Exploring Poetry as a Tool for Critical Literacy

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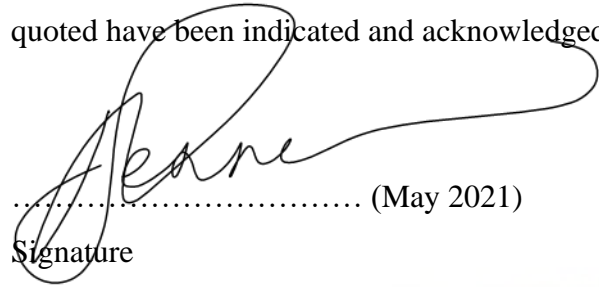
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ABSTRACT

The use of literature-based reading has a significant impact on the development of critical literacy (Tung and Chang, 2009). Based on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and Vygotsky's theory of collaborative learning, this interpretive qualitative case study aimed at exploring how Grade 10 English Home Language poetry was taught in the development of critical literacy. Research was conducted at two schools in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town in which lesson observations, focus group discussions, post-observation interviews, and field notes were used to amass data. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, and insights from Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort were used to analyse data. This study found that despite teachers' being favourably disposed towards poetry, they harbour covert feelings of inadequacy in teaching the genre which lead to the adoption of coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms proved to result in teacher-dominant poetry teaching practices, ultimately impeding the development of meaning making and criticality. Teachers' poetry practices were found to have a direct impact on learner dispositions towards poetry which, while generally favourable, proved to be complex and varied. The findings suggest a need for the critical evaluation of poetry teaching practices that inadvertently foster critical literacy-impeding coping mechanisms to enhance the development of critical literacy.

Keywords: **Grade 10 English Home Language, critical literacy, meaning-making, literature, poetry, Ex-Model C schools, CAPS, Democratic Citizenship Education, pedagogy of discomfort, CHAT**

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, **NICOLE IRENE FENNER** (née **ABRAHAMS**), hereby declare that this thesis, *Exploring Poetry as a Tool for Critical Literacy,* is my own, original work and that it has not been submitted previously for a degree or examination in any other university. All the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged through complete references.

…………………………… (May 2021)

Signature

3869159

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Student Number

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAPS: The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CHAT: Cultural Historical Activity Theory

CL: Critical Literacy

DCE: Democratic Citizenship Education

DBE: Department of Basic Education

EHL: English Home Language

LOLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

MKO: More Knowledgeable Other

NSC: National Senior Certificate

WCED: Western Cape Education Department

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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Firstly, I thank my Heavenly Father, whose hand I have felt over some of the most difficult parts of this study. He has blessed me with the insight, wisdom, and strength I needed to place my thoughts into words. Many days I have felt His Hand guide mine as I did my final write-up, and as I look back, I realise how He has always been there with me.

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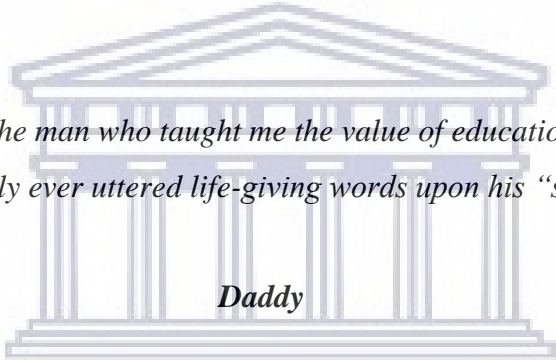
To my parents, *Redge and Iolanthe Abrahams*: Thank you for always having such unwavering faith in me that has made me believe I could ever hope to take on a project of this size. Thank you for always motivating me and praying for me.

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DEDICATIONS

To the man who taught me the value of education

and who only ever uttered life-giving words upon his "scholar":

Daddy

Love

Nikka

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research undertaken in this study which aimed at investigating the dispositions that Grade 10 English Home Language teachers and learners hold towards poetry. The subsequent poetry teaching practices employed by teachers which function to enable or constrain meaningful critical literacy were explored. In addition, I expound the context of the study, the research problem and motivation, and provide a detailed description of the research sites I visited during the course of my observations. Finally, a brief overview of this thesis is outlined.

1.1 Context of the Study

The role of an educational system should be to nurture youth who are not only able to read and write but also to interpret the world in "relation to power, identity, difference, and access to knowledge, skills, tools and resources" (Janks, 2013, p. 227), in other words: critical thinkers. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) echoes this sentiment. It states that the purpose of studying literature texts within the English Home Language (EHL) classroom is to "develop in learners a sensitivity to a special use of language that is more refined, literary, figurative, symbolic, and deeply meaningful…" (CAPS, 2011, p. 12). This ultimately suggests the skill of being able to view texts as "constructed discourse" laden with meaning (Huang, 2013, p. 66) in order to identify the overt and covert messages that lie within. In order for learners to read the "word" and establish the implications it has within the "world", learners need critical literacy skills which will enable them to look at texts and establish how the language in certain texts are used to advantage some at the expense of others (Janks, 2012, p. 153). Poetry, one of the three prescribed literary genres (alongside the novel and drama) studied in EHL in the Further Education and Training (FET) band as per CAPS (2011), has long been appreciated as a rich resource to foster this critical literacy (Bobkina & Stephanova, 2016). But the nature of poetry texts is also such that it airs the "tensions of [the] times" (Morgan & Ramanthan, 2005, p. 153). Given the historical underpinning of South Africa's socio-political backdrop, it is easy to see how the study of contentious Struggle or protests poems may unearth difficult emotions – a challenging terrain to navigate, even for an experienced teacher. But despite the perceived challenges that come with the teaching of difficult poetry, the benefits of taking measured risk and stepping out of one's comfort zone, especially with the types of poems selected for study, are duly noted as an

opportunity for meaningful growth (Boler, 1999). It is for this reason that poetry, and specifically the teaching of contentious poems, has been established as a key aspect of exploration within this study.

