In this action research study, Aziza Jardine investigates the language attitudes of a group of ten- to eleven-year-old children from a diverse range of language backgrounds in an English medium school in the Western Cape, South Africa. Her particular focus is on Xhosa-speaking children, whose perceptions of their home language as being of little relevance to school learning form part of broader societal language attitudes. As a teacher researcher, the author made use of dialogue journal writing to raise the children's awareness of their linguistic abilities, as well as to provide them with the opportunity of expressing themselves in writing. Her study is underpinned by critical conceptions of language, literacy, discourse, and voice.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Affirming marginal voices:
a study of a group of primary school children in an asymmetrical multilingual setting

Aziza Jardine

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Abstract

For the majority of Xhosa speaking children at English medium schools in the Western Cape, their understanding of literacy as the ability to read and write is synonymous with English reading and writing. Xhosa does not form part of formal school learning, and children in many instances have not attempted to read and write in their home language. For such children, their perceptions of their home language as being of little relevance to school learning form part of broader societal language attitudes and perceptions.

This action research study investigates the language attitudes of a group of ten to eleven year old children from a diverse range of language backgrounds. The setting is an English medium, former 'coloured' school in the Western Cape. As a teacher researcher, I made use of dialogue journal writing to raise the children's awareness of their linguistic abilities, as well as to provide them with the opportunity to express themselves in writing. This dialogue journal writing process forms the base of my research.

My study is qualitative in nature. The data consist of written extracts and language questionnaire items selectively represented and interpreted, and constructed, rather than presented as instances of factual knowledge. It is underpinned by critical conceptions of language, literacy, discourse and voice, but I also draw on postmodern insights. Aligned to my theoretical framework, I analyse the data according to the broad framework of Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Fairclough, and the notion of the dialogical nature of language as theorised by Bakhtin.

The critical nature of this project is evidenced in my attempts to raise children's language awareness and to provide them with an opportunity to 'voice' themselves in writing. In addition, this study aims, via the children's writing, to 'unsettle understandings' about the capabilities of children learning in their second language.

Opsomming

Vir die meerderheid van Xhosa-sprekende kinders in Engels-medium skole in die Wes-Kaap, is lees en skryf gelykstaande aan lees en skryf in Engels. Isi-Xhosa is nie deel van hulle formele leer op skool nie, en kinders het in baie gevalle nooit probeer om in hul huistaal te lees nie. Sulke kinders se persepsie van hul huistaal as synde van minder belang vir hulle skoolwerk, vorm deel van breër sosiale houdings en sienswyses jeens taal.

Hierdie aksie-navorsingsstudie ondersoek die taalhoudings van 'n groep tien- en elfjarige kinders van 'n verskeidenheid taalagtergronde. Die konteks is 'n Engels-medium voormalige 'bruin' skool in die Wes-Kaap. As 'n onderwyser-navorser het ek dialoog-dagboeke gebruik om die kinders se gewaarwording van hul taalvermoëns te verhoog, sowel as om hulle die geleentheid te gee om hulself skriftelik uit te druk. Hierdie proses vorm die basis van my studie.

My studie is kwalitatief van aard. Die data bestaan uit geskrewe uittreksels en items uit taalvraelyste wat selektief daargestel en geïnterpreteer en gekonstrueer word, en nie as voorbeelde van feitelike kennis voorgegee word nie. Dit word onderskraag deur 'n kritiese daarstelling van taal, geletterdheid, diskoers en die konsep van jou eie stem (*voice*), maar ek maak ook gebruik van insigte vanuit die post-modernisme. In ooreenstemming met my teoretiese orientasie analiseer ek die data binne die breë raamwerk van Kritiese Diskoers-Analise soos deur Fairclough ontwikkel, en maak ek gebruik van die konsep van die dialogiese aard van taal soos deur Bakhtin geteoretiseer.

Die kritiese aard van die projek kom tot voorskyn in my poging om die kinders se taalbewussyn aan te wakker en om hulle die geleentheid te gee om hul eie 'stem' skriftelike uitdruk te gee. 'n Verdere doelstelling van die studie is om, deur middel van die kinders se skrywe, algemene opvattings oor die vermoëns van kinders wat in hul tweede taal leer, te ondermyn.

Isishwankathelo

Kuninzi lwabantwana abantetha isisiXhosa abafunda kwizikolo ezifundisa ngesiNgesi kwiphondo lweNtshona Koloni, ulwazi lwabo ngokufunda nokubhala bathi balayamanise ngqo nokufunda ukubhala isiNgesi. IsiXhosa asithi sibe yinxalenye yokufunda kwabo esikolweni, kwaye abantwana kumatyeli amaninzi, abathanga bakha bazama ukufunda nokubhala ngeelwimi zabo. Kubantwana abanjalo, ukuqwalasela/ ukuqonda kwamalwimi abo enkobe nje ngangabalulekanga kakhulu ekufundeni kwabo ezikolweni kuthi kube yinxalenye yembaxa indlela abasekuhlaleni abalujonga nabaluqonda ngayo ulwimi.

Esi sifundo ngophando oluqhubekayo siphanda izimvo ngolwimi kwiqela labantwana abasukela eshumini ukuya kwishumi elinanye leminyaka besuka kwimvelaphi ezahlukene kakhulu. Isakhelo kukukufundisa ngesiNgesi, kwisikolo ebesifudula 'isabebala' kwiphondo leNtshona Koloni. Nanje ngomfundisi ntsapho, ndisebenzise intetha yababini ngembalelwano ukuphakamisa ukuqonda ebantwaneni malunga nokuba nako kwabo kwiilwimi, ndawonye nokuthi ndibanikezele ithuba lokuba bavakalise izimvo zabo ngokubhala phantsi. Le nkqubo yembalo ntetha yababini ithe yasisiseko sophando lwam.

Isifundo sam si*qualitative* ngendalo. Ulwazi luqulathe imihlathi ebhaliweyo nemibuzo engolwimi emelwe ngokukhethekileyo yaze yaguqulelwa, kwaye yakhiwa endaweni yokuba inikezelwe njengento yobunyani bolwazi. Luxhaswa luluvo ululuqilima ngezolwimi, ukufunda nokubhala, ukufundisa nelizwi, kodwa ndikwadontsa nakwimbono esemva kwexesha lempucuko. Kokuhambelana nophahla lwam lweengcinga, ndilucalula ulwazingokumalunga nophahla olubanzi lweMfundiso eGxekayo yokuCalulana njengoko ivelisiwe nguFairlough,

nembono yengxoxo ngolwimi nanjegoko yabekwa nguBakhtin. Eyona mvelaphi igxekayo yalomsebenzi ibubungqina kwinzame zam ukuphakamisa ukuqaphela kolwimi ebantwaneni kwaye ndibafumanele ithuba lokuba bavakalise 'ilizwi' labo ngokubhaliweyo. Ukoleka, esi sifundo sijolise, sisebenzisa isibhalo sa-bantwana, ekushukumiseni okuqondwayo' ukuba nako kwabantwana ukufunda ngolwimi lwesibini.

1. Introduction

Our words are not just neutral symbols – our words join with our thoughts to generate meaning. The language we use matters. Sometimes language hurts one group of kids, and sometimes it helps another group. (Wink 1997:25)

1.1 'I can't read Xhosa'

During my first year as an itinerant learning support teacher at a primary school, I approached children in the senior grades to read the Xhosa text of a multilingual reader to a group of Grade Ones that I was working with. Their response both puzzled and disconcerted me. Fewer than a handful of the over 70 children in these grades indicated that they could read in their home lan-guage, and those who indicated that they were unable to do so, appeared quite unperturbed by this. My observations of the children's interaction with their peers during breaks – almost always fellow Xhosa speakers – showed that they used mostly Xhosa to communicate with one another. It was therefore clear that the children depended on it at the social level, as a means of interacting with their friends. This was in contrast to their perception that the ability to read and write in their home language was unrelated to school learning.

My observations of classroom communication were that, with the exception of the odd translations of teacher instructions, the language of the classroom was English, and sometimes, Afrikaans. I also observed that children gener-ally, and Xhosa-speaking children particularly, did very little talking in class. Communication mostly took the form of pupil responses to teacher questions. It appeared that the children's voices, as Xhosa and as English second language speakers, were not being developed or affirmed.

During my learning support periods with Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) children, I found that English and Afrikaans speakers spoke most easily. Af-rikaans speakers, in fact, code-switched freely, confident in the knowledge that the language they used would be understood and affirmed. In contrast, Xhosa speakers had to be coaxed to respond, and then their responses were limited to what they felt confident to formulate.

The situation differed when I worked with a small group of Xhosa-speaking Grade 6 children, most of whom had been at the school since Grade 1, and had therefore acquired basic English communication skills. Although it was clear that speaking English still did not come naturally, these children were able to represent themselves and their home lives more fully, both orally and in written

form during a few exploratory dialogue journal writing sessions. These sessions alerted me to how limited both my communication with, and understanding of, Xhosa-speaking children had been until then. As a result, I decided to use dialogue journals to affirm children's voices. This exercise forms the base of my research.

1.2 Situating my research

I work as an itinerant learning support teacher at two multilingual primary schools in the Western Cape. At the time of the research, my work entailed providing literacy and language support to groups of between six to ten children. Children attending schools administered by the Western Cape Education Department learn in one of the three official languages in this province: English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. Almost without exception, white,[1] 'coloured' and Indian English-speaking children learn in their home language. Although there appears to be a language shift towards English for some 'coloured' and a few white Afrikaans-speaking families (Chellan 1999; Braam 2004; De Klerk 2001; Dyers 2004) the great majority of Afrikaans-speaking children are still taught in their mother tongue.

The situation is very different for black, Xhosa-speaking learners, where there is a growing tendency for parents to choose English as the medium of instruction for their children. The contexts in which these children are required to learn in English differ widely. In many poor to working class township schools, English is the official medium of instruction, but Xhosa is the *de facto* language of teaching. It is therefore possible to argue that the home language is being maintained to an extent. According to Alexander (personal communication April 6, 2006), however, the reality at most such schools is that Xhosa is mainly used to mediate children's understanding of English, with the result that neither English nor Xhosa is developed sufficiently to allow children to cope with academic learning.

At the other extreme, there are children at previously segregated 'coloured' and white schools where Xhosa is not offered at any level, and where there is an absence of teachers who are able to understand and speak the language. Children in these asymmetrical multilingual schools experience what Plüddemann et al (2004:35) describe as a 'severe form of primary language deprivation'. This study is situated in one such school.

Belldale[2] is situated in a working class, predominantly 'coloured' residential

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1   My understanding on all 'racial' categories is that they are socio-political, historical constructions which have particular material consequences for the people categorised by them (Soudien and Sayed 2001). I place the term 'coloured' in quotation marks to contest the way this particular racial identity continues to be explained in essentialist genetic terms, for instance, by the use of terms such as 'mixed race'.

2   The name of the school has been changed to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

area and serves the children from the immediate environment and a majority of children from the townships, Khayelitsha and Langa. The school is an ex-House of Representatives school; a school designated for 'coloureds' as a 'racial' group with its own language and culture, under the apartheid framework. In post-apartheid South Africa, it is still considered a poor school. Only a small number of parents are able to supplement the funds allocated to it by the Western Cape Education department by paying school fees. In spite of its relatively large class sizes, the school, because of its location near the train station and its relatively low school fees, remains an attractive option for its mostly working class black parents. Along with the neighbouring school, it is the only school in the area with a significant number of Xhosa speakers.

The school is an asymmetrical multilingual school: although it is multilingual in learner composition, this is not reflected in the teaching population, school curriculum or ethos. At the start of this research in 2005, Xhosa-speaking children formed more than 70% of the school population of 378 learners. The remaining children consisted mostly of bilingual Kaaps-Afrikaans/English speakers but also included some English first language speakers and a few speakers of languages such as Swahili, Lingala, Portuguese and French. All the teachers at the school were 'coloured', bilingual Kaaps-Afrikaans/English speakers. Apart from the odd word, given mostly in instructions like *yi'zap [come here]* and *thula [keep quiet]*, none of the teachers were able to understand or speak Xhosa. Afrikaans was introduced as an additional language from Grade 2. At the time of the research, the school had no official language policy.

It is my perception that Xhosa-speaking children at the school are generally positioned as children with language deficits. Children are described as having 'no language' when they start or else as presenting 'language problems'. As a consequence, most of the children referred to me for support are children who are learning in their second language. For most teachers, effective English language learning is based on assimilationist views: children are at the school to learn English and the earlier they start, the better. These views are accompanied by dismissive, negative views of the role of Xhosa at school, as illustrated by teacher comments such as: 'Xhosa is the language of their community, at school we speak English' and 'Don't speak that language here'.

1.3 Aims of the study

The aim of my teaching intervention, dialogue journal writing, was to counter these deficit perceptions by affirming the marginal home language at school. More importantly, I aimed to give children who do not often get the opportunity to do so, the space to voice themselves in writing. My research, therefore, aimed at investigating the dialogue journal writing process as a means of raising the status of Xhosa at school, as well as to affirm the voices of children in asymmetrical multilingual settings.

1.4 Research questions

The research question I formulated to align with my research purposes was:

> How do children respond to language awareness strategies embedded in dialogue journal writing?

In order to answer this research question, I formulated two sub-questions:

a) In which ways do children negotiate meaning in dialogue journal writing framed as a language awareness process?

b) How does such a process impact of children's language attitudes and perceptions?

1.5 Description of the study

I set about answering these questions by entering into a period of dialogue journal writing with a group of 28 ten- to eleven-year-old primary schoolchildren. The writing occurred towards the end of 2005 and during the first three months of 2006.

During this time I spent approximately 45 minutes in the Grade 4 (Grade 5 in 2006) classroom once or twice weekly. These sessions consisted of multilingual awareness activities, such as translations or reading of multilingual texts, followed by the children responding to my previous entry. My study was one of action research where I, as participant in the research and Xhosa learner, could reflect and learn as the process unfolded.

There were two phases of research, both lasting approximately two months. The first occurred during the latter half of 2005 and aimed to familiarise the children with the journal writing process. I framed the process as a multilingual one from the start, and encouraged the children to explore their home language writing abilities. However, during the first phase, children were free to use the language they felt the most comfortable writing in. In the second phase, I explicitly encouraged biliteracy by requesting that they include some Xhosa or Afrikaans in their entries.

The framework within which I chose to represent and interpret the children's journal writing and their responses to the language attitude questionnaires, was critical discourse analysis. As an approach to discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) foregrounds the relation between language and the different facets of society and focuses on issues of voice and power and privilege (Luke 1996; Rogers et al 2005). As a data analysis method, CDA 'combines some form of close analysis of the text with a social orientation to discourse' (Fairclough 1992: 12). The purpose of CDA is often deconstruction: texts are taken apart to 'reveal' how power relations are evident in these texts. Critical discourse analysis can, however, also be framed in reconstructive terms, for example, as a means of encouraging critical language awareness. Although my analysis contained deconstructive elements, it was the reconstructive aspects of CDA that my research sought to foreground.

1.6 Scope and limitations

Studies of South African primary schoolchildren learning in their second language have focused on language attitudes (Chellan 1999; Braam 2004) and the difficulties experienced by such children (Plüddemann et al. 2000). Different foci, as well as children's perceived language constraints have, with few exceptions (Janks 2006; Albororough 2004), prevented researchers from investigating how children portray their worlds within these constraints. My study is an attempt to provide children with an opportunity to represent their worlds from their marginal spaces as second language learners. An additional aspect of my study, not often interrogated in research, seeks to explore and encourage the home language literacy ability of children learning in their second language.

This was a small scale study undertaken over a relatively short period of time. In addition, my work occurred in a particular context. Although more than two languages can be heard on the playground, and the school can therefore be referred to as a multilingual school, neither the pupil population nor the teaching staff can be considered multiracial. The findings of this research can therefore not be generalised to all multilingual schools in the Western Cape. Instead, it offers insight into the possibilities of testing and pushing boundaries at a local, particular level.

1.7 Outline of the dissertation

Chapter two provides the theoretical considerations underpinning my research. This includes an explanation of the views of language that informed the research as well as an overview of relevant South African language in education issues. I then investigate the concept of voice as it applies to this research. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the nature and functions of dialogue journal writing.

In chapter three I account for the epistemology or view of knowledge underpinning the research and then provide a brief description of the action research paradigm within which the research method is situated. Thereafter I provide a narrative of the research process, describing the research population, the data collection and data analysis techniques, as well as validity issues and ethical considerations.

The descriptive chapter forms the main part of this thesis. In this, the fourth chapter, I present and analyse the children's journal entries and language attitude questionnaires using the broad framework of critical discourse analysis.

The final chapter serves as a summary of the findings as they relate to my research questions. I conclude this thesis with a discussion of the possible implications of the research for policy and practice.

2. Theoretical considerations

My dual interests in language attitudes and student voice fall within the field of sociolinguistics which focuses on the relationship between language and society. In this study, I view language through a critical, postmodern lens. This view of language is explained in the first section of this chapter. In this section I also make reference to historical and current markers of language and society in South Africa, thus contextualising the language attitudes and practices of the participants in the study. Thereafter I explore the concept of voice as understood within critical and postmodern orientations. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of dialogue journal writing as the intervention strategy I used to affirm children's voices. In this discussion I refer to relevant empirical studies as well as to theoretical issues surrounding literacy and biliteracy.

2.1 Language and society: a critical view

A critical view of language proceeds from the assumption that language is a historically shaped, culturally transmitted, social construction embedded in society (Vygotsky 1978). As such, it is inextricably linked to the power structures and inequalities that characterise society (Blommaert 2006; Lather 1991). Because language is located within the different political, economic, racial and linguistic structures of society, theorists like Lather (1991) and Cazden (1992) argue that it cannot be neutral, but always reflects a stance or position towards some aspect of reality. A critical orientation towards language use focuses on how these positions are accepted as the normal, commonsense way of viewing reality. Luke (1995:10) further asserts that the perspectives of reality naturalised tend to be those of the most powerful sections of society. To illustrate, a 'neutral' definition of a multilingual speaker would be that she is someone who speaks more than two languages. However, when the term 'multilingual' is used and interpreted, it is accompanied by a certain perspective, depending on the ideology within which its use is embedded. It can for instance be viewed positively, as an enabling social ability, or negatively, as a characteristic of 'less advanced' societies and of 'otherness.' In South Africa, the latter view has historically been held by the powerful members of society and this is the view that, for the great majority of South Africans, has become naturalised as common sense.

Language encounters between those who speak privileged versions of reality and outsiders, who have limited access to these versions, are characteristically asymmetrical or unequal. Examples of such inequalities in language encounters can be seen when less powerful participants lack control over aspects such as topic initiation and speaking turns, and as a consequence, are less able to sound their voices. Cameron (2001:162) points to asymmetric encounters between doctors and patients, and teachers and pupils. In the context of schools such as the one in this study, such inequalities are evident in interactions between teachers and parents.

2.2 The postmodern view: constructing our worlds via language

The idea of multiple versions of reality is based on postmodern views of the relation between language and reality. For Derrida (in Barker and Galasinski, 2001:10), language is, first of all, unstable, carrying multiple meanings and traces from other contexts. This characteristic of language, he argues, means that 'word to world' correspondence becomes problematic; the social reality represented by language is not simply a reflection of things as 'they really are'. Postmodernists argue that this reality, in fact, is constructed or shaped in a particular way, based on the values and norms of the language user. For example, when a teacher at this research site remarks that 'All *darkies* [black African children at the school] look the same', her language use inscribes or marks, rather than reflects reality. Rendering such children invisible by homogenising them is an example of what Foucault describes as the linguistic construction of reality or of discourse 'producing objects of which they speak' (1972:49).

2.3 Merging critical and postmodern interpretations: Discourse as 'regulated ways of constructing our worlds'

A critical orientation to language foregrounds issues of power and inequality in language in society. A postmodernist view, on the other hand, emphasises the mulitiple, value-laden ways in which language defines and construct social realities. In the discussion below I attempt to merge these interpretations by drawing on the construct of discourse as explained by Gee (1990) and Foucault (1972). In doing so, I aim to illustrate how language is used to construct and position, and exert power over children and parents in this study.

Discourse in neutral terms can be viewed as a meaningful, coherent stretch of language (Cots 2006). But within the critical, postmodern orientation, language and discourse cannot be neutral. Gee's conception of discourse as social practice underscores this view (1990: xviv):

> A 'role' as I am here using the term, is a combination of saying the right sorts of things in the right sorts of actions and interactions, and appearing to think and feel the right way and have the right sort of values. I call such integral combinations of sayings-doings-thinkings-feeling-valuings 'Discourses'.

According to Gee, Discourses are based on language but they also include feelings, actions and values. Moreover, in his definition the normative element is emphasised, for example, membership of a particular discourse community entails, amongst other things, saying the right kind of things. Foucault, in his conception of discourse (in Cameron 2001:15–17), also foregrounds the role of norms and values by asserting that these values govern the way topics are talked about, and practices are conducted. Included in his understanding of discourse as 'regulated ways of speaking' are hidden rules of who speaks and who listens, which knowledge is good and bad, and whose words have power and whose words are marginalised.

Whilst Foucault, like Gee, locates discourse in social structures, his view of discourse goes further in explaining the constructive nature of such discourses. Foucalt argues that it is within the social practices located in institutional structures that discourse can be seen to 'define and produce objects of knowledge'. In other words, this is where concepts and beliefs are formed which then define what we consider to be reality on a subject (Cameron 2001:16). For example, by describing a Xhosa-speaking child as 'an English second language learner', we constitute her in terms of a language other than her own and, through this definition, as deficient or lacking and not at the same level as English first language speakers. Such a positioning occurs within policies and practices in school environments where children are expected to leave *their* language at home and learn in another language, English. This is done often without adequate English support at home, and taught by teachers who are ill-equipped to teach children learning in a second language. As a result, many children struggle and are then categorised as having a 'language problem'.

