by the teachers for their classes, causes difficulties in completing the syllabus proposed for the discipline, generates frustrations and, consequently, a high rate of student drop outs. As S30 points up, his group had 40 students in the first year, now, in the third year, there are 14 students in the group and probably, by the end of the course, in the fifth year, more students will drop out; this represents a drop-out rate of more that 60% for this group. Facing so many difficulties, the classes may be really very uninteresting for the students who are more proficient. Perhaps this is why S30 himself seems to be so uninterested in the classes. He was not present in any one of the classes I observed and probably has the habit of missing the classes in other disciplines as well, for it was extremely difficult to contact him in the university to invite him for the interview. Although S30 shows that he knows what he wants from the classes, it seem that he does not attend them enough to know what they are about. He also judges the contribution his colleagues bring to the academic world solely by the amount of knowledge that they bring to class. He despises the life histories his colleagues bring to the community they take part in. If S30 adopted a posture of learning from his colleagues' experiences and if he developed a willingness to help them when necessary, he would be able to discover different aspects that could be useful not only to him but also to his children in the future.

Observing some classes in the third-year evening group, I noticed that when the teacher asked for the students' opinions, the group would remain silent and, after some time, a student, S16, would always answer the questions, with an air of absolute boredom. In an interview with this student she said that previously she used to answer the questions right after the teacher had asked them. On one occasion, however, she missed one of the classes, and on that day her classmates complained to the teacher that she used to speak too much and the other students felt inhibited to try to answer the questions. She heard about this and since then she decided to wait for sometime after the question to allow the others to answer, but even so they would not answer, so she had to oblige the teacher and answer the questions herself.

S16's comprehension level was much higher than her classmates'. As the students in her group in general took longer to decipher the texts in English, to understand what the teacher said and to formulate answers, the teachers would occupy a great portion of class time trying to solve language problems, and this situation tended to irritate the students who were proficient in the foreign language such as S16. The situation, in this way, became uninteresting for everybody including the teacher, who had to interact with an unmotivated, passive group with only one voice manifesting itself.

The situations described by S31 and S14 are very common in foreign literature classes. When a minority of students presents a much higher language proficiency level than that of their classmates, they seem to contribute to the de-motivation of the group as a whole; the teacher tends to spend more time overcoming the majority of the students' language deficiencies; the other, less proficient, students tend to delegate to the proficient students the task of participating in class with personal opinions, and, in this way, miss the opportunity of developing their own critical reading and agency. Often the less proficient student blames the more proficient one for her/his own lack of participation. In such occasions, the students expect the teacher to interfere. For S43, for example, there is always somebody in the class who thinks s/he is more powerful than the others because s/he knows more and ends up disturbing the others. On such occasions, for S43, the teacher should interfere and "calm the person down".

S43 is correct in one sense, in my opinion. The teachers cannot ignore the peculiarities in the relationships among the students in a particular group, since establishing a comfortable pedagogic environment for the classes contributes to meaningful learning. I believe that teachers must develop a sustainable relationship with her/his groups of students in order to perceive when there are people to be "calmed down" and people to be "pressured" to work.

Other students pointed out different aspects of the relationship among students of a same group. S56 says that she would like to suggest different kinds of activities to be developed in class, but her classmates would not approve. They prefer to keep their academic activities to the minimum level. According to S56, she would be "stoned" by her colleagues if she proposed activities that would demand a higher level of student participation in the class. The point of view of S56 may or may not correspond to what would really happen if she did in fact propose such participation. At the same time that S56's group's alleged reaction may indeed correspond to her expectations, her opinion may constitute a process of responsibility transfer. Believing that she should propose changes, since she is not satisfied with the situation in her group, S56 may be trying to justify her attitude of not in fact doing anything to change her group's situation by anticipating a supposedly negative reaction by her classmates. Imaginary or real, the role of the group seems to be decisive in the students' behavior in class. In general, the students want to be accepted by the group. Individual attitudes often constitute anticipated views of group attitudes, no matter if they prove to be true or not.

In contrast to the above cases, two students said they felt below the class level. S62 says she is too shy to discuss her ideas with the group, and S20 says she cannot express her ideas in English and is ashamed to speak in the mother tongue since most students are proficient and speak in the foreign language. Both students feel they lack the necessary tools to take part in the group.

The students' academic lives, in this way, make them project images of the group's behavior and make students adjust their attitudes according to such purported images. These conflicts that occur in class, representing a

confrontation of different opinions, could be turned to productive use if a process of interactive collective reading and meaning production was promoted in the group, since agency is also informed by the images students create of themselves through the eyes of the others, in this case, their classmates.

Students and their teachers

Even more evident than the relation between the student and her/his classmates, is the relation between the students and the teacher. The teacher represents institutional power; s/he is the direct representative of the whole educational institution. S/he can determine what is right and what is wrong and decide which student will be able to continue in the academic world and which student does not fulfill the minimum requisites to become a professional. In this way, students learn very early how to adjust their attitudes to the teachers' reactions. The role of the teacher in the relationship between the students and the literary text is crucial, for s/he intermediates constantly such a relation. In this section, I try to compile examples of how the students, in order to survive in the course, decide to behave in relation to her/his readings and to those of the teachers.

For S41, the inferiority of the students in relation to the teacher's forces them to accept what is determined by the teacher. Even if the students do not agree with the teacher concerning evaluation, for example, which is the most powerful tool of the teacher, the students do not feel strong enough to disagree. Of course many teachers are open to discussions and the institutions, through the course coordinators, offer official means for students to respond to unfair behavior from teachers. The students' institutional experience, however, teaches them that official complaints should be avoided, for they ruin the relationship between students and teachers, and my jeopardize them in the future. Furthermore, the teacher, seen as the one who holds knowledge, normally has the means to prove that her/his posture is always correct.

The superior position of the teacher, in terms of knowledge, de-motivates the students' from participating in discussions, at the same time that it confers an excessively high degree of confidence in the purported correctness of the teacher's opinions. S26, for example, says that she used to discuss her own point of view in class sometimes, in spite of her difficulties; but now, after being corrected so much by the teacher, she waits for his interpretation and tries to adapt her own readings accordingly. S26 trusts the teacher's reading much more than her own, to the point of effacing her opinion overall, in a traumatic way.

Another student, S16, says that she voices her opinions and that the teacher even agrees with her. During the assessments, however, she writes down what she thinks the teacher will consider as correct and does not feel confident to disagree with the teacher and the collection of critical texts already accepted by the academic world. This student shows a contradictory position. She affirms that the teacher accepts her opinions in class, so probably would accept them in the written tests as well. She recognizes that her teacher offers her an opportunity to express herself, but she does not feel confident to enjoy it. The image of the traditional teacher who constrains students is so strong that even when the

student is apparently not being repressed she feels she is. For another student, S50, the teacher could coordinate class discussions asking the students to justify their points of view. Instead, what generally happens is a "cutting short", the teacher rejects totally the student's opinion.

For another student, S31, whenever discussions for different readings happen in class, the students always agree with the teacher, since s/he has a more powerful argument. The collections of readings that the teacher brings with her/him, and her/his academic title, are enough to convince the students that their arguments will fail. However, students like S31 seem to lack the comprehension that there are other kinds of information, or world views, that can bring different readings. Even if they do not hold a great amount of theoretical knowledge, students bring to the class their own life histories that will make personal readings possible. These readings may be different from the ones the teacher and the critics present, but may also be made valid if they were inserted in an academic framework thus offering the chance for students to "win" classroom arguments once in a while.

Sometimes, however, it is the students who make the teachers believe they have "won" the arguments; in these cases the students keep their interpretation to themselves. S62 says:

> When I don't understand a subject, I don't know what is being discussed there, I leave it to the teacher, as what she says is the law. But when I know it and I have an idea about it, I keep my opinion to myself mine and she keeps hers; I don't change my opinion, but then I don't say anything, I don't even open my mouth, I keep it to myself, I keep quiet.

This excerpt shows that the teacher has difficulty in knowing what students really learn. They may have the illusion that a group of students thinks like them and not notice that this may not always be the case.

Fear of the teacher's reaction, however, does not always restrict students from voicing their opinions. S37 affirms that she has no qualms about voicing her readings or accepting the teacher's readings. She tries to make clear, in the assessments, what comes from her personal impressions and what was transmitted to her in class by the teacher or through critical and theoretical readings. She says she is not worried about the way the teacher will grade her test or paper. By marking clearly what her opinion is and what comes from other sources, the student is able to voice her thoughts and, at the same time, guarantee her academic survival. She is so self-confident that she says she was, at the time of the interview, writing for her final paper something different from what the teacher said in class. For sure, the attitudes of such students are motivated by academic histories, and even personal histories, different from those that S26, S50 and S13 brought with them, full of negative experiences relating to the voicing of their own opinions and readings.
Probably S37 had contact with teachers more prone to accepting the students' points of view, or her theoretical knowledge may be higher than that of her

classmates. Another possibility is that S37 is less shy than S62, for example, and is not as affected by what colleagues or teachers think about her or her opinions.

I was able to perceive this same posture in another student, S33. Apparently very self- assured, S33 affirms that, at first, she says what she thinks, but if the teacher brings another reading, she is not always convinced. In such situations, she prefers to remain silent; however, she says that she keeps the opinion to herself because she does not want to appear rude in class. In her writing assignments, however, S33 affirms that she writes what she thinks and has never had any kind of problem with that.

The attitudes of students like S62 and S33 show that students act in different ways in the classroom. I believe this happens because each one brings particular personal, academic and institutional histories, so they speak from different sites of enunciation even if their narrative sites (Bhabha 1994) are, apparently, the same. Once more, the role of the teacher is determinant in all these histories. If S37 had always had repressive teachers, I do not believe that her behavior would have been so self-assured in the classroom. S33 also says she had never had problems with her grades. This fact, certainly, keeps her self-assurance at a high level.

In order to provide a fertile environment for different possible readings, or meaning production, the teacher may refer to what Culler and Fish (Fish 1980) say about the relationship between students and teachers based on trust in literary education. Culler talks about a confidence trick that involves students and teachers, making students accept the knowledge teachers deliver to them. I believe that if teachers accept the idea of temporary trust in student readings, up to the point that such a trust may give rise to other readings, teachers will be able to accept and help their students to accept diverse perspectives. It is not necessary to adopt a reactionary, repressive attitude, which will only contribute to a feeling of non-belonging in the pedagogical process for the students. Such a feeling can only bring frustration to both students and teachers, since insecure students will not be able to present even the most basic level of progress in learning.

On the other hand, even when the teacher is extremely authoritative and reactionary, not accepting student readings which diverge from his/her own, student agency, though unvoiced and invisible, will still be present. Teachers thus have the option of encouraging agency and making it more visible, even if it will not show itself completely. When agency is encouraged, there will be a greater possibility of meaning production and frustrations will be diminished.

Students and their professional perspective

The experience the students develop during their lives in schools leads them to create an image of their future profession as teachers. Through their contact with their teachers, students build up images of the role of teachers in society. S36, for example, has constructed a quite idealized image of teachers:

I was 12 when I went to school for the first time, you know? The teacher was a figure… I have always thought that the teacher was a figure like… I see being a teacher as a mission, you know? Something like a talent, you know, the great teachers, you know… the greater teachers I had, almost all of them, it seems that there is an inspiration, you know, there is this biological issue, transformation issue, I think the world could be better, Brazil could be better, and why isn't it? There's something missing, there's something to be fixed and somebody must do it. I have always thought that the only people that could and can fix our county are the teachers. The teacher is something extremely great, you know, although I respect all the professionals from all areas, the teacher.. has something that others don't.