1.2 Research Problem and Motivation

My passion for this study was ignited through an experience that reinforced my appreciation for poetry's place in meaningful education. The teaching of the following poem, *Nightfall in Soweto* by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, gave rise to a meaningful event that occurred in my own practice, informing my desire to explore the power of poetry in the development of critical literacy:

NIGHTFALL IN SOWETO by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

Nightfall comes like	1	I am the prey;
A dreaded disease		I am the quarry to be run down 20
Seeping through the pores		By the marauding beast
Of a healthy body		Let loose by cruel nightfall
And ravaging it beyond repair	5	From his cage of death.
A murderer's hand,		Where is my refuge?
Lurking in the shadows,		Where am I safe? 25
Clasping the dagger,		Not in my matchbox house
Strikes down the helpless victim.		Where I barricade myself against nightfall.
I am the victim	10	I tremble at his crunching footsteps,
I am slaughtered		I quake at his deafening knock at the door
Every night in the streets.		"Open up!" he barks like a rabid dog 30
I am cornered by the fear		Thirsty for my blood.
Gnawing at my timid heart;		Nightfall! Nightfall!
In my helplessness I languish	15	You are my mortal enemy.
Man has ceased to be man		But why were you ever created?
Man has become beast		Why can't it be daytime? 35
Man has become prey.		Daytime forever more?

While teaching *Nightfall in Soweto* to my Grade 11 EHL class, I was struck by three things: Firstly, my unusual (since I am quite a confident teacher who loves poetry) feelings of anxiousness in dealing with a poem that so plainly speaks about the hardships that many South Africans face on a daily basis, the likes of which I had *no* experience. *How was I to comment? Is it expected of me to make comment? How do I treat this subject matter with sensitivity yet address it head-on? How do I, as a born-free Coloured woman, reconcile the experiences posed in this poem with the experiences of learners whose experiences perhaps align with it?* Though unusual, this surprisingly common sentiment of anxiousness aligns closely with the work of Xerri (2016) which suggests that poetry gives rise to feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability in teachers. Secondly, what struck me was the need, and when given the opportunity, the impressive *ability* to impart

insight that my learners showed regarding this challenging and contentious subject matter as the text worked its effects on them (Rosenblatt, 1985). But I think that what was most jarring to my naïve and sheltered self was that, despite the situation of my school within an affluent area (a former Model C school), some of the learners sitting before me were able to speak candidly about their experiences in poverty, one learner even having lived in Soweto, which caused a stark contradiction to occur between the setting (a well-resourced, urban school) and their life worlds (life in a township). I was left with difficult questions that have had an impact on the problematisation of my study: *Do we, as teachers, allow learners to bring their life worlds and experiences into their schooling and are these experiences valued as important factors to the development of themselves and others? How do the learners who come from affluent homes feel about the vast discrepancy that exists between their lived experiences and their friend's/classmate's sitting right next to them? How does the text position learners from all walks of life and can they unpack it so that it is meaningful regardless of their background? How do learners respond to the discomfort they will doubtlessly feel in dealing with a poem whose backdrop is so deeply rooted within inequality brought on by apartheid? How can I deal with my own feelings of discomfort and enable difficult poems to be impactful, thoughtful vessels to drive good change within my learners?*

The discussion was meaningful and included an array of perspectives that created a "deliberative educational encounter" (Waghid, 2007). My once shy and diverse class, whom I started teaching in Grade 10 the year prior, were now respectfully outspoken about the realities of poverty and issues of race. Suddenly, the conversation changed to one that revealed the deep-seated, raw emotions that bubbled beneath the surface. A careless comment from one learner, suggesting that all White people are rich, resulted in another's running out of my class in tears, quite inconsolably. My visceral reaction was to eschew engaging with the class in an already volatile state, a reaction common to many teachers when faced with issues that are thematically sensitive (Savenije & Goldberg, 2019). The incident would have made for meaningful deliberative encounter (Waghid, 2007), but I was afraid of stepping on *more* toes or worsening the already emotional and confusing situation. Indeed, I blamed myself for the incident even though, in retrospect, I think I managed the discussion well. Instead, I remained silent and managed the damage instead of working through

it with my learners, terrified of the repercussions that would ensue. This was a mistake, a missed opportunity, and I learnt from it.

This encounter in my poetry lesson impressed upon me the profound impact that a poem may have on learners' worldview when unpacked, and spurred a desire to look into the role I may play, as an educator, in using poetry as a tool for creating deliberative educational encounters that may lead to a disruption in learners' "frames of reference" (Mezirow, 1997). The results of such deliberative encounters are critically literate learners who "read the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and see power relations and its representation in text, and identify ways in which language is used "to advance the interests of some at the expense of others" (Janks, 2012, p. 153) in the hopes of bringing to light that which perpetuates social inequalities. Therefore, the way in which teachers facilitate such encounters prompted this study, which aimed to explore the role that the teaching of poetry could have in the development of critical literacy in Grade 10.

1.3 The Purpose of this Study

1.3.1 Research aim

This study's main objective is to investigate the manner in which current teaching practices are employed in Grade 10 EHL poetry teaching classrooms to develop meaningful critical literacy within former Model C schools in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town in the Western Cape.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

In order to achieve the main aim of this study, the study sought to attain the following objectives:

- Investigate the dispositions that teachers hold towards poetry and the teaching thereof and the possible impact this may have on their learners' dispositions towards poetry.
- Investigate the dispositions that learners hold towards poetry.
- Determine how the current teaching of poetry in Grade 10 enables or impedes the development of meaning making and criticality.