2.3.1 Power in discourse – the effects of categorization

Foucault asserts that the power exerted by those who speak authoritative discourses – 'experts' who are licensed to define and classify and 'construct' things and people – is often accompanied by the right to do things to them or a sense of power over them. He illustrates this by referring to the historically constructed category of 'mental illness' and how this enabled the 'experts' who constructed these categories to regulate the behaviour of those thus categorised, by institutionalising them. Within the context of this research, authoritative discourses in language education favour definitions of Xhosa speakers as deficient English learners rather than potentially multilingual and resourceful. Once children are positioned in this way, certain practices are set in place at schools by those who have the power to categorise, and these practices in turn repro-duce discursive perceptions of deficit. For example, at one of the schools where I teach, unofficial school policy sanctions language screening of Xhosa-speaking learners transferring from other schools. Once the teachers charged with assessing these children have categorised them as children with 'little English' or 'no language' [sic], the school urges parents to agree to their children repeating the grade they had passed at the Xhosa medium school. This is a clear example of so-called 'experts' having the power to define, classify and construct others, and assuming power over them.

Parents' responses to requests such as the one above illustrate further facets of power in discourse. Fairclough (1989:46) asserts that powerful participants are able to control and constrain the contributions of those with less power. For parents seeking to enrol their children at English medium schools, senior teachers, whom parents perceive to have the right to allow access to the school, are such powerful participants. These teachers exert their power not only by setting the agenda for what can be discussed, but also by dictating the language medium that can be drawn upon. Parents are invariably expected to communicate in their second language during these encounters, and thus are often not able to voice their concerns confidently. Blommaert (2005:71) would explain this as an example of differences in language being translated into linguistic and social inequalities between speakers. Fairclough (1989:57) refers to the power differences between standard English and dialects of the language and locates such inequalities in class relations, although researchers such as Bangeni (2001), Soudien and Sayed (2004) and Fiske and Ladd (2006) in the South African context have found that race, class and language intersect. In this respect, Soudien and Sayed refer to the way school fees are used to exclude children from poorer backgrounds from former white schools, and how the discourse that equates whiteness with standards of excellence is used to silence and assimilate black middle class parents into the monolingual ethos of such schools.

2.4 Language attitudes – internalising hegemonic discourses

Whatever the origins of these social and linguistic inequalities, they serve to reinforce existing language attitudes in societies. Language attitudes, according to Baker (in Adegbija 1994:49), consist of thoughts and feelings towards language and language speakers, and an inclination to act in certain ways based on these thoughts and feelings. When parents enter powerful educational institutions and struggle to explain themselves, or communicate their concerns by drawing on their home language, their experiences are likely to confirm their attitudes towards their home language as being of little use in powerful public spheres. They are also likely to further internalise their hegemonic perception of English as a language whose superiority is 'natural', 'given' and 'commonsense' (Janks 1994: 306).

2.4.1 South African Language attitudes as historical constructions

Ngugi (in Alexander 2000:6) claims that language attitudes that elevate the language of the powerful, ruling class to a state of being naturally superior, is a legacy of colonial times. He further argues that such attitudes are the result of effective, deliberate attempts by colonial rulers to justify their subjugation of colonised people by constructing them as deficient *Others*. This, he contends, was achieved via the colonisers elevating their own culture, and language, while at the same time denigrating the customs and beliefs of the colonised.

Alexander (2000:10) refers to the attitude of African language speakers towards their home language as 'debilitating'; by dismissing their home language as a means of communication in the powerful domains of society, these speakers place themselves in a position where they are required to conduct their most important and intimate business in a language many of them do not have an enabling command of. These attitudes, he argues, have continued to be sustained by political and social factors.

A significant South African historical example of a practice designed to sustain the construction of *others* as inferior and deficient was the policy of Bantu Education, instituted by the Nationalist Apartheid government in 1953. A product of an educational system designed to effect unequal segregation in South Africa, Bantu Education was characterised by unequal resources, an impoverished curriculum and mother tongue teaching. As Heugh (2004:4) points out, this ideologically driven education system achieved what it set out to do: 'the massive under-education of the majority of the population'. It also managed to forge a strong association between mother tongue education and this inferior, deficient education in the minds of African language speaking parents.

The denigration of mother tongue education in the minds of African language speakers was accompanied by an increased impetus towards English as medium of instruction. As in the case regarding attitudes towards African languages, attitudes towards English have also been subject to socio-political factors. An example of such a factor was the Soweto uprising in 1976. These were protests, simultaneously linguistic and political, against two of the Nationalist government's language medium directives. The first source of dissatisfaction was with the extension of mother tongue education in the primary school to the first eight years. This was seen as an attempt to limit and delay access to English, the language of power (Hartshorne, in Tennant 2003:3). The other, more immediate, cause of the protests was attempts by government officials to enforce a policy that compelled high school students to be taught some of their subjects in Afrikaans (Giliomee 2003:17), for many a third or even fourth language – and the language of an oppressive regime.

2.4.2 Current language policy and attitudes

Political and social factors, then, have historically impacted on the development and maintenance of language policy and language attitudes. South Africa's current Language in Education policy (July 1997) was formulated within a changed political dispensation and is based on a post-apartheid constitution that affirms the cultural diversity of the country as an asset (Department of Education 1997).

In line with the constitution, the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) recognises nine African languages in addition to English and Afrikaans. The LiEP is explicitly counterhegemonic, seeking to develop and encourage respect for all the country's official languages, particularly those languages which have traditionally been marginalised. Related to this, the policy strives to encourage multilingualism as 'a means to promote communication across the barriers of colour, language and region' (Department of Education 1997), in other words, multilingualism is presented as a resource for living in a diverse society.

The Department of Education's position on the medium of instruction likewise responds to past discriminatory practices, practices that have curtailed successful participation in the education system for the majority of its citizens. The policy advocates additive bilingualism: the home language is developed and maintained, while access is provided to an additional language, usually English. This is the approach that worldwide research has found to be the one most likely to lead to conceptual and emotional development.

2.4.3 Criticisms of current language policy

More than ten years after the announcement of the LiEP, there appears to be a considerable mismatch between this policy and the practice at schools (Plüddemann et al. 2004:17). The researchers, drawing on information gathered by PanSALB and the National Department of Education (2001), estimate that no more than a quarter of African language speaking children learn in their mother tongue. They further point out that for the great majority of these children, this mother tongue medium of education would be confined to the first three grades of school. As is the case in the rest of the country, English medium instruction continues to remain an attractive option for African (Xhosa) language speaking parents in the Western Cape.

At this stage it appears that the LiEP has not achieved what it set out to do. Researchers such as Banda (2000) and Webb (2002:51) account for this failure by emphasising what they consider to be flaws in the policy. One of these, impacting on current language attitudes of Xhosa-speaking parents, is that the policy does not consider the need to change the negative attitudes towards the African languages as envisaged in the constitution. For example, a few years since the formulation of the policy, both Chellan (1999)

and De Klerk (2001) found that parents dismissed the value of the home language in education. In Chellan's case, parents stigmatised the home language, Kaaps-Afrikaans, as the language of '*bergies en plakkers*' [hobos and squatters] (1999:68) while De Klerk (2001:9) describes middleclass Xhosa-speaking parents' efforts to maintain the Xhosa language as '(at best) a half-hearted effort'. Negative attitudes towards the use of the home language as medium of education are, however, not shared by all African language speaking parents. Nomlomo (2004:126–129) in her study of working class Xhosa-speaking parents, found that parents who have come to an awareness of the political nature of language use and language rights are more inclined to see the value of the home language as a medium of education. In her study, those parents who opted for Xhosa medium instruction linked their affirmation of the language to the country's transformation process, to its role as a carrier of culture and identity, and also as a means to ensure better matric results for their children.

Children are influenced by the attitudes of their parents but they also listen to their teachers. According to several South African researchers (McKay and Chick 2000; Sayed and Soudien 2004; Braam 2004; Jansen 2004; Muthukrisna et al. 2007) the language attitudes of many teachers are embedded in a *difference as deficit* discourse. This is evident when teachers construct children's different language abilities as a lack (language problem) or negation (no language). Teachers also periodically voice concerns about having to 'lower standards' to accommodate the 'type' of child that enters the school. Such comments illustrate language attitudes that position learners who do not have English as a home language as essentially or inherently different and deficient.

2.5 Language attitudes and 'voice'

My discussion about language attitudes thus far has illustrated the role of past practices and policies in determining existing language attitudes of parents, teachers, and, quite likely, learners. In so doing, I have located language attitudes within the discourses found in institutions and groups in society. In order to account for the role of the individual in such discourses, I turn to the concept of 'voice' as conceptualised within the critical and postmodern paradigms.

2.5.1 Critical conceptions – amplifying the voices of marginalised others

Critical theorists account for voice, or the individual in discourse, by focusing on asymmetry in power relationships, that is, on interactions where one party has more control. Voice is thus linked to the ability of people to make themselves heard or understood. By emphasising inequalities in language encounters, critical researchers strive for some form of empowerment by amplifying the voices of marginal, less powerful groups. Voice is then viewed as a 'necessary pragmatic conceptual tool for getting things on the agenda that might otherwise be lost or marginalised' (Baker 1999:370).

Several researchers within the postmodernist tradition take issue with critical conceptions of voice. Theorists such as Smith (in Mills 2004:74) and Street (in Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester 2000:100) argue that critical views of voice focus on the power of larger institutional structures in discourse and do not make allowances for the interrelational and individual nature of power. In this vein, Mills (2004:87) argues that individuals do not necessarily assume the roles set out for them by discourses, and are able to assume various positions in a specific discourse. Thesen (1994:39) supports this view and uses the term 'voices in discourse' to highlight the individual in discourse:

> It is individuals who uphold, perpetuate and stretch discourses, and give them life through their choices and actions.

2.5.2 Postmodern views – voices as multiple, fluid and emergent

Voice as conceptualised by Thesen and Mills is framed within postmodernist interpretations of the nature of individual identity. Rather than view identity as unitary, fixed and stable, these authors point out that individuals simultaneously speak and act from intersecting social categories or locations such as gender, race, language, class, marital status and political affiliations. These categories account for the multiple, shifting and partial nature of voice. Bakhtin (in Maybin 2006:140) explains multivoicedness as follows:

> Our practical everyday speech is full of other people's words: with some of them we completely merge our own voice, forgetting whose they are; others we take as authoritative, we use it to reinforce our own words; still others finally, we populate with our own aspirations, alien or hostile to them.

Voice as conceptualised by Bakhtin, is multiple, in process, often conflictual and always value-laden. Voices contain traces of other voices, past and present, and are always simultaneously individual and social. The partial and unfinished quality of voice arises from the dialogic nature or addressivity of all utterances. In other words, our utterances are oriented towards a future audience, and takes into account and anticipate the responses of that audience. At the same time, our words take into account and are thus oriented backwards, towards previous utterances and voices (Maybin 2006:23).

Although Bakhtin acknowledges the value-ladenness of voice, he does not foreground a critical orientation, an orientation within which my study was framed from the start. Via my research topic, affirming marginal voices, I

sought to raise children's perception of their marginal home languages, Xhosa and Kaaps-Afrikaans. Then, I wished to provide a space for children who seldom get the opportunity to do so, to voice themselves in writing. In the process, I hoped to 'unsettle understandings' (Thesen 1994:8) by presenting an alternative discourse to what I considered to be the *difference as deficit discourse* within which these children were positioned at school. The journal writing process I undertook to achieve these aims was therefore largely motivated by these critical conceptions of voice. But, as I discovered as the research process unfolded, Bakhtin's linguistic conception of voice as dialogical and multiple proved to be equally relevant in illuminating voices in dialogue journal writing.

In the section that follows I expand on the nature and functions of dialogue journal writing. This includes a discussion of the view of literacy in which the genre is located, as well as a discussion of the concept of biliteracy as understood within this view.

2.6 Affirming marginal voices via dialogue journals

Journal writing in educational settings can take several forms, depending on their uses or purposes. Cobine (1995) distinguishes between dialogue journals whose primary purpose is to promote communication, literary journals where the focus is on personal responses to pieces of literature, and subject journals for identifying and clarifying subject specific ideas and concepts.

As a genre used in this study, dialogue journals can be viewed as a regular written conversation between teachers and students. Peyton (1993) explains the nature of this communication:

> Students write as much as they choose and the teacher writes back regularly, responding to the student's comments and questions, introducing new topics or asking questions. The teacher is a participant in an ongoing, written conversation with the student, rather than the evaluator who corrects or comments on the student's writing.

Although the teacher in such conversations is recognised as a more proficient writer who is able to model standard language use, the assumption underlying dialogue journal writing is that the relationship between teacher and student is an equal one (Bloch 2002). Students, for instance, initiate topics and decide how they will respond to teacher comments and questions, thereby maintaining an element of control over how they represent themselves and their worlds, and how their voices will be heard. Harada (2002) suggests that the levelling of power between teachers and students is often accompanied by shifting teacher-learner roles. The nature of these teacher–learner roles allows dialogue journal writing to provide a space where children feel safe to express their feelings, thoughts and needs, and to take risks.

2.6.1 Empirical studies of dialogue journal writing

Two empirical studies that illustrate dialogue journal writing conceived in the above terms are those related by Peyton and Staton (1993) and Bloch (2002, 2003). Peyton and Staton, reporting on the dialogue writing exercise done by Leslie Reed, a teacher of a Grade 6 class with varying levels of language and literacy skills, found dialogue journals to be an effective way to build English language fluency and writing skills. Reed, reflecting on the process, also recognised the potential of dialogue journal writing to develop language and literacy abilities, but for her the practice had several other, equally important benefits: she found it to be a source of information about her students' cultures, activities and needs, a private channel of honest, ongoing communication with each student in her class and a way to individualize instruction (Reed 1993: 29-46).

Reed started out from the belief that communication should build on the cultural perspectives of students, and suggest that children with no proficiency in English may start out by writing in their home language, if someone is available to write back. However, all the dialogue entries presented in the study are in English. Although this was a study of a multilingual class, home language literacy was not foregrounded. This study therefore did not involve writing or reading in more than one language or biliteracy.

A South African dialogue journal study that included home language literacy was the one undertaken by PRAESA in 2002. The dialogue journal writing study formed part of a broader multilingual project which aimed to give effect to the principle of additive bilingualism as promoted in the Department of Education's Language in Education Policy (Bloch 2002). The project followed the literacy progress of a class of mostly Xhosa speakers who had been introduced to literacy in both Xhosa and English in Grade One. At the time of the study of dialogue journal writing in Grade 3, these children had therefore been exposed to two years of biliteracy practice. In Grade 2, this included interactive letter writing to Xhosa-speaking and English-speaking 'visitors'. During the dialogue writing process in 2000, children again wrote to two adults – the English-speaking class teacher and Ntombi Nkence, a teacher/researcher employed by PRAESA.

The PRAESA study echoes many of the findings of previous research, re-iterating the role of dialogue journals in providing a deeper understanding of the lives of children. In addition, and of particular relevance to my study, was the role of dialogue journal writing in balancing the power between English and Xhosa, in order to, for instance, raise the status of Xhosa in print. However, in this respect, Bloch cautioned that raising the status of Xhosa required work as children had internalised the negative perception of the language that the school and adults conveyed about the language (2002, 2003). This caution, in turn, highlights the relationship between language and literacy and institutional structures. This aspect, as well as other theoretical issues pertaining to

dialogue journal writing as a biliteracy and mutilingual awareness strategy, is discussed below.

2.6.2 Dialogue journals as a literacy strategy

As a literacy strategy, dialogue journals form part of a whole language approach which views literacy as an essentially active, social, meaning-making process that it is best acquired when literacy is used for real purposes in authentic contexts (Wagner 1989). As used in this study, it is located within an ideological paradigm of literacy. Edelsky (in Bloch 2006: 7) explains the impact of paradigms pertaining to literacy as follows:

> Paradigms wield their power by determining how to look at phenomena – where to draw the boundaries, what questions to ask, what to count as answers – which in turn, determines what one sees.

2.6.2.1 Literacy: autonomous and ideological views

An ideological paradigm of literacy stands in contrast to the autonomous view, which sees literacy as a largely individual activity. Within the latter view, literacy is described in psychological and cognitive terms, as sets of uniform skills residing within an individual that leads to unambiguous social and cognitive gains (Street 1984, 2003). One example of such an autonomous conception of literacy is the (still largely prevalent) decontextualised, discreet teaching of phonics and writing skills at primary schools in the Western Cape (Plüddemann et al. 2000:51). Literacy in these terms is unrelated to the social contexts in which it is acquired or used.

An ideological view differs from the autonomous view in several respects. Whereas an autonomous orientation requires the teaching of separate technical skills before literacy can be attained, an ideological view proposes that skills are learned as individuals use them to do something personally meaningful or useful. This learning, moreover, as is the case with most literacy activities, is embedded in other social realities or practices. The social nature of literacy points to a further difference between the two paradigms: literacy as part of people's various daily social practices takes different forms and people therefore have multiple literacies, rather than any one single literacy. Gee (1990:xviii) explains this by saying that people engage in different kinds of reading and writing practices as members of different discourse groups, for example, religious groups, students at school, colleagues at work. Gee further suggests that, rather than framing literacy in terms of absolute levels of skills, the focus should be on multiple literacies and how people use these literacies in their lives. Such a conception would moreover illuminate literacy use within wider institutional power relationships and struggles (Street 1995).

One such area of contestation is the relationship between language and literacy. According to a Unesco summary of developments in literacy understanding (2003) literacy is fundamentally a linguistically based concept, yet as Bloch (2006:7) points out, the relation between language and literacy is often underplayed or dismissed. Within the latter conception, literacy in two languages is viewed in neutral terms and scant attention is given to how literacies in different languages is implicated in power relationships in society; how, for instance, literacy in one language leads to economic empowerment while in another it is dismissed as of no real consequence.

2.6.2.2 Biliteracy within the ideological paradigm

By relating biliteracy practices to systems of social inequality, Hornberger (2001, 2003, 2005) frames biliteracy in ideological terms. She defines biliteracy as 'any or all communication in two or more language varieties that occurs around writing' (2005:319) and refers to the 'Continua of Biliteracy' model to explain the dimensions of biliteracy, and how these are related to issues of power.

According to Hornberger's model, instances of biliteracy can be analysed along four dimensions, namely **context** – the setting, participants and underlying ideologies; **media** – language varieties used; **content** – texts, genres and viewpoints; and **development** – the kind of literacy abilities that are being developed. Each of these dimensions can be further analysed. For this, Hornberger uses the construct of a continuum. She explains her use of this construct as a means to 'problematise dichotomies' and emphasise the fluidity and interconnectedness of different instances of biliteracy. The ideological basis of Hornberger's views of biliteracy becomes apparent in her explanation of the nature of the continua comprising the respective dimensions.

Hornberger discusses each of the four dimensions of her model in terms of three intersecting continua, and argues that the end points of these continua are associated with more or less power. The **media** dimension, as the language varieties used in class, is particularly relevant to this study. Hornberger (2005:151–165) discusses this dimension in relation to student voice in multilingual classrooms. Following Ruiz (1984), she proceeds from the assumption that language diversity is a resource to be respected and developed, and relates the language varieties and dialects allowed in educational settings to issues of power and student voice. She illustrates this by pointing to privileged, powerful varieties of languages – usually standard versions – and the consequences the ability to speak or write these privileged versions have for speakers, depending on how close or far they are from the privileged language or variety (2005:158). For Hornberger, language attitudes around standard and non-standard varieties are reflections of 'deep-seated language and racial prejudices', and making space for divergent varieties in classrooms is one way of contesting such dominant discourses. In the process, she argues that speakers of less powerful varieties are afforded 'the right to speak'.

2.6.3 Code-switching as bilingual discourse

Hornberger's discussion around student voice and the media of biliteracy in multilingual classrooms, in addition to focusing on the co-existence of multiple standard and non-standard varieties in such classrooms, includes code-switching, defined by Rose and Van Dulm (2006) as the interchange of two languages within a single communicative turn. Hornberger views code-switching as a bilingual discourse practice, that is. as a natural communicative practice in bilingual communities. She further contends that, as such, code-switching, when used effectively in classrooms, can be used to mediate the curriculum and build social relationships, thereby promoting student voice.

In the South African context, McCormick (1995) has investigated code-switching as the accepted, normal way of talking in an English/Afrikaans bilingual community. In her analyses, she distinguished between conversational code-switching which is of a largely unconscious or unmarked nature, and situational code-switching which is conscious and deliberate and designed to perform certain functions or discuss certain topics. South African research on code-switching in educational settings has focused on the functions of situational code-switching in interactions between teachers and learners. Studies such as those by Adendorff (1993), Mati (2003) and Rose and Van Dulm (2006) have found that code-switching performs both social and academic functions. On the social level, code-switching can indicate solidarity, signify authority and build relationships, while on the academic plane, it is used by teachers, and sometimes by children, to reiterate, clarify and expand on academic content. Although some teachers do employ code-switching as a teaching and learning tool, perceptions about this linguistic occurrence generally remain ambiguous; teachers express ideological concerns about 'dependency' on the home language and the 'lowering of standards' (Mati 2003:21).

This study, in seeking to encourage literacy in less powerful languages, proceeds from the assumptions that language variety, including code-switching, is a resource and that classroom literacy practices based almost completely on English marginalises the voices of African language children. I therefore follow Hornberger in conceiving of biliteracy in ideological terms. My attempts to encourage home language literacy in children who had had little or no formal literacy instruction in this language, was ideologically motivated. But it was also informed by my understanding of Cummins' theory of language and literacy learning. I discuss this theory below.

2.6.4 Cummins' theory of language and literacy learning

Cummins (2001:65–91) asserts that learners need to acquire a level of proficiency in both the home language and the second language in order for them to benefit from learning in their second language. He also suggests that when the use of a student's home language is promoted by the linguistic environment outside school, a high level of second language acquisition is likely to occur at no expense to the home language. For Cummins, promoting the home language means more than just using it; parents need to work at developing and affirming the worth of the home language.

