What counts as language in South African schooling?
Monoglossic ideologies and children’s participation

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This paper focuses on the lack of impact on language education of recent paradigm shifts in the study of language and society such as the recognition of the ideology of language[s] as stable, discrete or bounded entities and the reality of heteroglossic languaging and semiotic practices in everyday life. Using South Africa as a case, the paper explores the implications of heteroglossic conceptualising of language as social practice for language education through three ethnographically informed case studies of classroom discourse. I will argue that monoglossic orientations which ironically underpin both monolingual and “multilingual” approaches have wide-ranging constraining effects on how children are positioned in schooling, and on children’s participation in classrooms, resulting in a form of ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2007).

Keywords: heteroglossia, language ideologies, classroom discourse, language policy

1. Introduction

Mrs West [to researcher]: This is one who couldn’t anything [referring to Sipho who began the year not speaking English] (fieldnotes, Carrim 2013: 65).

The extract above is taken from observation of a class of Grade 1 children (6–7 year olds) in a relatively well-resourced school in Cape Town that during apartheid was legally reserved for white children but now is attended exclusively by
black children. Mrs West, the teacher, is calling on children to tell their morning news in English while commenting in asides to the researcher. She has asked Sipho to stand and tell his morning ‘news’ in English. Sipho comes from an isiXhosa speaking home while Mrs West is monolingual in English. Since the language of instruction in this school is English only, following government policy for language of instruction in primary schools, the English language learners must follow the English as home language curriculum. Here, it is not just the power and privileging of English that renders children’s non-English linguistic resources invisible. In this paper I will argue that essentialist and monoglossic conceptions of language that inform language in education policy, planning, curricula and teaching, whether monolingual or multilingual, have profoundly inhibiting effects on children’s participation in classrooms and ultimately their access to quality education. In the brief example opening this paper a child’s lack of proficiency in English is characterised as synonymous with being unable to speak at all and the teacher is quite comfortable signalling this to the researcher in public.

Deconstructing the notion of stable, bounded languages can be read as a post-structuralist move (e.g. Busch 2012; McNamara, 2012; see also Lillis and Curry this issue). This reading is helpful in enabling us to understand how resilient essentialist notions of language are and how resistant to change, in parallel with the resilience of essentialist notions of race (McKinney 2014). But it can also be read as a decolonial move as analyses of historical processes of the construction of ‘national’ and ‘tribal’ languages in different parts of Africa show (e.g. Irvine 2014; Makoni & Mashiri, 2007) or relatedly as the critique of ‘Western’ perspectives in applied linguistics in Africa (Makoni & Meinhof 2004) and Asia (Canagarajah 2009). In this paper I am inspired by all of these orientations, and draw on a Foucauldian notion of discourse as constitutive of subjectivity and the social, as ‘practices which systematically form the object of which they speak’ (Foucault 1980). I pay attention to the need for deconstruction and continual revisiting of the discursive objects and subjects that are formed. I am particularly concerned to explore the gaps between recent non-essentialist theorising of language as a socially, culturally, politically and historically situated set of resources and as a social practice (Heller 2007) and the object of language as it is discursively constituted in language in education policy and practice (Makoni & Pennycook 2007).

The paper begins with a review of recently developed heteroglossic approaches to understanding and describing language and language practices and then

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1. While the apartheid race categories of white, black, Indian and coloured (the latter denoting one was not categorized as ‘white’, ‘black’ or ‘Indian’) continue to be used post-apartheid, I use the term ‘black’ inclusively except in reference to Black South African English varieties (BSAE) referring to Englishes spoken by those with African languages as first language.
moves on to explore the implications of these in a site historically of concern to the discipline of applied linguistics, language education and language in education. I then apply heteroglossic conceptions of language to language in education policy and practice, using the South African context as a case, and drawing on a range of empirical data from ethnographically informed case studies of language ideologies and practices in three primary schools. I will argue that the highly stratified monoglossic orientations which ironically underpin both monolingual and “multilingual” approaches (Makoe & McKinney 2014; Makoni & Meinhof 2004; Canagarajah 2009) have potentially wide-ranging constraining effects on how children are positioned in schooling, and on children’s participation in classrooms. I will conclude with the argument that monoglossic ideologies informing official policy and classroom practice ultimately remove ‘voice’ from children in the sense of their ‘capacity to be heard’ (Blommaert 2005a), resulting in a form of ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker 2007) where individuals are undermined in their capacity as knowers (Fricker 2007, 2012).