1.3.3 Research Questions

Main Question

How does the current teaching of poetry in Grade 10 develop meaningful critical literacy?

1. What are Grade 10 teachers' dispositions towards poetry?
2. What are Grade 10 learners' dispositions towards poetry?
3. How do current Grade 10 classroom literacy practices enable or constrain learners' development of meaning making and criticality through poetry?

1.4 Description of the Research Sites

The research for this study was conducted at two sites in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town with only 8 kilometres between them. Both Schools, A and B, service two communities that are very alike and are formerly known as Model C schools, a term used for schools that were meant for White learners during apartheid (Radebe, 2015). During the data capturing phase of this study, School A consisted of a learner body of 1060 learners and 58 teachers (the ratio of learners to teachers is 18:1). School B consisted of a learner body of 1138 learners and 72 teachers with an approximate learner-teacher ratio of 15:1. Both schools A and B were fee-charging schools and were competitively priced at approximately R3000 per month. The learners appeared neat and well-dressed in their uniforms. The teachers at both schools A and B were well-qualified, experienced National Senior Certificate (NSC) markers with additional degrees (both holding a BA Honours degree in English Studies and Psychology, respectively) surpassing what is required.

Schools A and B shared many commonalities, most definingly that they were both Afrikaans-medium schools. Thus, the learners in schools A and B spoke Afrikaans as a home language. The choice of selecting English Home Language (EHL) for study in the FET band is an entirely voluntary undertaking and known as a "choice subject". Both classes observed in this study thus comprised learners who had elected to study EHL by choice. Of the 232 learners enrolled in Grade 10 in School A, only 28 learners chose to take EHL, and, of the 211 Grade 10s enrolled in School B, 84 of them took EHL as a subject. This gave rise to an entirely new dynamic in which learners' study of EHL was, for the most part, intrinsically motivated. Consequently, the learners who chose the subject appeared to be fully committed learners who, as noted by their teachers and me, were of the brightest or most hardworking in their grade. Academic achievements are valued highly by school A, and especially school B (a top-achieving school in the area), and so the pool of learners studied at both schools were learners who generally work hard to achieve excellent marks for their subjects. This further suggested significant support and motivation from their home environments. Interestingly, despite the resources that appear present at the schools, both of which are situated

within affluent communities, the classrooms remained relatively modest and traditional in terms of the use of technology. At the time of this study, each classroom had one computer and an internet connection, exclusively used by the teacher. School B had a data projector which the teacher employed in her lessons, whereas School A had no such implementation and instead made use of a traditional chalkboard and printed copies of the texts. Both schools, however, furnished their learners with sufficient resources to access the texts: learners had photocopied print-outs of the poems in their books for making personal notes on the poem during the lesson. The learners at both schools each had their own poetry anthology textbook from which to work.

The choice of research site was significant to me in many ways. In my experience, I have observed Ex-Model C schools to be a meeting place between various cultures, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The mechanics of the school are greatly influenced by South Africa's past and present. Because the South African people are still divided by their race and income – the legacy of apartheid's spatial planning (Noble & Wright, 2013), schools like this comprise some learners who live in the affluent area of the school, and learners who come from less-affluent, working class backgrounds. Often, this migratory pattern is based on the "reading" of the schools as "crucial in cultivating the necessary aspirant dispositions that will allow entry into formal, middle-class employment and lifestyles" (Fataar, 2015, p. 50). The demographics of such schools can be unexpectedly diverse, and I saw it as a means to gather rich data for my study on poetry. Secondly, I found Dlamini's (2019) finding about the lack of research done on poetry teaching in South Africa to be true, especially when compiling my literature review. These pickings became slimmer in the realm of former Model C schools, and I saw a gap in the research that I sought to fill – a project enthusiastically taken on by me given a real personal investment in this particular niche. This brings me to my final motivation for my particular research site: I am closely familiar with former/ex-Model C schools, having been socialised into them as a learner and now teacher. Even within the same category of schools, I have found great variation in many aspects of teaching and learning and so my choice of research site is also a terrain within which I have experience and can draw informed parallels.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis

This section serves as an overview of the five chapters of this study. Chapter 1, the introduction, located this study within context and problematised and expanded upon my motivations for

undertaking this investigation. It provided a detailed description of the research sites and an overview of the five chapters that constitute this thesis. Chapter 2, the literature review, locates this study within a theoretical framework. It outlines critical literacy as a key concept and introduces poetry as a significant tool in the development thereof. It delves into the teaching of poetry in South African schools, explores the literature on how meaning is made through poetry, and presents an account of the current dispositions that teachers and learners hold towards poetry. Relevant educational paradigms and poetry teaching strategies are detailed as a means through which poetry can be used to develop critical literacy in learners. Chapter 3, the methodology chapter, justifies and details the methodology of this study by delving into the theory and means by which this project was executed. Chapter 4, the data analysis chapter, sees my analysis of data and the presentation of my findings. My amassed and analysed data are based on my research sub-questions which provide insight into the dispositions that teachers and learners hold towards poetry as well as the current poetry practices that enable or constrain critical literacy. Because the data have shown these concepts to be intricately interlinked, they are discussed concurrently and categorised by themes that arose from the data. In my concluding chapter, Chapter 5, I present a synthesis of my findings by responding to the research questions. I present my reflections on my own learning during the course of this study and offer recommendations to teachers on how they could optimise their use of poetry as a tool for the development of critical literacy. I pose my suggestions for future research and conclude.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided an outline of my study which investigated Grade 10 English Home Language teachers' and learners' dispositions towards poetry as well as the current poetry teaching practices that enable or constrain poetry as a tool for the development of meaningful literacy and criticality. In this chapter, I have thus provided an introduction to my research, the context of my study, my research problem and motivation, a detailed description of the research sites from which I amassed my data, and provided an outline of the five chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this chapter by conceptualising critical literacy. Thereafter, I engage in a detailed discussion of the significance that poetry holds as a text for meaning making and criticality within South African schools. I discuss the impact that a Pedagogy of Discomfort may hold for poetry teaching practice. In addition, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is outlined as an important component of analysis through which the teaching and learning of poetry is viewed. Finally, I detail the poetry teaching strategies that have informed my analysis of classroom practice.