Probably for S35 schools and teachers were unattainable during his childhood, since he started school only at 12. This situation, for sure, has contributed to such an idealized vision he has developed of the profession. This perspective, though, corresponds to the common sense idea that sees teaching as a sacred activity similar to priesthood. The profession, from this perspective, is a "talent" hat requires giving oneself over to a personal mission, with no necessary reward other than making possible the transformation of information into meaningful knowledge, permitting people to realize their potentials in their capacity of producing thought and meanings. Such a concept, although apparently attributing extreme value to the profession, in reality does it a disservice. Teachers, it is expected, will do their best to transmit knowledge to the students, and like priests, hope for nothing in exchange. Moreover, S36 speaks about a biological predisposition, as if one has to be a born teacher.

The vision S36 develops of teachers apparently positive and respectful, may in fact be negative from two points of view and justifies attributing to teachers an inferior position in society. Firstly, students such as S36 probably would not be able to approach their teachers since they do not perceive themselves as being on the same level. Excessive respect often may not be productive. Not feeling courageous enough to disagree with the teacher, students like S36 tend to accept passively everything that comes from the educational environment. Such students may be good at following rules, but will rarely make decisions. Secondly, teachers-to-be who have such an idealized vision of their future profession may get disappointed when they start to work as teachers. If their future students do not treat them in the same reverential way they may feel diminished in their professional lives. In the same way that they feel they cannot argue academically with their teachers as they feel inferior to them, they are likely to interpret arguments with their own students in a similar manner.

For S24 and S25, as trainee teachers, frustration was the feeling experienced in their first contact with students. Both felt their efforts were not sufficiently rewarded. They say they spent time planning the lessons but could not achieve the expected results. They also mention "gift" and "vocation" when they speak, reminding one of S36. These students would like to see everything the way they had planned, proving that the classes had been, in fact, planned. From a positivist view of teaching, it seems that the trainee teachers did not work hard

enough when things do not come out the way they were supposed to do. S24 even gives examples of what "went wrong": the concept of literature they had learned at university did not match what she saw happening in the school where she was as a trainee teacher. They were frustrated and could not see that this unpleasant experience would probably not repeat itself always in their professional lives. However, one does not have to receive a special gift from heaven to become a teacher. It is necessary to notice that there are several ways of comprehending things and teachers should, instead of looking for "correct" ways of teaching, look for adequate ways of doing things with their students even if those ways are temporary and come out being eventually replaced. The kind of respect the trainee teachers expect from their students and, according to their opinion, will probably come when they become experienced teachers, may result, negatively as commented above, in the expectation of the excessive respect S36 thinks teachers should receive.

I am not suggesting that schools should not have rules, nor that students should not have limits. Respect for rules is fundamental for the survival of any society. The teacher, as an educator, has the right and the duty to demand that her/his students obey the rules. I do not believe, however, that teachers should refuse to discuss rules and accept changes. At the same time, in terms of transformation of knowledge, or in other words, meaning production, teachers should be accessible to students to read, together, the world from creative and critical perspectives.

In conclusion, the social relations established in the academic environment are crucial for meaning production and relevant for the teaching-learning process. In this sense, I consider of capital importance that university teachers be sensitive to the images students produce of themselves, of their classmates, of their teachers and of their future professional practice. It is by trying to act according to the demands of these different groups, that students guide their thoughts, formulate critical readings and exercise their agency.

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Children's Literature and Gender: A Critical Approach

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> "Children's books become interesting sites for gender studies because they sometimes provide models for what girls and boys should be like in a given culture"
> Fry, K. (2005) "No longer a friend of Narnia: Gender in Narnia" in The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy, Bassham and Walls (ed.), Illinois, Open Court.

Introduction

There are probably many reasons why children's literature is a relevant area of study. The ones this paper will explore in the following lines emerge when children's literature is analysed from the perspective of Cultural Studies and the field of Discourse Analysis, and a combination of theoretical tools, especially the concept of culture, power relations, Critical Literacy, ideology and gender –as opposed to sex- and how they can be applied to the analysis of children's literature.

Childhood as a Construct

Together with film, television, print journalism, advertising and other type of social practices literature is part of media representations and as such it contributes to the construction of an image of the world. It is through media that people are interpellated as subjects within a certain society and its complex network of views and values. Hence, children's literature influences how children conceive different social groups, gender and proper and improper behaviour. Since books for children provide –and promote- certain approaches to masculinity and femininity their close critical analysis should be carried out especially in order to surface the assumptions and biases contained therein.

As has often been pointed out, discourse and the social production of knowledge are never neutral. Conversely, they are intrinsically ideological and biased and therefore should be examined critically. In this sense, meaning is not stabilised. It is open and is always the object of struggle and conflict among social groups for its appropriation and control. As Claire Kramsch argues: "Meaning is never achieved once and for all, it must be conquered anew in every utterance through the verbal actions and interactions of speakers and hearers, writers, and readers" (1998:25).

Children's literature is to promote sensitivity to culture, gender and ethnic differences. Against the hegemonic efforts towards the homogenization of perspectives and negative stereotyping, children's literature should highlight

difference and heterodoxy to address diversity in today's multicultural and globalized world.

Although childhood could be defined biologically or clinically, it is also defined by culture. The concept of childhood varies from one society to another as well as the ideas conveyed to children in the books aimed at them: "Children are not only biological entities, but socially constituted roles, i.e. children are culturally constitutes as children by parents who consistently 'speak for them', and by children who accept to be 'spoken for'" (Kramsch; 1998:33). That is to say, being a child in the Industrial Revolution, for instance, is far different from being a child nowadays; at least because children do not work –or so the legal system states- and schooling is much more widespread than two hundred years ago.

As the result of social practices, all texts are ideologically biased in the sense that they serve a specific idea of the world and hence a view of class, race and gender. Texts also hold an idea of childhood and what being a child implies. Innocence, creativity and curiosity are not natural attributes of the early age. They are just one way, among others, in which childhood is conceptualized by culture being the image of the mischievous naughty child its negative stigmatized counterpart.

In the Critical Literacy ELT class students are engaged in the dissection of this covert ideological dimension that underlies texts and are encouraged to build meaning from another perspective: "students of critical literacy approach textual meaning making a process of construction, not exegesis; one imbues a text with meaning rather than extracting meaning from it. More important, textual meaning is understood in the context of social, historic, and power relations, not solely as the product or intention of an author. Further, reading is an act of coming to know the world (as well as the word) and a means to social transformation" (Cervetti, G., Pardales, M.J., & Damico, J.S.; 2001).

In this context, interpretations and meaning are considered the result of sociopolitical practices which involve power relations, discourse and struggle over the significance of certain facts: what being a man or a woman means, what being a child means.

Gender Relations: Patriarchy as Hegemonic Ideology

In addition to childhood, gender relations are also culturally bound. Through the books they read children get an idea of the world they live in and the place their gender occupies in it. They are imbued with what is expected from boys and girls in terms of attitudes, what behaviour is agreeable in each case and what should be punished or stigmatized: "Besides being an important resource for developing children's language skills, children's books play a significant part in transmitting a society's culture to children. Gender roles are an important part of this culture. How genders are portrayed in children's books thus contributes to the image children develop of their own role and that of their gender in society" (Singh; 1998).

When Gramsci (1971) defined the term hegemony at the beginning of the last century he stressed the fact that it consisted in the predominance of one social

class over another being the subordinate one co responsible of such domination. When analyzing gender, it can be agreed there is also predominance of one gender over another. This "form of male domination" (1998) is how patriarchy is defined by the Argentine feminist July Chaneton.

In Althusserian terms, patriarchy could be understood as hegemonic ideology in the sense that there is a process of internalization operating through which the views and values promoted by one gender are seen as natural and therefore not questioned by the other, devalued, gender. Althusser's main contribution to the analysis of ideology is the idea that it does not only consist in overt political stances held by social groups. Ideology operates more subtly and is also present in institutions such as churches, schools and family –all of them Ideological State Apparatuses (1971)- which shape our perceptions and social practices.

As opposed to sex which is mainly connected to biological differences between boys and girls, men and women, gender is defined by theorist Joan Scott as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes,(…) gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott; 1999:42). In this context, men are expected to be independent, strong, rational and aggressive, and women, weak, affectionate, irrational and sensitive. These attributes are grounded on the assumption that men are active and women passive.

Children's Literature and Gender: A Brief Analysis on the Chronicles of Narnia
According to Kimberley Reynolds the study of children's literature is not only important because it is connected to language acquisition but also because language is the means through which the world becomes intelligible to children: "While reading, the young person is trying out new languages, experimenting with different kinds of subject positions and identities, and encountering different ideas about what the world feels like" (1994:ix).
One feature she analyses is the fact that books tend to be instructive and are therefore agents of the dissemination of ideas and values held by society. This role of children's literature becomes even more evident if we take into account that it is at school where reading is highly valued and praised. This may explain why children's literature and social policy are inextricably linked. Reynolds puts it thus: "No literature is neutral, but children's literature is more concerned with shaping its readers' attitudes than most" (1994:ix).

C. S. Lewis' The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe can be analysed from the perspective of Gender Studies in multiple ways. Although it could be argued that "the typical female heroine in the Chronicles is frustrated with female gender roles and surpasses the conventional limitations of her sex by bending the gender rules" (Fry; 2005:155), there is evidence in the story of how close the characters stick to the demands of each gender. A brief character analysis appears to be useful to trace how the dominant ideas of masculinity and femininity are reinforced through the use of innocent and apparently insignificant Christmas gifts.

In one stage of their long lasting stay in Narnia three of the human main characters Peter, Susan and Lucy –helped by a couple of nice clearly gender-

specific beavers- meet Santa Claus for Christmas –already a sign pointing out that Narnia is also as Western and Christian as our world. Apart from the fact that the presents they receive will be crucial over the end of the story, they are intrinsically gendered.

Peter gets a sword, Susan an ivory horn and a bow and arrow, and Lucy a dagger and a bottle with a healing cordial. The significance of the sword does not need to be explained. It is in essence a phallic symbol, laden with allusions to aggressive and active bravery. He is the boy of the group and as such the legitimate leader who has to protect the others who are –not- casually girls. He uses the sword to save his sister and afterwards has to wipe it from the remaining blood once he has slashed a wolf with it.

It could be argued, though, that Susan receives a bow and arrow and that these are also a sign of outstanding bravery. She is actually brave and her behaviour is not that of a completely submissive girl. However, there is no evidence in the book that she effectively uses the bow and arrow she has been given. She apparently does not make use of them or at least not at a rate Lewis would have considered worth including in the story. What is more, the most important sequence in which Susan is foregrounded is precisely when Peter saves her from the jaws of a devouring wolf. This is the point at which she uses the horn. Instead of saving others, she has to be saved at the last minute. She remains passive, helplessly waiting for her brother's powerful sword to help her. From the two gifts she receives she uses the one which places her in a reactive position where, as a subordinated entity, she can only wait for the help to arrive.