2. Heteroglossia and linguistic repertoires

Recent attempts to capture the complexity of everyday language use in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics have given rise to a range of new languages of description, such as polylanguaging or polylingual languaging, (Jorgensøn 2008; Jorgensøn et al., 2011) metrolingualism and metrolingual multi-tasking (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji 2014), contemporary urban vernaculars (Rampton 2011) plurilingualism (Canagarajah 2009) and translanguaging (García 2009; Wei, 2011). Primarily focused on spoken language practices, such terminology shares a goal to move away from the ideology of named languages as pure and bounded entities and monolingual or monoglossic orientations to the study of language in society (cf Canagarajah 2007; Bailey 2007). In a recent review of new languages of description, Pennycook and Otsuji (2014, 164–5) identify three orientations:

- those that are focused on the individual as starting point (albeit a social individual who is enabled or disabled to use resources from their repertoires in socially stratified ways), that is, the individual as the “locus of linguistic resources”, in notions of linguistic repertoire (e.g. Busch 2012; Blommaert & Backus 2011);
- those that are focused on movement (trans) and the plurality of linguistic features (poly), thus moving amongst linguistic resources, e.g. polylanguaging (or polylingual languaging) and translanguaging (code-meshing, Canagarajah 2006 could also be included here) and
their own notion of metrolingual multi-tasking where they argue that space is the locus of activities and language practices and include the notion of ‘spatial repertoire’.

All of these terms, e.g. repertoires, polylanguaging and metrolingualism, do slightly different and necessary work and may be more or less useful depending on the specific context and/or the specific language practices one is attempting to capture. In the discussion that follows the focus will be on the work that these heteroglossic resources might do in serving to disrupt a monoglossic ideology of language, and their potential implications for the positioning of children in schools and for language and literacy pedagogy. Working against the exclusionary effects of monoglossic ideologies in schooling I will argue, requires consideration of the individual as locus of a repertoire of linguistic and other meaning-making resources that includes their past, present and future trajectories as the more recently developed notion of linguistic repertoire outlines; and of the possibilities for enabling meaning-making that come from movements across different linguistic resources as well as the use of integrated or mixed codes. It also requires consideration of what the space of the classroom enables and disables in relation to children’s language and literacy practices. Finally developing children’s metalinguistic and sociolinguistic awareness of the ways in which language resources are differentially distributed and socially valued, as can be done through critical language awareness (eg Janks et al. 2014; Alim 2010) is also vital.

Focusing on linguistic repertoire, in contexts which are saturated with monoglossic ideologies, and frequently Anglonormative ideologies, one can argue for the need to make visible the resources that individual learners have and aspire to, such that paying attention to the individual (though of course the social individual) as “the locus of the repertoire” performs a significant strategic function. In the case of Sipho, the year 1 child referred to at the opening of this paper, teacher knowledge of his linguistic repertoire upon entry to the school would enable him to be positioned as a speaker, a meaning-maker, rather than as “one who couldn’t [speak]”. Busch (2012) and Blommaert and Backus (2011) develop Gumperz’s notion of the linguistic repertoire, “The totality of linguistic resources (i.e. including both invariant forms and variables) available to members of particular communities” (Gumperz, 1972, cited in Blommaert & Backus 2011:2). Busch places the notion of linguistic repertoire firmly within a post-structuralist framework, and

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2. Drawing on the notion of ‘heteronormativity’ from Queer theory, Anglonormativity (McKinney, 2014) refers to the expectation that people will be and should be proficient in English, and are deficient, even deviant, if they are not. In previous research I have shown how Anglonormativity as the compulsory or expected command of English is further linked to the valuing of a narrow range of linguistic resources associated with racialised, prestige varieties of English.
follows Derrida, draws our attention to “the power of linguistic categorisation” as “constitutive for the subject” but as also open to “a practice of deconstruction”. For Busch, repertoire must be seen as interactional and is characterised in four ways: 1. languages are understood in relation to one another forming an “heteroglossic whole”;
2. meanings attributed to language practices are “linked with personal experiences and life trajectories”; 3. “speakers participate in varying spaces of communication”, each with “its own language regime” and finally the linguistic repertoire is linked both to the history of the individual and his/her future, pointing “both backwards and forwards” (2012, 520), including the realms of imagination and desire.

Blommaert and Backus (2011) draw attention to the ways in which Gumperz’s notion characterises verbal repertoires attached to speech ‘communities’ or groups as well as how repertoire is linked to competence or language knowledge. Despite the acknowledged complexity in accounting for what constitutes ‘language’ and language knowledge, as Blommaert and Backus argue, institutions such as the European Union common framework and other standardised tests of language and literacy are “predicated on linear and uniform ‘levels’ of knowledge and developmental progression” (4). They thus draw attention to the ways in which standardised testing of language and literacy authorises uniformity, (re)producing the notion of a unitary standard language, with vastly unequal consequences. Their expansion of ‘linguistic repertoire’ takes a usage based approach to competence as dynamic as well as seeing repertoires as biographic linked to different kinds of language learning and individual trajectories such that repertoires are no longer attached to communities but to subjects (22). Significant for the purposes of this paper, both Busch and Blommaert and Backus’ re-working of the notion of linguistic repertoire have social justice motivations pushing for institutional change. For example, in the desire to make visible invisible language and literacy resources of children in schools, such as Sipho, and displaced people (Busch 2012, 2010), and to unsettle problematic conceptions of language underlying standardised testing and educational systems (Blommaert & Backus 2011).