Cummins further points out that language and literacy skills can transfer across languages. He explains this by stating that a high level of home language literacy can help second language literacy acquisition and similarly, high levels of second language literacy proficiency can have positive effects on the home language

Based on the above research, as well as my experience working with children who transfer to the school with Xhosa literacy in place, my assumption at the start of the research was that the level of English that the children in this study had attained would allow them to transfer only limited phonetic abilities to their home language reading and writing. This would, however, be enough to allow them to make an attempt, if they could be encouraged to do so.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I accounted for the theoretical considerations pertaining to my study. I explained the view of language in which this study is located, and then discussed current South African language attitudes as sociohistorical constructs. This was followed by a discussion of voice, as a construct for explaining the role of individual perceptions and attitudes in society. I concluded this chapter by examining empirical studies and theoretical issues surrounding dialogue journal writing as a literacy strategy used to affirm children's voices.

3. Methodology: Research as acting in the world

In the previous chapter, I contextualised my research topic *Affirming marginal voices,* within both critical and postmodern views of the nature of language and society. In this chapter, I continue to draw on these orientations in accounting for the epistemology, or view of the nature of knowledge, that guides the research, as well as the research design I decided upon.

3.1 Views of knowledge and research

The critical paradigm, with its concern with social inequalities, views the role of researcher as one of producing knowledge, and acting in the world, to effect positive social change. This is the paradigm within which this study is situated. Working from a critical space does hold tensions, however, especially as it relates to the epistemology of the paradigm. For example, postmodernists argue that critical researchers operate within a modernist conception of knowledge. They assert that when such researchers employ categories such as *social justice* and *oppression* they view these concepts as fixed, unitary, static and transparent (Stevens:2003) In addition, they assume that reality is objective and can be perceived and represented by every rational being in the same way. Postmodernists problematise this assumption by arguing that, as all representation is influenced by the experiences, attitudes, values and disposition of the observer, it is not possible to speak of any representation or knowledge as *the* truth.

Reality and knowledge within the postmodern orientation, rather than being absolute, are viewed as historically embedded social constructions that are always based on particular values. In addition, postmodernists assert that knowledge and power are co-implicated. So, for example, the 'truths' and values of those with power are seen to be more valid or legitimate. This view of the relationship between knowledge and power is shared by those working within the critical paradigm. However, critical theorists question the value of an orientation that views all knowledge as relative and contextual to inform research. Critics such as McClaren (in Lather 1991:45) in fact argue that, by denying any foundational truths or values, postmodernism in effect becomes an intellectual enterprise removed from the research process, or action in the world.

3.2 Reconciling critical and postmodern views: the researcher within the study

The notion of 'truth' I hold in this study is that, despite the constitutional changes brought about by the 1994 democratic dispensation, essentialist *difference as deficit* discourses from the past persist in the present (Hamston 2006:57). South African society therefore remains largely unequal and unjust. It is also my belief that current language in education practices at schools serve to perpetuate these inequalities. I acknowledge that this knowledge is partial and has been socially constructed, but I believe that this does not preclude me from trying to act in that world. Drawing on postmodern insights (Lather 1991, Usher 2000) I proceed with this research, mindful of the contingency of the 'knowledge' that I am constructing. I also acknowledge that my perceptions and values permeate all aspects of this inquiry, including how I will represent and interpret the children's voices in the end. In this particular study, I consider the values embedded in my linguistic and racial locations the most salient, and it is therefore these locations that I choose to foreground.

In describing my racial location in post-apartheid South Africa, I align my interpretation of the current racial reality with the view that 'race' remains the key construct around which South African lives and institutional structures are organised (Erasmus 2005, Sayed and Soudien 2004, Jansen 2004). I see the need to deconstruct race for the homogenous, essentialist, social construction it is, and I also see the need to contest inscriptions and interpellations. But viewing its persistent, material consequences, I also seek to come to terms with what Erasmus (2001:13) would describe as my 'historically ambiguous location' as 'coloured': 'less than white' and 'better than black'. For me, coming to terms with this location includes acknowledging the position of privilege I enjoy in relation to the majority of black South Africans, including the children in this study.

My current linguistic identity is linked to my racial identity, and is in flux and shifting. I present myself as an emergent multilingual who speaks Kaaps-Afrikaans, English and a little Xhosa. The language I use at home and with family and friends is Kaaps-Afrikaans, a low status, non-standard dialect that simultaneously indexes 'race', social class and educational background; that is, its speakers are always 'coloured', often poor to working class, and do not have a high level of formal education. This is a language I am the most comfortable speaking and the one that I have only recently come to valorise (Busch 2006:6).

My attitude towards English as my second language remains ambiguous. On the one hand, I recognise the need to resist the power of English when I witness the struggles of children learning in their second language. But then English is the medium that allows me to verbalise my thoughts in writing, as well as to sound the voices of the children in the study.

My uncertainty around my Xhosa linguistic identity stems from my struggles to acquire the language; after several years I still have only a very basic understanding of the language. On the other hand, it is my attempt to learn this low status language that allows me to position myself as an emergent multilingual. My Xhosa learning in addition continues to form part of a process of a broader unlearning of biased attitudes about Xhosa speakers that I, influenced by the insidious social engineering of apartheid, have acquired.

The above discussion of the assumptions and values in which this study is embedded, has attempted to explicate my 'place to stand' as I view reality and knowledge (Macguire in Thesen 1994:8). Within the critical orientation, it simultaneously explains the place from which I act.

3.3 Methodological choices

Both Thesen (1994) and Harding (1987) relate epistemology to the methodology of the research. Thesen understands methodology as applying perspectives of knowledge in research, while Harding's (1987:3) description of methodology as 'a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed' includes in this understanding the way a study's theoretical framework and analysis are aligned to its epistemology – the view of knowledge and truth.

The research design I chose to work within in order to answer to my research question was aligned with my epistemology, but it was also a matter of contingency, initially. Firstly, my location within the research site would allow me to make use of ethnographic methods such as observations and informal conversations. I was, however, mindful of the fact that as an itinerant teacher, I had only partial access to the children's school lives, and hardly any knowledge of their community environment. I therefore employed a limited degree of ethnographic methods. Then, as Xhosa third language learner, I was entering relatively uncharted territory. This required a design that would allow me to reflect and learn as the study proceeded. For these reasons, I decided on participatory action research, augmented with an ethnographic perspective

3.3.1 Conceptions of action research

Action research has been variously defined as an approach, a model or a method. For the purposes of this research, I view action research as model or framework for taking action while doing research. The action research model can differ in nature and form, as well as scope and purposes, but researchers in the field generally characterise it as consisting of cycles of observation, action and reflection (McNiff 2002; Stringer 2004). Participatory action research, in addition, emphasises collaboration: the views and needs of all participants in the study should ideally inform the research process.

According to Grundy (1982, cited in Masters 1995) the distinctions that can be drawn amongst various models of action research are not as much attributable to methodological differences, as they are to different underlying assumptions and world views. Thus, a positivist world view would underpin technical or instrumental action research. Such research would be conducted by a 'value-free' observer who would obtain 'objective', generalizable results by making sure that he gets 'the method right'. An action research study within a critical postmodern paradigm, in contrast, foregrounds issues of equity and social justice – and acknowledges that research, and the researcher, cannot be value-free, and that the researcher needs to be reflective about her role in the construction of knowledge. The description of the research process below is presented in a narrative form, to allow me to illustrate my attempts to be reflective and attend to my impact on the data constructed in this research.

3.4 The research process

My intention initially was to work within the action research cycles of planning, observing and reflecting. However, I soon found that, although I could identify episodes of planning, observing and reflection, these did not necessarily follow one another. My experience of the research rather was that it was 'messy' and 'unpredictable' (Mcniff & Whitehead 2006:78) and not the linear, process suggested by successive, cycles of action and reflection. For this reason I construct the process in phases rather than in cycles.

3.4.1 Research participants

The group I worked with at the start of the research, in the latter half of 2005, consisted of a class of 34 ten- to eleven-year-olds.

I chose this group because of its language profile: only one child was learning in her home language, English. I had worked with some of the children in my capacity as learning support teacher, and also had had some interaction with the rest of the children in this group since starting at the school. This research with the whole class fell outside my usual learning support role, however. I therefore sought and obtained permission to conduct research with this group from all the parents of the children in the study (see Appendix C). The class teacher also agreed to observe and provide comments when she could.

3.4.2 Data collection during the first phase

During the first phase the data consisted of the dialogue journal entries, a language questionnaire and my research journal. The dialogue journal entries were written as part of the two 45-minute periods that I spent in the Grade 4 class each week. These periods usually started with a literacy or multilingual awareness activity followed by the children writing in their journals.

One month into the writing process, the children had been exposed to some Xhosa and Afrikaans, so I was interested to know if there had been any shift in their perceptions of their home language literacy abilities. I therefore asked them to complete a language questionnaire in order to give me an indication of their language attitudes (see Appendix A). This questionnaire was completed in class. The class teacher and I assisted those children needing help in reading the questions.

I followed up the first questionnaire with a language awareness activity. In this activity, Mrs K and I asked the children to anticipate our responses to the questions they had responded to previously. We then compared our responses to their guesses and discussed what, for several children, were surprising differences. So for instance, some Xhosa-speaking children had guessed that my favourite language was Xhosa instead of Afrikaans. We went on to explain that there were no languages we did not like, and that a language only becomes 'ugly' when it is used in ways that are hurtful.

We followed up this language awareness activity at the start of the next session, when we discussed the tabulated results of their responses to the questionnaire. This included some time for children to provide reasons for their preferences. During this discussion, Mrs K and I again made it clear to the children that there were no languages that we disliked.

Ntombi Nkence, a teacher trainer/researcher employed by PRAESA, had supported my multilingual teaching efforts with my learning support groups in the past. She joined us to observe a session early in the process, and provided me with some feedback. Nkence also indicated that she would be prepared to write to the children when possible, thus providing much needed Xhosa input and, as a Xhosa-speaking teacher/adult, affirming that Xhosa has a legitimate space in school learning. The journal entries during this phase then also included some of her writing.

3.4.3 Reflections during the first phase

During this first phase, I had many questions, perturbations and insecurities, some of which I noted in my research journal. This journal consisted of observations which I typed up daily. Midway through the process, I categorised these notes according to emerging themes, for example, children's responses during the multilingual awareness strategies that preceded the journal writing. These notes allowed me to reflect on the learning and the adjustments I made as part of this action research journey (see Appendix F).

One of the decisions that the reflections brought about was that since my aim was to encourage communication, I would allow the children to write in any language. I would continue to use some Xhosa and Afrikaans in my entries, but would only invite those children whom I considered to be confident English second language writers to use their home language in their writing. I arrived

at the latter decision after witnessing the struggles of a few children who, after more than three years of English medium instruction, were still struggling to crack the English sound symbol code. My reasoning was that for these children, learning the symbols for Xhosa sounds that differed from English, such as the 'c' click for example, would hold an added strain.

A related adjustment during this phase concerned the children who had formed part of my learning support group. These children did not appear to be taking to the writing process, they appeared reluctant to risk and their entries as a consequence were formulaic and repetitive. I therefore decided to resume the separate session I had with them before I started the research.

Another issue of concern I noted in my journal was the teaching of writing conventions. I was acutely aware that the children were communicating in their second language, and therefore focused on meaning rather than structure. But as a learning support teacher, I found it hard to observe children's mechanical errors and not make an attempt to fix these. Midway through the first stage, I therefore decided that I would, contrary to the spirit of dialogue journal writing, make some attempt to teach basic conventions like the use of capital letters and full stops as a literacy activity preceding the journal writing.

3.4.4 The second phase: encouraging home language literacy

The data during the second phase consisted of selected journal entries, my research journal, a language questionnaire and a free writing language paragraph.

The break in writing from early November to late January allowed me to make contact with some researchers in the field. Based on my reflections and their suggestions, the writing in the last phase was framed as teacher and children learning together. I provided as much input as I could by providing Xhosa reading materials via reading and accepted that as a Xhosa learner, my role was to encourage the children to learn with me, rather than expecting me to be a Xhosa writing model. The second period of journal writing lasted approximately six weeks. This period coincided with athletics practices at the school, so in effect this meant that children only wrote between six and twelve additional journal entries.

3.4.5 Journal writing during the second phase: working in two classes

Six of the children I had started out writing to, no longer formed part of the research group because they had to repeat the grade or had transferred to other schools. The remaining 28 children were now placed in two Grade 5 classes. I had hoped to work with each class for two periods per week but because of time table constraints, I worked with the children in their respective classes once a week only.

Several of the other children in these classes asked that I write to them as well, so during this period, I wrote to a total of 48 children. All the children were included in the initial pre-writing multilingual awareness/literacy activity. Those children not writing to me spent the most of the remainder of the periods reading beginning level multilingual books. These books were new to them and were thoroughly enjoyed by most of the children.

In retrospect, the decision to write to the additional children was worthwhile; some children clearly valued this non-threatening opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. I was able to see that, although there were some children who would not venture any home language writing, there were others who had been taught by parents and peers, and were in fact more comfortable writing in Xhosa than most of the children in my research group. The Kaaps-Afrikaans children in this group were likewise prepared to risk using their home language to communicate.

During this phase I had an explicit focus on encouraging the children to write in their mother tongue. This included providing more Xhosa input from my side, via assistance from a Xhosa-speaking adult. I was, however, unable to arrange for consistent Xhosa support and so reverted to my earlier code mixing use of Xhosa.

Towards the end of journal writing process I requested the children to complete another language awareness questionnaire (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was similar to the one administered to the children in 2005 as it sought to compare their language attitudes at the beginning and end of the writing process. In addition, the 2006 questionnaire included items that required children to explain their language preferences. I decided to include these items after I noticed that some journal entries showed evidence of metalinguistic awareness, that is, the children were able to think about the process of language learning as well as the role language plays in their lives. This questionnaire was completed in class.

In August 2006 I concluded the research with a free writing language paragraph. This was an attempt to elicit an additional source of data, but I was also interested in finding out how the children expressed their language awareness when no longer responding to me in their journals. My instruction to the children was that they should write a paragraph of at least 5 sentences indicating how they felt about their languages. This writing was done in smaller groups, in my class. Although I was no longer working with the children, my presence while they were writing quite likely influenced some responses.

In the following section I pay attention to the way I chose to analyse my data. I start this section by explaining Critical Discourse Analysis as a method for analysing discourse, and then indicate the extent to which I used this method to analyse my data.

3.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

As mentioned in chapter two, this study focuses on the relationship between language and society, and in so doing, foregrounds the critical nature of this relationship. As a method of data analysis that 'to some degree combine[s] close analysis of language texts with social orientations to discourse' (Fairclough 1992:12), critical discourse analysis is aligned to the view of language that informs this study.

CDA has been variously defined as an approach, a method, a tool or a combination of these (Rogers et al. 2005). Barker and Galianski, for example, in describing CDA as 'an aid in the analysis of language based data' (2001:12) focus on what CDA is able to accomplish, and suggest that, by foregrounding the role of language in mediating power relations, CDA enables us to become more reflective about power relations between speakers.

For the purposes of my research I appropriate Fairclough's conception of CDA as a social orientation to discourse. The understanding of discourse that informs Fairclough's approach is derived from the work of Foucault; discourse rather than being a neutral means for describing the world, is implicated in power relations in society and serves to construct, regulate and control that society. Accordingly, the task of CDA is to explicate the way discourse serves to privilege and position.

As a framework for analysing discourse, Fairclough is concerned with three interrelated dimensions of discourse: the text, the process by which the text is produced and received, and the social context in which this process is embedded. Each of these dimensions is associated with a different level of analysis. An analysis of the text is largely descriptive; an analysis of the process by which the text is produced focuses on interpretation; and the analysis of the social context within which the discourse is embedded, seeks to be explanatory.

3.5.1 The textual dimension

Fairclough's textual dimension of discourse draws on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. This analytic method involves paying attention to three linguistic functions. The ideational function serves to make meaning of, and represent the world. This includes making sense of one's own experiences and inner world of thoughts and emotions, and perceptions (Galianski and Barker 2001:68). Linguistic features that are analysed under the ideational feature include transivity – the multiple ways in which verbs are used to represent reality, and nominalisation, which entails turning processes into things, thereby reifying these processes.

The interpersonal function within systemic functional linguistics refers to the social relationships between participants in the action, and includes the way these participants are positioned via language use. Linguistic features analysed include topic control and modality – speakers' attitudes towards what they

express (Barker and Galianski 2001:75). An analysis of the textual function of language entails paying attention to the structure of the text in terms of how it coheres and is organised, for instance, via the use of conjunctions and theme–rheme structure.

Drawing on elements of systemic functional linguistics as described above, textual analysis within Fairclough's model entails looking at the linguistic features of the text in order to find out how the writer/speaker represents the world, how she enacts social relationships, and positions herself in her writing. A textual analysis describes aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, language functions and mode of address and how these contribute to conveying or interpreting a specific message.

3.5.2 The discourse process dimension

The second dimension of Fairclough's model, the discursive process dimension, refers to the process in which a text is produced and responded to. Analysis of this dimension focuses on how people produce, interpret, or transform texts. In this regard, Fairclough (1992:80) points out that the process of production can be constrained by the resources the participants are able to draw on. An analysis of this dimension therefore entails explaining the nature of these member resources, and how participants draw on these resources as they produce and interpret texts.

Another aspect of the discursive (discourse as process) analysis, is intertextuality which Fairclough explains as the relation of a text to other texts (2003:42). By further describing intertexuality as the 'diverse and often contradictory elements which go to make up texts' (1992:104) he acknowledges the work of Bakhtin's 'dialogical' theory of language. Bakhtin suggests that all utterances and texts are dialogical, and intertextual, in that they are linked to, and contain the voices of other texts. The intertextual aspect of a discursive analysis then entails interpreting the text in relation to other texts and voices. Whilst this means paying attention to the presence of other texts or voices in the text, Fairclough points out that the absence of voices potentially relevant to the text, also needs to be interpreted.

3.5.3 The social context dimension

The third dimension of Fairclough's model is the social context or the socio-historical conditions within which the discourse process is situated. Analysis of this dimension aims to explain the text and discourse process in terms of this social context. In this explanation, particular attention is paid to issues of power and the way the social context, as instantiated by institutional practices and process, as well as other societal discourses, govern and shape the discourse process and the text.

3.5.4 Critical discourse analysis as used in this study

Although CDA, and Fairclough's model, appeals to researchers working within a critical orientation, several criticisms have been levelled against it. A key shortcoming I attempted to take into account in my analysis is that CDA is mostly framed in terms of problems or deconstruction and in the process, the reconstructive possibilities of CDA are neglected. Luke for example (1995, 2002) points out that CDA also has the potential to highlight what is possible in terms of human agency and that this agency includes people's ability to resist the way they are positioned by others.

Fairclough's framework provides a tool for detailed analysis of small samples of mostly media and institutional discourse. Because of the nature of the data, because I was positioned within this process, and because this study was at once deconstructive and reconstructive, I used his framework as a guide, selecting elements and moving outside of it when I needed to.

My analysis of the textual dimension did not follow the model provided by Fairclough. I paid some attention to the interpersonal function of textual analysis by interpreting linguistic features such as modality. However, because most of the children would be writing in their second language, and would not necessarily have the English language proficiency to make the kind of choices that Halliday's textual and ideational functions are posited on, I decided against focusing on textual aspects such as grammar and cohesion, and ideational aspects such as nominalisation and transivity.

My analysis of the writing as discourse process focused on the asymmetry in linguistic knowledge of the participants and how this impacted on the communication. By paying attention to the linguistic resources brought to the writing, I followed Fairclough as well as Blommaert (2005:14) who asserts that there is a deep relation between the language one uses and one's ability to tell one's story and be heard in society. My analysis of the discourse process, in addition, involved interpreting the shifting relationship between teacher and learner, and children and adult researcher, as part of the production and response in the writing. A third aspect of my analysis was references to the intertextuality of the text. In this regard, I extended the analysis to include Bakhtin's related concepts of addressitivity – all utterances are oriented backwards towards a response or audience, and the multi-voiced, evaluative nature of all utterances. This attention to the 'traces of other voices or discourses' in a text allowed me to interpret the children's writing in terms of the insight it provided into larger social discourses.

My analysis of the data in terms of the social context in which it was embedded focused on the children's language perceptions and attitudes. These perceptions and attitudes were in turn considered in relation to the dominant South African language discourses of English language hegemony and African language deficiency.

Whereas the journal writing formed most of the data for the textual analysis, I also drew on informal conversations, my research notes, questionnaires and a last written piece for the discursive and social analysis.

3.6 Validity

I make extensive use of original data in the form of typed transcripts of children's journal entries. However, much of this account is a creative act as I constitute reality via language, my own and the multitude of snippets from other texts. My concern with validity is therefore not to establish the 'truth' of my account, but rather to find a way of representing the data fairly accurately, and to attempt to provide a full, vivid picture of this particular reality as the children and I experienced it. I tried to do this via triangulation, member checking and reflexivity.

In addition to providing a 'thicker' description, my triangulation was an attempt to allow for different interpretations. Although there was some triangulation of methods in the form of observations, questionnaires and journal entries, I feel that a shortcoming in this area was the strong emphasis on the written mode. This clearly limited the voices of those children who were still in the process of acquiring schooled literacy. Although I had informal conversations with some children during intervals or as I passed them in the corridors, there were no formal interviews. At the time I felt that I did not want to place the children in a position where they had to converse in their second language in an interview setting.

I made an attempt at member checking (inviting the views of participants) via the class teacher's comments and by asking the children to complete questionnaires about the journal writing process. I was also able to obtain some feedback from researchers in the field. However, this study cannot be termed a collaborative study. Neither the children nor the teacher were involved in setting the purposes and planning the sessions, nor did they have a say in the analysis or interpretation of data.

According to Maxwell (1996:86) validity is not a product but a goal. Perhaps the same can be said for reflexivity, the continual critical awareness and questioning of one's values and actions and how this influences the process. I used my research journal to record this awareness and questioning. This reflexivity also extended to my reading and how this influenced the process. So, for example, Glesne's encouragement to ask 'whom do I not see' (1999:151) led to my decision to include the voices of all the participants in the study rather than profile a few.