Lucy, in turn, does not make use of the dagger either and does use the tiny bottle she has been given. She uses it to heal Edmund, the fourth human and her brother who was co-opted by the witch at the beginning of the story. And then she heals everyone who has been wounded in the battle. Of course healing constitutes an active role when considering wars and combat, but a role generally assigned to women which turns Lucy into the sweet Florence Nightingale of the story: nursing, caring, curing. In "Fantasy, Psychology and Feminism: Jungian Readings of Classic British Fantasy Fiction"Susan Hancock claims: "Lucy is clearly en instrument rather than a source of power, and in using the gift is firmly controlled by Aslan (the Divine) (…) Finally, the divine patriarchal figure chastises Lucy for her excessive focus on Edmund" (2005:55).

In the same way Susan depends on Peter, Lucy is subordinated to Aslan. Both girls are portrayed as unable to make decisions on their own either because they are weak and feeble or because they are not functional to the purposes of the battle. Seemingly, agency is forbidden to them. The violent action of penetrating somebody's flesh with an arrow or dagger is something not permitted to the girls not only because it seems not appropriate, but also because "battles are ugly when women fight" (Lewis; 2001:119) as Father Christmas conclusively asserts.

The beavers are also illustrative of this subtle reinforcement of gender roles. Mrs. Beaver is the stereotype of a loving granny. Even more maternal than a mother herself, she sews, cooks for the group, packs the food and takes care of Edmund

when he is wounded in battle. She is nurturing and loving. Its counterpart, Mr. Beaver, is the man of the house. He goes outside the house to find the children, while Mrs. Beaver remains in the privacy of the home. He drinks beer and smokes pipe and is literally the breadwinner, the one in charge of getting the food for this 'transitory' family formed by the children and these two not-so-animal-like beings.

Resistant Reading Strategies

Trying to trace and surface political, social and gender assumptions in texts seems to be one possible alternative to the traditional analysis of books and other media. From a critical pedagogy perspective resistant reading would be the most recommendable strategy when approaching different texts.
According to Stuart Hall's approach to reception practices, students would be carrying out a kind of counter-hegemonic reading, one in which an alternative frame of reference operates to produce heterodox and more ideological-aware readings.

In The Pleasures of Children's Literature Nodelman and Reimer point out that "Knowing how to read against a text by identifying and thinking about the subject positions it offers, then, becomes a highly significant skill for children as well as adults" (1992:179). This is, therefore, the way in which students can become empowered subjects who can consciously choose from a range of positions offered by diverse media.

Conclusion

Critical Literacy offers a wide range of options to generate a different textual practice which promotes resistance and alternative readings of a text. Making students aware of the multiple strategies they can build themselves and apply to the analysis of media –books but also film, cartoon, commercials, photography, etc.- should be one of the main goals of the ELT class.
Surfacing assumptions and dissecting discourse are procedures that are to be encouraged from a critical pedagogy perspective. One in which meaning is constructed democratically and in an interactive way between students and teachers.

As the counterpart of homogenization and stereotyping, Critical Literacy appears as the alternative which allows for multicultural and open approaches to issues such as gender, race and class, but also poverty, immigration and other phenomena present in the globalized world.

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An Ethical Engagement with the Other: Spivak's ideas on Education

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Gayatri C. Spivak is a postcolonial theorist who articulates the links between culture, power and economics, offering insights into how ideas of privilege, merit, development and difference deriving from colonial processes still play significant roles in the justification and maintainance of inequalities. Spivak critiques imperialism from a feminist-deconstructivist standpoint using (and being critical of) Marxism to articulate the economic dimension of her critique. She addresses issues of voice and representation in relation to the 'Third World' and the role and place of education (both actual and potential) in relation to 'North-South' encounters. She invites one to look at one's own context, positioning and complicities, to unlearn one's privilege, to establish an ethical relationship to difference and to learn to learn from below. In this article I outline key ideas in her work which point towards the relevance of critical literacy in education, especially education that is concerned with issues of global and social justice. However, it is important to point out that her style of writing and mode of critique make it very difficult to classify or present a clear-cut picture of her work, which is much more related to finding contradictions (aporias) to open up debates than to propose a coherent set of universally applicable solutions.

Colonialism and globalisation

In her critique of imperialism, Spivak argues that colonialism started a process of global inequality and socioeconomic impoverishment for the Third World by incorporating the colonies into the international division of labour, that globalisation is a continuation of this process and that "the subaltern woman is now to a rather large extent the support of production" (Spivak, 1999:67). She emphasises the role of the cultural dimension of imperialism in the creation of the Third World – a process of cultural production and domination she calls 'worlding of the West as world' in which Western interests are projected as the World's interests and become naturalised in the rest of world (Spivak, 1990).

For Spivak, the construction and naturalisation of the idea of the 'Third World' obfuscate the construction and naturalisation of Western dominance and supremacy. She calls this process 'epistemic violence' of imperialism. She argues that this naturalisation occurs by a disavowal of the history of imperialism and the unequal balance of power between the 'First' and 'Third' Worlds in the global capitalist system. The outcome of this naturalisation is a discourse of modernisation in which colonialism is either ignored or placed securely in the past, so that we think it is over and does not affect – and has not affected - the construction of the present situation. The result is a sanctioned ignorance (constitutive disavowal) of the role of colonialism in the creation of the wealth of

what is called the 'First World' today, as well as the role of the international division of labour and exploitation of the Third World in the maintenance of this wealth. Within this naturalised logic, the beginning of the Third World is post-WWII "with 'First' World growth patterns serving as history's guide and goal" (Kapoor, 2004:669). This ideology produces the discourse of 'development' and policies of structural adjustment and free trade which prompt Third World countries to buy (culturally, ideologically, socially and structurally) from the 'First' a "self-contained version of the West", ignoring both its complicity with and production by the 'imperialist project' (Spivak, 1988). Also within this framework, poverty is constructed as a lack of resources, services and markets, and of education (as the right subjectivity to participate in the global market), rather than a lack of control over the production of resources (Biccum, 2005:1017) or enforced disempowerment. This sanctioned ignorance, which disguises the worlding of the world, places the responsibility for poverty upon the poor themselves and justifies the project of development of the Other as a 'civilising mission'.

The West becoming global
For Spivak the epistemic violence of colonialism makes this sanctioned ignorance work both ways with complementary results (as the Third World forgets about the worlding and 'wants' to be civilised/catch up with the West). In line with Said, Bhabha and Fanon, Spivak affirms that the colonial power changes the subaltern's perception of self and reality and legitimises its cultural supremacy in the (epistemic) violence of creating an 'inferior' other and naturalising these constructs. Spivak illustrates that in the 'First World' it reinforces eurocentrism and triumphalism as people are encouraged to think that they live in the centre of the world, that they have a responsibility to 'help the rest' and that "people from other parts of the world are not fully global" (Spivak, 2003:622). This has significant implications for the notion of 'global citizenship' (Whose globe? Whose citizenship? Who benefits?). However, in terms of the reproduction of this ideology, for Spivak the class culture is more important than geographic positioning: she refers to an elite global professional class (consisting of people in or coming from the First and the Third Worlds) marked by access to the internet and a culture of managerialism and of international non-governmental organisations involved in development and human rights. She maintains that this global elite is prone to project and reproduce these ethnocentric and developmentalist mythologies onto the Third World 'subalterns' they are ready to help to 'develop'.

Issues of voice and engagement
Spivak asserts that this baggage of sanctioned ignorances, as well as one's institutional positionings, always mediate the representations and engagements with the Third World subaltern. In her critique, she shows that attempts to speak for the subaltern, to enable the subaltern to speak or even to listen to the subaltern can very easily end up silencing the subaltern. Her most influential essay "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988) draws on the example of the British intervention and the local reaction in relation to the practice of widow sacrifice (sati) in India to demonstrate how both colonial and 'native' representations of the oppressed are similarly problematic. She examines how the British tried to ban

the practice on the basis of their 'civilising mission' (justifying the imposition of the liberating and modernising regime of Empire), which Spivak illustrates in the sentence 'White men are saving brown women from brown men', in contrast with the dominant Hindu opposition illustrated in the sentence 'But they *want* to die' (committing a 'pure' and 'courageous' act) (Spivak, 1988).

This process confirmed the self-image of the British as civilisationally superior in comparison to both the native woman and the local oppressors (Moore-Gilbert, 1997). For Spivak, the voice of the widows is ignored in this exchange. She concludes that "between Patriarchy and Imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears […] There is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak" (Spivak, 1988:306-307). She also uses the example of the political suicide of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri that was interpreted in the local scene in India as sati to illustrate that even when the subaltern tries to say something, she is 're-interpreted' from an ideological-political standpoint. When she asks 'can the subaltern speak?' her point is that, in the examples she gives, two meanings of representation are conflated: that of 'speaking for' (political representation) and that of 'speaking about' or re-presenting (making a portrait 'as people are or would like to be'). This conflation ends up silencing the widows and erasing the role and the complicity of the 'representers' in the representational process.

She also accuses Deleuze and Foucault of the same fault of making gross generalisations when speaking of/for the Third World subaltern (referring to categories such as 'the workers' or 'the struggle'), using a discourse of emancipatory politics and assuming cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people and ignoring the international divisions of labour, as well as their ties to a history of appropriation which reinforces their own prestige as interpreters of subaltern experience (Moore-Gilbert, 1997): "the banality of leftist intellectuals list of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed: representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent" (Spivak, 1988:275). Being transparent means being able to "escape the determinations of the general system of Western exploitation of the Third World – in which Western modes and institutions of knowledge (such as universities and cultural theory) are deeply implicated" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:89) She suggests that progressive intellectuals representing themselves as the 'saviours of marginality' and intervening 'benevolently' to further the struggle of the subaltern for greater recognition and rights end up reproducing the same power relations that they seek to put an end to.

The claim that the subaltern cannot speak means that she cannot speak in a way that would carry authority or meaning for non-subalterns without altering the relations of power/knowledge that constitute the subaltern in the first place (Beverley, 1999).

However, Spivak also questions the assumption that the subaltern necessarily has a privileged insight into her own predicament - a pure or essential form of self- consciousness independent from the colonial discourses and practices that have constructed her as a social category. If the subaltern is constructed by the

hegemony of the dominant (even as an intending subject of resistance), by definition she cannot be autonomous (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:87). Thus, Spivak questions the subaltern's ability to speak 'for herself' (without being a mouthpiece) and suggests that if the subaltern is speaking (given a voice) she is not a subaltern anymore and that the terms determined for her speech (the space opened for her to speak) will affect what is going to be said and how her voice will be heard. Therefore she is suspicious of attempts to retrieve a pure form of subaltern consciousness and suggests that the effort to produce a transparent or authentic (and heroic) subaltern is a desire of the intellectual to be benevolent or progressive that ends up silencing the subaltern once again (Kapoor, 2004).

Western Knowledge production
Spivak is critical of the way Western institutions produce knowledge about the 'Third World' and their desire for the most 'authentic' and 'pure' Third World subject. She analyses the implications of placing native informants as authentic and exotic 'insiders' (while Western researchers are 'benevolent' outsiders). For her, this outside/inside binary results in a depoliticisation of ethnicity or in the placement of the onus for change on the Third World subaltern (or the informant as its representative) (Kapoor, 2004). Spivak suggests that the disavowal of geopolitical determinations or the complicity of the investigating subject (the material and cultural advantages resulting from imperialism and capitalism and the privileged identities as Westerner or native informant) in the attempt to champion marginality results in increased privilege for the investigating subject as s/he becomes

> …liable to speak for the subaltern, justifying power and domination, naturalising Western superiority, essentialising ethnicity, or asserting ethnocultural or class identity, all in the name of the subaltern (Kapoor, 2004:631).