The focus on the plurality of linguistic resources themselves and the practices of moving amongst them with consciousness or in a seamless system has great productive potential in the educational context. Acknowledging linguistic repertoires and movements amongst different resources as well as aiming to extend such repertoires can again create spaces in which children are positioned as meaning-makers rather than as more or less deficient users of a single ‘standard’ language, or even two or three separate ‘standard’ languages (as in many current multilingual policies). In pedagogical settings, the notions of hybrid language and literacy practices (Gutiérrez et al. 1999a, 1999b), translanguaging (García 2009), and specifically in relation to written texts, codemeshing (Canagarajah 2006) and
a translingual approach (Horner, Lu, Jones Royster & Trimbur 2011) have been gaining currency.

For example Makoe and McKinney (2009) focusing on one first grade child who uses her multilingual linguistic repertoire in order to draw her peers into the routines and meaning-making processes of classroom life, used the notion of hybrid discursive practices to describe the learner’s use of a range of linguistic codes as well as different voices (Bakhtin 1981). Here we drew on and expanded Gutiérrez and colleague’s notion of hybrid language and literacy practices, the “commingling of…different linguistic codes and registers” (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López & Tajeda 1999b: 289) in the production of both spoken and written texts during classroom activities. Gutiérrez et al. emphasise that hybrid literacy practices are not simply codeswitching as the alternation between two language codes. They are more a systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process among those who share the code, as they strive to achieve mutual understanding. (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez & Chiu 1999a: 88).

This resonates in García’s (2009) revitalising of the term ‘translanguaging’ referred to as “the constant adaptation of linguistic resources in the service of meaning-making” (García & Sylvan 2011: 385) and earlier defined as ‘the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages’ (2009: 141).

García and Sylvan (2011) point to the relationship between translanguaging, languaging and ‘transculturación’;

For Ortiz, transculturación refers to the complex and multidirectional process in cultural transformation, as well as to the questioning of the epistemological purity of disciplines and of the knowing subject (389).

They link transculturacion to Mignolo’s (2000) notion of ‘border thinking’ or ‘subaltern knowledge’ (in García & Sylvan 2011). For a number of scholars, monoglot ideologies and approaches to the study of language, as pointed out in the introduction to this paper, are yet another example of colonial constructions and impositions of knowledge (Canagarajah 2009; Irvine 2014; Makalela 2015; Makoni 2003; Makoni & Mashiri 2007; Horner et al. 2011).

The range of concepts and terminology reviewed above shares a heteroglossic orientation to language practices. While heteroglossia can be defined (following Bakhtin 1981) as the complex, simultaneous use of a diverse range of registers, voices, named languages or codes, and varieties of language in our daily lives, it also draws attention to the potential tension between different kinds of registers, and voices (Ivanov 2000; see also Bailey 2007). As Ivanov has argued “heteroglossia is opposed to monoglossia (the dominance of one language) […] and to
What counts as language in South African schooling?

polyglossia (the [monolingual] coexistence of two languages” (Ivanov 2000: 100, my addition).] This emphasises the ways in which different resources are not equally valued or distributed, i.e., the stratification of linguistic resources as well as value in indexicality. Drawing on Silverstein’s (2003) notion of ‘indexical order’, Blommaert has argued that indexical meanings are ordered “in the form of stratified complexes, in which some kinds of indexicality are ranked higher than others” (Blommaert 2005a: 73). Blommaert uses the term ‘orders of indexicality’ to capture the regular stratification involved in indexicality.

In my view, heteroglossia describes an orientation to language as a diverse set of resources, that is highly productive as a descriptive umbrella term for both specific practices such as code-meshing, poly- and translanguaging as well as notions of contemporary urban vernaculars and linguistic repertoires. Heteroglossia refers to the potential in all language use

– across a range of domains (e.g. in and out of school)
– across geographical spaces (urban/rural and hybrids)
– and across modes, including spoken and written.

The opposition to monoglossia, or unitary approaches to language, foregrounds possible tensions amongst linguistic resources and opens the way for recognition that not all are valued as resources. Finally, multiplicity or heterogeneity is not restricted to the use of named languages or the blending of resources from different codes, but significantly includes, voices, registers and varieties. Heteroglossia thus provides a multifaceted lens for analysing the complexity of instances of language use within a micro and macro socio-political context. Translanguaging, polylanguaging or code-meshing (as examples) then can be described as a particular manifestation of heteroglossia or as heteroglossic practices that draw on or seamlessly blend resources from more than one named language/code (see also Blackledge & Creese 2014).

3. Language ideologies and South African language policy

There is a stark contrast between such heteroglossic approaches to understanding language and literacy as plural practice and resource and the monoglossic ideologies that frequently inform national language and language in education policies. In considering the particular ideologies of language that inform current language policy in South Africa, the most significant is the conception of languages as stable, bounded entities clearly differentiated from one another. Makoni (1999, 2003) has pointed to the continuities between apartheid linguistic engineering, where language was used as a divide and rule strategy, in the official enshrining of the same list of nine indigenous African languages, as was constructed through the
apartheid bantustan policy that imposed “ethnicity from above” (Pieterse 1992 in Zegeye 2001: 3) and geographical separation in the list of eleven official languages in the post-apartheid constitution.\(^3\) There have been a number of comprehensive discussions of the ideology of languages as autonomous entities (e.g. Blommaert 1996, 2006; Heller 2007; Jørgenson 2008; Makoni & Pennycook 2007), an ideology as much sustained by linguistic research as held in popular views on language (Blommaert 2006). This ideology underlies many versions of the linguistic rights paradigm (LRP, Blommaert 2005b)\(^4\) which itself informs the South African constitution and post-apartheid language policy of additive bilingualism (Department of Education 1997). As De Klerk (2002: 43) has pointed out, in the progressive ideal of additive bilingualism which encourages the maintenance of home language alongside “effective acquisition of additional language(s)” (DoE 1997, Preamble 5), “there is the echo of a compartmentalized view of language.”\(^5\) May highlights a concern for the LRP of the disjuncture between macro language rights claims and micro language practices in any given context (macro language claims necessarily require the codification and homogenisation of language groups and related languages and thus ignore the often far more complex, fluid, and at times contradictory, micro language practices of individuals from within those groups). (2005: 320)