3.7 Ethical considerations

For researchers such as Pendlebury and Enslin (2001) the caveat for researchers to be reflexive about their impact on the research is also an ethical issue. They argue that the researcher's positioning in relation to the research affects the way participants are represented. In their discussion, the authors also link the way participants are represented or positioned, to two more commonly discussed ethical considerations, namely confidentiality and trust.

Considerations of trust and confidentiality are particularly important in dialogue journal writing as a pedagogic strategy and a data collection tool. I endeavoured to attend to these aspects through the use of pseudonyms. Then I obtained the permission of the children, as well as their parents, to use their writing in my research. I also extended my notion of privacy to exclude those entries that children specifically asked me to not write about, and those entries that I felt parents would be uncomfortable having children write about. Although I did not extend this sensitivity to teacher utterances as I felt these were essential to explaining the children's positioning at the school, teacher anonymity is ensured via my non-disclosure of the name of the school.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has been an attempt to explain my methodology; the way I went about doing this research. This involved accounting for the view of knowledge that guided the research and how this was aligned to my research design, action research. I also accounted for the data collection techniques I used to investigate my research questions, my data analysis procedures and issues of validity and ethics. In this chapter I situated myself in the study, thus making transparent some of the values that impacted on this research. In this way, I aligned myself with postmodern views that propose that reflexivity about one's position in the research is an integral part of ethical research; research that aims to ensure that participants in the research are not harmed through their inclusion in the research.

4. Constructing the data

In this chapter, I present and analyse the data relevant to my research question: *How do children respond to the language awareness strategies embedded in the dialogue journal writing process?* The discussion is organised in terms of the two sub-questions in my research. In section one I focus on the children's responses as they negotiated meaning in the journals and in section 2 I analyse children's emerging language attitudes and perceptions as a response to the dialogue writing process.

4.1 Negotiating meaning in the dialogue journals

Section one aims to describe the process of meaning-making in the dialogue journals as children and teacher engage with English, Xhosa and, to an extent, Afrikaans. I start by commenting on the linguistic resources that the children and I brought to the process, and on the impact of these on our communications. This is followed by a discussion of shifting teacher-learner roles as part of this meaning-making process. The section concludes with an analysis of children's responses to the writing of a Xhosa first language speaker. The data for the first section consisted of the dialogue journals, but I also drew on observations recorded in my own research journal to supplement my interpretations.

4.1.1 Dialogue journals – an asymmetrical meeting

The interactive nature of the writing meant that the children and I were both producers (writers) and consumers (readers). I strove to frame our participation as both teachers and learners, and the children appeared to respond to this at times. Still, the interaction was asymmetrical from the start and remained so for much of the process. This asymmetry was evident in the unequal power relations embedded in teacher-pupil relationships, in the different 'racial' status of the Xhosa-speaking children and myself, and also

in our respective language proficiencies. I focus on differing language levels as the most apparent effect on the dialogue writing process.

4.1.2 Unequal member resources: English language proficiency

Writing in English in the dialogue journals required a certain level of linguistic and literacy knowledge, and in both respects, this communication required much more effort on the part of the children than it did for me. Fairclough (1992:80) would refer to this as an asymmetry in the member resources we brought to the writing.

The asymmetry in literacy abilities can, of course, be ascribed to the fact that, as a mature adult, I have had incomparably more opportunities to develop and use English literacy. However, another factor to be considered is the medium through which I learned to read and write. My initial literacy learning was in my home language; for me, reading and writing was a meaning-making process from the start. In contrast, my experience with teaching children who start out learning in their second language, has shown me that for many such children, reading in a language they barely understand has the consequence of reading being associated with 'sounding out' or decoding; children do not necessarily understand that their reading has to make sense. Their experience of writing at school, likewise, has been that it is a mechanical process focusing on surface aspects of writing like spelling and punctuation, rather than a means of communication.

As was pointed out in chapter two, literacy is fundamentally a linguistic concept. Although children need what Hornberger (2003:54) refers to as 'the parts', that is, knowledge of writing conventions, it is their knowledge and understanding of language that allow them to communicate meaningfully in writing. I therefore start this discussion by focusing on asymmetrical linguistic resources between the children and myself and how this impacted on our communications.

AJ: I don't think your teacher wants us to know her age, Mihle, so we should respect this, don't you think?

Mihle: [Entry 9]: ... *yes I have a letl respect. I am sorry to don't have respect.*

My writing is in response to Mihle's request to know her teacher's age. In Mihle's reply the asymmetry in our English language proficiency is illustrated by the way she understands and uses the word 'respect' – my use of the word was not as severe as her interpretation of it.

The following extracts from my communication with Mandisi also illustrate both asymmetry in power and language.

AJ: Mandisi, when you behave as you did today I wonder about what you write. It is unacceptable to say 'hayi suka' to any teacher. I need you to understand this.

[Entry 11]: *I well not do that again. I'm very sorry miss J.*

AJ: I accept your apology, Mandisi. Now let's see if we can make the most of the last few weeks of the term!

AJ: I'm sorry about what happened to your bag, Mandisi. Is that why you had a headache today?

[Entry 14]: *I'm sorry of not righting. I don't men tate. [I didn't mean it] I'm very sorry miss J. can you aplogys please miss.*

In the first entry of this extract, I respond to Mandisi with the authoritative voice of a teacher, a voice that he is familiar with, and in this case, defers to. In Entry 14, he again responds to me as a more powerful adult, and chooses to apologise for not writing in his journal rather than to respond to my concern about his missing schoolbag. His last sentence illustrates the dialogical, inter-textual nature of our communication as he echoes my use of the word 'apologise' earlier. At the same time, his understanding of the word is still partial – and caused me to wonder during subsequent readings of these entries whether he had previously encountered, and was able to make meaning, of such phrases as: 'I accept your apology'.

In their entries Mihle and Mandisi do not show awareness of their partial understanding of my communications, but one or two other children did verbalise their confusion. This is illustrated in Oyama's entry:

AJ: … Perhaps you can tell Ms Todd that you were sorry to hear about her mother. Check with your teacher, but I think one says, 'My deepest sympathy'.

[Entry 28]: *I don't under staned the last sum [sentence] can you please reapeat it for me …*

Few children asked me to clarify my language, but I suspect that several other children, after just more than four years of learning in English, had difficulty understanding me at some stage or another – and that this might have had some impact on those responses that bore little reference to my previous entry.

4.1.3 Unequal member resources: Xhosa language proficiency

It was not only the children's communication that was constrained by their language proficiency. As a Xhosa language learner, my understanding of the language, and therefore my ability to write in Xhosa, was limited to simple sentences and code-switching phrases. The Xhosa linguistic resources the children

brought to the writing therefore surpassed mine by far. The following entries illustrate the impact of my knowledge of Xhosa on the children's writing, as well as on the responses I was able to make.

AJ: Can you tell me a bit about what you do in the Transkei when you go and visit? Ungakwazi ukubhala Xhosa? [Can you write in Xhosa?]

Sandisiwe [Entry 3]: *Miss J, Do you Like reading books Ndizoku xhelela ngezinto zase maxoseni. [I am going to tell you something about the rural areas] I always go to fech water and do tea. Ndizaku buza wena uya kwazi ukwenza itie. UMaMa uti itie yamu imnandi I am Prowd of myself Ndiya tanda ukusinda diyo kuka mBulongwe [I am going to ask you if you can make tea. My mother says my tea is nice. I like to smear (the floor) and fetch cow dung (when I am in the Eastern Cape.)].*

AJ: Will you help me with this, please? Ewe, nam ndithanda[3] iincwadi. Ewe, nidyakwazi ukukwenza iti kodwa ndithanda ikofu more [Yes, I also like books, yes I can make tea but I like coffee]. My mother doesn't like coffee or tea!

At the time, I was only able to make sense of bits of Sandisiwe's entry and so did not respond to her reference to smearing the floors of her relatives' clay dwelling in the Eastern Cape, something which, I discovered later, is a regular aspect of rural Xhosa living. I code-switch at the end of my last sentence, not in the unmarked, natural way I do with bilingual Kaaps-Af-rikaans/English-speaking friends and colleagues, but because of a lack of vocabulary.

Oyama, like Sandisiwe, was one of a few children who used Xhosa more frequently. In her case too, my Xhosa understanding hindered our conversation:

[Entry 12]: *No miss J even I'm ten years old I can think about whear I want to work. Difuna ukusebhenza kwa hungry lion kodwa ndiyayazi ukubh iyafana na kwa kfc kodwa nook ku betele [I want to work at Hungry Lion but I know that it is similar to working at KFC but it is better] don't lough at me I can't writ Xhosa and read it well some words are wrong.*

AJ: Now why should I laugh at you? There are thousands of Xhosa words that I can't write! Uthi ukuba ufuna ukusebenza kwa Hungry lion [you say that you want to work at Hungry lion] – this part I understand. Will you please explain the rest of the sentence to me in English? Then will you write ONE sentence in Xhosa again. You see, when we write in Xhosa, we both learn!

[Entry 13]: *I want to work at hungry lion. But I know its the same as kfc but its better.*

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3   As a Xhosa learner there were times when I made mistakes. In this instance, I should have written, *Ndiyazithanda* instead of *Ndithanda*

AJ: Ndicela ukuba ubhala [Please write] an isiXhosa sentence each time you write. I think you are a bit too quick to hand back your book?

[Entry 14]: *I don't understand but I will try. I'm ten years old I can work and hard and I can work at hangry lion.*

Ndina Ten years old ndinga seben kakhulu ken ndi kwazi ukusebensa kwa hangry lion enkosi I am ten years old I can work very hard when I work at hungry lion

In the first entry of this extract, Oyama appears to view me as a more knowledgeable teacher, and is apologetic about her Xhosa literacy abilities. In my response I try to reassure her, but my inability to understand her writing might have had the opposite effect. In addition, by asking her to write only one sentence I am limiting her expression. In entry 13, she explains her writing for me – I do not acknowledge this and instead comment on the shortness of her response. My response confuses her, but she perseveres and decides to use her English entry as a translation of her Xhosa.

My written conversation with Oyama illustrates that, although I viewed the children's writing as an opportunity for them to engage with home language literacy, it was my limitations as a learner that hindered conversation at times. This extract from my communication with Thandokazi provides a further example:

[Entry 11]: *Nam sendi ndiyiponile amapolica a rongo ngo pali khono ipolica elifileyo esitratweni sam ipi yi tshomi ka tata me upule we zizikoli [I also see it is wrong to become a policeman because in our road a policeman was killed. He was my friend's father. He was killed by gangsters]*

AJ: I hope you don't mind but I asked a friend of mine to read your writing for me. I could understand some of the words but was not able to make sense of most of your message…

Thandokazi was prepared to use her home language from the start. I struggled to understand her writing for two reasons. Unlike most of her peers, she did not code switch within a sentence. Then, as a colleague pointed out to me later, she substituted the letter 'p' for 'b' in her writing. Whereas I could use my linguistic knowledge to make sense of such errors in English, I was unable to make allowances for this in Xhosa.

My limited Xhosa knowledge and understanding thus impacted on our communication in two significant ways. Because I could not fully understand some entries, my responses were partial and at times confusing. But perhaps a more serious consequence was that, for those few children who used the writing as a chance to explore their Xhosa writing abilities, my limitations served to constrain their efforts rather than acknowledge the strides they were making.

4.1.4 Teachers and learners: negotiating language learning and meaning-making

The constraining effects of my emerging Xhosa knowledge did not appear to affect all children. Tony, for example, who was confident of his ability to read and write in his home language from the start, had his own idea of teacher-learner roles and expectations, and persistently negotiated his Afrikaans and my Xhosa learning:

[Entry 12]: *Miss J I want to learn Afrikaans too like Mandisi. I would like you to teach me to know Afrikaans. If you want me to teach you xhosa you must call me when you call the children that must go with you. But you don't call me anymore. Please miss Jardine call me . When you call the other children I feel very sad.*

[Entry 16]: *Miss Jardine you haven't teach me Afrikaans yet. you said you will take me to your class. If you take the children to your class you must take me to your class and teach me Afrikaans. You said you going to teach me you haven't teach me a peace of Afrikaans. When I am in your class I will take Afrikaans book and I going to (read to you). You will teach me Afrikaans*

In entry 12, Tony refers to my learning support periods with a group of children in his class. During the research period, several children indicated that they would like to join this group. Children appear to appreciate forming part of a smaller group, and being taught in a relatively quiet and peaceful environment. At this stage, Tony appears tired of my explanations and reminds me, quite strongly, that I have not done what he understood that I undertook to do. He pursues my Xhosa and his Afrikaans learning in later writing:

[Entry 22]: *I can teach you xhosa but you don't tell me. How do I know that I must teach you xhosa. tell me I go to your class.*

[Entry 23]: *human ndifundisa wena [I am teaching you Xhosa] but you don't call me in to your class when you come again take me to your class and I gona teach you Xhosa. Please miss Jardine can you teach me Afrikaans I know little of Afrikaans.*

[Entry 24]: *don't worry you Just write when you write me in Afrikaans. I make it easy for you if you write in Afrikaans I understand a little of Afrikaans now it easy to write to me in Afrikaans and I'll write to you.*

[Entry 25]: *you don't write to me in Afrikaans. I don't know Afrikaans. But you can mix it and write in Afrikaans. Or English and now I can understand better if you can mix it together.*

Tony starts entry 23 in Xhosa, thus illustrating that he understands how his writing helps me as an Xhosa learner, but he still feels that he can do this more effectively in his own class. In his next entry, he finally accepts my reasons why this is not possible, and also appears to realise that, just as I can learn from his Xhosa writing, he can benefit from my Afrikaans. In his last

communication of this extract, he responds to my two Afrikaans sentences. He reflects on this, and on his Afrikaans learning, and suggests that he is better able to make meaning if I code-switch – something that I, as a Xhosa learner, have found to be helpful also.

4.1.5 Negotiating meaning via English/Xhosa code-switching

The possibility of code-switching was also referred to by Sinazo. After a reminder to use some Xhosa in his writing, he checked with me first.

AJ: … Ndisalinda ukubona [I am still waiting to see] how well you can write in isiXhosa.

[Entry 7]: … *Excuse me Mrs Jardine can I mix my english with Xhosa?*

In my response, I pointed out to him that code-switching was fine, and that in any case I reverted to this quite often when I lacked the knowledge to express myself in Xhosa. Whereas my code-switching stemmed from my linguistic gaps, this was not the case for Sinazo. He used Xhosa in his first journal entry, and expressed his ability to read and write in his home language from the start. My interpretation of his question is that he is exploring the use of code-switching as an acceptable writing convention.

Children like Sonela and Enathi were less confident of their ability to write in their home language, but they too, like several others, code-switched in their writing.

Georgina [Entry 24]: *Nam ndifuna ukulusa [I also want to lose] some weight.*

Sonela [Entry 24]: *When he came back, umakazi wam beta nge vasstap wa cala [my aunt beat him with a rag and he cried]*

Enathi [Entry 23]: *teni wena ucinga [why do you think] about I don't have family here.*

I think that much of the inter-sentence code-switching in the journals can be attributed to my request for children to use at least one home language sentence in their writing. However, intra–sentence code-switching such as in the examples above, were more common. My writing no doubt influenced this kind of code-switching but again, I would suggest that children's reasons for using code-switching differed from mine. These children code-switched almost effortlessly and seemed to view code-switching as a regular feature of bilingual writing – and perhaps as a way to allow others entry into their language.

My intuitive interpretation of children's use of code-switching to scaffold teacher understanding is based on the writing of children who, on occasion, used only Xhosa, and those who code-switched between sentences:

Pamela [Entry 17]: *Andiqondi uzo kwazi kuyi funda lentobulileyo! [I don't think you will be able to read what I have written here!]*

Thandokazi [Entry 16]: *ndifundiswe ngu brother wam uku funda xhosa. [I learn Xhosa from my brother] And my mother teach me Xhosa. Every night I read xhosa book. nidya vuya uku va lento uya kwa zi usi funda Xhosa. I am glad to hear that you can read Xhosa.*

Athenkosi [Entry 3]: *I love my family so much. ndiyayi thanda ifemeli yam*

Entry 16: *Asanda use ka khulu yena aka mameli. I am saying Ayanda is very naughty and he does not listen*

[Entry 17]: *Uyageza means you naughty use means you are so rude*

AJ: Then I look forward to hearing all about it when we come back to school! Uyonwabele iholideyi yakho! [Enjoy your holiday!] Is this right?

[Entry 19]: *Yes It is right, Nawe uyonwabele I holdeyi yakho. [You enjoy your holidays too]. Are you coming to the party? I want you to come.*

Pamela's entry was completely in Xhosa. In this last sentence she voices her understanding that I struggle with writing that is only in Xhosa. Thandokazi again appears to anticipate that I would have difficulty understanding her second Xhosa sentence and code-switches to translate for me. The role of teacher she assumes in this entry is also illustrated when she comments on my Xhosa ability. Athenkosi, too, used code-switching to translate for me; his translations in entries 3 and 16 were unsolicited, while in entries 17 and 19, he responded to my requests.

My requests to Athenkosi illustrate two ways in which I positioned the children as teachers. There were times when I decided to accept some degree of uncertainty in our communications, but at other times I felt that I needed the children to clarify their meanings for me. I also positioned children as teachers when I asked them to comment on my use of Xhosa. By doing so I wanted to make sure that I was understood, but I also sought to affirm the children's status as more knowledgeable language users.

4.1.6 English/Afrikaans code-switching

My use of code-switching in Afrikaans was similar to that in Xhosa in that it aimed to affirm the children's home language in writing[4]. However, there were significant differences in the way code-switching was used by the children and myself, as well as in the way we were positioned by this code-switching.

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4   Although the children's entries contained some Kaaps-Afrikaans words and phrases, the Afrikaans I used, as in the case of English, was the standard variety. In retrospect, this leads me to question the extent to which my writing in fact affirmed the children's home language, Kaaps-Afrikaans.

Of the four Afrikaans-speakers in the group, the two children who were still developing fluency in their English writing, appeared to find it challenging to write in Afrikaans. Their writing therefore contained very little Afrikaans. In her only Afrikaans entry, Khaltoem used my previous entry as guide, then code-switched:

[Entry 21]: *Ek het my ma gesê about my school book. [I told my mother about my school book]*

Sharon, one of the more confident Kaaps-Afrikaans speakers, used complete, Afrikaans sentences but also code-switched within sentences:

[Entry 24]: *Sondag is ons dop mal by die Old apperstolick church so me and my Brother, mother and father (will go to church) [Sunday is our Christening ceremony at the Old Apostolic Church …]*

Whereas Xhosa-speaking children's use of intra-sentence code-switching could be ascribed in part to the way I used it, this was not the case in Afrikaans. With the odd exception, my English/Afrikaans CS was intersentential. Sharon's use of intra-sentence CS was too infrequent to allow anything but a most tentative interpretation, but my hunch is that, as a bilingual Kaaps-Afrikaans/English speaker, her writing mirrored her everyday spoken communication pattern.

My Afrikaans code-switching also reflects the different way I positioned the children, and myself, as language users. Unlike my practices in my Xhosa responses, I was able to express myself in standard Afrikaans with relative ease[5], and I therefore often used several Afrikaans sentences before switching to English. In doing so, I assumed that the children would be able to read what I wrote. I thus positioned myself as a teacher and expected the children to learn from my writing.

4.1.7 Children's responses to the writing of a Xhosa first language speaker

My Xhosa use could serve to affirm the status of the language in the classroom and act as an encouragement for some children to attempt some Xhosa writing, but I could not act as a language model or teacher. As mentioned in chapter 3, I therefore enlisted the help of Ntombi Nkence, of PRAESA, to fulfil this role. Because of time constraints, Nkence could only manage to write to the children twice. I comment on a few of these entries as they relate to the Xhosa home language writing process.

Sinazo [Entry 10]: *What did you (mean when you said) hot to think? I was saying. My mother use to take me to the doctor when I chest and the (doctor) gives me medicine. Ms. J is miss Ntombi our Xhosa teacher?*

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5   I switched to English medium instruction after Grade 6. My view is that my ability to write standard Afrikaans, though limited, enabled me to model standard Afrikaans writing at this primary level.

NN: Ewe ndingutishala wesi isiXhosa. Uyayithanda lonto? Xa isifuba sakho sibuhlungu usesikolweni, xelela utitshala wakho.
[Yes I am your Xhosa teacher. Do you like it? When your chest is sore at school tell your teacher.]

[Entry 11]: *Yes a teacher of Xhosa. Do you love it? When your chest is sore at school tell your teacher [his written translation]. I got chest when I was 6 years old but now I don't have chest.*

In entry 10, Sinazo responds to my earlier entry, clarifying his previous communication and also requesting me to explain mine. He does not write to Nkence directly, but is curious about her role. As she was not present when I handed her responses to the children, and as I was unable to understand all of her writing, I asked the children to translate for me before responding. In entry 11, Sinazo translates, illustrating his understanding and then extends his response, in English.

Athenkosi [Entry 6]: *No baseball has no wickets. The same with baseball and cricket. baseball has a bat ne cricket inalo ibat [and cricket has a bat]*

NN: Yintoni umahluko phakathi kwe cricket ne tennis? Hayi mna andazi nto nge sport.
[What is the difference between cricket and tennis? No, I don't know anything about sport.]

[Entry 7]: *Into ehlukeneyo kuzo icricket ine wickets yona itennis i net [One thing that is different is that cricket has wickets and tennis has a net].*

Athenkosi in entry 6, responds to my previous writing, but uses some Xhosa. He had used his home language in one previous entry so I cannot be sure if his code-switching was a response to Nkence's presence. He does not translate her writing, but instead offers a Xhosa response (the only child to do so) indicating that he was able to read her entry. His response to Nkence, like his previous response to mine, is an answer to a question; he does not extend the conversation.

Patricia [Entry 5]: *Yes. My favarta fruit is banana, Apple and pear. My first luange is Xhosa. I have two brothers. I like to cook, play, read and write.*

NN: Ndinobhuti ababini, oosisi abathathu. Ndithanda ukubukela I TV, ukufunda nokulala. Ukupheka kona? Hayi, Hayi!!
[I have one brother and three sisters. I like to watching TV, reading and sleeping. Do I like to cook? No, No!!]