She subjects benevolent engagements to scrutiny reminding us that such engagements always offer the risk of exacerbating the problems they are trying to address.

Besides her critique of engagements with subalterns or 'native informants', Spivak's critique also focuses on the production of knowledge about the Third World. She stands with Foucault in saying that knowledge is always loaded with power and that

> …getting to know (or 'discursively framing') the Third World is also about getting to discipline and monitor it, to have a more manageable Other: and helping the subaltern is often a reaffirmation of the social Darwinism implicit in 'development', in which 'help' is framed as 'the burden of the fittest' (Spivak, 2004:57).

She sees the 'field' data collection – that she calls 'information retrieval' - carried out by Western university researchers (with personal/institutional interests) in the Global South as another form of imperialism in which the Third World provides resources for the First World. Spivak argues that this cultural imperialism

supplements socioeconomic imperialism as the Third World produces "the wealth and the possibility of the cultural self-representation of the First World" (Spivak, 1990:96). As an illustration, she contends that it is the manipulation of the Third World labour that sustains the resources of the U.S. academy which produces the ideological supports for that very manipulation (ibid). Spivak identifies two specific aspects of this cultural imperialism. First is the (benevolent) appropriation and reinscription of the Third World as an Other – that can result in an exoticisation and 'orientalisation' of the Third World, an approach to the margin 'as a tourist' which in turn advances the project of knowing the Third World to control it. The second aspect is the transformation of the South in a repository of data and the Western academy as the centre for value-added theory that transforms the raw material collected in the (Southern) 'field' into (Western) 'knowledge' – keeping Western academy and the Western academic at the centre.

Trap of tokenism and idealised representation
Spivak maintains that one cannot leave one's own baggage – or historical, geographic and class positionings - when encountering the Third World and that her own discipline and positioning as a Third World academic in the West is complicit in the reproduction of forms of Western hegemonic power over the Third World. This is one of the reasons why she looks into the role of Third World migrants living in the West who take advantage of discourses of multiculturalism and marginality to essentialise their ethnic identity and romanticise their national origins.

As Hoofd (2006) points out, Spivak discusses how the revalidation of the West and the fantasy of the Cartesian subject as the power centre of evolution and action (whether capitalist or liberatory), relies upon the constant precarious 'reproduction of marginality'. People who can empower themselves through this claim of marginality, then have the paradoxical effect of becoming the agents of Eurocentris, since they are a "group susceptible to upward mobility" that pose as "authentic inhabitants of the margin" (Spivak, 1993:59) and as such seemingly prove and extend the application of the humanist subject and its technologies (Hoofd, 2006). For Spivak, this attitude can lead to ahistorical or fundamentalist claims and claims about the native informant as keeper of ethnic or subaltern knowledge. She implies that prioritising the 'ethnic' may end up "rewarding those who are already privileged or upwardly mobile, at the expense of the subaltern" (Kapoor, 2004:631). Spivak claims that upwardly mobile third worlders can also play an important role in the commodification of difference by packing their culture and selling it to a niche-market. She proposes that this new nativism conceals a reverse ethnocentrism that can lead to the perpetration of a new 'orientalism' (ibid).

Educational Implications
Spivak's writings provide a kind of educational project consisted of a series of hints on how to establish an ethical relation to the Other (or subaltern). She conceptualises education 'to come' in the humanities as the "uncoersive rearrangement of desires" (Spivak, 2004:526) that would result from the development of 'transnational literacy' (an understanding of how globalisation

works and how it can be negotiated). This would work (in different ways) as a supplementary education both for the metropolis and for the rural 'subalterns'. This education should aim to build the habit of democratic civility through the activation of an ethical imperative conceptualised as a responsibility to the Other (as answerability or accountability) and not 'for' the Other (as the burden of the fittest). In this sense she refers to the necessity of addressing the "discountinuous divide between those who 'right wrongs' [from above] and those [below] who are wronged" (Spivak, 2004:563). Kapoor summarises her project as "a deconstructive position followed by a process of self-implication" (Kapoor, 2004:640). Four distinct propositions in relation to this project of establishing an 'ethical relation to the Other' are presented below.

The first is 'negotiation from within'. In contrast to what is implied in Orientalism (Said, 1978), Spivak rejects the idea that there is an uncontaminated space 'outside' discourse, culture, institutions or geopolitics where one has access by virtue of lived experience or cultural origin or can claim purity, transparency or triumphalism and launch a critique without being implicated in it. Therefore, rather than a simple rejection of Western cultural institutions, texts, values and theoretical practices, she advocates critical negotiation from within. She argues that people should engage in a persistent critique of hegemonic discourses and representations as they inhabit them. This is why she promotes 'deconstructive' strategies for the critique of imperialism. For her, deconstruction "points out that in constructing any kind of an argument, we must move from implied premises, that must necessarily obliterate or finesse certain possibilities that question the validity of these premises in an absolute justifiable way" (Spivak, 1999:104). She also insists that

> Deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly looking into how truths are produced… That is why deconstruction doesn't say logocentrism is a pathology, or metaphysical enclosures are something you can escape. Deconstruction, if one wants a formula, is, amongst other things, a persistent critique of what one cannot not want." (Spivak, 1994:278)

As the enterprise of deconstruction always falls prey to deconstruction itself, Spivak sees it as producing a 'success-in-failure' which creates "constructive questions and corrective doubts" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:112) that lead to better practice. For her, deconstruction as a tool is a political safeguard against fundamentalisms and totalitarianisms (however seemingly benevolent) in its suggestion that masterwords like 'the worker' or 'the woman' have no political referents :

> For when you are succeeding in political mobilizations based on the sanctity of those masterwords, then it begins to seem as if these narratives, these characteristics, really existed. That is when all kinds of guilt tripping, card-naming arrogance, self-aggrandizement and so on, begin to spell the beginning of an end (Spivak, 1990:104).

However, she firmly maintains that deconstruction cannot found a political project of any kind. If foundational, it becomes "something like wishy-washy pluralism on the one hand, or a kind of irresponsible hedonism on the other" (ibid). She insists on the strategy of unsettling the dominant discourse from within because she believes that a counter discourse of reversal (e.g. valorising East over West to counter Orientalism) involves remaining within the logic of the opponent and "is more liable to cancellation or reappropriation by the dominant than a 'tangential' or 'wild' guerrilla mode of engagement" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:85). She suggests that while reversal is a necessary stage, it must be followed by the displacement of the terms of opposition (through self-reflexivity/deconstruction) - or a position and counter position will continue to legitimise one another (ibid).

Her second proposition, following from the first, is that critics need to acknowledge and be scrupulously vigilant (hyper self-reflexive) in relation to their complicities. Spivak makes it impossible to conceive of an innocent or inherently politically correct denunciation of (neo)colonialism derived from an unexamined identification with, or benevolence towards, the subaltern (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:112)

While Said, in "Orientalism" (1978), sees colonial history as a continuous narrative of oppression and exploitation, Spivak sees oppression, domination and their effects as much more complex. In contrast to Said and Bhabha, she enacts this complexity by consistently and scrupulously acknowledging the ambiguities in her own position as privileged Western-based critic of (neo-) colonialism, and draws attention quite explicitly to her 'complicitous' position in a 'workplace engaged in the ideological production of neo-colonialism' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997). This acknowledgement of complicity (and complexities) also affects the way she addresses imperialism: while never underestimating its destructive impact, she nonetheless insists on a recognition of its positive effects too, which she calls "enabling violations" (comparing it to children of rape) (Spivak, 1994:277).

Her third proposition is that for an ethical encounter with the Third World, people should unlearn their privilege and learn to learn from below (from the subaltern). Kapoor has summarised this process as the pre-disposition to "retrace the itinerary of our prejudices and learning habits (from racism, sexism and classism to academic elitism and ethnocentrism), stop thinking of ourselves as better or fitter and unlearn dominant systems of knowledge and representation" (Kapoor, 2004:641). Beverley (1999) defines 'unlearning privilege' as "working against the grain of our interests and prejudices by contesting the authority of the academy and knowledge centres at the same time that we continue to participate in them and to deploy that authority as teachers, researchers, administrators and theorists" (Beverley, 1999:31). More-Gilbert (1997) refers to unlearning as the "imperative to reconsider positions that once seemed self-evident and normal" (p.98). Kapoor (2004) asserts that unlearning means "stopping oneself from always wanting to correct, teach, theorise, develop, colonise, appropriate, use, record, inscribe, enlighten" (Kapoor, 2004:642). He quotes Alcoff's statement that "the impetus to always be the speaker and speak in all situations must be seen for what it is: a desire for mastery and domination" (Alcoff, 1999:24 cited in

Kapoor, 2004:642). This implies that, in representing the other 'over there', careful scrutiny is needed 'over here' (ibid).

Spivak has given up using the term 'unlearning privilege' in recent years, but she insists on the term learning to learn from below, which in any case implies unlearning privilege. She argues that learning from below is an old recipe that generally results in more of the same. She claims that learning from the subaltern requires a previous step: learning to learn – or clearing the way for an ethical relation with the subaltern. She warns against ambivalent structures of 'enabling violations' like human rights, which generally promote the righting of wrongs as the burden of the fittest. In this case, for example, learning to learn from below demands learning about 'human wrongs' and the legacies that have created the position of the dispenser of rights (and his sanctioned ignorances) in the first place. Without this previous learning, the result is the unexamined reproduction of Eurocentrism, which prompts the imposition of concepts like 'democracy', 'nation', 'participation' as universal, natural, good, unproblematic and incontestable, while the contexts and historical circumstances in which these concepts were written are forgotten (Kapoor, 2004). Learning to learn from below is related to "a suspension of belief that one is indispensable, better or culturally superior; it is refraining from thinking that the Third World is in trouble and that one has the solutions; it is resisting the temptation of projecting oneself or one's world onto the Other" (Spivak, 2002:6 cited in Kapoor, 2004:642). It is realising a historically established discontinuity between the subalterns and the activists and educators who are trying 'to help', and changing the notion of responsibility as the duty of the "fitter self" towards the other into responsibility to the other – as being called by and answerable to the other, "before will" (Spivak, 2004:535-537).

Her last proposition is working without guarantees. As mentioned before, the project of deconstruction always falls prey to its own work and therefore creates what Spivak calls 'success-in-failure' . Kapoor (2004) summarises that, in practice, this means:

> becoming aware of the vulnerabilities and blind spots of one's power and representational systems. It is accepting failure, or put positively, seeing failure as success. The implication is that…we need to learn to be open, not just, in the short-term, to the limits of our knowledge systems, but also to the long term logic of our profession: enabling the subaltern while working ourselves out of our jobs (p.644).

Spivak's propositions lead to an educational project that creates spaces and provides the analytical tools and ethical grounds for learners to engage with global issues and perspectives addressing complexity, uncertainty, contingency and difference. In practice, compared to a liberal educational framework, her ideas offer an approach that attempts to go beyond ethnocentrism, essentialism, reversed racism and orientalism (as illustrated in table 1 in very general terms).