As an example, Jorgenson et al’s notion of polylanguaging referred to earlier includes the idea that individuals use language, or are engaged in (poly)languaging without awareness of moving between different ‘named’ languages or of how these are blended in their languaging. This is similar to Makoni and Meinhof’s (2004) argument in relation to urban vernaculars in African contexts where individuals are socialised into using ‘new’ urban blends that are not amenable to the linguistic boxes of language policy.

Makoni and Pennycook refer to the notion of multilingualism defined as competency in separate named languages, as a “pluralisation of monolingualism” (2007: 22). This critique is in line with current critiques of monoglossic approaches to bilingualism variously named as ‘parallel monolingualism’, ‘bilingualism with

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3. The South African constitution gives official status to eleven named languages: Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, siSwati, seSotho, SeTswana, Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga

4. Also often referred to as minority language rights, MLR (May, 2005).

5. The recently developed ‘Incremental Introduction of African Languages in Schools Draft Policy’ (Department of Basic Education, September 2013) takes the same approach compartmentalising languages and recommending the extension of the school timetable to enable a third language as subject to be introduced.
What counts as language in South African schooling?

diglossia’, ‘separate bilingualism’, ‘bilingualism through monolingualism’ in which “each term describes the boundaries put up around languages that language varieties must conform to prescriptive norms and represents a view of the multilingual/bilingual student/teacher as ‘two monolinguals in one body’ (Creese & Blackledge 2010:105; see also García & Sylvan 2011; Bailey 2007), or what Cummins has referred to as the “two solitudes’ view of languages (Cummins 2008; also Blackledge & Creese 2010). While a monoglossic approach to multilingualism as 1+1+1=1+1+1 (using García’s metaphor, 2009) is not only flawed theoretically but extremely limiting, as I will illustrate below, for the use of a child’s full linguistic repertoire for meaning making in the classroom, May (2010) also cautions against the consequences of a radical ‘disinvention and reconstitution’ of language as advocated by Makoni and Pennycook. In the South African context, Makoni’s arguments regarding the development of complex, cross-linguistic urban vernaculars in township settings and his rejection of the notion of home language has enabled policy and curriculum makers to argue that it is not practical to offer schooling in children’s home language and that it is pragmatic to school all children in English from year one, regardless of their linguistic repertoires (e.g Vinjevold 1999; NEEDU report 2012). We thus need to be cautious in the take-up of critical applied linguistics in language education. In this case, the critique of essentialist and monolingual orientations to language itself has been missed.

Another contentious example of the use of a heteroglossic orientation to language and literacy in research in an educational site is Blommaert’s (2010) description of the restricted English literacy practices/repertoire of students at a township high school as examples of ‘peripheral normativity’, or the ‘systemic, normal and hence normative’ use of ‘orthographic, syntactic, lexical and pragmatic peculiarities’, from a standard language perspective ‘errors’ (Blommaert et al. 2005:378). Canagarajah (2015) and Prinsloo and Stroud (2014) take issue with Blommaert’s use of scales theory to describe the lack of mobility of students’ linguistic resources beyond their local site, and the bypassing of the particular meanings of learners’ literacy practices within their specific contexts, as well as the lack of attention paid to the potential ability of learners to deploy different (and differently valued) resources and practices at different times. However for the purposes of this paper, what is more pressing is the issue of valuing only one linguistic code, English, and the consequences of the language and literacy pedagogy for the English as additional language students at the school. Extremely limited opportunities to write in English, whether monolingually or translingually, (see also Dixon & Dornbrack 2014), and to be positioned as meaning-makers can also result in the ‘restricted repertoires’ or peripheral norms produced.

Despite international research on hybrid language and literacy practices in classrooms, and the ubiquity in South African classrooms of what is named as
code-switching as a typical language practice in schools in rural and township settings (Probyn 2005, 2009), the South African language in education policy (Department of Education 1997) is silent on the possibilities of using more than one named language in the classroom *simultaneously* and it is not uncommon for education department advisors and officials to condemn the use of code-switching by teachers. It is the ideology of languages as pure and bounded entities that underlies the guilt commonly expressed by teachers who do use code-switching, or more accurately translanguaging, in classrooms where the language of learning and teaching is English and this is not the home language of learners. For example, one of the teachers in Probyn’s (2009) research refers to her use of code-switching as ‘smuggling in the vernacular’. Against the backdrop of and in contrast with heteroglossic theorising of language as practice and as resource, in the presentation and discussion of data from three different schooling sites below, I aim to show how particular monoglossic conceptions of language, and of what count as linguistic resources, constrain children’s efforts and ability to participate in classrooms.