[Entry 6]: *Why don't you like cooking. I hope you will like cooking next time too!!!? And my brother like to cook And my mom too!!! And my big cousin too!!!?*

In entry 5, Patricia responds to a question in my previous writing. The rest of her entry breaks from our dialogue and is addressed to Nkence. Although she does not translate as requested, her response in entry 6 shows that she has understood Nkence's writing. By taking on Nkence's use of exclamation marks

she signifies her emotional involvement in the exchange. In addition, this entry is dialogical in anticipating a future response.

While it was clear that these children had understood Nkence's writing, my attempts to ascertain if others had understood her, and my requests for clarification, were unsuccessful. Children chose to write about something else or offered short, vague responses.

Aviwe [Entry 10]: *My first brother is in English school and my second brother is in coloured school.*

NN: Uthetha ukuthini xa usithi ubhuti wakho use sikolweni se English?
Nokuba nawer usesikolweni sama coloured?
[What do you mean when you say that your brother is at an English school? And your other brother is at a coloured school?]
Yintoni amahloko phakathi kwezi zikolo?
[What is the difference between these schools?]

AJ: Aviwe, please ask Georgina, Lovuyo or Athenkosi to help you to read this. You showed me last week that you *can* ukufunda Xhosa kancinci already!

Aviwe [Entry 11]: *My brothers make fun of me and they say I am fat…*

In my previous entry, I had asked Aviwe if his brothers were also at English medium schools. His response puzzled both Nkence and me, but we were unable to clarify this with him. If he had difficulty reading some of Nkence's writing, this did not apply to mine. It is possible that he responded to the impatience in my comment by choosing not to answer, but then several of his other entries also bore no reference to what had gone before, and my impression of his writing generally was that he did not really take to the process.

My communication with Sonela, in contrast, was dialogical from the start. Yet, I was not much more successful in ascertaining how much of Nkence's writing she understood.

Sonela [Entry 13]: *No I know what miss Nkence Letter. It is ok you can pass a message.*

Several factors could have accounted for what I considered to be such disappointing responses to Nkence's writing: most children had not yet established a relationship with her, she was not present when they responded so they were not clear about who to respond to, they were exercising their option to choose what they could write about. In certain instances my request for clarification might also have hampered the dialogue.

Perhaps the most significant factor was the frequency of her writing; Nkence wrote to the children twice, with a three-week interval between her entries. The children were therefore not able to benefit from regular Xhosa communication, such as her writing to Sandisiwe, for example:

[Entry 8]: *And the exciting pot is tht Enathi is woking and standing I kon't wat for hre Birthday My MoM is going to Bake skons and cakes, mufens I am very excited I am going to sing fo Enathi Happy Birthday*

NN: U-Enathi unethamsanqa kakhulu lokuba nosisi onjengawe! Ndiyayazi ukuba umthanda kakhulu nje ngendlela obhala ngayo kumnandi ngaye. Xa bendinokumbona xa emdala, ndingamxelela eli bali le birthday yakhe. Yazi ungamgcinela. Nale ncwadi abone ukuba umthanda kangakanani na. Nam ndinaye ubhuti omncinci nangona emdala kakhulu ngoku. Kodwa kum ndisambona nje ngo mntwana wasekhaya omncinci Yena uzenza mdala kodwa

Miss Ntombi xxx

[Sandisiwe's written translation, much later in the process: Enathi is lucky so much to have sister like you! I no you love her so much the way you see her. If I can see her when she is younger (I think older?) I will tell her about her birthday storry. You kno you can keep this Book for her that she can see how much you love her. I have a brother althow he is old now but to me I sill see him as a small kide althow he think his old.]

Sandisiwe's extract illustrates the emotive function of dialogue writing as she expresses her feelings towards her baby sister. Nkence's response provides significant Xhosa input and, moreover, affirms Sandisiwe's feelings – and at the same time affirms the language she uses in her intimate family domain.

Nkence's writing thus played a role in affirming the status of Xhosa in school writing but this was not her only, nor necessarily her most important, impact. Just as I brought to the writing the social discourses – race, religion, gender – that I am immersed in, so too Nkence's social presence was felt. This is illustrated by Patricia's entry:

[Entry 13]: *When is Miss Ntombi coming back. I wish she is back soon. because I want to tell her something …*

Even though she only visited twice, Patricia indicates that there were some things she could discuss more freely with Nkence, someone who shared and was able to validate her language and her culture.

My overall impression of the children's responses to Nkence, as a Xhosa first language speaker, was that her communications were too infrequent to establish a relationship for most children. Any interpretation of the children's understanding of her communication, and the effect of her writing on encouraging Xhosa literacy, therefore needs to be tentative. However, as illustrated by Sandisiwe's and Patricia's entries, Nkence's role in the research opened up several possibilities. One possibility highlighted was the ability of a Xhosa speaker to provide extensive standard input whilst allowing and responding to the dialect the children used. In the process, this served to affirm Xhosa as a legitimate language to be used in writing. Affirming the home language in writing, for several children, meant a validation of their culture and sense of self. And for at least a few children, Nkence's ability to communicate fluently in both English and Xhosa served to combat what Bloch and Alexander (2003: 103) refer to as 'racist attitudes':

attitudes that position African language role models as incompetent when they communicate in English, a language of which they have only a limited grasp.

In this first section, I have attempted to answer the first of my subquestions, namely, how do children (and teachers) negotiate meaning in dialogue writing framed as a multilingual process? I now turn to children's language attitudes and perceptions as a response to the dialogue writing process.

4.2 Children's emerging language awareness and attitudes

In this section, I focus on three aspects of the children's language awareness. I start by discussing children's perceptions of their home language literacy abilities. Thereafter I interpret their language attitudes towards the three most used languages at school, English, Xhosa and Afrikaans. I end this section, and the chapter, by discussing the children's emerging multilingual awareness as a response to the dialogue writing process. The data for this section consisted of journal entries, selected items from the 2005 and 2006 questionnaires and the language paragraph that concluded the research.

4.2.1 Children's perceptions of their home language literacy abilities

Whilst acknowledging the uncertainty of children's perceptions of their own levels of skill or proficiency, and the possible influence of 'audience' in this regard, it is my view that these perceptions are nevertheless indicators of language awareness and attitudes. Children's perceived ability to read and write in their home language might be an indicator of the extent to which they are aware of, and allow for the possibility of, home language literacy in their classroom learning. And, as some entries showed, for some children perceived proficiency in a language influenced their attitude towards that language.

The table below represents the children's perceptions of their ability to read and write in their home language. The August data consisted of the initial journal entry in which the children responded to my oral request for them to write a paragraph about the languages they were able speak, read and write.

In September, the children completed a language proficiency table as part of a language attitude questionnaire. From their responses it appeared as if some children had difficulty understanding the language proficiency section at the end of the questionnaire and I suspect that a few copied from a friend. Children would also indicate that they could write a certain language a little, but could not read it, and seemed not to be aware of the link between reading and writing. Still, the responses reflected that a month into the process, a significant number of children who had initially indicated that they were unable to read and write in their home language, now thought they could do so – even if only poorly.

The data for March was a response to the questionnaire item *The languages I can read and write are __ and __.* I realised afterwards that the way I had framed this item might have encouraged some children to list more than one language. In addition, my wording did not encourage the children to separate their perception of their reading and writing abilities. These cautions notwithstanding, the children's perception of their home language literacy abilities showed a definite increase one month into the writing process in September and remained stable for the period from September 2005 to March 2006.

Home Language	Perceived ability to read in the home language			Perceived ability to write in the home language		
	Aug 2005	Sept 2005	March 2006	Aug 2005	Sept 2005	March 2006
Xhosa N = 23	7	18	20	6	19	22
Afrikaans N = 4	2	4	4	2	4	4
English N = 1	1	1	1	1	1	1

One child was absent in March

Table 1: Children's reported home language literacy abilities during the journal writing process (N = 28)

4.2.1.1 Literacy perceptions in journal entries

A few children provided more insight into their perceptions of their home language literacy abilities in their journal entries.

Oyama [Entry 32]: *Ndifuna ukuthi enkhosi ndi funda nokubala isixosa na kusi pela nook nizamile ukusibala amanye amgama ndiwabale rongo kwodwa nidibulele ka kulu*
[I want to say thank you very much. I learnt to write Xhosa and I could write it properly. The other words they were wrong but I at least I try to write it. Thank you very much – her oral translation]

Oyama's entry reflects that she believes that she has some Xhosa literacy. She also evaluates her willingness to try as part of the learning process, positively.

Mihle [Entry 24]: *Ndiyakutanda miss Jardine kakulu nawe uyayazilotho? Nditeta-jenidfuna ukuhlealana yokeimihlele we ugumtu oteta kakulu ndicela ukubni-fundis isixosa andsa zihuhle ekosi uhlele undicimile ehlezi weniyoko*

[I like you very much miss Jardine and you also know that? I'm just saying that I want to stay with you everyday you are a kind of person that likes to talk I would like you to teach me isiXhosa I don't know it very well. Keep me in your heart]

Here Mihle refers to her perceptions of her Xhosa literacy ability.

When she reflects that she doesn't know it very well, she also acknowledges that she can do some reading and writing in her home language. In addition, she indicates that is important for her to improve her home language literacy.

Children's perceptions of their home language literacy abilities appeared to be related to their language attitudes in some instances. In the case of Mihle, the interest she shows in learning more about her language is an indicator of her generally positive attitude towards Xhosa. In the section that follows, I focus on issues of language attitudes, including the metalinguistic awareness on which these attitudes were based.

4.2.2 Language attitudes towards, English, Xhosa and Afrikaans

My discussion about children's language attitudes focuses on the languages they liked and disliked, as well as the reasons advanced for these choices. The data for this section consisted of selected items from the language questionnaires, journal entries and the last free writing paragraph. As explained in chapter 3, the 2006 questionnaire was structured differently from the one in 2005, and aimed to encourage the children to reflect on their language use and choices. It is this metalinguistic awareness that I discuss below.

4.2.2.1 Why English matters

The table below reflects the children's responses to the questionnaire item: *My favourite language is _____*, in 2005, and, *My favourite language is _____ because _____*, in 2006. My interpretation of children's attitudes towards English below also draws on other items in the questionnaire and the free writing paragraph as children's last written text.

The table reflects that in 2005, the majority of Xhosa-speaking children selected English as their favourite language. As the question on which this data was based did not require the children to explain their choices, I interpreted their responses to reflect the hegemonic view of English to be found at home and at school. I found some evidence of this in the excerpt from Tony's language free writing paragraph, at the end of the process:

My other language that I know is English because I wasn't born talking English I didn't know about. I know English when I was in Gr 1 when my father put me

in this school when I came from Xhosa school. My…learn me English and then I start learn English. I don't know other languages.

Home language	Favourite Language							
	Afrikaans		English		Xhosa		Other	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Xhosa N= 23			16	9	4	12	3	2
Afrikaans N=4	4	3		1				
English N=1	1	1						

Table 2: Language attitudes towards the three official languages in the Western Cape (N = 28)

When he writes that he 'wasn't born talking English' and that his 'father put me in this school' Tony points not only to his lack of agency in the matter, and possibly the role of parents in influencing their children's attitudes towards English, but he also appears to express some unresolved ambivalence towards the language.

In 2006, Xhosa had replaced English as stated favourite language of Xhosa-speaking children. However, children generally remained positive about the language. Several themes are apparent in these views:

I can read better in English

Some of the children who still preferred English explained their choice in terms of their perceived proficiency in the language:

Asanda: *I can read and write it.*

Esathi: *I can speak it well.*

Khaltoem, a Kaaps-Afrikaans speaker, also explained her choice in terms of her ability to use the language saying: 'I can read better in English'.

The March questionnaire also contained the item: *I think it is also important for me to know ___ because ___*. The two Kaaps-Afrikaans speakers who selected English, likewise explained their choice in terms of language use:

Leon: *I can talk English and I can write English.*

Shene: *I speak it at home sometimes.*

I am at an English school now

For some Xhosa-speaking children, especially those who felt less confident in their English ability, English proficiency was more than the ability to read and write in the language. For them, rather, English was important as a means of communication:

Asonele: *My language Xhosa when I'm in school I spek English. when I Explain I Explain in English if is English words . Some one swear me I go tell to Mrs A with English*

Asonele's entry illustrates that he needs English to make himself understood, and to assert himself.

Children's reflections about the importance of English moved beyond their own language use and the school environment in certain instances. Then, Xhosa-speaking children appeared to invoke the dominant discourses of their parents, discourses which motivated them to place their children at English medium schools.

I can get work easy

For Chris, Georgina, Pamela and Amava, English provides access to the world of work:

Chris: *I can get a job*

Georgina: *When I grow up I will look for work its really important for me*

Amava: *I can get work easy*

Pamela: *When I need a job nobody will take me ...*

Chris and Amava appear to be echoing adult voices. In addition, Georgina and Pamela show an awareness of, and some anxiety about, the power of English.

English is perfact ... most of the people now it

English, however, is not only elevated as *the* means of communication in the work place. Children's entries, in addition, illustrated their understanding of the hegemony of the language in wider society:

Kalthoem: *Enles is a nice langwin most of the people now it. and they can read and write ...*

Sonela: *Why I love English is when you go across the country most of them speak English you can't go there and speak Xhosa or Afrikaans they will not understand what you are saying because they only understand English.*

Kalthoem understands the hegemony of English to extend to literacy, while Sonela focuses on communication. Like Kalthoem, she believes that most South

Africans understand English, a view that is not borne out by research, but nevertheless influences language attitudes and choices.

Sinazo, Loyolo and Enathi, perhaps influenced by parents as well as the media, comment on the role of English as a worldwide means of communication ...

Sinazo: *English is useful in all countries*

Luvuyo: *Another language I Like to speak is English because it is a useful language in the world.*

Enathi: *I speak Xhosa. I like Xhosa but not like english. I like english because many pople all over the world speak it.*

... and a language that everybody aspires to:

Sia: *... English is Perfact ... My littil brother he want to speak English he is going to school next year*

4.2.2.2 Xhosa, the language that matters at home.

Children's attitudes towards Xhosa were not as unambiguous as their attitudes towards English. Table 2 reflects that they generally were more openly positive about their home language in March. As in the case of English, children offered various explanations for their choices.

I was born speaking Xhosa

Georgina explains her questionnaire response to *'nother language important to know ___* with *'I was born speaking Xhosa because my family speaks it'*. In their language paragraphs, Athenkosi and Tony too, refer to the place of Xhosa at birth.

Athenkosi: *I love my language very much because at home I speak Xhosa. The whole day people speak Xhosa in my street. I am proud of my language. I was bon speaking Xhosa. At school I speak English ...*

Tony: *I love my language because I was born speaking the language. When I was born my mother taught me all the things I didn't know in Xhosa. Now I know all the things that my ... taught me when I was young.*

By connecting the importance of Xhosa to the time of their birth, the children appear to view their language as part of their identity. Tony, moreover, highlights Xhosa as the one that helped him to make sense of the world.

It is my caltca [culture]

Two children, Pamela and Sandisiwe, explicitly linked language and culture. In doing so, they go further than Tony and Christina in affirming the value of their language. By stating that they are proud of their language and culture, Sandisiwe and Pamela are speaking an alternative discourse to the dominant discourse that views African languages as inferior and of little use.

Sandisiwe: *My favourite language is Xhosa because it is my culture I Love my lang-wig and my calcher. and I am proud of my calcher.*

Pamela: *It is my culture and I like it so much*

The whole day people speak Xhosa in my street

Children reflected on the use of the language in the immediate environment.

Aphiwe: *It is my home language*

Lubabalwa: *If is my home language. If I couldn't speak it I couldn't speak to my friends.*

Tony: *my friends speak xhosa and it is me speak English.*

Xhosa is valued as the language most often used in the intimate domains of family and friends, where the children typically feel the most at ease. It is also the language the children are the most comfortable speaking. None of the children commented on this aspect throughout the research, however.

Speaking dominant discourses: 'I don't like my language'

While most Xhosa-speaking children expressed favourable attitudes towards their home language at the end of the research process, a few children remained unconvinced. For two of these children, negative attitudes towards Xhosa were explained in terms of bad language or swearing.

Chris: *I don't like my language. Because when you are (Xhosa-speaking you) cannot get a Xhosa job. I like English Because when you are big you can get a English job and I don't feel nice with Xhosa Because Xhosa make me saw (swear) lot of times …*

Chris initially shares the hegemonic view that Xhosa has little value in the job market. His comment about swearing is difficult to interpret as my experience at school has been that boys his age tend to swear, whatever the language. In his case, he perhaps has only learnt to swear in Xhosa. His unfavourable evaluation of his own swearing could be a combination of him internalising parental voices about this, as well as non-Xhosa speaking teachers' suspicions that loud, social talk in class invariably involves swearing.

Asanda: *I are lewis swen wenat my lekeag. [I always swear with my language] I love egensh I arely[(only) no egansh and isXonsa*

As the entry shows, Asanda was struggling to acquire English literacy, so I decided against encouraging him to explore his Xhosa literacy. His negative attitude towards his home language could therefore also be ascribed to the fact that he was one of the few children who did not engage with home language literacy.

Sia: *I like my language it is Xhosa. And sometimes it is bouring … Xhosa is some-times hard to explain and sometime I can not speak Xhosa very wall.*

Sia does not mention bad language but his struggles to acquire Xhosa literacy could likewise account for his uncertain attitude towards his home language. On the other hand, he could be sharing the ambivalence felt by some bilingual speakers whose first language is a low status language, that is, the feeling of not being able to speak either language well. An example of this is his comment that he cannot speak Xhosa well – he perceives that he lacks the Xhosa vocabulary to explain things he has learnt in English.

4.2.2.3 The value of Afrikaans

Table 2 reflects that in 2005, all four Kaaps-Afrikaans speaking children in the research group indicated that Afrikaans was their favourite language[6]. These responses appeared to contradict the generally low evaluation of the dialect reported by adult respondents in research (Chellan 1999, Braam 2004). At the time, I attributed the children's responses to the fact that Kaaps-Afrikaans was understood, and often used, by several of the teachers at the school. In addition the children had not been exposed to adult linguistic attitudes that equated the dialect with inferiority; a language viewed as 'a mess' and one that resulted in speakers being ridiculed and looked down upon (Jardine 2006: 36). On the other hand, as Dyers' 2004 study of a group of high school children in a poor/lower economic settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town has shown, 'coloured' Afrikaans-speaking children's affirmation of their home language could also be a means of asserting their identity. In Dyers' research, Afrikaans-speaking children reported using their home language as a way of excluding Xhosa speakers. Dyers interpreted this as a way of maintaining the 'superiority' 'coloured' people held over Xhosa speakers during the apartheid era. The four children in this group did not report their preference for Afrikaans in such terms.

In 2006, one of the children, Khaltoem, had changed her preference for Afrikaans as her favourite language, explaining: 'I can read better in English'. Of the remaining three, Leon mentioned his ability to read and speak the language, while Sharon explained that she grew up with the language. She expands on her view of Afrikaans in her free writing paragraph.

Sharon: *The language that I like is Afrikaans and the language I speak at home is Afrikaans and at school English. I speak with my friends Afrikaans and English … My hole family speak Afrikaans.*

In addition to illustrating the important role of Afrikaans as a means of communicating with family and friends, Sharon shows that, as a bilingual speaker, she is able to communicate with both English- and Afrikaans-speaking friends, an ability, I would suggest, that allows Afrikaans-speaking children to value

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6   The study did not explore the children's awareness of different varieties of Afrikaans. My view is that for the children, the dialect that they spoke *was* Afrikaans. When they therefore expressed any opinion about Afrikaans they were referring to their home language, Kaaps-Afrikaans.

their home language and not elevate English to the extent that their Xhosa-speaking peers do.

It was not only Afrikaans-speaking children who valued the language: the table below reflects that it was of significance to Xhosa-speaking children as well. It is these perceptions that I foreground in this section.

Home language	Additional language							
	Afrikaans		English		Xhosa		Other	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Xhosa N=23	12	12	1	5	1	3	9	3
Afrikaans N=4				2	4	2		
English N=1		1			1			

Table 3: An additional language children would like to know (N=28)

In the 2005, children completed the item. *I would like to know the ___ language very well.* The 'other' category in the table was significant in that it contained African languages such as Venda and Sesotho. These languages were of importance to the children because they were spoken by their parents and other family members. Afrikaans, however, was the language more than half of the Xhosa speakers wanted to know. At the time I attributed this to the place of Afrikaans as a school subject that the children needed to learn.

In 2006, children responded to the questionnaire item: *It is also important for me to know ___ because ___.* More Xhosa-speaking children now chose English as an additional language, as opposed to it being their favourite language earlier, but as most children felt confident of their ability to communicate in English, Afrikaans remained the language that most children wanted to know. These attitudes differ from those related by Dyers 2004. In her study, Xhosa-speaking children were largely dismissive of the value of Afrikaans. Apart from the possible influences of adult discourses that associate Afrikaans with apartheid, the more negative attitudes of the children in Dyers' study could be ascribed to the fact that Afrikaans- and Xhosa-speaking children were placed in separate classes, thereby making it more difficult to dislodge entrenched linguistic and racial prejudices.

Although a few of the Xhosa-speaking children in my study provided vague reasons for their wanting to learn Afrikaans, most children voiced their choice clearly.

Inclusion and exclusion: 'When people talk to me I must know what they say.'

Children emphasised the need to *understand* Afrikaans:

Sonela: *When my boss speak Afrikaans, I will not know it..*

Aviwe: *If they make fun of me so I can hear.*

Sonela stresses the need to understand her (hypothetical) Afrikaans-speaking boss. She thus allows a space for Afrikaans in the workplace, a space that is generally allocated to English. At the same time, however, she echoes the dominant discourse that excludes Xhosa as the language of the workplace, and the language of those in power.

Aviwe's perception that peers speaking another language might be speaking about him, is common in situations for speakers of marked, low status languages. His views are echoed by Luvuyo, who in addition, associates language with 'racial' categories.