2.1 Critical Literacy

The teenage years is a period of rapid emotional and psychological change (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). It is in this season where social awakening and self-awareness begin to form and awareness of the Other is constructed (Janks, 2012). Beliefs and conceptions of the world are shaped and provoked within this time, and as such, it is fertile ground for life skills to be learnt. Teachers play a significant role in the development of holistic, well-rounded young people who are able to impact the world around them meaningfully. Fostering a platform for the development of meaning making and criticality is crucial to that end. Morrell (2005) expresses the importance of language education, and in the case of this study, English language education, as the foundation of such learning. He holds that "there is no higher social calling, no work more honourable than teaching critical approaches to the consumption and production of language" (p. 312). As such, critical literacy should be an integral part of English teaching (Stevens, 2014).

2.1.1 Conceptualising Literacy

Critical literacy is founded upon the widely disputed concept of literacy (Street, 2005). Despite the growing tendency for literacy to be used synonymously with 'competence' or 'ability' (Goodfellow, 2011, p. 131), there is still a general understanding of its being the ability to read and write (CAPS, 2011; Goodfellow, 2011; Navehebrahim, 2011; Kohnen & Lacy, 2018). These views of literacy have packaged literacy as a neat concept characterised by a "simple cognitive pathway between mind and text" (Burnett & Merchant, 2016, p. 3), involving the cognition of the individual and the mental processes that accompany them (Gee, 2015). However, this view of literacy lacks consideration for the role of human agency and the potential of an individual to be an active participant in their own learning and the world. Instead, it allows the individual to be

seen as, what Freire terms, "knowledge banks" (Freire, 1970). Since humans use literacy to read "the word" and "read the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987), ability to read and write should be seen as a tool for human agency and to make sense of the world and not an end in itself (Luke, 2012, p. 5). These early views of literacy were based on what Street (1997) calls 'the autonomous model': the view of literacy as a neutral, one-size-fits-all concept which can be transferred to many different contexts, producing the same result (Street, 1997, p. 133). Naturally, humans are not so simple. The various contexts within which we have been socialised, particularly within the South African context as it pertains to this study, are vastly different and hold great bearings on how we learn and who we become. Thus, the autonomous model view of literacy cannot serve a country and its learners or any context that has seen as much historical strife as South Africa, because even though it focusses on mastery, it excludes the "voices, histories, and experience of subordinate groups from the ideologies, practices and normative orderings that constitute the symbolic hierarchies of the dominant literacy curriculum" (Giroux, 1990, p. 369). In other words, the autonomous model does not provide equal epistemological access where bridging the divide within a vastly discrepant country in terms of access to resources is greatly needed. The autonomous model stands in stark contrast to the 'ideological model' which views literacy as being an array of social practices characterised by its having power implications, being highly contextualised, and the understanding of it as never being completely mastered (Collins and Blot, 2003). Collins and Blot's (2003) view of literacy agrees with the repositioning of literacy by Gregory, Williams, Baker, and Street (2004) who expanded the concept of literacy as being multidimensional in that it encompasses…

> a set of social practices that can be inferred from events that are mediated by written texts; associated with different domains of life; patterned by social institutions and power relations […]; purposeful, and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices; historically situated and constantly changing whereby new literacies are frequently acquired through learning and sense-making (Gregory et al., 2004, p. 87).

Because literacy is in a constant state of flux (Boche, 2014), the need for meaning-making to be seen beyond the notion that it is primarily developed through print-based text becomes even more prominent. Because the world is constantly evolving, literacy needs to be viewed as a multifaceted concept characterised by its interactive and informative nature to serve a society characterised by constant technological advancements in which spatial, audio, and visual patterns become more and

more prominent (Boche, 2014). This study therefore accepts the notion of 'multiliteracies', a term coined by the New London Group (1996).

The multiliteracies ideology ties into the idealistic model and views literacy as including a multimodal approach to communication, meaning making and learning. It views language as dynamic and fluid and believes that learners derive the most out of a tuition that "supports their ability to be flexible and [sees] language as social and situated" (Kohnen & Lacy, 2018, p. 103) drawing on their "funds of knowledge" which are the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133) that learners carry with them into their schooling. These funds of knowledge shape how they perceive the world, and the way in which the world sees them. These "powerful discourses" speak *to* the learner and *through* the learner (Janks, 2012, p. 150). According to Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller (2003), a multiliterate approach not only supports logical thinking but also encourages learners' "imagination and emotional development" (p. 5), skills highly necessary for a holistic education. The use of multiliteracy approaches in education will, according to the New London Group (1996) enable learners to gain "access to the evolving language of work, power, and community" in which they learn tools of "critical engagement" that allows learners to have agency in their own position in society. However, the view of literacy as grounded within social practice necessitates criticality (Mnyanda & Mbelani, 2018), and there is the consensus that, although the multidimensional ideological approach lends itself to providing epistemological access to a much broader scope of people, literacy without criticality cannot make a meaningful contribution to society (Janks, 2010, 2012; Mnyanda & Mbelani, 2018).