4. Methodology

Below we⁶ present three brief case-studies to provide a glimpse of what participation looks like in three different primary school classrooms in South Africa, and specifically to pay attention to the constraints on performance that we will argue are in one way or another linked to a monoglot ideology of one (‘standard’) language at a time, preferably one variety of schooled English. All the cases draw on the tools of linguistic ethnography (Rampton, et al. 2004; Lillis 2008; Blommaert & Dong Jie 2010). Data was typically collected with researchers spending 4–6 weeks observing in a primary school following a particular class — year 4 in the first case and year 1 in the following two cases. Ethnographic tools of observation captured in field notes, audio-and video-recording of lessons and discussions with teachers informally and in interviews were used. The methodology (overall research design, processes of data collection and analysis) is thus epistemologically framed by linguistic ethnography. The power of linguistic ethnography is in the making visible of macro-structural dimensions in the micro-phenomena of everyday language and literacy practices. Macro-structures and micro-practices as well as the transformation of these are intimately related. As Rampton et al put it:

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6. The three case studies discussed here were conducted by Masters students in the School of Education, University of Cape Town: Alex Marshall (2015) (case 1), Hannah Carrim (case 2) and Laura Layton (case 3).
Linguistic ethnography generally holds that to a considerable degree, language and the social world are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity. (Rampton et al. 2004: 2).

In each of the cases discussed below, we are concerned to analyse the language ideologies enacted through an analysis of discourses produced (both verbal and embodied) in the three classroom sites. The analysis thus aims to answer the question: how do particular conceptions of what language is and of what counts as permissible language use shape the interactions and children’s opportunities to participate in the classroom and ultimately in education?

5. Case study 1: Participation as rote performance

The first data extract is from a transcript of a Science lesson with a class of year 4 learners (Grade 4, 9–10 year olds) in a township school in the Western Cape (Marshall, 2015). As is very common in schools in South Africa, and recommended by government, though not stated in official policy, the children here have been schooled for the first three years using the local language isiXhosa as language of instruction and have taken English as a subject (English First Additional Language, EFAL) for 2 years. In year 4, there is a sudden transition for these children to English as language of instruction and as such this school is typical of the language policy reportedly in use for the majority of schools in South Africa (NEEDU 2012; Probyn 2005). In this case, the teacher and children share a home language in isiXhosa. The lesson takes place mid-way through the academic year and was described by the Science teacher as a revision lesson. The extract is from the beginning of the lesson.

7. Townships in South Africa refer to geographical areas created during apartheid on the peripheries of cities and towns to house black people who were not allowed to own or rent property in the inner city and suburbs. They remain segregated, overcrowded and poorly resourced.

8. See fifth bullet point FAQs on LOLT: “learners who are taught in their mother tongue perform better than those learners for whom the LoLT is a second or foreign language. At the same time learners learn English as a subject to develop basic language competence in English and so increase its utility as a LoLT later on (from Grade 4).” Accessible at <http://www.education.gov.za/TheDBE/tabid/54/Default.aspx>

9. Schools may report to department officials and parents that they use English as language of instruction from Grade 4/year 4 upwards but in classroom practice use code-switching/translanguaging covertly as de facto language of instruction (see Probyn, 2009).
Extract 1: Year 4 Science lesson ‘Matter is anything that occupies space’

1: T: All right! Who can tell me…what is matter? Hey?
   [to Tumo] What is matter?
2: L: Matter is anything that occupies space
3: T: Matter is anything that occupies space All of you...
4: Ls: [in chorus] Matter is anything that occupies space
5: [T writes the sentence on the board while learners repeat the sentence.] Ls: 
   [in chorus] Matter is anything that occupies space
6: T: Are you a matter?
7: L: Yes
8: T: OK. Are you a matter? Why?
9: L: Yes
10: T: Why do you say you are a matter? Stand up.
11: Ls [silent]
12: T: Come...who can tell me...You all know that matter is anything that oc-
13: L: because I occupy space...
14: T: Because he occupies space...
15: T: He says he is matter because he occupies space...If I take all these chairs
   and I take you outside... will there be space here?
16: L: Yes
17: T: Huh?
18: L: Yes.
19: T: But now, we took all the desks...(that) are here, we have occupied...
20: L: space
21: T: We have occupied the space.Very good!
22: T: Uh, do you know that air is also matter?
23: Ls: Yes, Miss.
24: T: Do you know that?
25: Ls: Yes, Miss
26: T: Why do you say that air is also matter? We say matter is anything that oc-
27: L: Because it occupies space.
28: T: Where? Here... Ja, it also occupies...what? ...occupies space. Air occu-
29: Ls: Yes!
30: T: ...meaning that the air is inside this room...[Intercom announcement in-
   terrupts lesson] OK, we say: Matter occupies space. Matter is also around
In this revision lesson we see the children demonstrating their ability to produce the verbal definition of ‘matter’ (presumably that they have been taught previously, given that the teacher describes this as a revision lesson, although it was the first science lesson observed) in response to the teacher’s question ‘what is matter’ (turn 1). While this question may appear to be an open one, the learners’ response in the full sentence ‘Matter is anything that occupies space’ and the teacher’s injunction to the class to repeat this exact wording suggests that the teacher is eliciting the definition that she had previously taught the class. In turn 3 the teacher affirms the individual student’s answer through repetition and through inviting the rest of the class to repeat the answer in choral response with the initiation ‘all of you’. That the learners are accustomed to choral response is evident in their continued repetition of the definition ‘Matter is anything that occupies space’ in choral form as the teacher writes the sentence onto the chalkboard with her back towards the class. The teacher then progresses to extend, perhaps to scaffold, learners’ ability to answer a different question using the learned definition (and learned wording) of ‘matter’. Turns 9 (Ls:Yes) indicating an inappropriate response to the question why (8) and 12, silence, indicate that the learners are unable to spontaneously answer the question of why they themselves constitute matter in English. In turn 13, after repeating her question of why the learners constitute matter, the teacher says ‘You all know that matter is anything that occupies space’ and the child in turn 14 is able to apply this reasoning/wording to himself “because I occupy space”. And in turns 20–21, with the teacher’s rising intonation cueing the learners to complete the sentence ‘we have occupied?’, learners give the appropriate answer, ‘space’ (21).