Luvuyo: *... I would also like to learn Afrikaans because my coloured friends like to speak Afrikaans and I won't know if they talking about me behind my back.*

The above entries point to the relation between understanding a language, and being included in or excluded from communication. This is again illustrated in this extract from Sandisiwe's language paragraph:

Sandisiwe: *When someone speeks Afrikaans I think I am the only one that can't talk Afrikaans ...*

Communicating with 'Others'

A few children, although still concerned with the need to understand Afrikaans so as not to be excluded from conversations, went further and emphasised the role of Afrikaans as a means of building relationships. They explained the importance of Afrikaans as follows:

Enathi: *that I can communicate with Afrikaans speaking people.*

Zanele: *I can teg weth cooled people*

Sandisiwe: *I am going to meat a friend thet speak Afrikaans.*

Zanele, like Luvuyo earlier, associates Afrikaans with a racial category. But like Enathi and Sandisiwe, his motivation for wanting to know the language is to communicate, rather than just to understand. In some way, these children have come to understand that developing relations with other language users involves an attempt to learn their language. It is this understanding, as part of an emerging multilingual awareness, that I pay more attention to in the next section.

4.3 Multilingual awareness

For the purpose of this analysis, I view multilingual awareness as the children's awareness of the different languages in the country. This would include their understanding of the role these languages play in their lives and in the lives of others. The data for this discussion consists of selected questionnaire items and the free writing paragraph.

The table below reflects children's responses to the questionnaire item: *A language I do not like is ___* in 2005, and, *A language I do not like is ___ because ___*, in 2006. I comment on two of the findings as reflected in the table, namely the children's responses under the 'other' and 'none' categories.

Home language	Disliked Language									
	Afrikaans		English		Xhosa		Other		None	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Xhosa N = 23	3	5				2	20	3		13
Afrikaan N = 4					1		3	1		3
English N = 1							1	1		

Table 4: Languages children disliked (N=28)

In 2005, one month into the research process, children's responses recorded under the 'other' category consisted of African languages other than Xhosa. Of the total of 26 responses recorded in this category, the languages most often named were Tswana or Sesotho. I had listed these languages at the bottom of the questionnaire on the chance that the children might need the spelling to answer the item about the languages spoken by parents. I doubt that many of the children had any real knowledge of these languages at the time. Children were not required to explain their choices. In 2006, the number of responses under the 'other' category had dwindled to five. I suggest that this decrease is directly related to their responses reflected under the 'none' category.

Of significance for an understanding of the children's emerging multilingual awareness is that in 2006, 17/28 children indicated that they did not dislike any language, a common response being: 'I like all languages'. I had expressed the view that there was no language that I disliked early in the research, and this was no doubt recalled by some children. On the other hand, children may have responded to a six-month process of validation and affirmation of different languages, including their own usually marginalised home language. Whatever the reasons for the change, the free writing paragraphs that ended the research in August 2006 illustrated that, four months since we had worked together, some children had come to their own understanding of multilingualism and its value.

Multilingualism at home and at school

Georgina: *The languages I can speak is : Xhosa, English and Afrikaans and isiduba-da. My home language is Xhosa. At school I speak English. I can read and write these languages. My teachers first language is Afrikaans. Some of my mates in class speak English some of them is their first language. I love Xhosa very much.*

Georgina is the only child who describes her multilingualism in literacy terms. When commenting on the languages of her classmates and teacher, she illustrates her awareness that speakers of a language can operate at different levels.

Rone: *I like isiXhsa because my friend lean me isiXhsa. I like Afrikaans because my ma also lean me if I get stuck with a Afrikaans word my Ma help me. And English I love English its fun to lean English*

Rone, the only English first language speaker in the study, was reared by her grandmother who speaks standard Afrikaans. As a struggling learner, multilingualism for her is acquired with the help of family and friends.

Sharon: *The language that I like is Afrikaans and the language I speak at home is Afrikaans and at school English. I speak with my friends Afrikaans and English. Sometimes I speak Nkosa with the Nkosa children. I wan to learn more Nkosa. And big Afrikaans words. My hole family speak Afrikaans.*

Sharon states that she speaks English at school but I have often observed her speaking Afrikaans also. She speaks Afrikaans and English with her friends and sometimes speaks Xhosa with 'the Nkosa children'. This othering notwithstanding, she does express the desire to acquire more Xhosa.

Asathi: *My first language is Xhosa and my second language is English and my third language is Afrikaans. I love all my languages I would love to speak Afrikaans I try to speak Afrikaans but I am not used to it at school I speak Xhosa or English At home I speak Xhosa because it is my home language I am very proud of all the eleven languages of South Africa I love them all.*

Asathi, although he admits that he is still struggling to acquire Afrikaans, counts this as his third language, and therefore considers himself multilingual. He makes reference to all South Africa's official languages, saying rather abstractly that he is proud of all eleven languages. Anathi wrote this sentence after requesting me to hand back his page. I suspect that, as someone who had particularly enjoyed the writing, this last utterance was meant to please me.

Different language landscapes

Whereas some children viewed multilingualism mostly in relation to school and the immediate environment, the awareness of others extended to its use and

value in wider contexts.

Thandokazi: *My best language is Xhosa, English and Sesotho because my mother speaks Sesotho and. I can speak Xhosa and English So I want to learn how to speak Sesotho. When I went to Eastern Cape with my mother I learn a little bit of Sesotho. I like speaking SeSotho.*

Sonela: *I also understand a little bit of Afrikaans because in De Aar most people speak Afrikaans and little bit of isiZulu*

Both paragraphs refer to *speaking* a language, that is, language as a means of communication. Thandokazi and Sonela are voicing their understanding that different languages are spoken, and are important, depending on the area or environment. In their paragraphs they show, and evaluate positively, their ability to acquire some of the language of a region by interacting with people of the area.

Multilingualism as a resource

Viewing multilingualism as a resource, as referred to in chapter two, includes respect for and an appreciation of the use of various languages and varieties in society. The entries of Patricia and Lubabalwa show some understanding of this view of multilingualism:

Patricia: *I always wish I know lots of Languages when I'm old Because I want to talk with lots of people. My mother can speak four languages because she stay in Johannesburg and she stayed there a lot so most of the people speak different Languages so my mother can speak with them but I can't.*

Patricia has not acquired any additional languages but her entry reflects that she admires the urban multilingualism of her mother. She views multilingualism as a resource, as a means of communicating with many people, and something that she aspires to. This is also the case for Lubabalwa:

Lubabalwa: *My favourite language is Xhosa, English and I would like to learne Afrikaans. I would like to understand three languages. My Mother understand Sisuthu and Zulu languages. I wish She could teach me thise languages. thank you for letting me write ubout what I would like to learne. And my languages*

Zonele: *My league is Xhosa I LOVE Xhosa because Xhosa is my first league. I had like to lean otho leaguage also and I like to siky [as]) people about they leaguage.*

Zonele too has become aware of, and is interested, in other languages as a means of connecting with others – in the earlier language questionnaire he expressed the desire to know Afrikaans because he 'wants to talk to coloured people'.

Multilingual awareness: mutual learning and respect.

Children have until now voiced their desire to become multilingual as a means of understanding and communicating with others. They have also verbalised

their appreciation of their home language. Two children showed still deeper insight.

Sandisiwe: *My langwig is siXhos. I Love my langwig and my calcher. and I am proud of my calcher. I would like to lern Afrikaans. I think it is an intresting langig. What I have lerned is to resptd some wans langwig and they must respect yours too.*

Sandisiwe's multilingual awareness involves mutual respect; she has learned to respect the language of others but at the same time she asserts this respect for her language as well.

Sinazo, when he was asked to list another language important to know, responded that it was important for him to know 'all South Africa languages to communicate with other people.' His language paragraph consisted of one sentence:

Sinazo: *I like the languages that I speak but sometimes it is difficult to communicate with others who don't know the languages that I speak, but sometimes I wish I can speak the languages that they can speak.*

Sinazo describes himself as, at least, a bilingual and appears to assume that most South Africans speak more than one language. I interpreted his last sentence to echo the sentiments expressed by Sandisiwe. But, he goes further, suggesting that instead of waiting for others to acquire our language in order for them to be included in our conversations, we could instead try to learn the language of others so as to gain access to theirs.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to answer my two research sub-questions. For the first sub-question, I framed the journal writing as a discourse process and paid particular attention to asymmetries of linguistic resources and shifting teacher-learner roles as children and teacher negotiated meaning in the writing. My data presentation and interpretation for the second sub-question focused on language attitudes as part of the social context in which the journal writing process was embedded. In this discussion I related children's reported language attitudes and perceptions to wider societal discourses about language and power.

5. Conclusion

... what is also at stake in acknowledging power and its effects is not to be trapped by crippling pessimism, but to sharpen our self-awareness, and to see with greater humility and tentativeness what our efforts yield, recognising that our knowledge of each other and the right course of action will always be partial, contingent and historically situated ... (Walker 1996, drawing on Ellsworth 1989)

In the previous chapter I presented, analysed and interpreted children's responses to dialogue journal writing framed as a language awareness strategy. This concluding chapter is divided into two sections. The first part serves to summarise and highlight some of the findings of my investigation and then I discuss the implication of these findings for policy and practice.

5.1 Negotiating meaning in dialogue journals framed as a multilingual awareness strategy

Although I framed this research project as a multilingual one, most of the children's writing was in English, and occasionally, in their home language, Xhosa or Afrikaans. In the case of English, this meant that most of the children were writing in a language that they did not have an intuitive command of. In the previous chapter, I discussed the impact of the asymmetry in English linguistic resources between the children and myself on the children's ability to make meaning in the journals. However, my general impression of their English writing is that, despite these constraints, children were mostly able to make meaning of my writing and were able to express themselves in English. In this respect, it appears as if they viewed the writing as a social activity, oriented towards interacting and communicating with me more than a school literacy task. Furthermore, I would venture that because of the nature of the dialogue journal genre and the relationship we had developed, children did not view their proficiency in English as a constraint. This was evident in children's willingness to risk spelling errors, and in the fluency of their writing.

It is difficult to establish the extent to which children were able to make sense of the Xhosa writing in the journals. Several children did not respond to my code-switching use of isiXhosa, and to Ntombi Nkence's standard use of the language. In terms of expressing themselves in their home language, one of the children did not use Xhosa at all, while another used some Xhosa in all of her communications during the last phase. Almost all of the children, therefore, used their home language to communicate in writing at some stage during the process. What I found striking was that most of this home language writing consisted of code-switching.

As I explicitly requested the children to use at least one Xhosa or Afrikaans sentence in their writing, this code-switching had a marked, directed nature. On the other hand, most children did respond to this request – and children also code-switched within a sentence, and then appeared to do so in a natural, spontaneous manner. My interpretation of this code-switching is that children who were not confident of their ability to write in their home language used code-switching to gain confidence, while other children used code-switching to help me to make meaning of their Xhosa. Some children perhaps, taking the cue from my written model as well as their everyday spoken 'community discourse practice' (Hornberger 2005), viewed code-switching as a natural way of communicating in two languages within a dialogue journal context.

The latter interpretation of the children's view of code-switching is aligned to my impression of children's overall response to journal writing as a linguistic awareness strategy. To illustrate, I present two entries by Xhosa-speaking Sonela, whose communications contained some code-switching now and then, but were mostly in English. These were written during the first and second half of process respectively.

[Entry 18]: *Some peole will say bad things some people would swear and fight and we will not like it some people will not have respect. Some will ware nice clothes and think they are better than other people. Like me I do not ware nice colthes as long as I have clothe's some will want more things. But in the bible God say appreciate what you get but some will want because they want people to say they house's are nice. But they prentes [parents] suffer when my mother say she does not have something I will learsen. Not cry because she does not have it. My mother is a brand [bread] winner and I am still saying it.*

[Entry 25]: *I am so happy to be back at school. The past few days esikolweni bekumnandi. Besibala nge break ndi dlala ne shomi zam. I Christmesi yam dizo yilela apa ekapa [...it was nice at school. We wrote and during break I played with my friends. I spent Christmas here in Cape Town] I said to my daddy to not buy Christmas clothes because he must buy books and give me money to go to De Aar that is why I said he must not buy clothe he must buy books because money does not grow in a tree*

Entry 25 illustrates the spontaneous way in which Sonela code-switched – starting with intrasentence code-switching, staying with Xhosa and then reverting to English. In this longer English section, she continues our communication started before the year-end school holidays. Here, in relating her communication with her father, she invests more of herself, and uses English because she wants to make sure that I understand.

Entries 18 and 25 serve to illustrate the dialogical, multivoiced nature of the writing, an aspect that characterised much of the writing, but, because of my language awareness focus, was not always apparent in the entries I presented in chapter four. In both of these entries, containing direct responses to my earlier writing, Sonela uses our dialogue to voice her opinion and express her feelings. Her entries are a good illustration of Bakhtin's notions that our voices are always value-laden, 'populated by the voices of others', and oriented backwards and forwards. In this case, Sonela invokes the voices of unnamed others, her mother, as well as God, and in doing so, assumes a position towards these voices. She concludes both entries by 'orienting her voice backwards': in entry 18 towards her communication to me earlier in the journal writing process, and in entry 25 to the voice of a significant adult in her life, her mother.

My conclusion about children's responses to dialogue journal writing framed as a language awareness strategy is that the children were indeed able to voice themselves, and as Bloch (2003) found in her study, they were able to do so in profound ways. Although they were aware of and negotiated the linguistic slant to the conversations, children viewed their journals as, essentially, a non-judgemental space where they could represent themselves and their worlds, and where *what* they communicated mattered and was affirmed. I foregrounded language awareness, and for several children this first opportunity to use their home language in writing no doubt led to an enabling, heightened appreciation of their linguistic abilities. But, taken as a whole, the entries reflect that for the children their language use, and negotiation of meaning, was subordinate to the valuational, emotional and interpersonal dimension of the writing. These dimensions are illustrated in my written conversations with Enathi, especially (see Appendix E).

At the start of this project, my language awareness focus aimed at encouraging children to reflect on their home language literacy abilities. As the process unfolded, this focus broadened to include an awareness of multilingualism as a South African linguistic reality.

5.2 Language awareness and attitudes as a response to the journal writing process

I will now discuss my interpretations of this broader language awareness, as evidenced by the language attitudes children expressed towards the different languages used at school, at home and the broader community.

If all utterances are oriented towards a response, and participants present a certain picture of themselves for the benefit of the researcher (Cameron 2001:14), then many of the opinions expressed by the children were responses to me, as a teacher/researcher that they had come to build a relationship with and wanted to please. These cautions regarding responding to an audience notwithstanding, by the end of the exercise, Xhosa-speaking children rated their home language more positively than at the start. This appears to present an alternative discourse to the one that ascribes a lesser status to the home language. Most of the children were prepared to try to use their home language in writing and by the end, professed some proficiency in their mother tongue. The fact that this evaluation of their literacy abilities was not reflected in the frequency of their Xhosa writing can be ascribed to two main factors: the nature of the genre and the audience. Above all else, the children viewed the journal writing as a space for them to connect and communicate with me – and most of them felt more confident of their ability to write and to be understood in English.

Xhosa-speaking children's increased appreciation of their home language did not diminish the status of English as the language of power. Not a single negative attitude towards English was expressed throughout the process. And at the end several children foregrounded the instrumental value of the language, thereby voicing the dominant discourse that equates English with educational and economic success. These hegemonic sentiments might, inadvertently, also have been conveyed by me as teacher. I promoted home language literacy, yet almost all of my spoken communication with the children was in English. In addition, my relative fluency in the language served to illustrate the benefits of being able to communicate in English to the children.

Much of the discussion about the children's responses to the dialogue journal writing process in this chapter, and in the thesis as a whole, has focused on English and Xhosa. Because of the relatively small number of Afrikaans speakers in this group, and the fact that Afrikaans is taught as a subject at school and therefore enjoys a higher status than Xhosa, my attention to Afrikaans was often incidental. This bias did not go unnoticed; whilst reading with a group of Xhosa-speaking children during a pre-journal writing activity, I glanced up to see the following written on the chalkboard: 'Miss Jardine NOW AFRIKAANS TIME'. Nevertheless, the positive attitude that the children expressed towards their home language at the start of the research persisted throughout the process. Although not all of the children in this group felt confident of their ability to read and write in their home language, by the end all of them were prepared to try to do so. Xhosa speakers, too, were mostly positive about Afrikaans, voicing the need to be able to communicate with Afrikaans speakers. For several of the Xhosa-speaking children, this awareness of a third language was extended to other African languages used by family members and friends. Children, furthermore, expressed admiration for parents whose multilingual ability allowed them to communicate with people from other communities.

5.3 Situating the findings within the current South African language in education conversation: implications for policy and practice

In my view, this counterdiscourse of valuing African languages, seldom expressed by parents and teachers, was the most striking language awareness response to the journal writing process. The children had come to the ideological awareness of 'language-as-resource' as envisaged in the South African Constitution. This heightened language awareness illustrates the potential of multilingual dialogue writing to provide children with the opportunities to voice themselves in writing and 'claim the right to speak' (Pierce in Hornberger 2003:40) in their home language. At the same time, by accepting and respecting different languages, varieties, and discourse patterns such as code-switching, teachers using multilingual dialogue journal writing have the opportunity to open up classroom spaces for these less powerful languages and varieties.

What this study has further highlighted is the potential of a multilingual journal writing strategy to encourage children who have not been formally taught to read in their home language, to attempt to read and write. Ideally, such a project should be undertaken by a Xhosa first language speaker who would be able to move children beyond the exploratory stages to some degree of sustained writing. Such a teacher would be able to use her linguistic knowledge to lead the children towards drawing comparisons between the home language and English, thus developing the metalinguistic awareness necessary for transfer and translation. In addition, she would be able to use her knowledge of the dialect spoken by the children as a means of bridging their way to the standard usage, as suggested by Alexander (2007).

On the other hand, as this study has shown, this strategy can be quite successfully employed by teachers who view language diversity as a resource, and are prepared to encourage biliteracy from the position of a learner of the language. For me, these shifting teacher-learner relationships opened up several opportunities. Positioning children as teachers not only affirmed their home language and their sense of self, but also afforded children the opportunity to learn while they were engaging with the language. However, the process rested on the willingness to take risks. For most of the Xhosa speaking children, this involved risking writing in their home language although they had not been formally taught its written conventions(see Appendix D). For me, it meant risking my still limited knowledge of the language via code-switching. This code-switching became an integral part of the process and along with developing my own confidence to try, and showing the children that I considered their home language important enough to make the effort, it at the same time served as an encouragement to less confident Xhosa speaker writers to engage in home language writing.

The above discussion, and the examples of the children's writing, has highlighted the potential of dialogue journals to affirm marginalised voices and to provide insight into the lives of the children we teach. It has also illustrated its value as a strategy for encouraging children to engage in home language literacy. These uses of dialogue journals are embedded in an ideological view of language and literacy and follow the spirit of the South Africa's Language in Education Policy and the Constitution.

However, as was pointed out in chapter 2, there is a deep chasm between policy and practice. In multilingual schools such as the one in my study, it is English literacy that is assessed and which leads to schools being categorised as 'good' or 'weak' schools. Teachers at such schools, who are anxious about the spectre of the biannual WCED Grade 3 and Grade 6 provincial testing, would understandably be concerned about the potential of dialogue journal writing to develop English literacy. My view is that the English literacy of all of the children in this study benefited from the writing. Attention to the nature and extent of this development falls outside the scope of this study and could possibly be a topic for future research. For those teachers who wish to use the strategy to develop English literacy the following suggestions and cautions might prove useful.

As a pedagogic tool for literacy development, dialogue journal writing would be useful as part of a more comprehensive language and literacy programme. Children who have come to associate reading with decoding, become better at decoding by reading dialogue entries; they are not necessarily able to read better. For such children, journal writing entails the danger of becoming yet another frustrating experience, and careful attention needs to given to how to scaffold these children's writing. In classes of more than forty, regular writing to all children might in any case prove extremely difficult to sustain. Teachers, accordingly, might need to consider writing to smaller groups, perhaps with a different group each term – though this holds the drawback of only reaching some children towards the end of the year.

I conclude this section on the implications of my findings, by paying attention to Kaaps-Afrikaans. My unwitting marginalisation of this dialect during much of the research process, led me to consider how Afrikaans teaching is approached in English medium multilingual classes. Xhosa-speaking children in this study have voiced their need for Afrikaans at a third language level; that is, they need a basic understanding and knowledge of it in order to communicate with peers and friends. At a former 'coloured' school such as the one in this study, this would necessarily include an understanding of Kaaps-Afrikaans. The teaching of Afrikaans that children experience at school range from it being glossed over, to teaching with a strong grammar and spelling focus that is conducted exclusively through the medium of standard Afrikaans. My observations of classes where teachers make some attempt to acknowledge Xhosa, is that the teacher/pupil divide is not as sharp as in many of the other classes. However,

even in such classes, Afrikaans is being taught as a second language, and children are therefore still not acquiring the communicative abilities they need to be able to understand and speak basic, standard Afrikaans or Kaaps-Afrikaans.

As mentioned previously, children in this study, and in most working-class suburbs in Cape Town, speak a non-standard dialect of Afrikaans, Kaaps-Afrikaans. This is the variety children bring from home and speak with their friends during break time. This is also the variety that teachers need to start with in order to guide them to standard Afrikaans. My impression of the writing of the four Kaaps-Afrikaans-speaking children in this group is that they would benefit from explicit language awareness strategies such as looking at the difference between dialect and standard pronunciation and spelling, as well as a comparison between English and Afrikaans phonetic systems. This would need to be done as part of a programme that includes regular opportunities to read and write Afrikaans so that these children acquire basic spelling sight word vocabulary.