Table 1: A liberal versus a postcolonial educational project

	A liberal framework	A postcolonial framework
Problem	Poverty, helplessness	Inequality, injustice
Nature of the problem	Lack of 'development', education, resources, skills, culture, technology, etc.	Complex structures, systems, assumptions, power relations and attitudes that create and maintain exploitation and enforced disempowerment and tend to eliminate difference
Justification for positions of privilege (in the North and in the South)	'Development', 'history', education, harder work, better organisation, better use of resources, technology	Benefit from and control over unjust and violent systems and structures
Basis for caring	Common humanity/being good/sharing and caring Responsibility *FOR* the other (or *to teach* the other)	Justice/complicity in harm Responsibility *TOWARDS* the other (or to *learn with* the other) - accountability
Grounds for acting	Humanitarian/moral (based on normative principles for thought and action)	Political/ethical (based on normative principles for relationships)
Understanding of interdependence	We are all equally interconnected, we all want the same thing, we can all do the same thing	Asymmetrical globalisation, unequal power relations, Northern and Southern elites imposing own assumptions as universal
What needs to change	Structures, institutions and individuals that are a barrier to development	Structures, (belief) systems, institutions, cultures, individuals, relationships
What for	So that everyone achieves development, harmony, tolerance and equality	So that injustices are addressed, more equal grounds for dialogue and power are created
What individuals can do	Support campaigns to change structures, donate time, expertise and resources	Analyse own position/context and participate in changing structures, assumptions, identities, attitudes and power relations in their contexts
Basic principle for change	Universalism (non-negotiable vision of how everyone should live what everyone should want or should be)	Reflexivity, dialogue, contingency and an ethical relation to difference (radical alterity)
Goal of global citizenship education	Empower individuals to act (or become active citizens) according to what has been defined for them as a good life or ideal world	Empower individuals: to reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures and contexts, to imagine different futures and to take responsibility for their decisions and actions
Strategies for the global dimension in education	Raising awareness of global issues and promoting campaigns	Promoting engagement with global issues and perspectives and an ethical relationship to difference, addressing complexity and power relations
Potential benefits of the approach	Greater awareness of some of the problems, support for campaigns, greater motivation to help/do something, feel good factor	Independent/critical thinking and more informed, responsible and ethical action
Potential problems of the approach	Feeling of self-importance or self-righteousness and/or cultural supremacy, reinforcement of colonial assumptions and relations, reinforcement of privilege, partial alienation, uncritical action	Guilt, internal conflict and paralysis, critical disengagement, feeling of helplessness

Source: Andreotti, 2006: 96-97

Spivak's questions and ideas have inspired two research based international educational initiatives that the author of this paper is involved with: Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE) and Through Other Eyes (TOE). OSDE focuses on the development of critical literacy and independent thinking through the introduction of global issues and perspectives in educational contexts, including primary, secondary, higher and teacher education. The project website (www.osdemethodology.org.uk) offers a methodology for the creation of safe spaces for enquiry, guidelines for facilitation, and 'copyleft' resources for teacher education and secondary schools. TOE aims to develop an online teacher education course around 'indigenous' understandings of the development agenda. The objective of this course is to build transnational and critical literacies by supporting teachers and teacher trainees in England:

- To develop an understanding of how language and systems of belief, values and representation affect the way people interpret the world
- To identify how different groups understand issues related to development and their implications for the development agenda
- To critically examine these interpretations - both 'mainstream' and indigenous - looking at origins and potential implications of assumptions
- To identify an ethics for improved dialogue, engagement and mutual learning
- To transfer the methodology developed in the programme into the classroom context through the analysis and piloting of sample classroom materials (using creative arts and other strategies)

The conceptual framework of this project is based on 4 dimensions which were partly inspired by Spivak's ideas of 'unlearning': 1. learning to unlearn; 2. learning to listen; 3. learning to learn and 4.learning to reach out (or engage with the other). This project is still in its 'piloting phase', but draft resources can be found at www.throughothereyes.org.uk.

In conclusion, Spivak's suggestions offer the sketch of a framework for an educational approach that could enable learners to value and learn from difference and to reconstruct their worldviews and identities based on an 'ethical relation to the other'. Her insights add strength to the argument around the significance of critical literacy as an educational practice that prompts learners to examine their locus of enunciation and the connections between language, power and knowledge, to transform relationships and to reason and act responsibly.

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Social interpretations and the uses of technology: a Gramscian explanation of the ideological differences that inform programmers positions.

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Introduction

The growing use of computer technology in daily practices has raised concerns about the nature of technology and its relation to society. Deterministic views on this issue tend towards optimism or pessimism about the benefits and costs of technology and its role in fuelling economic development, emproving the quality of life in developing countries and empowering peripheral communities. However, such perspectives fail to grasp the fact that technology, like any social products is never neutral: its creation or adoption by specific communities is guided by social interpretations about its potential use to fulfill particular social needs. In other words, the direction of technological development and consequent social change is always linked to pre-existing cultural values and ideologies that may also change in new directions once technology adoption transforms the very nature of pre-existing social practices.

Such a close relation between technology and ideological choices may be well illustrated by the ongoing debate that underlies the free software movement. Having been initially triggered by a collective reaction against proprietary operating systems which did not allow customization of softwares to specific user's needs, this movement ended up also serving aims very different from the the ones foreseen by its original libertarian and anarchist principles. The Gramscian notion of hegemony, not as a static formation but as a structure perforated by 'gaps' created by internal conflicts between social groups, may be a promising way to interpret such differences.

Following this line of reasoning, the present paper will initially briefly discuss the philosophical guidelines that oriented the free software movement. Secondly it will illustrate how the initital ideologies ended up serving very different social purposes. This discussion will consider data collected in three interviews: two involving university students who, due to different ideological biases, are supporters of the Free Software Movement, and one involving a young leader from a peripheral Community Center in Brazil. The final section of the paper will focus on the Gramscian notion of hegemony, and its potential to explain the possibility of agency within social structure.

Free Software Movement and Open Source Initiative: a brief history to contextualise ideological conflicts

Walton (2204), discussing the language of web design, stresses that effective critical use of the web demands an understanding that the user's external view of

invisible digital data is partially orchestrated by designers' assumptions embedded in the Web's underlying codes and conventions. The author's analysis calls our attention to the fact that communication within the digital milieu is always mediated by the affordances of technical languages that make man/machine interactions possible. Thus, within the realm of the language of the new media , computer programmers became a powerful elite whose views and choices shape the very nature of the codes and conventions that are integral to the process of computer and Web uses in general. The debate on Free software allows us to reflect on how different ideologies affect this new intellectual social elite.

The concept of Free Software, according to Poynder (2007), was originally inspired by revolutionary ideals about human freedom and right of choice. It was initially proposed by Richard Stallman – a former hacker working at the MIT Artificially Intelligence laboratory. A conflict of interest was the central trigger of this initiative. Stallman wanted to adapt a Xerox printer machine to the working needs of his research group, but the printer source code was denied on the grounds that it was proprietary information. He argued against this decision, thereby raising an ethical issue: sharing information is necessary for human co-operation and thus anyone refusing to share a source code is committing a hostile act.

As Poynder stresses, his position was later strengthen by a subsequent event that involved the work of his laboratory. More specifically, in the early 1980's, MIT decided to license the program it was developing (LISP System) to two companies – Symbolics and LMI – both set up by ex-hackers. Later on, one of the companies – Symbolics – declared that it would deny permission to MIT to copy in its own system any changes and improvements made to the software by Symbolics. Strongly reacting to this decision, which he interpreted as an attempt to make the MIT Artificial Intelligence dependent on Symbolics, Stallman started a hacking campaign copying the improvements made by Symbolics in the MIT system and also passing them on to the rival company LMI. When his hacking actions were finally blocked by a change in machines, Stallman left the MIT and dedicated his life to the cause of Free Software. In 1984, he started the GNU project with the goal to develop a free operating system, and one year later he found the Free Software Foundation. As a new guideline for software production Stallman articulated four freedom principles: the freedom to run a program as you wish; the freedom to study the source code and change it to do what you wish; the freedom to make copies and distribute them to others; and the freedom to distribute modified versions. Within this innovative direction one of Stallman's major achievements was the creation of a revolutionary type of copyright license: General Public License (GPL), labeled 'copyleft'. As Poynder points out:

What is revolutionary about copyleft is that it exploits traditional copyright law – whose very raison d'etre is to make creative expression proprietary – to achieve the opposite effect. By attaching a copyleft license to their software, developers are able to assert ownership, but then give away some of their rights – particularly the right to copy and modify the software in order to allow others to build on it. (...) the creators are able to stipulate the terms on which they are

making software freely available, and so control how it is used by others. (http://poynder.blogspot.com/2006/03/interview-with-richard-stallman.html)

For the aim of the present discussion, this brief review about the genesis of the Free Software enterprise is relevant to illustrate both how technological development may be informed by specific ideologies, and also how these ideologies are re-interpreted in order to suit a different set of social interests. This second issue may be well illustrated by the Open Source Initiative, launched in 1998, mainly motivated by the success achieved by software productions based on the GNU/Linux operating system. This second movement was more business oriented and advocated that the source code of computers should be freely available for technical reasons: allowing access to the softwares' inner code contributes to the achievement of technical superiority, i.e. the development of better, cheaper and more efficient softwares. This second ideological bias is well portrayed in a seminal paper written by Raymond (1996) entitled the Cathedral and the Bazaar. In this paper, the author uses the metaphors of ' cathedral' and 'bazaar' to represent hierarchical and non-hierarchical modes of software production. In the author' s view, production based on GNU/Linux may be considered ' subversive" in the sense that it overturned the traditional belief that important software ' needed to be built like cathedrals, carefully crafted by individual wizards or small bands of mages working in splendid isolation with no beta to be released before its time' . Gnu/Linux's style of development, as the author stresses, is able to generate more coherent and stable systems, even though its mode of production resembles ' a great babbling bazaar of different agendas and approaches'. In other words, by releasing early versions of the program as often as possible, a line of action strongly avoided by traditional modes of software production, the bazaar mode of development manages to profit from the co-operative and collaborative exchanges of knowledge among several developers, with different levels of expertise, scattered all over the planet and connected by the Internet. As shared representations grounded in the actual source code enhance communication and narrow the gap between developer's and tester's conceptions of the program, this mode of software production greatly accelerates debugging and code evolution. Taking into consideration Raymond's analysis, it is easy to understand the reasons that made the open source movement so appealing to more pragmatic and business-oriented approaches. It also reveals that the original radical actions against proprietary information defended by Stallman, in practice, ended up also serving neo-liberal interests which are highly concerned with technical benefits and no longer informed by the original concepts of freedom and ethics. The section that follows discusses how these different orientations are interpreted by youngsters that strongly and actively support the free access to software source codes.

Society, knowledge and freedom: ideological conflicts through the eyes of open source supporters

The present section focus on data collected through recorded interviews with three individuals who have a history of participation and contribution to the free software cause. All the interviewees belong to the same age group – early twenties. Two of them are Computer Science students that attend one of the top

Universities in Brazil. The third one, completed his high school degree some years ago and is since then acting as one of the local leaders of a Cultural Center located in a peripheral urban area, mostly inhabited by economically underprivileged communities.

2.1 Free software and social action

Student A is an undergraduate student and, at the time of the interview, had recently changed areas from Computer Science to Linguistics. According to him, his motivation for changing areas was directly related to his own concerns about social issues.

> (Computer Science course) it was a mainly technical course... good basic knowledge, but that did not give me a further perspective, just that technical knowledge per se, not considering it as a tool to act on society.

His social bias was also clearly marked when he discussed his life ambitions:

> I have no desire to go out and work in a big company, as the great majority does, or to work with programming. I could foresee some individual perspectives, but I did not see how I could act in society or do something that could be beneficial to society, within the Computer Science area.