Cued choral response through elicitation following questions and rising intonation is characteristic of what Chick (1996) has described as ‘safe-talk’ and the descriptor has been applied to post-colonial schooling contexts where there is a mismatch between the language of instruction and the linguistic resources children bring with them to schooling (e.g. Peru and South Africa, Hornberger & Chick 2001; Botswana and Brunei Darussalam, Arthur & Martin 2006). In Chimbutane’s (2011:28) review of the literature on classroom discourse in post-colonial contexts where children are not proficient in the language of instruction, he points to

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10. It is possible that the teacher may have limited her use of isiXhosa due to the presence of the researcher; all four of the Science lessons observed followed similar discourse patterns. Transcription conventions: upward facing arrow ↑ indicates rising intonation; ? indicates a question (…) indicates audible pause; / indicates overlapping speech; researcher comments in [square] brackets; where sounds rather than letters are transcribed, IPA symbols are used in bold font; underlining indicates emphasis.
two common discursive strategies, code-switching and safe-talk: “the key pattern of safe talk is that of teacher prompt and pupils’ choral responses (...), that is, teachers routinely provide cues to which pupils respond in chorus. The prompts or cues used by teachers to trigger such pupils’ chorusing responses include yes/no questions and oral gap-filling exercises” (28). Chick (1996) has argued that ‘safe talk’ performs a face-saving function in enabling students to participate without providing incorrect responses. Safetalk thus enables children to perform as learners, responsive members of the classroom community, or one might argue that it enables the teacher to position the children as members of a classroom community under severely constraining linguistic circumstances. It does not however generally afford learners voice in that it does not enable them to produce their own meanings.

Extract 1 above we would argue illustrates aspects of safe-talk, with cued elicitation and choral response enabling children to participate in classroom discourse and take up the positioning of learners despite the gap between their own English language resources and those privileged in the English language of instruction classroom. To the extent that learners have been successfully socialised into cued elicitation and choral response, this then could be characterised as a case of participation through rote performance. It could also be argued that the children are learning to produce a scientific register in phrases like ‘Matter is anything that occupies space’ and in being able to answer questions such as why does x constitute matter, or that they are learning to talk like scientists (in English). But the learners’ opportunities to participate in this lesson are very different from the kind of exploratory talk that researchers such as Gibbons (2001, 2003) have analysed where English language learners are encouraged to grapple with both the registers of science and the concepts of science though classroom discussion and writing. The learners’ silence in response to the seemingly open question of why they constitute matter (turn 12), and their inability to produce language that is divergent from that modelled by their teacher, indicate that there is little doubt that the English only language of instruction severely restricts children’s participation in classroom discourse, limiting it almost entirely to rote performance, or the production of acceptable linguistic chunks. Apart from the momentary move away from English in turn 31 in the checking phrase Andithi? (Didn’t I say), there is very little in this extract (and indeed in the full lesson) to indicate that the teacher and learners share linguistic resources other than English in their shared home language of isiXhosa. In this case then the adherence to a monoglossic orientation where English is the only legitimate resource denies learners both the capacity to be heard and the opportunity to engage meaningfully with the scientific knowledge of the curriculum, thus resulting in epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007).
6. Case study 2 — Participation as assimilation

The second example is taken from a case study of language ideologies in a previously white suburban primary school in Cape Town where black learners have replaced white learners (Carrim 2013). Data extracts two and three are from observational data captured in fieldnotes in a Grade 1 class (6–7 year olds) where the teacher is a white English speaker and the majority of the children are from isiXhosa speaking families, while some are from English and Afrikaans speaking homes. In this case, the school, typical of previously white suburban schools, use English as the language of instruction from reception year (Grade R) throughout and children follow the English as a home language curriculum (as do all children in schools where English is the language of instruction from Grade 1, regardless of their linguistic repertoires), while taking isiXhosa as a subject (First Additional Language, FAL) for a few hours during the week. For many children then, this school is experienced as a ‘straight for English’ or submersion (Walter 2008) context, that is children are submerged in English and expected to sink or swim.11