The language we use matters

This study has attempted to encourage a group of primary children to reflect on how and why language matters, by looking, amongst other things, at their perceptions of their home language literacy abilities and their language attitudes towards the three official languages in the Western Cape. However, as a critical action research project, I aimed at more than understanding, and sought also to heighten children's language awareness. As a participant in the research, I attempted to achieve this heightened awareness by presenting myself as a Xhosa learner and an emergent multilingual. And in the journal writing process, I aimed to show the children that the languages they use matter, that their voices matter, and that they matter. My view is that, at least for some of the children, this is how they will view this short period in their schooling. As to the value of the research for the researcher, my practice will no doubt benefit from the language insights I gained. Of further significance for me was owning up to my limiting beliefs about the abilities of Xhosa-speaking children, and the opportunity their insight and wisdom, and their openness to my 'racial' 'otherness', offered me to interrogate my own prejudices.

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Appendix A

Language questionnaire September 2005

Name: _____

1   The first language I ever learnt was _____

2   My mother's language is_____

3   My father's language is. _____

4   The main language at home is._____

5   The main language I speak at school is _____

6   My favourite language is _____

7   A language I do not like is _____

8   I would like to know the _____ language very well.

9   I know these languages

Language	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Afrikaans				
IsiXhosa				
Sesotho				
English				
Tswana				

W = well R = reasonably well P = poor C = cannot

(In MacDonald, 1991. Eager to talk and learn and think; bilingual primary education in South Africa)

Appendix B

Language questionnaire March 2006

Name: _____

1. My main language at home is _____

2. I use this language to speak to my _____

3. I can also speak _____

4. The languages I can read and write are _____

    and _____

5. This is how I write '***I can read and write***' in my home language

    _____

6. My favourite language is _____because

    _____

7. I think it is also important for me to know _____

    because_____

8. A language I don't like is _____because

    _____

9. I think that writing in my journal has helped to improve my

    _____

10. Miss Jardine's favourite language is _____

    because _____

11. She is learning to understand, speak, read and write isiXhosa

    because _____

12. I think that she finds learning isiXhosa _____

13. My advice to her is _____

    _____

Appendix C

Parent consent forms

<div style="border:1px solid">

Dear _____   ____ **August 2005**
As learning support teacher at the school, I am doing research that aims to improve the literacy level of the Grade 4 learners at the school. _____ will form part of the group that I will be working with. Please sign below to indicate that you are in agreement with this. I hope to be working with _____ till the end of the year.

Ms A Jardine
Learning Support Teacher
Name:_____ Date:_____
Signature_____ Telephone no._____

</div>

<div style="border:1px solid">

Dear _____   ___ **August 2006**
Last year I wrote to you to request permission to work with your child as part of my literacy research at the school. The purpose of the research was to use journal writing to encourage biliteracy (English and isiXhosa/Afrikaans reading and writing). The children and I wrote to one another in English mostly but they were also encouraged to use their home language when they could.

   I now request your permission to use the journals to write up my research. As I will not be using your child's name or the name of the school, you can be assured of confidentiality.

   Once the process is complete, I would be prepared to share the findings of the research with you should you wish.

   I would appreciate it if you could sign below to indicate that you agree to my using the journals.

   Thank you very much/*Enkosi kakhulu/Baie dankie*

Aziza Jardine
Learning support teacher
Comment/questions: _____

_____

Parent/Guardian : _____
Signature: _____

</div>

Appendix D

Research participants' profiles based on school records, informal conversations and journal entries

Name	Age at Aug 2005	Home Language	English medium instruction from:
Amava	**10**	**Xhosa**	**Grade 3**
Comments: Lived with her grandmother at the start of the research. At the time, her father worked in England. Expressed the desire to live with him in her journal entries. Received some LS shortly after she started at the school in 2004. PWS in Grade 3 and Grade 4. Apart from her two references to her father, I felt that most of her journals entries were 'flat' and that we did not really connect. She felt confident of her ability to write in Xhosa – used some Xhosa in her writing when requested to do so. Left the school at the end of 2006.			
Asathi	**10**	**Xhosa**	**Grade 1**
Comments: Comments: His journal entries describe a close-knit family. Has a younger sister at the school. 'Average' learner according to his teachers. Enjoyed writing. Overheard him while opening his journal: 'I like getting letters.' Used one or two Xhosa words after my request for him to do so. Not confident of his ability to read and write. Appeared to have difficulty coming to grips with Xhosa sound-symbol relationships.			
Aviwe	**10**	**Xhosa**	**Grade 1**
Comments: His mom, a single parent, supports three sons. According to past teachers, he has the potential to do really well – underperforms. Was absent quite frequently so had fewer entries than the rest. Did not really take to writing process/ no real dialogue developed. Hardly any Xhosa writing. Appointed prefect in Grade 7 this year.			
Asonele	**11**	**Xhosa**	**Grade 1**
Comments: Lives with parents. Has received LS for much of his schooling. Repeated Grade 2. Able to express himself orally and has mastered the mechanics of English reading and writing. Struggles with more demanding academic work. Responses in journals did not always make sense and were mostly unrelated to mine. Dialogue only developed towards the end of the process. Prepared to try some Xhosa writing – used English sound-symbol relationships then.			

Name	Age	Home Language	English medium
Athenkosi	**11**	**Xhosa**	**Grade 2**
Comments: Lives with his aunt during the school term – with his parents during the holidays. Repeated Grade 2 and is an 'average' learner now. Some of his entries were dialogical. Prefers reading to writing. Confident of his ability to read and write in his home language from the start. Assisted me with translations now and then.			
Asanda	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with his mom – parents separated in 2006. Repeated Grade 3. Received LS from Grade 3. Still struggling to acquire basic English literacy. Journal entries typically short and limited to words he felt he could spell. Did not write in Xhosa. In Grade 7 now – arrangements being made for him to be placed at a 'Skills' school next year.			
Georgina	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with both parents. Coping academically. Enjoyed journal writing process. Confident of her ability to read and write in her home language from the start. Taught by friend at home. Her Xhosa use mostly took the form of intra-sentence code–switching. A prefect in Grade 7 this year.			
Chris	11	Xhosa	Grade 2
Comments: Lives with his mother during the holidays and in a children's home during the school term. Repeated Grade 2. Took a while to settle into writing but later entries provided some insight into his home life. Not confident of his ability to read and write Xhosa. Made some attempt during the second phase – used English sound-symbol relationships and short, code-switching phrases mostly. Left the school at the end of 2006.			
Enathi	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with her parents and her brother who also attends the school. Coping well according to past teachers. Enjoyed communicating in her journals. Indicated at the start that she was unable to read and write in her home language but was prepared to use Xhosa on request. Mostly intra-sentence code-switching. – using some English sound-symbol relationships. A prefect in Grade 7 now.			
Mihle	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lived with her older sister in 2005. Trying home circumstances. PWS in Grade 4. Journal entries short, mostly expressing her feelings towards me. Was prepared to try Xhosa – inter as well as intra-sentence code-switching. As in the case of English, she struggled to spell phonetically. Left school at the end of 2006 to live with her mom in the Eastern Cape.			
Kalthoem	11	Afrikaans	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with her mother and 9 siblings in an informal settlement in the area. Teachers report that during winter she is often absent – clothing and bedding waterlogged. Has struggled at school since Grade 1 but has not repeated a grade. Started school late. Has received LS since 2004. Enjoyed writing in her journal. Still developing English literacy. Struggled with Afrikaans writing – used Afrikaans twice only.			

Leon	10	Afrikaans	Grade R
Comments: Lives with his parents. Received some LS in 2006. Teachers report that he is playful and not serious about learning. Journal entries showed that he has a definite spelling difficulty. Apart from complaining about what he considered to be unfair treatment of him by a teacher, his entries provided little insight into his world. Indicated from the start that Afrikaans was his favourite language and was prepared to try to write when encouraged to do so. It was clear that he did not know Afrikaans sound-symbol relationships.			

Luvuyo	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with his aunt. Expressed the desire to stay with his parents in his entries. Coping at school. Enjoyed writing – almost exclusively in English. Was confident of the ability to read and write in Xhosa from the start. Learnt Xhosa at Sunday school classes he attends regularly. Hardly any Xhosa in his journals – few words used were to appease me.			

Lubabalwa	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with his mother. Father works in the Eastern Cape. Entries reveal that his family is a warm, caring one. Teachers have expressed concern about the anger he exhibits towards peers and adults at school. He is coping academically – because he is prepared to ask if he does not understand, according to one of his teachers. Enjoyed writing in the journal. Only used Xhosa twice during the entire process. Did not feel confident of his ability to do so.			

Mandisi	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with his parents. Has not repeated a grade but is struggling academically on the whole – once indicated to me that he works slowly and that he finds some of the work hard. Took a while to settle into the writing. His Xhosa writing took the form of a 'game' in which we asked each other for the English meaning of some Xhosa words.			

Oyama	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Lives with parents. One of the few children who always has money for 'civvies'. Her journal entries reveal that she is mindful of the sacrifices her parents are making for her. Coping academically. Enjoyed writing in her journal. Was prepared to risk using Xhosa from the start although she was aware that her spelling might not be accurate. Code-switched to explain some of her entries.			

Pamela	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: Has lived with her aunt, Oyama's mother, since Grade 1. Her mother works in Johannesberg. Journal entries reflect that she is happy living with her aunt. Coping at school. Some of her journal entries were rushed but on the whole her communication was dialogical. Particularly enjoyed writing to Ntombi. Used some isiXhosa – inter-sentence code-switching mostly.			

Rone	9	English	Grade R
Comments: Mother passed away at birth. Reared by grandmother who is a pensioner. Has basic literacy skills in place but struggles with most academic subjects. Has received intermittent LS since Grade 2. Enjoyed communicating in journal although she tended to echo my words in her entries. Afrikaans her favourite language. Used this language in writing once. In Grade 7 now – arrangements being made for her to be placed at a 'Skills' school next year.			

Sandisiwe	10	Xhosa	Grade R
Comments: Lives with both parents. Has a spelling difficulty but my perception is that she is confident and smart. This is not reflected in her school work, according to her teachers. PWS in 2004. Was absent during the initial stages of the writing but was willing to risk writing in Xhosa from the start. Enjoyed the process. Views Xhosa as part of her culture.			

Shene	11	Afrikaans	Grade 1
Lives with both parents. Neither parent had full-time jobs during the time of the research. Quiet. Coping with school work. Enjoyed writing in her journal. Requested that I teach her Xhosa. Was prepared to attempt Afrikaans writing – has not learnt Afrikaans sound-symbol relationships.			

Sharon	10	Afrikaans	Grade R
Comments: Lives with mother and stepfather. Journal entries reflect that home environment not always safe. Used journal to work through some of her concerns. Coping at school. Inter as well as intra-sentence code-switching during the second phase.			

Sinovuyo	10	Xhosa	Grad 1
Comments: Lives with parents. Absent frequently – once explained that there was no money for transport. 'Below average' learner according to teachers. Fewer entries than most. Dialogue only developed late in the process. Did not use any Xhosa in spite of several requests for her to do so.			

Sinazo	10	Xhosa	Grade 1
Comments: At the time of the research lived with both his parents -father unemployed. Intelligent learner according to all of his teachers. This was reflected in his entries. Used Xhosa to appease me – was confident of his ability to read and write in his home language. Xhosa use consisted mostly of intra-sentence code-switching. Left the school at the end of 2006 to stay with his grandparents in the Limpopo Province. His parents were no longer able to afford transport costs to the school.			

Sia	10	Xhosa	Grade 1

Comments: Lives with both parents. From journal entries, in a happy safe environment. PWS in 2004 but is coping now according to his teachers. He enjoyed the writing process but found my requests for him to use Xhosa stressful. Used Xhosa twice – I found it hard to read this writing. Wrote at the end that he found some Xhosa words difficult and that English is 'parfact'. In Grade 7 now. His parents' application for him to attend a technical high school has been successful.

Sonela	10	Xhosa	Grade 1

Comments: Lives with mother – father provides some financial support. Journal entries reflect her understanding of her mother's struggles. Coping at school. Enjoyed writing – dialogical from the start. Used Xhosa during the second phase after my requests for her to do so. Intra-sentence code switching.

Thandokazi	11	Xhosa	Grade 1

Comments: Lives with both parents. Repeated Grade 1. Used capitals within words and confused b/d/p in journals. Enjoyed using her home language – wrote about parents' interest in her learning.Mother, older brother taught her to read and write. I found her Xhosa writing challenging. Writing not always phonetic, some entries only in Xhosa.

Tony	11	Xhosa	Grade 2

Comments: Lives with parents. Repeated Grade 2. Confident of his ability to read and write Xhosa from the start – learnt to do so at Xhosa medium school in Grade 1. Several language related entries e. g. asking me to teach him Afrikaans. Hardly any Xhosa used. Did not see the need to do so?

Zanele	11	Xhosa	Grade 4

Comments: Lives with both parents. Family had to give up their house to move in with his grandmother after his father became ill and could no longer support the family. Received LS since he started at the school in 2004 – had difficulty reading basic Xhosa words at the time. Has definite English spelling difficulty. Was keen to write in Xhosa so I allowed him to. I had great difficulty understanding his reading.

Abbreviations:
LS = Learning Support
PWS = Progressed with Support

Appendix E

Dialogue Journal entries: Enathi, aged 10, August 2005.

Initial entry 2/8:[7] *I can speak english. I can read english. I can write english. I speak english at school.*
I can speak isixhosa. I can't read isixhosa. I can't write isixhosa. I speak isixhosa at home. I would like to learn to write and read it.
I cant speak afrikaans. I cant read afrikaans. I can write Afrikaans. I would like to learn it

AJ: Dear Enathi, I can speak, read and write English but my home language is Kaaps Afrikaans and this is the language I enjoy speaking the most. I am also very excited about the isiXhosa I have been able to learn.
If you can read English, you will be able to read isiXhosa and Afrikaans. Your teacher and I can help you if you like.

23/8 E: *Yes I'd like to learn isixosa and Afrikaans. [8]My name is Enathi K. I am 10 years old. I live in Khayelitsha. We are 4 in our family and I love my family. I like going sopping with my mom and brother.*

AJ: Nam ndiyathanda ukuya shopping. [I also like to go] Ndithanda ukuthenga iincwadi. Uthenga ntoni? [I like to buy books. What you do buy?] Won't you also tell me more about your family? What does your mother like to do?

24/8 E: *Dear mrs Jodine I will tell you about my family. My father is a taxi drver. My mom is a nurse. My father likes fried meet I think its bad for him but he doesn't lersin and my mom like a fool [full] meal.*

AJ: Thank you for this long, lovely letter. Ndicela uxolo ukuba [I am sorry that] I lost the piece of paper you asked me to keep. You know a lot about healthy food. It is a pity that utata wakho [your father] doesn't want to listen to you. My father used to smoke and he became very ill because of this. I look forward to your next letter. Perhaps you can try one or two isiXhosa words?

7 I used this as the initial journal entry but I am not sure if it qualifies as one – children completed the frame I provided after most of them did not understand my request to write a paragraph about their languages. I found it interesting that she says that she can write Afrikaans but not read it – perhaps she meant that she can copy it from the board.
8 Model provided. This served as a translation activity as well as a way for me to get to know the children.

30/8 E: *Why do you love wearing iblukwe not isiketi? [pants and not skirts]Which country do you love. do you have children What kind of cake do you like.*

AJ: I am South African! No, I don't have any children but I enjoy being with my nephews and nieces (my sisters' children). I wear iiblukwe ngoba ndicinga [because I think] they are more comfortable. What kind of clothes do you like to wear?

31/8 E: *Dear miss Jordine. I like a imini sketi [mini skirt] and a jipsy top. I like being with my friends and I enojy most bing with my best friend do you enojy being with your friends. and I like making fun of my brother. but he enojy it most. we fight with each other but we get along quickly. and I love him too much that he cant see it. do you know some one that is like that . and he is so funny sometimes. is one of your brothers like that you must tell me. and I am hoping to know more about you. and I think you are a lovely person with a lovely hart . I hope you read this soon. Thank you Miss Jardine*

AJ: Enkosi, Enathi. Your writing warmed my heart. I only have one brother. He is just a few years younger than me. We don't speak about it much but we are very close. His right eye is also blind like mine. Yes, I also like spending time with my friends when I can. Who are your friends at school? Are they the same ones you have at home?

6/9 E: *No they are here at school they are Georgina, Asisipho, Sonela, Sisonke, Ndileka and Phendulwa. I love them. Miss Jardine can keep a sicret me and Georgina are best friends but Asisipho is not happy with it.*

AJ: I worked with Ndileka last year. She learned so quickly. I don't know Phendulwa, Sisonke and Asisipho. Are they all in Mrs A's class? Yes, I will keep your secret and I understand that sometimes one of one's friends becomes one's best friend. Maybe Asisipho will feel better if you let her know now and then that you also think she is special? Ibinjani impelaveki yakho? [How was your weekend?]

7/9 E: *yes thay are all in mrs A's class. and I will tell you about my last week It was very hot and it very nice and I played with the boy next door his very nice and I think he likes me. Do you know a boy when you were my age that liked you. If someone about your age liked you and you like them to. someone that loves you too much!! some one that is male some one that's nice. I did tell she notised something was happening. so we toled her. P.S Mrs Jardine.*

AJ: I am glad that you have found a friend at home that you like and can play with. I was very shy when I was your age and did not have a special friend. You seem to be the kind of person that other children like to be with. Thank you for being so easy to teach. I struggle to get some of the children in class

to listen sometimes. I see that your favourite subject is English. Akathandi isiXhosa? [9] [He/she doesn't like Xhosa?]

13/9 E: *Why were(you) shy when you were small and mybe you were strickt that boys were scard of you. And you were so shy that they did not know. But me too I can be shy to!!! When the two boys fight over me I just say just stop it I don't like any one of you they say what!!! but they won't give up on me and they will be back tomorrow. I once met a boy called Zolani he used to hit me every time one day I noticed it he liked. (me) Miss Jardine do you have a dog what is his name .or any kind of pet. do you love (to) watch tv because I love it I love watching Mona the vanpare. What is your faroute programe. do you know much about it*

[10]*PS Mrs Jardine From Enathi to You*

14/ 9 NN: Andinayo inja. Uyazithanda izinja? Uthi uyathanda ukubukela iTV? Uyamazi umzwini yezintsizwa?

20/9: [11]E's written translation: *I don't have a dog. Do you have a dog? You say you like watching T?. Do you know umzinwe zintsi zwa.]*

Yes I like dogs. Yes I like watching tv yes I know umzinwe zintsiwa.

AJ: Nam ndithanda ukubukela iTV kodwa [I also like watching TV but] I don't always have the time. It was great fun being outside in the fresh air the last week of the term wasn't it? I enjoyed learning about bats but ndicinga ukuba ndizabaleka xa ndibone one! [I think I will run if I see one.] What about you? What did you enjoy the most?

4/10 E: *It was very nice being on holiday. but the nices thing that happen was that I got to see my little cosen Ondela and Nhanha. I went to thirty eight street. It was nice there but there was Thandokazi's aunt she was saying every time when the dishes where dirty she said we must wash them it made me angry. I for gave her But she did the same thing. but we did not mind and went to the park. when we got there a man was fighting with a woman. the man had a broken broom stick and the woman had a sabok. and the woman was bleeding so the woman phoned her hasband. and the hasband had a gun and he wanted to shut the man and the man was drunk so he shot, shot and shot but he was not hurt. The police came and got the man so he got to jail so the next morning he came back and I don't know what happend next*

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9 My Xhosa is incorrect. I had meant to ask 'Don't you like Xhosa?'
10 I think she used the PS as a please reply.
11 I had asked the children to translate Nkence's entry for me before responding. Enathi did just this and did not extend the conversation in this entry.

AJ: This must have been terrible to watch. Weren't you scared? Do you always go to this park alone? I remember that you once said that if you had a lot of money you would buy your family a house in a different area. Do you still feel the same? I have never seen adults fight but I have heard people shouting at each other in our road and that upset me. Please be careful when you go somewhere without an adult, Enathi.

5/10 E: *Know I don't go alone to the park. I only go with my family children Thandokazi Buyiswa and Lusindisa. They are coming here at school. Thandokazi is 10 years old and Buysiwa is 9 years old Lusindisa is 7 years old. have you seen a gun before. do you like to go to the park.*

8/10 NN: Mna ndiya epakini qho ukusa abantwana bam. Xa siphaya abafuni kubuyela endlini koko kuyinsokolo ukuba nangona kumnandi nje kubo Bayathanda ukudlala kujingi. [12][I go the park all the time to take my children. When we are at the park, they don't want to come back home because it is nice there so I struggle. They like to go on the swing].

AJ: Could you manage this reading, Enathi? I am looking forward to next week when I work with you again.

18/10 E: *Yes I do but I strugaled to read it but I understand I did not know that it was Miss Ntombi who was writing the letter but it was fine I did not know that Miss Ntombi was a Xosa person. but I don't mind it. I must not get in to other peoples bissines. The other day I told you about My mother I did not tell you enogh. My Mother works in hospital esteriver. they were writing a test the other day she past her test I was happy she was happy more than me but she said thank you God she's training in Joster until next year she's training for the red stuff on her sholders. she's going to be a doctor.*

AJ: I can see that you are very proud of your mother and you have every reason to be. She works hard and she still makes time for learning. This is not easy, I know. My late father also worked very hard. He did not study while he was working but he loved learning. I hope I am like him in that way. I don't think your question about Miss Ntombi is 'minding other people's business' but I am curious, why did you think she was not isiXhosa speaking? I am sure your mother is just as proud to have a daughter like you.

19/10 E: *Yes she works hard to arn money and I don't think that (I) could survive without (her) and shes my bread winner. Oh!!! I think that I (am) exited about my mother. I will answer your qustion. I thought Miss Tombi was a coloured but I hard her xhosa speaking and I was shoked. So I sow her writing in the book so I*

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12 This was Enathi's oral translation, towards the end of the process.

asked myself about her. back to you now. What grade did you stop in? What school were you in? which teacher did you like best?

AJ: I like the part about 'back to you now'! I will answer your questions about my school days over the next few days. I was at a school called Good Shepard. The school closed down years ago when there were too few children.
Can I ask you why you were 'shocked' when you found out that Ms Ntombi was not coloured? Apart from the language are 'coloured' people and isiXhosa speaking people very different? (Are these questions too hard for a ten year old to answer?)