He declared that his initial contact with the free software debate occurred when he joined the Student Union in his second day of college. The Student Union, at the time, was highly involved with this issue, and he actively participated in a campaign to spread the Gnu/Linux use to other Institutes in the campus. Describing his understanding of the two tendencies of the moment against proprietary software, he states:

> Basically, in general terms, the free software issue cannot be dissociated from the issue of freedom of knowledge. In fact, free software is second to a major movement, a larger ideology, that is the ideology of you not being subordinated to a "black box" type of knowledge, so they say. A "black box" is a software in which the (code) knowledge is closed, in which only the results are given to you. The Open Source movement says that a free software is a business model, that is, being free you can have several corporations, several groups working on it, and this allows its quality to be much greater. Than that of proprietary software.

When asked if he considers Gnu/Linux in fact 'subversive', he replied:

> The free software may be linked to any type of political bias: neo-liberal, traditional liberal, even communist or anarchist may use and defend free software (...) Then, in this sense, it is not subversive, but it can be. It can be subversive when you see it as a tool to reach a goal.
> Technology, I believe it is not neutral: it serves a purpose. It is this purpose that will define if this software is good or not. I believe in free software not because it is free per se, but because it is a tool, the only tool

that allows you to promote transformation. I believe that with proprietary software it is impossible for you to change anything.

Further discussing the advantages he sees in the free software movement he mentions a specific conception about 'knowledge' which he considers to be well accepted among free software supporters:

> All knowledge is an historical construction. Knowledge is not created from nothing. Physics as we know it nowadays is as it is because we already had mathematical knowledge. Thus we are always making use of previous knowledge which we contest, improve or make developments based on it. Proprietary software contradicts all this because you say to yourself " I construct my software and then I can close it". If you want to do anything that has a little more than what I did , you must start from zero, because you know nothing about what I have done, you will not profit form this knowledge.

Towards the end of the interview, reflecting on the different trends of the movement within the university, student A indicates his disagreement with the new tendencies based more on pragmatic aims which have been recently adopted by several students in the Computer Science area.

> In general there are (at the university) two main groups, but within these groups you have several subdivisions. There are choices to be made within the university based on class. It is not because we are middle class students that I will follow and defend this class forever. Thus, even at the university you will find a strong disagreement on the reason why software should be free. For instance, among Computer Science students, I know one who is highly engaged in the free software cause. He believes that software should be free because this is the current tendency of capitalism: you change from selling products to selling services. Free software allows this. You may profit as a consultant, or by offering technical assistance. (..) This is not the way I think about free software, and we both belong to the middle class.

The discussion that follows is based on an interview conducted with the student mentioned by student A in the above discussion.

Concerns on technical efficiency and work market

Student B is also a Computer Science student who, at the time of the interview, had finished his undergraduate degree and was continuing his study at master's level. He also had his first contact with free software as soon as he started his undergraduate course and started to explore it as a more efficient technical alternative to do his academic tasks:

> I started using Linux as soon as I started college, because the Computer Science Institute has both Windows and Linus Installed (...) and Linux is infinitely better for doing our academic work : programming and everything

else. Even one of our teachers indicated Linus as being better for programming tasks. Then I ended up knowing it, and knowing it, I also ended up meeting a student (...) who put me in contact with the software principles.

When asked about the principles, he mentioned the four freedoms proposed by Stallman, and then stressed that there are conflicting tendencies among them:

There are several tendencies. There are tendencies that allege that that you can get a free software, change something in it, close the code and pass it to another person in that way. Another tendency, that they call copyleft, which is the opposite of copyright, which gives you the four freedoms but forbids you to take away any of the four freedoms.

In general terms, the ideological struggle occurs more or less like this: people that argue in favor of the 'copycenter ' license as they call it, defend that if you give freedom you must give all freedoms, including the one of closing the underlying code. In contrast, people that defend the copyleft license say the following: for a program to be free it must guarantee access to everyone, so changes must maintain the program open.

When asked about the advantages of adopting free software he stresses its benefits regarding technical quality and efficiency and also as a promising bridge to the job market:

(..) in reality there are two great advantages. It is free, that is, you can use it as you please. A second advantage related to this one is that many persons work on projects that they are interested in. For instance, I say : I am starting this project , who is willing to join it? (..) Thus you have production by many hands , you have fast results because you have many people working on it. And, as it is free, many people may do a download of i , test it, and point out the problems.

Discussing the advantages of engaging in this collective mode of software production, he states:

First of all you get a lot of experience working on a project. There are a lot of people I know who went to work in firms. Google for instance, valued a lot if you had previously worked in free software production. (...) another thing, the great majority of projects we refer to as free software are not free. That is , a lot of people profit working to produce free software. Big corporations give financial support pay some people to develop that software. (...) then you have this financial side as well. A lot of people make money with free software. Even if a person earns no money during the production process, he may profit by offering services. He may say:" I help to develop it, so if you want help to customize it to your needs I'll charge you this much per hour work".

According to his understanding, the involvement of big corporations was the main turning point in the development of free software:

> When several people, including Eric Raymond, founded an NGO, named Open Source, to sell this type of software to firms, in my opinion, in my conception of history, it was a crucial turn responsible for the explosion of free software. When big companies, such as Netscape and other big firms, started to work and promote the development of free software, it grew very fast.

> Thus I see Open source as responsible for the great boom of free software. But some people from the Free Software Foundation dislike the Open Source initiative. They say that they do not support the same ideals of freedom that they are only concerned with technical quality, but in my opinion the two ideas run in parallel.

Asked to elaborate more on this issue, student B explains:

> The problem is the following: the emphasis given by Open Source is on technical quality. It wants to sell the idea that you can earn money with it (free software). People from Free Software Foundation see this idea as harmful to free software's conception of freedom. I disagree. I think that they are two directions that work in parallel, and work well in parallel. But people from the Free Software Foundation do not agree with me.

Finally, when asked to comment on Raymond's statement that "free software is subversive", he mentioned a recent national meeting that was attended by a larger number of participants and commented:

> In a way it is subversive because it seduces many people, who engage in the movement and start to defend it immediately. It is an idea that rapidly attracts many persons who begin to fight for it immediately.

Appropriations of cultural knowledge.

The third interviewee is a community leader who actively participates in a Cultural Center mostly attended by under privileged people, who live in the outskirts of one of the main cities of São Paulo State, in Brazil. Describing his interests in technical issues, he mentioned that after high school he joined two technical courses aiming to improve his chances in the job market. He lost interest in the area when he realized that these courses were mainly concerned with preparing him to be part of the labor force necessary for the installation of the technical infrastructure necessary to the growing communication industry in Latin America:

> Teachers would say the following: this is the technology of the future. But there was in these teachers a lack of vision of communication technology as a tool for social change, something that the communities could get for themselves not having (to assume) the role of consumers of services

offered by big corporations. (...) I distanced myself from this area of technology because I could not see a way to get rid of the interference of the big communication monopolies. I would either work for them or do nothing .

As he narrated during the interview, he joined the Cultural Center as a musician, an option he saw as one possible alternative. Later on, when the Center also became involved with computers he recovered his interest in the Computer Science area. It is important to stress that the Center in question is a very successful example of a non-formal educational center, even at national level. The Center promotes a variety of cultural and artistic activities designed to explore the African heritage of the local community, and computer technology is widely exploited in the center in relation to these activities (digital editing of videos, for example), and also as means for long distance communication. Discussing how he and other members of the Center became involved with free software, he states that at the beginning they were not familiar with this alternative and used for several years proprietary software. It was his involvement with virtual networks through the Internet that led him to grasp a new perspective about technology and knowledge

> I, at least, started to understand the principles of free software through the construction of virtual networks through the Internet. Then I started to understand the true possibilities of this technology: collective production … construction of a technology aiming to promote transformation, as a way to re-interpret technology itself and community interactions. Then we (people from the Center)started to work on this , because before we did not have access to this discussion. It is important to stress that we spent a large amount of time working here with no access to the Internet.

> Free software gives you the possibility of not discussing the tool as way to climb the social ladder. People always say: you have access to the computer to be able to get a better job to go up in the social ladder (...) Free software allows you to discuss the following: what is knowledge? What is the knowledge that built everything, that builds everything, that built this tool that you use to send e-mails, for instance? Is this a mathematical knowledge? Who owns mathematics? Who owns Pitagora's theorem? Free software allows you to discuss this. All knowledge that was taken over' by the academy was, in fact , knowledge produced by the communities, it is an ancestral type of knowledge, a way to understand nature, human nature and the relation of human beings with nature. (...) Free software allows you to understand this: all tool used to construct culture, as well as all languages, they are always built on traditional types of knowledge.

When asked if he considers free software in any way subversive, his reply was:

> It is the way you use a tool that transforms it. A screwdriver may be used to construct something or to make a hole on somebody's foot. Then free software is not one thing or the other.(...) It is subversive in the sense of

not being totally subordinated to ideological dominance, structural dominance and economic dominance of the macro-regions. Then if you do not sell yourself to this, you can create a dialogue among communities, a dialogue centered on the development, a type of development supported by the community itself. We feel, for instance, that the support of a Microsoft program of social inclusion would not be defendable.

Dilemmas and contradictions involved in different modes of social engagement

The differents direction taken by the movement against proprietary software, illustrated in this section by the selected citations from the three interviews, reflect how a specific social group – computer science community – interprets and takes position in a more general debate supported by Stallman's and Raymond's conflicting perspectives. The quite antagonic points of view show that deterministic conceptions about technology and objective constraints are, at least, problematic. In fact, it is true that Stallman 's original proposal of collective production of software, originally informed by anarchistic principles, was appropriated and adjusted in order to suit the interest of a neo-liberal ideology, which is mainly oriented towards market needs and interest in profit. Howerveer, it is also true that this very proposal promotes a broader debate that questions traditional views on knowledge production. Student A, for instance, embraces the original ideology defended by Stallman to support his political and ethical concerns. To the community leader, the general debate made him review the value of traditional culture, to question the value attributed to academic types of knowledge: in other words, it was an empowering tool. Both student A and the community leader agree that technology is not good or evil per se; it will all depend upon the use made of it.

The interviews reposted in this section also highlighted two issues that are worth mentioning. First of all, considering student A's perspective, it is possible to perceive that social structure is not a homogeneous and static formation. Conflicting ideologies, even within the same socio-economic group, create internal 'gaps' that offer grounds to alliances between social groups which may be politically used to promote social changes. Secondly, analysing the community leader 's evaluation of the impact of the Internet on the possibilities of access to a broader debate, it is possible to say that it offered him new terrain for reflection upon technology and knowledge in general. This indicates that, although technology is no garantee for a more egualitarian society, it may be used to reach and fight for such goals. In fact, Internet technology allowed this specific community leader to move beyond the limits imposed by his own socio-economic group and be an active member of the computer programmer hegemonic elite, a social position that he probably would hardly have access to through schooling, at least considering the Brazilian context. Finally, I would like to argue that the Gramscian notion of hegemony, may be an interesting direction for the interpretation of the differences and contraction explored in this section.

Final considerations

Gramsci's theory of hegemony seems a promissing basis for the interpretation of how a resilient and independent civil society may promote power through ideological struggles. Cultural hegemony, as suggested by Gramsci in the Prison notebooks highlights the complexities of the process of politics and the struggles over policies and strategies. In the work of Gramsci, much stress is given to the divisions among the powerful groups and the need of alliances to secure and maintainpower. As Bilton et ali suggests:

The Gramcian approach is distinctive for its concern with 'hegemony'. This concept refers to consent or acceptance of an ideology, a regime , or a whole social systm. Those attempting to gain hegemony in this sense must try to build consensus behind the ideas or social arrangments they wish to secure; full hegemony exists when a social order is accepted as natural or normal (Bilton et ali ,1989 , p:218-219.).