Extract 2 is from observation of news time in the classroom where the teacher, Mrs West, is calling on children to speak and at the same time commenting in asides/off-stage to the researcher:

Extract 2: Grade 1 ‘This is one who couldn’t [speak]’
Mrs West (to researcher): This is one who couldn’t (makes gesture for ‘speaking’) anything
Sipho: Yesterday my mommy went to the Spur12
Mrs West to researcher: It’s an improvement [his English]. This is another one
[Mrs West calls up another learner to the front]
Bonginkosi: me and mommy/
Mrs West: /Mommy and I
Bonginkosi: Mommy and I buy a chocolate
(reconstructed from field notes 03/08/12, Carrim, 2013, 65–66)

In extract 2, the beginning of which was quoted in the introduction to this paper, Mrs West draws attention to Sipho’s lack of proficiency in English on arrival at

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11. “A submersion model is one in which all elements of the educational environment are encountered in a language (largely) unknown to the learner upon entry (…) it is assumed that the child will ‘automatically’ master the language of education during the educational process” (Walters, 2008, 131).

12. ‘The Spur’ is a popular franchise of family restaurants in South Africa. Going to the Spur or Macdonalds is often a topic of news, frequently signaling children’s aspirations rather than recent activities.
the school as a problem, conveying the expectation that children should arrive at school competent in English. Here speaking in English is rendered as equivalent to 'speaking', thus indexical of competent speech, or the only valid linguistic resource. This is similar for her positioning of Bonginkosi. Thus the two children Sipho and Bonginkosi are constructed in this English monolingual/monoglot environment as having arrived at the school without ‘voice’ or the capacity to make themselves heard (Blommaert 2005b). Mrs West’s quick recasting of Bonginkosi’s ‘non-standard’ formulation ‘me and mommy’ to ‘mommy and I’ shows that it is not just the repertoire of resources we can name as ‘English’, but a particular variety of English that is valued in this classroom. Carrim’s research shows a number of instances of Mrs West teaching the phonological features of what is often named ‘White South African English’, WSAE (Bowerman 2004; Mesthrie 2010; McKinney 2013), both in vowel sounds and in syllabic stress, and constructing as deficient phonological features and stress patterns typical of Black South African English, BSAE, varieties (Makalela 2013; van Rooy 2004).

Extract 3a
Mrs West: Say seventy [‘e’ as in ‘bed’, with emphasis on first syllable] again, say fifty [‘I’ as in ‘sit’] again, seventy seventy fifty fifty fifty
(reconstructed from field notes 02/08/12, Carrim 2013: 67)

Extract 3b
Mrs West: shIp shIp [‘I’ as in ‘sit’] — ‘SH’ ‘I’ ‘P’. Listen to teacher, it’s not shēp [sheep, ‘ē’ as in ‘see’]. I’m going to write shēp [writes ‘sheep’ on the board], say ship (shIp), say sheep (shēp), say ship (shIp).
(reconstructed from field notes 13/08/12, Carrim 2013: 68)

Excerpt 3c
Mrs West: Who can tell me what the date is today? Put up your hands and don’t shout out
Fihle: It is the two of August
Mrs West: No, not the two, the second. Ok, remember let’s count in ordinal numbers; first, second, third
Fihle: first, second, third, fourth, fifth (‘i’ as in ‘see’, BSAE pronunciation), sixth (‘i’ as in ‘see’) seventh-
Mrs West- Ok, lets try that again. Fihle, tell them to me. Look at my lips and repeat after me, sixth (‘I’ as in ‘sit’), seventh (‘e’ as in ‘bed’, emphasis on first syllable)
Mrs West [to researcher]: The learners have trouble pronouncing these words
(reconstructed from field notes 14/08/12, Carrim 2013: 68)

The emphasis on particular pronunciations and syllabic stress in extracts 3 a-c above indicate the teacher’s monoglossic orientation: there is a single standard English with a single, unified set of rules and phonological system that equates to
the variety which she herself commands. Her teaching of vowel sounds and initial syllable stress (associated with phonological features of WSAE) here thus has the effect of assimilating children into the ethnolinguistic repertoire (Benor 2010) of Whiteness. As Carrim points out, “Fihle’s accurate knowledge of ordinal numbers draws no comment” (2013 68), thus it is not the child’s competence in being able to express ordinal numbers on request that captures Mrs West’s attention here (i.e. what Fihle is able to do) but rather what he is not doing, speaking English like her. That Mrs West expends considerable effort on the teaching of ‘proper’ pronunciation is further linked to her views on phonics and the learning of literacy as discussed in an interview:

Researcher: In your class I’ve noticed quite an emphasis on pronunciation/
Mrs West: /I try to get them to pronounce the words properly because we have been asked by our headmistress to see that the children don’t have the incorrect pronunciation and I just feel that its better for them for when they’re learning their phonics. If they can pronounce their words correctly, then they can spell, then they can use the phonics.