2.1.2 Criticality
To be "critical" stems from a distinctly Greek etymology that denotes "the ability to argue and judge" (Luke, 2012, p. 5). Critical theory underpins critical literacy, and is distinguished by a practical purpose where an individual uses their judgement to investigate instances of oppression or marginalisation (Bohman, 2016). A critical theory is only critical, therefore, to the extent that it pursues human "emancipation from slavery", is a "liberating…influence" and aims to foster a world where the "needs and powers" of human beings are satisfied (Horkheimer, 1972, 246). Above all, it must aid in the pursuit of "human emancipation in circumstances of domination and oppression" (Bohman, 2016). A critical theory needs to be able to identify and explain the issues

within society, identify ways of changing them, and provide distinct standards for criticism and attainable goals for social transformation (ibid.). When literacy becomes critical, it opens doors for the emancipation of the minds of the future who are able to interrogate how the knowledge that they have come to learn is constituted within historical and social constructs (Giroux, 1989). Freire's (2009) defining iteration of critical literacy appreciates how language is a political thing that is used to serve "asymmetrical distributions of institutionalised power across societies" enabling the oppression and marginalisation of some by others (Whatley, Banda, Bryan, 2000). According to Giroux (1989), critical literacy offers learners the opportunity to look into what constitutes knowledge, historically and socially, and allows them to look into their own "historically constructed voices and experiences" in the development of self and social empowerment (Giroux, 1989, p. 33-34). Others echo the aforementioned views in that critical literacy entails naming and renaming the world, noticing the patterns and complexities within it, and enabling the critically literate learner to redesign and reshape it (New London Group, 1996).

Learners who are in the process of developing critical literacy analyse the effects of "capitalism, colonialism, and inequitable economic relations" (Luke, 2012, p. 7), all of which are significant issues that exist in South African society, and very often expressed through literary works studied in EHL. As such, learners, within a classroom that involves practices that enable critical literacy, are immersed in activities that encourage the questioning of issues of class, race, and gender through classroom discourse (Luke, 2012). As such, critical literacy aims at fostering values in young people that allow them to question existing power relations and identify ways in which language is used "to advance the interests of some at the expense of others" (Janks, 2012, p. 153) in the hopes of bringing to light that which perpetuates social inequalities. Such a setting should ideally entail a shift in the relations between teachers and learners in which "learners become teachers of their understandings and experiences and teachers become learners of these same contexts (Luke, 2012). As such, the practice of critical literacy within the class is overtly political, especially in teaching and learning, and focuses on the use of literacy for social justice in marginalised communities (Luke, 2012, p. 5). Critically literate learners are therefore engaged in the conceptualisation of literacy by Freire (1970) which links critical literacy to "self-empowerment and an ethics of care" (Janks, 2013, p. 229). In so doing, critical literacy can be seen as a tool for transformation and is an attribute for which all educational institutions should strive.

However, in as much as critical literacy has noble aims, the development of it within the classroom may not always be as simple as it may seem, and often, the resistance to criticality serves as an impediment to its meaningful development. Critical literacy has to do with facing harsh truths, such as social inequality in its various forms, in the aim of emancipation. Naturally, studying literature that deals with contentious issues may prove difficult for some learners. In fact, McKinney (2004) presents an account of learners' resistance to critical literacy, specifically within the South African context, when confronted with texts that reference a racist, repressive past. She found that resistance to meaningful criticality stems from tension that exists between "the desire to escape the past, […] feelings of guilt, and a real desire for a new, non-racist and equal South Africa" (McKinney, 2004, p. 68). In fact, Ellsworth (1989) and Janks (2001) problematise and contest the understanding that simply revealing societal issues will bring about change, as people bear close attachments to the "social positions and discourses" they hold, which are "not lightly given up" (McKinney, 2004, p. 65). As such, it is of utmost importance that, when working with texts as tools to develop critical literacy, that teachers take into account the identities and positionalities learners bring with them into the classroom as well as how texts position them (McKinney, 2004; Ellsworth, 1989).

It is through careful, sensitive, and thoughtful practice that critical literacy assures that learners' funds of knowledge are respected, that multimodal literacy practices are employed, and that learners are encouraged to view the world as a "text to be read" (Esquivel, 2020, p. 208) through which learners are given the tools to "read the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). As such, critical, multimodal literacy involves reading the "words, images, objects, and spaces 'against the grain'" to unearth the underlying "perspectives, biases, and ideologies" that lie beneath the surface (Dallacqua & Low, 2019, p. 4). In the end, critical literacy teachers may access powerful and meaningful responses, connection, and engagement with the poem that can culminate in the development of meaning making and criticality if they are prepared well and willing to take risks (Moore & Begoray, 2017, p. 173). When teachers take risks in exploring contentious literary works – though overwhelming and intimidating – the platform for transformative learning experiences within the poetry teaching classroom is fostered (ibid., p. 180).