If we consider the community leader's position, it is possible to see at work the Gramscian emphasis on agency, his more flexible notion of power, and his argument against the fatalistic acceptance of the social reality. The Gramscian approach may be illuminating to understand the importance of human agency at the macro-political or structural level. As Busnardo and Braga (2001)suggests, Gramsci's notion of hegemony offers us grounds for the reflection upon positive human action and resistance within hegemony. If we accept that within the realm of the mew media, computer programmers belong to a powerful hegemonic elite, the ongoing debate against proprietary software may be a good argument against conceptions that favour monolithic and all-pervasive notions of power.

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Broadening the Social Contract through the Literary Text

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Introduction

One of the founding fathers of Indian literature in English, N. K. Narayan (1909-2001) has rewritten one the most outstanding narratives of Indian narratology, The Mahabharata, significantly subtitling it "A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic", already pointing to the changes in genre, length and language, he needed to accomplish in order to reach a wider, transnational audience.

I understand that the rewriting for a Western audience (used to prose narratives) of one of the most famous Indian narratives can be understood as a significant example of how literature can be turned into a channel to express global solidarity, as it crosses the frontier among cultures and literary genres in order to approximate varying cultural competencies.

At the other end of the line, in a Brazilian educational context, these narratives are included in the syllabus of an undergraduate course in English Language and Literature of an urban university, forming part of a postcolonial pedagogy that, as Brydon (2004: 8) explains, aims "to encourage citizens desirous of creating a better world". This pedagogy helps students become "responsible and tolerant border crossers" (Giroux, 2006: 165) and thus leads them to bridge (not erase) the gap among different cultures, in a world that more and more demands a cosmopolitan citizenship.

This university course, and the literature class in particular, thus become a powerful arena to nurture the social contract that, as Giroux points out, today extends "…beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, invoking a broader notion of democracy in which the global becomes the space for exercising civic courage, social responsibility, politics, and compassion for the plight of others" (in Guilherme, 2006: 164).

The aim of this paper is to discuss how, in the context of this university course in Brazil, Narayan's reading and rewriting of Indian myths and legends may function as an example of what Giroux calls 'multicultural literacy': "the space in which new dialogical practices and social relations become possible" (2006: 172).

Broadening the Social Contract: Narayan's Mahabharata for a Modern, Western audience

In order to approximate the Mahabharata –one of the most important texts in Indian narratology in Sanskrit—to a Western audience, the novelist N. K. Narayan familiarizes the unfamiliar. Already in the "Preface" he deals with those cultural and literary competencies, rooted in Indian culture, that might dishearten

a Western reader and thus make him lose the chance of enjoying the epic and beautiful narrative of the rivalry between the Pandavas and the Kauravas: two branches of a ruling family and one of the narratives that is at the roots of the Hindu religion.

Since the genre is the link between writer and audience, Narayan (1978: vii) first calls the reader's attention to one of the most outstanding features of the narrative: its length. He says that the original composition in the Sanskrit language runs to a hundred thousand stanzas in verse, thus making it the longest composition in verse, eight times longer than The Iliad and The Odyssey put together! Narayan (1978: xii) explains that for a modern reader in English it is necessary to "select and condense", this because the Indian notion of time, with its circularity implied by the eternal reincarnation of all beings in new forms, is different from the linearity of time in the Jewish-Christian Western civilization based on the birth, life and death of all beings.
Another characteristic of the narrative, also central to Indian narratology, is the fact that in the Mahabharata, as it came to be known in 400 A.D., history and fiction are deeply intertwined. It is a popular ballad, already known in 1500 B.C. – though the date of the epic has never been ascertained-- that takes places in real locations: Hastinapura and Kurukshetra, that as Narayan (1978: vii) points out, actually exist in the North of India.

Another central feature of this oral narrative that has been transmitted from generation to generation and has been rewritten by an endless number of story tellers, adding new episodes, philosophical reflections and moral lessons is that of its authorship. Narayan (1978: viii) explains that there has been a lot of speculation around the name "Vyasa". While for most of the Indian population, this would be the name of its consecrated author, more recent scholarship has tried to prove that this is a generic name given to the story tellers and that different persons, through the ages, could have assumed this name. But one of the main characteristics of Vyasa that calls the attention of Western readers, even those familiar with post-modern literary techniques, is the fact that, as Narayan (1978: xii) explains, being aware of the past, present and future of the characters, as he can read signs and portents, helps them out of their dilemmas: "Throughout, the author lives with his characters, and this is the greatest charm of this work for me" (1978: xiii).

The structure of the narrative is based on an intermingling of genres –fable, epic, myth and history— that in the West are kept separate but in India are brought together due to the equal standing of all beings created by God, both animate and inanimate: men, animals, vegetation, rock, and the fact that, Gods and Men walk the same streets. Hence it is the elephant God Ganesha, who takes down the vision that Vyasa, as Narayan (1978: viii) explains, receives from Bramha, the Creator.

Very interestingly, Narayan points out that the transposition from Sanskrit to English implies not only a change of languages but also of genre. Narayan (1978: xii) says that he has not attempted any translation "…as it is impossible to convey in English the rhythm and depth of the original language. The very sound of

Sanskrit has a hypnotic quality which is inevitably lost in translation. One has to feel content with a prose narrative in story form". Narayan, a consummate novelist, already in the Preface confesses that his own preference, as regards genre, is "the story". He explains his own difficulties in the transposition to prose of the "staggering physical quantum" (xi) of the epic, with its laborious narrative of the comings and goings of its heroes and its rich philosophical discussions of some of its most famous sections as the Bhagavad Gita,

He defines the Mahabharata as

> …a great tale with well-defined characters who talk and act with robustness and zest –heroes and villains, saints and kings, women of beauty, all displaying great human qualities, super-human endurance, depths of sinister qualities, as well as power, satanic hates and intrigues— all presented against an impressive background of ancient royal capitals, forests, and mountains (xi).

In turn, like Vyasa, Narayan also lives and vibrates with his characters as they interact both with men and gods. The Pandava brothers who emerge from his writing are lovable characters: powerful, wise, righteous and, at the same time, as in the case of all human beings, these virtues are matched by their own passions, desires and weaknesses that sometimes make them deviate from the right path. On the other hand, the Kauravas are vain, greedy, jealous, insolent but also clever and accomplished. Though Narayan sticks "to the episodes relevant to the destinies of the chief characters, to keep his version within readable limits" (1978: xii), it is, precisely, from their inward conflicts and actions, that Narayan expounds on the morale of the Mahabharata, as each situation in which the characters find itself is a new trial in the path to truth.

Hence, once the questions of form that, as suggested, might present themselves as an impediment for audiences that respond to different literary competencies have been explained and ameliorated not to domesticate the text to the point that it loses its cultural marks, but in a gesture of transcultural literacy, the story being told, that actually dramatizes the morale of the people it represents is unveiled to the eyes of the foreign reader in its full splendor: the importance of non-violence in thought, word and deed, one of the staples of Gandhi's policy of active non-violent resistance; the right and fair manner of behaving towards our superiors, equals and inferiors; the fact that forgiveness, in its right measure, is more important than even indiscriminate anger and revenge; the idea that all human beings are, in some measure, vain, jealous, greedy, but that it is our duty to control these weaknesses, that it is our duty to learn to curb grief and fear and see beyond our present circumstances; that fair means should always impose themselves upon deceit…

All this becomes an example of Narayan's process of struggle and negotiation in the composition of his text as he turns the Mahabharata into an example of transcultural literacy. The fact that he adapted it into prose and translated it into English reads, on the one hand, as a by product of the colonizing period and, on

the other, as his love for this narrative and his desire to facilitate it to audiences beyond the borders of his nation.

At the same time, following Giroux's premise that the classroom situation is an ideal space for border thinking, it could be said that the foreign literary text in particular, when critically interpreted by teachers and students following a practice of 'transcultural literacy', could be turned into an important channel to shorten the distance among cultures and to promote tolerance and respect for difference. The foreign literary text thus becomes an important tool in the process of literacy, as understood by Giroux (2006: 172)

> Literacy in this sense not only is pluralized and expanded, it is also the site in which new dialogical practices and social relations become possible. Literacy as I am using it here does a kind of bridging work necessary to democracy while also offering up modes of translation that challenge strategies of common sense and domination.

It is precisely as an act of transcultural literacy that I will consider the reading of the Mahabharata in a Brazilian university English Language and Literature classroom.

Reading the Mahabharata in a Brazilian Classroom

Paulo Freire (1996:24) points out that "to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the appropriate conditions for its production". He adds that through the act of teaching, both teachers and students, through their differentiated roles, not only influence each other and are subject to change, but also make the world a better place.

This process of change, then, transcends the classroom situation and is applied to society in general, revealing what Giroux (2006: 164) calls "the transformative potential of the academy and the school within wider society". In turn, this concept of "wider society", as already hinted at, is not marked by the limits of the nation-state in today's globalized world but goes beyond its frontiers to encompass other cultures.

The foreign literary text thus becomes, more than a mere object of contemplation or admiration, an arena which propitiates this encounter of cultures and that awakens in the student the curiosity and the epistemological desire to learn about the knowledges of other peoplse in other parts of the world. And for these students, this could result in a process of construction of knowledge accompanied by (self)critical understanding, respect and tolerance.

Freire (1996:43) establishes a difference between what he calls "ingenuous knowledge", acquired non-systematically and "rigorous knowledge" acquired in a rigorous, systematic way. Both of them are associated with the epistemological curiosity of the subject. The first one is the type of knowledge that the student brings to the classroom situation from his every day experience. The second, is

the knowledge that is critically created in the classroom situation through the interaction between teachers and students.

In a world torn apart by what is presented as unbridgeable differences, knowledge about other cultures is often built upon clichés, cultural stereotypes, and misunderstandings about foreign customs that may nurture the most varied forms of discrimination. Hence, through a critical literacy strategy of what Freire (1996:43) calls the "teaching practice of thinking rightly" that involves "a dynamic, dialectical movement between doing, and thinking about what one is doing", the process of promoting critical literacy through readings of literary texts should help students deconstruct acquired cultural stereotypes and make them aware that knowledge is culturally created and specific and that varying types of knowledge exist diachronically and synchronically across the globe.

Discussing teaching practice, Freire points out the importance of stimulating the student's curiosity as an epistemological tool: "Both the teacher and the students should understand that their posture should be dialogical, open, curious, inquisitive and not passive in the acts of both speaking and listening. What matters is that the teacher and the students should assume a position as 'epistemologically curious'" (1996:96). By extension, this curiosity should be extended beyond the national social contract to include other cultures.

In the discussion of the Mahabharata in a Brazilian university Foreign Language and Literature classroom, as an example of transcultural literacy, (namely the introduction into one culture of meaning-making resources imported from another culture (Menezes de Souza, 2007:13)) my main aim has been, as already stated, not only to develop competence in reading another culture's literature but also to develop in the students the "ability to recognize that matters of difference are inextricably tied to issues of respect, tolerance, dialogue and our responsibility to others" (Giroux 2006:172).

If Narayan explains in his Preface how he tried to look at the Mahabharata from a Western conception of literature, in my classes I try to reach this same narrative from an Indian cultural and literary perspective, aiming at helping students visualize in this English rewriting of the epic the main features of Indian narratology.