25/10 E: *No Miss Jardine they not hard for a ten year old mybe I am older then a ten year old in my brain. but don't mind that let's get talking business not that money business. let's talk our own business now.[13] I was shocked because her english was like your one I thought that she was coloured I heard her speaking isiXhosa. I don't know what I am going to say next because I am out of idea's. I am going to ask you quistion's who were your friends in the old day's. What was it like in those old days. I remember a film of Will Smith in the old day but the day I watched it was on Sunday 21 July 2005. the people there was ladies slaves and men and children. they were writing with fether's in the film. What movie of Will Smith you watched. What kind of animal you like what kind of chocolate you like. I think Sir is still sad about the phone I know its a lot of money I am sorry about what happened that day. if you know teachers phone number please miss Jardine say that I miss her I can't wait to see her on 4 November. PS from Enathi to you Miss Jardine.*

AJ: I am only going to answer some of your questions now, OK? Yes, I will phone your teacher soon again and then I will give her your message. I was also sorry about what happened to Mr W's phone. I am also sorry that one child/ some children are making wrong choices so early in their lives. I like dolphins because I've heard that they are friendly and sometimes help people who get into trouble at sea. I am pleased to see that you are using full stops now. Can I ask you to write bigger please? Also do you think you can manage one of your sentences in isiXhosa when you write again? Ndizabulela. [I will be grateful]

26/10 E: *Sorry Miss J that I am not writing in isiXhosa. I will write isiXhosa now. Bendi qumbile nahanje goba wena kange uyibale ichokolate oyinthandayo wena. [I was sad today because you never wrote down your favourite chocolate.]*

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13 Like most South Africans, Enathi positions others and is positioned by 'race' – in her case she connects 'race' to a certain kind of English. These exchanges still left me uncertain about her 'shock' at discovering that Ntombi was not 'coloured'.

I have to ask you questions. I am a girl and boys are boys so they must stop think-
ing that girls are not strong like them in these days because we are strong than
them. So Miss dardineJ how many family do you have what kind of pet you love

AJ: Let me try the isiXhosa first (did you write this on your own or did Georgi-
na help you – it's fine if she did!). Are you saying that you were sad or cross
because I didn't write my favourite chocolate? If this is what you said then
a small word will set things right. Ndithanda iTex [I like Tex]. It sounds
as if some boys upset you! Andinayo ipet [I don't have a pet]. My nephews
LOVE animals. The one has a rabbit and the other a bird. (I don't know
how to spell the name of the bird.)

1/11 E: *No, Georgina did not help me. I did it on my own. Who is tall in your house?*
Did you heard that Loyiso was burmt by a car that day? Was it hard for you
when you heard that Loyiso was in hospital did you pray for him? Enough with
the questions. Mrs Jardine I am sorry that I did not write back to you on that
day. How was your mother like in those days.

AJ: Your journal was with me so I understand. Yes, I know about Loyiso but I
only found out this morning! I am sure that Mrs K. would have phoned to
let me know. We are all so short, even my brother is not much taller than
me. (I heard about Amava, I don't mind!) My mother is still her own kind,
sweet self but she is often tired now. I think fasting becomes harder as one
grows older.

8/11 E: *Why is fasting so hard when you older? I don't like being in this class the one*
twin like to bully me that's why. Oh I can see that the children are writing about
the exam as Oyama did. Did you know that the children in this class are very
rude to their teacher.

AJ: Why do you think it is harder for older people to fast? I am sorry that you
did not enjoy school on Wednesday – yes it is hard for you to learn and
teachers to teach if some children are disruptive and disrespectful. Is it
bhetele ngoku? [better now?]
    About what we spoke about in class the other day – do you think that
all the children in your class can learn to work and play together?

9/11 E: *Yes I think they could play together but they must be good to each other. dont*
you know because you told me when you spoke to me. I think I am going to miss
you in this holiday. Will you miss me!!?

A: I think you will miss me for a while but then you will enjoy your holiday too
much to think of the teachers at school! I will continue to write to you till
the end of the term if it is OK with you. Then we can work together again
next year. Do your parents know that we are also working on your isiXhosa?

Are they happy about this?
    If you like, I can give you a book to take home during the holidays – you
can use it like a diary and also write to me if you feel like it.

15/11 E: *Yes Id love to have a diary thanks Miss Jardine I will write to you everyday*
maybe I will go to the beach in New Year and now my book is finishd I am sorry
about this loose page. can I ask about where are you going this holiday mybe you
going to Durben? do you like Chrismas or New Year. Were you here when Ola
was here did you see how Alutha was shy? And you looked nice this morning but I
was shy to say it out of words!!! Buy Mrs Jardine. Good luck.

17 January 2006: Second phase

AJ: Molo Enathi,
    [14]Ubuke wabhala nto kule holiday? [Did you do any writing in the holiday?]
Bendiye elwandle kanye [I went to the beach once.] Siye sanexesha elim-
nandi [We had a lovely time] Can I count on you to help me when I make
mistakes with my isiXhosa writing?

18/01 E: *I will tell you about my holiday. The nice days in my life were the Chrismas*
and the New Year. I had a good time. I went to the park we road on the roler
coster and on the train.

AJ: So Abazali bakho [your parents] were on holiday most of the time? I know
that taxi-drivers and nurses have to work long hours so they deserve the
break. Uyavuya na ukubuyela na ukubuyela esikolweni? [are you happy to be
back at school?] Remember to write some isiXhosa sentences!

24/1 E: *Dear Miss J I was very happy to see all my friends at school and the teachers.*
You know what that means write. If you don't know diya vuya ukuza esikolweni
I am happy to come to school]You know that my mother when she get's home she
says she is so teird she wont cook so we had to go to the Prominaid Mall to go and
buy pizza at Deboneze. Did you know it was my birthday on 22 January 2006.
I did not get cake so my mom said that she will buy me on Wednesday so I was
very upset that I did not get cake. did you get upset when your mother did not buy
cake for you when it was your birthday

AJ: I am so sorry that I didn't know it was your birthday! Did your classmates
know? I can't remember if I always had cake on my birthday. I know that as
a child there was a time when both of my parents were not working so if I
had a birthday during that time there would probably not have been

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14 I enlisted the help of a Xhosa speaking learning support teacher for my first two
    entries of this phase.

cake. Did your mother promise to buy cake today? Then I am sure she will. Enjoy!!

25/1 E: *Now about my birthday yes they did know but they did not sing happy birth-day. [Diza hitcha iikacke I will enjoy the cake]*

AJ: Ndiza yitya cake later. [I will eat cake] I am sitting writing to you while at a meeting. We will soon have tea-time. Can I ask your classmates to sing for you next week?

31/1 E: *No thanks miss Jardine it would be imbersing and I don't want Asisipho and Sisonke to sing for me I am so upset with them I don't(know) what they say about me I am not saying that I am not their friend I'm Georgina's friend too and that will not change for ever ayiko into ezasihlukia nisa [there is nothing that can separate us] even that I am not in her school when we in high school I'll still stand by her I love her so much but we can fight and get back being friends I think that my friendship with Georgina is true what do you think?*

AJ: What happened between you and Asisipho? Weren't you friends last year? Then she must know that you can be a good friend. I hope things will be better soon. Yes, I do think that you and Georgina have a very special friendship. Uyonwabile imini yakho! [Enjoy your day!]

7/2 E: *Sorry that I am writing with a red pen things are great between me and Asisipho. I don't know what put us back to where we were.[15] Did something happen to you when you were my age something like fight with a friend and the next day be friends again that's what happen to me and Asisipho and Sisonke ndiya batanda [I love them]*

AJ: I am so glad! Yes, when I was your age I also had periods when my friends and I could not agree, when we seemed to irritate one another. Like you I always felt relieved when things got back to normal. Asisipho has a brother, Samkele, in Mrs W's class. He is a cute inkwenkwe [boy]. You don't have any family at BV, hey?

8/2 E: *I have family here at his Olwethu is my family me and Asisipho have such in-comen like we have brother's here at school Teni wena utinga [Why do you think] about I don't have family at school I saw you ealer you were talking to Mrs A*

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15 For Enathi, more than anyone one else, the writing served the interpersonal function of connecting with me and finding similarities with my life world.

AJ: Wow, you wrote this quickly! You left out some words. Another thing that you and Asisipho have in common is your lovely smiles – and you are both shy! You did tell me about Olwethu earlier. Ndilibale [I forgot] Ube imini entle [have a lovely day]this Valentine's Day.

14/2 E: *Is allright miss Jardine. Me and Asisipho have lovely smiles incommon yes we do have lovely smiles Do you still have the pen that you said you will give me. Did Asisipho wa kuxelela ge chocolate [tell you about the chocolate] if she told you please forgive me.*

AJ: Yes she did. There is nothing to forgive! I no longer have any blue pens. Will this one do? Your writing is very neat by the way. What was the best part of Valentine's Day for you?

20/2 E: *My best part of Valentine's day was when we were buying cake you know that I saw you at the table buying cake I wanted to give you cake that I bought but you left. Uyayazi i show namhlanje I za ku hlala eskolweni. [Do you know the show that is going to play at school today]*

AJ: So I missed out on Valentine's Day! Ndithanda ikeki [I like cake] and chocolates! They are not good for me though. If I eat too many sweet things my face gets full of pimples then I am miserable. Ndiyazi ishow.[I know about the show] It was Ok kodwa[but] I have seen better. Uyayithanda na? [Do you like it?]

21/2 E: *ibi geko munandi ishow ibi bora [It wasn't nice it was boring.] My mother said that I must not eat sweets because I will have pimples but I will not stop*

AJ: So you also have a sweet izinyo! [tooth] Your mother knows all about healthy food, doesn't she? Is she still working in Kuils River? Can you explain your isiXhosa writing to me – are you saying the show wasn't nice, that it was boring?

27/6 E: *Yes she does know all about healthy food. Yes I am saying that the show was boring and that the vegetables were not so intertaning me that much. was the vegetable intertaning yoooo? Asisipho say that you haven't gave her anything when I showed her this pen. Why are you stopping to teach us? We will be mis-ruble without you please don't leave but I know you still gonna leave us.are you going to leave grade 5A? oh by the way I like your clothes tell me where did you buy them. What is your favourite Shopping clothes shop.Asked inagh.*

AJ: I will try to answer all your questions! No, I did not find the vegetables entertaining. I gave you the pen because it was your birthday, remember? If I give Asisipho one then wonke umntu eklasini yakho [everybody in your class] will ask for one! Although I won't have the time to teach the Grade 5s any longer I will still see you at school till the end of the year at least – there is no need to be miserable! Andithengi [I don't buy] expensive clothes – I shop at places like Fashion World.

Enathi, your friends say very nice things about you. They say that you are kind, helpful and that you like to share.

I think you know how much I have enjoyed writing to you? Stay as sweet as you are. Love Miss J

4/3 E:[16] *Me too!! I buy cloths at fashion world sometimes. Miss Jardine I have been dieing to ask this would you get married now if you met some one if you don't want to answer me don't. do you want to know my favourite shop? Fochini the girls side.*

Her language paragraph, August 2006

I speak isiXhosa. I like isixhosa but not like english. I like english because many pople all over the world speak it. I am very poor in Afrikaans and realy like to learn it and I get very unhappy sometimes when I think about high schools because my mother can send me to a Afrikaans speaking school. I think that I will fale Afrikaans.

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16 My impression of this last entry is that she was not yet ready to end our conversation.

Appendix F

Research journal observations

My research journal observations were organised according to the following themes:

1. Journal writing process: action, reflections, questions.

2. Multilingual awareness activities, activities other than journal writing.

3. Language and literacy learning.

4. Influence of other learning support groups.

5. 'Other influences': teacher, supervisor, 'critical' friends, researchers, readings. I present the *language and literacy learning* category to illustrate the influence of my research journal observations on my interpretation of the children's writing in chapters 4 and 5.

3. Language and literacy learning

24/8: Should have made sure that peer help was available when I handed back journals – many children could not read my Xhosa or Afrikaans responses.

24/8: Told Ntombi that I am beginning to realize that I need to be careful when reading Xhosa to the children – I do not read it half as well as I read English – not doing justice to the language. This perhaps reason why grade 2 child told me on Friday, 'Now read a English one.' after I had tried one in Xhosa. Ntombi agreed with this limitation – because of my intonation and pronunciation, meaning might be lost. To try to get fluent Xhosa speaking children to read instead.

25/8: Yonelani told one of his friends in Xhosa, 'Ms Jardine wants to speak Xhosa but her tongue doesn't want to.'

30/8: Leon called me at one stage and asked if he could use my writing in the journal to look for spelling. Enathi asked me how to spell *isiketi*. When I indicated that I wasn't sure three or four children came rushing to the board to help

31/8: Asked Georgina where she learned to read and write Xhosa as I passed her on the playground during interval– a friend who is in Grade 3 taught her.

Athenkosi asked me when he could come to my class to read – gave him a Xhosa book when he returned his journal yesterday – he loves reading. I must remember to encourage this.

2/9: Sharon (Afrikaans speaking) requested that I teach her Xhosa – how do I make allowance for this?

6/9: Zanele able to use his knowledge of Xhosa to help him to read.

7/9: After several explanations managed to get children to complete language questionnaire and write in journal. Most children chose English as favourite subject

14/9: Spoke to three of the girls to explore their Xhosa literacy – Georgina sometimes writes in Xhosa, Sonela has indicated that she can read a little and Enathi feels that she can't. Gave them some books to read. Tape recorded session as Viv Edwards suggested – not very clear. Volume too loud

All three made some attempt. Enathi managed quite well. Said that the boy next door helped her – he had a Xhosa Life Skills book. Her mother can read Xhosa but only reads the English books she brings from work. Enathi was able to tell me what the books she read was all about. Sonela managed her book also – a friend in Grade 4 taught her. Georgina's friend taught her by reading a book to her, giving her a turn to read and then helping her when she got stuck. Her mother can read Xhosa – sometimes helps her brother who is in Grade 9 – has never read to her.

Children read a few pages together – helped one another. Noticed how easily they managed to read words with the *hl* sound – a sound not found in English. Also the different *th* in Xhosa. Realised and told Enathi , that I would never be able to read Xhosa as well as she can.

15/9: Realised when listening to children read – English speaking teachers with some knowledge of Xhosa phonetics will be able to check some decoding skills but not if miscues are meaningful.

21/9: Back at school asked teacher if I could see Mandisi and Teboho – to explore Xhosa reading. Told them that I needed assistance with Ntombi's writing. Mandisi's reading showed that he was guessing – used initial sounds only. Realised that although I was unable to understand Ntombi's writing, I could decode and the children would be able to provide meaning. This worked – afterwards Mandisi and Teboho were able to read Ntombi's writing. Then moved to concept books. Children not able to read first page so I read, and then asked them to read with me. Mandisi: 'Let me read the English one first, then I will know.' Watched him placing English and Xhosa versions side by side in an effort to make meaning. Read with them, thereafter they read as a pair. Mandisi stronger than Teboho but they will be able to learn from each other.

4/10: Children reading each others writing? Leon not using 'and' as much.

12/10: Chris: 'I can't read this Xhosa.' – helped him. Athenkosi read Ntombi's entries for me – struggled with some. Became tiring to listen to him after a while. Zanele loves reading – struggled with Xhosa reading but used con-

text, knowledge of language – something he is not able to do when reading English?

14/10: Most children unable to use punctuation to separate their ideas – Sinazo, Georgina and Athenkosi able to punctuate. Asked teacher if I could assess children's reading in my class. Sia struggling, guesses. Asathi unable to read. Sinazo very eager to read Afrikaans. Asked him if he would try writing one of his sentences in Xhosa Thandokazi quick to point out to me that nobody helped her to read the Xhosa .

5/10: Zanele chose to write in Xhosa .I was very pleased but have no idea about what he wrote. Asathi was still writing when I left – more than a page already. Need to make time to see children like Ashley, Teboho and Lerato separately – to work on their English.

10/10: LS group: Some children still start journal writing with 'What can I write?' I asked that they read journals and see if there was anything they could respond to, if not, to write about their wishes or what they know about the ostrich – a piece I had read to them in a previous session. Zanele asked me how to write *inciniba* then proceeded to write two sentences in Xhosa! I think that with him I need to risk – he is still struggling to acquire English but he wants to learn to read and write in his home language so I should encourage this.

18/10: Asathi not paying attention to print when he reads in Xhosa. Mzamo appears more fluent than Sinazo? Sinazo asked me if he could read Afrikaans to me. I checked – very little understanding of what he had read.

Collected some journals on Thursday – phoned Ntombi to let her know that the children are asking about her. Also chatted about the journals – very few of the children are punctuating but some real communication happening.

18/10: Zanele asked me to read Ntombi's Xhosa writing for him and then tried to reply in Xhosa. Asked Athenkosi to assist Sia. Tony worked with Asathi. Loyiso helped Aviwe.

19/10: Grade 4 LS group – Asonele is not getting instructions. Have not been able to teach Rone to punctuate.

25/10: LS Group – Eight children including 6 who forms part of research group. Reading comprehension activity. Lerato struggled throughout – had to be guided to answer questions. Asanda and Zanele very vocal – Zanele growing in confidence. Became clear that it is necessary to check children's understanding all of the time – Anele, Zanaxolo and Lerato only knew the Xhosa term for 'brick'.

26/10: I get the impression that for most of the children, English writing is easier. If they want to communicate with me and be sure that they are understood, they will use English.

17/01 2006: Realised a while back that I am using English word order when trying to write in Xhosa. This again made clear today as Xhosa speaking LS teachers translated my English. One of them told me, 'It's a problem when you expect people to translate word for word for you – in Xhosa we won't start with the same word – the meaning changes.'

18 Jan: I needed to read my Xhosa writing for Sia, Chris and Mandisi. Zanele helped to correct my pronunciation .Aviwe able to read one of my sentences. When I asked him about the Xhosa sentence I had asked him to write he replied, 'I can read but I can't write.' Then asked him if he could write: 'I am not happy.' in Xhosa. He wrote ndiqumbula [I am cross] – by himself – smiled when I asked him, 'Now who can't write Xhosa?' Chris asked me to reply in English – he struggled to read my Xhosa. Thandokazi read her Xhosa entry for me. Zanele only wants to write in Xhosa.

20/1: I think that I realised a while ago already that I am not going to develop Xhosa literacy – I have far too little knowledge of the language to do this, what I am trying to do is encourage literacy – the question that worries me now is – what happens after the study?

Responding to the writing will take longer than last year – I first of all need to understand the Xhosa writing and then get some help with my longer Xhosa responses. Will have to find ways of making this happen each week. I find that I can't think of a learner's response being complete until I am able to understand it..

25/01: Some children are interpreting writing in two languages as translating – this is fine. Helps me to understand. I find that I am able live with some uncertainty if there are English bits I can understand but I struggle when children write only in Xhosa. Will get help with these at LS teachers meeting tomorrow.

31/01: Lubabalwa checked his understanding of my Xhosa question with me and then responded in Xhosa. It appears as if children are more prepared to risk if they are asked to write only one or two words?

1/2: Responded to the Xhosa for those entries I could understand – responded to English sections of other entries and asked children to explain their Xhosa to me. I still use the odd Xhosa phrase or word now and then – my spelling is reasonably accurate at least? Could not make sense of Pamela's entry – she only used Xhosa.

7/2: Mandisi asked me to explain my use of the words 'he/she' – then went on to tell me that no one helped him with the Xhosa he used in his writing , he read them on the walls in class! Loyiso could use more Xhosa when he writes – I get the feeling that for him what is the most important is that I understand what he says and that is why he prefers writing in English – the odd Xhosa sentence is to appease me.

9/2: Sia has learnt to punctuate but he is not prepared to risk using Xhosa. English/Afrikaans children respond consistently. Use Kaaps Afrikaans. Will put up list of high frequency words e.g. *baie, goed, hou*

14/2: Asanda again asked me to read my entry for him. He does not feel comfortable accepting help from any of his peers? Uses my writing to respond. One sentence only – does not initiate any topics. Thandokazi only responds in Xhosa now – separates Xhosa words – requires explicit instruction re difference between English and Xhosa. Who will do this? Sandisiwe still does not write regularly but uses some Xhosa when she does. Lindokuhle like Thandokazi uses only Xhosa – I struggle with this and find that I need to get help to understand the writing. Loyiso able to interpret Xhosa errors – something I can't do.

16/2: Still no Xhosa from Sibongile. Tony says that he will understand my Afrikaans if I ' mix it.' I MUST put up the list of Afrikaans high frequency words.

Asanda again approached me for help – 'I can't find someone to help me' Got Enathi to help him. He made an attempt to respond to my entry – came to me sayin, ' I can't find the other words.' Perhaps I should focus on the positive – he is using my writing to help him to respond – rather than being frustrated by his unwillingness to risk his own spelling.Sharon asked , 'No readers today?' – will drop some at school before I go to W___ tomorrow morning.

21/2: Responded to some entries after school. I still sometimes wonder about the Xhosa I use, I know that I am making mistakes – do I make it clear to the children that my writing is that of a learner?

Feeling uneasy about not being able to assist with Xhosa writing – not being able to provide a model as I try to do with English.

28/2: Zanele asked me to read my entry for him. Enathi used ' misruble ' in her entry – where did she see this?

Thoughts – end March 2006

Realised very late in the process that as Xhosa learner, I could not act as model. Wondered if I was not doing any damage – where I took chances and tried a phrases or two, what was the impact on the chuldren to have a teacher write incorrectly? Although I had asked the children in the journals to correct me when I made mistakes, only one or two did so.

This project would have worked much better as a team research effort .I was not very effective in getting consistent Xhosa support and input. Even when this was available I felt ambivalent – the children needed Xhosa input but I then also felt left out, could not follow the flow of the communication.

I found that I struggled greatly when the writing was only in Xhosa. Apart from my lack of knowledge, the fact that I was reading the writing of children who was still getting to grips with the phonetic system of Xhosa in writing made things difficult. So e.g. I found that Ntombi, as well as older children were able to interpret and then understand spelling errors that I could not. As teacher, I could allow for spelling errors in English but lacked the understanding to do so for Xhosa.

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