2.2 The Significance of Poetry

2.2.1 Defining Poetry as a Literary Text

Literary texts, such as poetry, have long been noted as a rich resource within language education classrooms (Collie & Slater, 1987). These texts not only contribute to learners' linguistic development in exposing them to the nuanced use of language, but also towards their appreciation and awareness of different cultural backgrounds, allowing them to become more personally involved, and in so doing, experience personal growth (Kaşlıoğlu & Ersin, 2018). However, through the review of the literature in an attempt to define poetry as a literary text, it became clear that to define poetry empirically is notoriously difficult. Poetry, a word derived from the Greek verb "poeo" which means "to make, to construct, to create and to process", is an entity in itself and a text that is useful to humankind (Matalon, 2020, p. 74). Dlamini (2019) holds that poetry is a genre in literature that exists as a vehicle to convey the speaker/poet's "feelings about different social issues using a specific kind of language which arouses the readers' own feelings and provokes thought" (p. 8). Others have said that poetry evokes and provokes feelings and thoughts about "complex social issues" (Hughes, 2007, p. 1) as it communicates "universal human truths" (Peskin, 1998, p. 3). These sentiments corroborate with earlier musings in an attempt to make sense of poetry as an entity. Definingly, 18th century philosopher, J.S. Mill, famously asked, "What is poetry besides the thoughts and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself?" (Mill, 1833 in Schneewind, 1965, p. 103). He went further to compare and contrast poetry to science where…

> The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from […] its logical opposite, […] science. The one addresses itself to the belief; the other, to *the feelings*. The one does its work by convincing or persuading; the other, *by moving*. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding; the other, by *offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities* (Schneewind, 1965, p. 103, italics my own).

This study accepts this view of poetry. Among all the definitions of poetry, Mill (1833) puts forth one that does not bind poetry as a genre into any set format, but rather its intent and effect. Poetry texts communicate important human subjectivities and, through "implicit and explicit reference", poetry texts air the "tensions of their times" (Morgan & Ramanthan, 2005, p. 153). As such, poetry as a literary text allows readers to "experience contradictions between their past experiences and new ideas which spur an internal dialogue in which the things they may believe, their attitudes, and the way in which the world is constructed for them undergoes changes" (Wright, Coryell,

Martinez, Harmon, Henkin, & Keehn, 2010, p. 105). It is perhaps for these reasons that the CAPS document (2011) prescribes poetry as a compulsory literary genre for study within the Further Education and Training (FET) band of English Home Language (CAPS, 2011, p. 13).

2.2.2 Poetry's Significance in the Development of Critical Literacy

Poetry is fundamentally a text, and texts are not neutral. Texts include layers of explicit and implicit meaning and ideology (Ioannidou, 2015; Dallacqua & Low, 2019) which entice the reader to see and understand the world from the perspective of the writer, including their version of reality (Janks, 2010), as well as protect the values and interests of those in power (Gee, 2008). In the hands of a conscientious and open-minded educator, poetry can be used as an effective tool for fostering critical literacy within the classroom activity system as it has the potential to transform the learning space into a one where learners can critically reflect on "their own experiences and identities" while creating a safe space for the engagement with different points of view of other learners in the classroom community (Wissman and Wiseman, 2011, p. 236). It offers a platform for learners to "reflect on language, culture, experiences, and memories" (Flint and Laman, 2012, p. 14), and in so doing, learners come to be familiar with the alternative realities of others. Furthermore, Kaşlıoğlu & Ersin (2018) assert that learners "become more tolerant and sensible towards others' differences and develop a sense of empathy as they read literary texts" (p. 214). According to Dlamini (2019), through the use of poetry within the classroom, learners can present their own visceral responses and opinions on "how the issues have been presented, looking at whose voice and perspective is regarded as powerful in the presentation of the poet's messages" (p. 15) as well as the poet's intended effect upon the reader. These actions within the classroom have the potential to develop meaning making and criticality through the use of poetry as the tool.

2.2.3 Poetry Teaching in South African Schools

According to the EHL FET phase CAPS document (2011), *poetry* should be taught *not* poems (p. 12). This, according to the CAPS document means that skills should be instilled within learners that will enable them to ask two questions of a poem: "*What is being said?*" and "*How do I know?*" in which both questions bounce off one another in the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the poem and the message being conveyed (CAPS, 2011, p. 25). The means by which this end is reached on a practical level within the classroom is by taking a deeper look into "the figurative use of language; of the way sentences, verse lines, and poems as a whole are presented; of the choice

of image, rhythm, pace and sound; of the emotive feelings that such images generate" (ibid.). The aforementioned aspects are investigated by a close, practical study of the poem which deepens the understanding of the poem by looking at the literal and figurative meanings within the poem, "the mood, theme and message, the imagery, word choice, tone, rhetorical device, emotional responses, lines, words, stanzas, links, punctuation, refrain, repetition, sound devices and enjambment" (CAPS, 2011, p. 25). Through poetry, learners view the world from perspectives that are divergent from their own when literature is used effectively within the class. Through the effective inclusion of literary texts within the English classroom, learners experience a holistic education (Kaşlıoğlu & Ersin, 2018). Whereas the NSC examination poetry is fixed in Grade 12, this study found that Grade 10 teachers have a substantial degree of freedom in the choice of poetry texts for study, often based on their own interests and aim in poetry teaching. Inasmuch as this freedom is welcomed, it comes with the onus of being responsible and aware of the repercussions poetry choices may have on learners' education and experience of poetry. According to Street (2013), the selection of poetry should be an act of purpose and thought, bearing in mind the various "attributes of reading engagement and motivation", the way in which it should be taught in order to spur the desire to read within learners, and learners' engagement with the text in a critical way (p. 57). It is important, given South Africa's history, that learners are exposed to texts that function as a window through which they can view and engage with the experiences of the marginalised and oppressed. For this reason, I believe it necessary that contextually significant Struggle/protest poetry be studied at Grade 10 level. In many instances, these works are contentious and unearth deep-seated emotions, the exploration of which can be a traumatic event though which "human or natural violence, terror [or] violation" may investigated (Moore & Begoray, 2017, p. 174). And, most notably, within the South African context, themes such institutionalised racism during the apartheid era come to the fore. Contentious poetry that touches on traumatic events or historical occurrences within the South African context are important as they "significantly increase [learners'] capacity for compassion, which is […] crucial for critical literacy work" (Moore & Begoray, 2017, 174).