The first issue I draw the students' attention to is that literature, as an academic discipline, should highlight the fact that knowledge is not universal but geo-politically located (Menezes de Souza 2007: 3). This leads to a contextualization of the Mahabharata, as belonging to what is known as pre-colonial Indian literature, i.e., the literature produced by the Indians, before the arrival of the English on the subcontinent in the seventeenth century. It is an example of itihasa, namely the Indian epic narrative tradition. In the itihasas the human element is dominant, though the divine elements are also present. These narratives deal with historical matters presented as legend (Paniker 2003: 40).

One of the most important sections of the Mahabharata, the Baghavad Gita is an example of the Purãnas, generic name given to the mythical narratives of India.

As a rule, says Paniker (2003:40), the Purãnas deal with legendary matters presented as history and the glorification of the divine is their central concern. The Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana, composed in the second century B.C., make up an invisible cornerstone that is the basis of Indian literature. These narratives are composed by verses, slokas (similar to "couplets").

The second issue is that although I discuss in my classroom the Mahabharata as adapted by Narayan, I make a point of showing that in its original verse form in Sanskrit, it responds to different principles of narratology with which we, as Brazilian readers, need to become familiar if we are ever to cross the borders of our culture and reach out to the target culture, even if represented in English and in prose.

In his discussion of Indian narratology, Paniker (2003: 2) lists ten distinctive narrative features, common to Indian pre-colonial narratives. As narrative strategies can be understood as semiotic signs (Menezes de Souza 2007:2), I focus on those that are relevant to read the Mahabharata in my own Brazilian classroom situation because they can be used as the stepping stones that lead us to the heart of the narrative and allow us to decode those cultural elements with which we are not familiar.

 The first of these narrative strategies that Paniker alludes to is what he calls "interiorisation":

> …the process by which a distinction, a contrast or even a contradiction is effected between the surface features of a text and its internal essence.[A text] is constructed through a multiplicity of layers of signification and that surface simplicity is often a clever device to interiorise a deeper and more complex end […] Almost every tale seems to contain a complex tissue of interiorised tales. The inset tale is related to the outer tale in a variety of ways. The cleverer the narrator, the more complex the inner fabric and the more simple the outer frame (4-5).

Hence, the Mahabharata should not be read simply on a surface level as the story of the strife between two families, Pandavas and the Kauravas, but as a story with a deep moral meaning that reveals the values and beliefs of Indian culture. In this sense, the narrative brings together the historical and the mythical levels. As Paniker (2003:44) explains "history is interiorised in the myth that is narrated", and this is one of the main differences with Western narratives in which history and myth are kept separate.

The second narrative strategy is that of "serialization". Paniker (2003: 6-7) explains that the typical Indian narrative is structured upon a never ending series of episodes that unlike Western narratives, can be detached without detriment to the main story. As an example, in the Mahabharata there are some episodes that concentrate on the adventures of minor characters, for example Nala or Sakuntalã, and not necessarily on the Kaurava brothers. These many sub-plots interspersed among the main lines of the plot confer a distinctive character onto

the Mahabharata and are a mark of Indian narratology that, in turn, points to the plural quality of Indian culture and society: "a multiplex narrative, multi-focal, multi-character, polyphonic, multi-layered" (Paniker 2003: 56).

When this narrative is performed in the theater, often among these episodes are inserted songs or dances that comment on the main narrative (this is still today one of the characteristics of Bollywood movies, that sometimes appear strange to a Western audience). This decentralization that may deviate our attention from the central plot is, paradoxically functional, in the sense that it helps re-present human experience in all its richness and complexity. At another level, I call my students' attention to the fact that this apparently loose quality of the Indian epic reflects a quality of Indian culture and society that sometimes is misunderstood in the West. It is not that it has no cohesiveness but that because of its heterogeneity, it is "organized on a very different idea of social cohesion and space management" (Paniker, 2003: 7) that might appear as "disorganization" to the Western reader.

Another quality central to Indian narratives is its cyclical quality. Indian narratives seem to be always in process as if attempting to imitate "the perpetual cyclical rotation of the seasons, as well as the circular revolutions of the heavenly bodies, totally ignoring all man-made laws of historical progress" (Paniker, 2003: 10).

Trautman (1995, p.176) explains this difference in the conception of time through the theory of creation. He points out that if for the Christian world, time is created by God and implies a movement and a change between two eternities, one in the past and the other in the future, at the end of history, moving progressively along in a singular and linear process from creation to salvation, the Hindus do not believe in creation as a completed past event as such, nor in linear progress. The idea is that, through the eternal cycle of the transmigration of the souls, God utilizes the same "mud" to recreate and refashion the world again and again from one era to the next. This is why the spinning wheel is the central symbol of India and metaphorizes the cyclical movement which implies an endless end and beginning. Western people understand this feature of Indian culture as pagan and implying that the Indians do not have a concept of history. However, what it means is that Indians have a different conception of the past and, in turn, a different literary, historical and narrative paradigm.

This conception of time is also represented both in the length of the Mahabharata that confers to it an endless quality; the branching out of the many stories that make up the narrative gives it depth at the same time as it also recycles the narrative in variegated ways.

Another feature of Indian narratology is what Paniker (2003: 8) calls "fantasy" and is related to the fact that from the beginning of history the Indian mind has questioned the quality of reality, finding delight in the "transformation of apparent reality into invisible or intangible legend or myth". Thus, natural objects such as Arjuna's sword in the Mahabharata, a present from Krishna, are often invested with an element of divinity, revealing how, culturally, the Indian mind takes pleasure in "conferring godhead on any object that he comes across, thereby

subjecting the objective world to the subjectivity of the collective human imagination" (Paniker, 2003: 9). Thus, every aspect of the universe both animate and inanimate belong within a comprehensive mythical pattern governed by a kind of logic that is difficult for the Western mind to accept since it turns the impossible into the possible. As an example, in the Mahabharata it is an elephant god, Ganesha, who actually writes down the story Vyãsa learns from Brahmã.

Anonymity, as mentioned above, is another feature central to Indian narratology. It is I think one of its most enticing peculiarities, though foreign to a Western audience in which the figure of the author reigns supreme. Paniker (2003:13) explains that a certain anonymity was maintained by most story-tellers, "even when they lived in historical times and their names could be identified: the objective was to merge the subjective self of the narrator in the collective readership so that ideally the narrator and the audience are one".
This is a distinctive feature of the Mahabharata. First because authorship, as Paniker points out, is attributed to what he defines as "ficticious names like Brahmã, the creator, Vãlmiki, the anthill-born or Vyãsa, the diameter or extension" (13) and also I think because, being an oral narrative, it has been passed on from generation to generation by different narrators each of whom imprint on the narrative their own means of expression. Such is the case of Narayan himself. As a result, there is not one Mahabharata but many, and all of them are equally "authentic".

Another metaphor that confirms this anonymous quality is the fact that the narrator is also a character who actually intrudes in the narrative, and advises the characters how to solve their dilemmas, as when Vyãsa appears to the Pandavas in Narayan's version of the Mahabharata:

> One day at dusk when [the Kauravas] were resting beside a lake after the evening ablutions and prayers, they had a venerable visitor. It was their great-grandfather Vyasa, the Island-born and composer of the Mahabharata. It was a welcome change from the monotony of trudging along in the same company. Vyasa said, 'You see those two paths? Follow the one on your left, and you will arrive at a town called Ekravata… (28).

This quality of the narrative is directly related to its chronotope: the relationship between time and space. On the one hand, as there are so many narrators, it is almost impossible to name the moment of the writing of a given work with certainty. Likewise, as Paniker (2003:15) explains, it is also difficult to fix the fictional time of the narrative since there is a deliberate attempt on the part of the narrator to make the events of the narrative happen in an undefined area of time. This is because what matters in these narratives is their ethical value. As is well known, for Gandhi, Indian narrative had a religious value precisely because of its ethical quality.

Likewise, in Indian narratives, events are presented in a time scale unknown to the Western world because, as Paniker (2003:15) explains, "time is measured in cosmic terms: day and night the different phases of the moon, the cycle of the

seasons, the ages or aeons measured out by the stars". Hence the wanderings of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata never seem to reach an end, and when they do, a new narrator is ready to retell and reconstruct the story once again.

For all the imprecise quality of the time reference, in Indian narratology, space is very specific; so much so that the city where the story of the Mahabharata takes place, Hastinapura and Kurukshetra in the North of India, actually exist. This specificity of place, adds Paniker (2003:16), allows a free handling of the time factor, as place becomes the unifying element in a narrative which becomes discontinuous due to the many actions taking place at the same time and the less rigid notion of time.

What gives this specific quality to the element of place in these narratives is the fact that it takes into account not only the geography of the country but also the composition of the races of the people, their customs and rituals, as well as the stratified quality of its society (Paniker 2003:44). In this sense, the Mahabharata for all its mythical quality, can also be understood as narrating the consolidation of the Indian nation as a single unity, since it tells of the coming together of all the different peoples of India –symbolized by the Pandavas and Kauravas—at the famous battle field of Kuruksetra.

At the same time, its mythical quality leads to the reading of the moral or ethical layers of meaning that permeate the narrative. The fight between the Pandavas and the Kauravas can also be understood as a fight between good and evil, in which the divine element is present in the figure of the God Krishna who intervenes when the forces of evil, the Kauravas, seem to impose themselves on the forces of good, the Pandavas. What calls the attention of a Western reader is the fact that this divine intervention is so subtly contrived that it appears as logical and inevitable, bridging the distance between myth and history and highlighting the spiritual quality valued by Indian culture.

If the genre is the link between the narrator and the audience, "style" (as the distinguishing elements constituting the use of a genre by a particular author) should be one of the most important features of a narrative. In the case of Indian narratology, this feature is in counterpoint with "improvisation", a characteristic of oral narratives. On the one hand, narratives awaken in the audience certain expectations that lead the narrator to move in a certain direction (Paniker, 2003:16). On the other hand, since these narratives are recreated by different narrators for different audiences, it means that there will always be a certain degree of improvisation, on the part of the narrator to suit the present audience. A text like the Mahabharata is a mosaic of episodes. Not necessarily, each rendering will include all of them. As an example, in his retelling of the story of the Pandava and the Kauravas, Narayan chose as unifying principle the quality of the narrator, Vyãsa and thus left some episodes out of his narrative. Hence, as Paniker (2003: 17) observes the narrative contracts or expands to suit different contexts or situations. Once again, this yarying quality of the narrative echoes the composition of the heterogeneous Indian culture which, through the ages, was constituted by waves of immigrants and invaders from different cultures from different parts of the world.

Final Words

Teaching foreign literary texts in the classroom situation may be an example of transcultural literacy if it becomes an effective means to develop in the students the ability to interact across cultures and to critically understand difference. In this sense a new type of knowledge, as Freire would say, is produced in the literature class where "cultural difference becomes an asset rather than a threat to democracy" (Giroux 2006: 173).

Simultaneously, literature as transcultural literacy makes students aware that we always look at other cultures with the lenses of our own culture. As Menezes de Souza (2007:13) points out, in intercultural situations, it is important to be critically aware that "here's how my culture colors my vision of another culture". This awareness should lead students to reconsider the situated and constructed quality of their own cultural values as well as that of the texts they produce. Finally, this exercise developed in the classroom through the interaction between teachers, students and literary texts may function as an important step towards providing both teachers and students with the means to develop a critical attitude of their own towards the world in general.

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