In this discussion, command of WSAE phonology is erroneously equated with ‘correct pronunciation’ which is then viewed as a prerequisite for correct spelling and use of ‘phonics’. Through the data extracts presented here, a chain or ‘order of indexicality’ is constructed such that: (1) lack of English proficiency indexes an inability to speak; (2) use of phonological features of BSAE indexes a deficient command of English, and; (3) use of phonological features and syllabic stress from BSAE indexes an inability to develop appropriate phonemic awareness, and ultimately an inability to spell words correctly, and thus deficiency in literacy. This has the effect not only of preventing a child such as Fihle in extract 3c from being heard, but also from being positioned as a knower, and in this sense provides a further case of epistemic injustice.

7. Case study 3: Participation as illegitimate

The third case study was conducted in a private/NGO funded school that was opened post-apartheid in a township on the Cape Flats, drawing predominantly on coloured Afrikaans and English speaking children, with a smaller number of isiXhosa speakers as well as some refugee children from outside of South Africa, all of whom live in the area. In common with the school in case study 2, the language of instruction is English from year 1 and children follow the English as a Home Language curriculum. The children take Afrikaans as a subject (First Additional Language) at specific times during the week and are not taught by
their class teacher during Afrikaans lessons. The class teacher of Year 1 children in this case describes herself as ‘English first language’ though her ‘parents are Afrikaans’ speakers; and constructs her own command of Afrikaans as deficient (Layton 2014: 53). On a number of occasions, Layton observed the teacher playing an English phonics game with the learners. Reproduced here is Layton’s explanation of the game and one extract of talk from an instance of the game.

“Explanation of game: The students stand in a circle and the teacher decides who begins and picks the sound they will practice. Once a student gives a word that starts with the appropriate letter, then the student to the left (clockwise) must give a new word beginning with the same letter in a timely manner (often, if the teacher deems that the student is taking too long she counts to three). The students have been playing this game since the beginning of the year so I was not able to witness an explanation of the rules, however, based on my observations, the students sat down when they said a word that did not begin with the appropriate letter, or if they repeated a word that was already said. The winner of the game was the last person standing in the circle.” (Layton 2014: 44–5)

**Extract 4: English Phonics Game**

[The sound/letter is l]

S: lamp [lump]
T: what?
S: lamp
T: lamp… lamp is Afrikaans… lamp is the English word. We using English words not Afrikaans words

[the student sits down and is out of the game]

In coming to understand why the child’s offered word ‘lump’ [lamp] is rejected in response to the teacher’s request for ‘l’ words, and her participation in the game thus ended, Laura and I were puzzled by this extract which we listened to several times. As an English speaker drawing on the ethnolinguistic repertoire of WSAE and who was schooled during apartheid compulsory English/Afrikaans bilingualism, I heard the English word ‘lump’ when the child spoke. The teacher who positions herself as “English first language” and as deficient in Afrikaans nevertheless hears the Afrikaans word ‘lamp’ [lamp] which has the same meaning as English ‘lamp’ but is a homophone with ‘lump’. Hearing the word as Afrikaans ‘lamp’, the teacher rejects the word and chastises the child with “lamp is Afrikaans… We using English words not Afrikaans words”. In my reading of this moment it is, ironically, the teacher’s bilingualism or her Afrikaans linguistic resources that enable her to hear the Afrikaans word ‘lamp’ rather than the English word ‘lump’. However, since she is enforcing an English-only rule and informed by the monoglossic ideology of languages as pure, bounded entities, a powerful opportunity for examining the
What counts as language in South African schooling?

The three brief case studies presented here show the complex ways in which ideologies of language impact on pedagogy and children’s opportunities to participate in the classroom. Ideologies of linguistic purity and the need for the use of only one language at a time as authorised by the South African curriculum, as well as Anglonormativity frequently results in the misrecognition of children’s linguistic resources. What counts as language, or legitimate linguistic resources, in these schooling contexts is always the set of resources named as English, although the specific kind of English that counts varies across different sites and in extreme cases such as case study 2, is racialised and limited to the ethnolinguistic repertoire of whiteness. Through case-studies from the South African context, this paper has attempted to shed light on the consequences for children of the lack of take up in language in education policy and practice of anti-essentialist and heteroglossic approaches to language from critical applied linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Classroom discourse in each of the three cases presented constructs an ideal subject raising the questions: who is the normal child? And who can produce knowledge, whether linguistic or other? Stuck with notions such as “the language of learning and teaching”, language as subject, home language, and first or second additional language that are constructed in both official language policy and the national curriculum, South African teachers are, as Makalela (2014) has argued, entrapped into the (re)production of colonial language constructs and of language practices that severely restrict children’s participation. It is in this sense that I am arguing that essentialist and monoglossic ideologies of language result in a form of what Fricker (2007, 20) has called ‘epsitemic injustice’, described as injustices in which “someone is undermined specifically in their capacity as a knower”. That this undermining is, in the South African context at least, clearly racialised such that it is specifically black children who are prevented from taking up positions as knowers is all the more disturbing.
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What counts as language in South African schooling?


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