2.2.4 How Meaning is Made through Poetry
Because of deliberate nature of texts, that they are crafted with an intent, one is able to distinguish between "what is said and what is hidden", when one sees texts as being "constructed discourse" (Huang, 2013, p. 66). The deconstruction of discourse is necessary for meaning-making.

According to Mbelani (2014), there are various schools of thought regarding how meaning is made. As opposed to objectivist philosophy that propagates the idea that the reader is passive and accepts meaning in an uncritical, bottom-up style, and subjectivist philosophy that views meaning as residing solely in the reader's interpretation, this study sees meaning-making from a constructivist lens that allows for an "interplay between the reader and the text" (p. 14). Through a constructivist lens, the reader is seen as a "participant" in the meaning-making process (Kress, 2010), and in so doing, agency is ascribed to them.

Dlamini (2019) asserts that there are different ways to make meaning of poetry, and that the understanding and meaning making of some poems can be difficult (p. 16). This is true for learners and teachers. When reading a poem, there are many things that will affect an individual's understanding and response to a poem such as their gender, race, and even social class within a given society (Street, 2013). According to Johnson (2019), this very act of reading for meaning is a "transaction" between the specific text in question and the reader, which, for the purpose of this study is an interaction between the learner and the poem, creating a "unique event situated within its own unique context" (p. 336). This study draws insights from Fairclough's (1989) dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis to inform the way in which meaning making and criticality of poetry may be understood. Figure 1, below, shows the concentric, nested nature of the elements of discourse according to Fairclough (1989), suggesting an interconnected and interdependent process through which meaning is made.
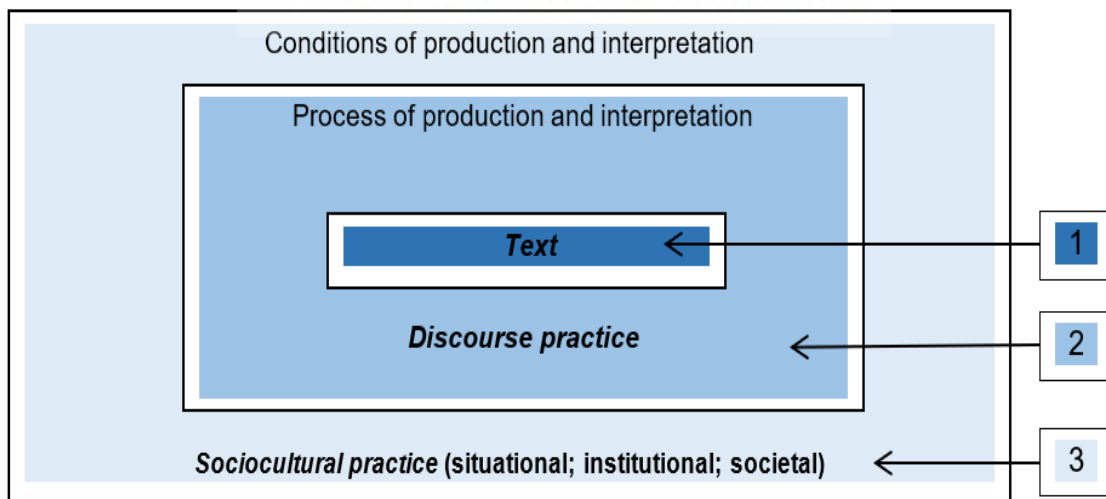
Figure 1 Fairclough's Dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis (Source: Fairclough, 1989, p.21)

The inner box, labelled 1, represents the text being studied, which, as it pertains to this study, are poems in their various forms. Because poetry is a "central example of the use human beings make of words to explore and understand", it ascribes meaning to our experiences to enable us to move through the world as it is known to us, and even beyond (Simecek & Rumbold, 2016, p. 309). Meaning making of texts also has to do with a close reading of the broader poem as words alone work together to create meaning. Schmatz (2019) contends that "the meaning of a single word is determined in relation to the words surrounding it" (p. 126). As such, it is important that in making meaning, learners unpack the language used in poetry, as a non-neutral text, to explore the experiences of others and examine it in relation to their own. The box labelled 2 represents the discourse practice that exists around the text, encompassing the process of production and interpretational processes that accompany meaning making and criticality of poems.

As a multimodal text, poetry's meaning is layered (Newfield & D'Abdon, 2015) and, according to Dlamini (2019), "readers need meaning making ability to unpack the unapparent messages or themes in poems" (p. 17). Simecek & Rumbold (2016) believe that the use of poems within the English classroom can foster "crucial thinking spaces" where we can reflect on our lives, a process through which our understanding of the self through engagement of a poem can be enhanced (p. 310). The box labelled 3 represents the overarching contextual backdrop within which meaning of the poems are made, including "the social situation or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs; the social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse; and the society as a whole" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25). This definition links to Gee's (2008) broad understanding of textual reading as existing within a diverse view of literacy that encompasses the "cognitive, social, interactional, cultural, political, institutional, economic, moral, and historical contexts" (p. 2). This means that, according to Dlamini (2019), the production and interpretation of meaning are literacy practices that exist within a socially-governed paradigm which require "social analysis to explain why texts are the way they are and why they are read in the ways they are read" (Janks, 1998, p. 197). Poetry, however, should not only be seen within the broader societal context, but also be a tool for change within it. Foster (2012) believes that poetry "should be a stimulus for social criticism and social action" (p. 751). As such, poetry texts are not only read *by* society and situated *within* society, but also *for* society.

The meaning making of poetry through reading enables learners to engage in code-breaking, become text-participants, text-users, and text analysists (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Figure 2 below, shows the interrelatedness of Freebody & Luke's Four Resources Model which illustrates the four roles learners play in meaning making and criticality of texts.
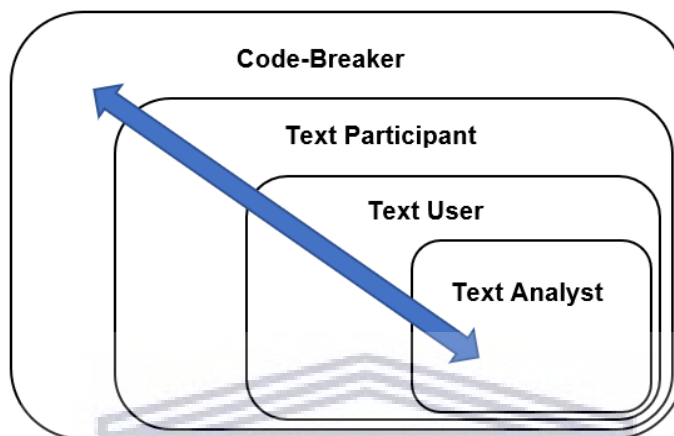
Figure 2 Freebody & Luke's (1990) Four Resources Model

The four interrelated roles of the reader within the meaning making process are not linear, but should, according to Freebody & Luke (1990), be developed simultaneously. As a *code-breaker*, learners take a careful look into the way in which "sounds, vocabulary, and grammar" are used to produce meaning (Firkins, 2015, p. 2). In poetry, where sound devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, and assonance, as well as diction and creative use of grammar to suit the writer's purpose are used, the careful evaluation of how these literary techniques come together to create meaning is essential in making sense and meaning of the poem. The meaning making of poetry necessarily involves the learner's active participation in unlocking the meaning of the poem. As such, being a *text participant* involves the reader asking themselves, "How do I understand this text?" (Firkins, 2015, p. 2) in order to make meaning of the poem as informed by their own experiences and subjectivities. *Text users* are learners who reflect on how they can use the text appropriately for various purposes within "different cultural and social contexts" (Dlamini, 2019, p. 20). Finally, learners who are *text analysts* have developed "an understanding of the application of the text, the relationship of the text to other texts, as well as develop skills evaluate the effectiveness of the text" (Firkins, 2015, p. 2). When learners are engaged within these four reader roles as put forth by Freebody & Luke (1990), learners become active agents who unpack the poem and peel away the layers of it in order to make meaning making in their reading of the poem as a text.

Making meaning of a poem is not a linear process but instead involves multiple avenues of unpacking, questioning, evaluating, and investigating to tease out the meaning that lies beneath the poetry text. The abovementioned processes may appear to be daunting, and in many cases, the analysis of poetry is quite a feat, but the dispositions that teachers and learners hold towards poetry proves to be a significant incentive to engage in the process of meaning making and criticality. Disposition theory will be discussed in the following section.

2.2.5 Dispositions towards Poetry

To ascertain a precise definition of disposition has proven to be problematic and is deemed inconclusive (Welch, Pitts, Tenini, Kuenlen & Wood, 2010; Choi, Benson, & Shudak, 2016; West, Baker, Fitzgerald, Ehrich, Woodcock, Bokosmaty, Howard & Eady, 2020). Because disposition theory is such a contested terrain (Shiveley & Misco, 2010), there are many loose definitions within literature on the subject. Broadly speaking, Bourdieu (1999) refers to one's disposition as influencing the manner in which one interprets the external world though an inherently "subjective bias" which influences one's "perception and appreciation" (p. 64) of external stimuli. West, Baker, Fitzgerald, Ehrich, Woodcock, Bokosmaty, Howard & Eady (2020) therefore hold that dispositions form the basis of one's "decisions to think and act" and are fundamentally influenced by "prior life experience, beliefs, and assumptions" (p. 186). As such, they comprise the temperaments, beliefs, attitudes, personality traits and ideas that are visible through one's proclivity to respond to situations in a particular way (Katz & Raths, 1985), manifesting in "observable behaviour" (Shiveley & Misco, 2010; Villegas, 2007). This "observable behaviour" and the attitudes and beliefs that underpin it are important for this study. The dispositions that teachers hold towards their subject and poetry have an impact on the actions they take within their classroom, directly influencing their classroom practice. Similarly, the dispositions that learner hold towards EHL and poetry have an impact on their learning and engagement with poetry. As such, disposition theory is important for this study as these dispositions inform action and practice. They inform how teachers teach and react to poetry and the way in which learners learn.

Despite its usefulness for the development of critical literacy (see Section 2.2.2), poetry is a polarising genre: feelings of favourable disposition and opposition are held by teachers and learners alike. The disposition with which learners approach poetry has an impact on how they will perform in the higher grades (Danesh and Shirkani, 2015), and it is thus important that a

favourable disposition exist. Yet, the literature illustrates a grim account of the prevalence of resistant, nervous dispositions towards poetry and poetry study. There is a consensus that poetry is "difficult" (Peskin, 1998) and it is because of this perceived difficulty that "poetry seems to elicit the most groans from [learners]" (Hughes, 2007, p. 1), shockingly, *above all other genres*. According to Honeyghan (1999), poetry has been identified as the "least preferred literary material" (p. 26) amongst learners and Ofsted (2007) posits that learners see the study of poetry as "dull and pointless" (p. 7). Maynard, Davies, and Robinson (2005) propose that one of the reasons for the intimidation and negative emotions towards poetry is that the study of poetry requires a level of attention to detail not necessarily demanded by other literary forms" (p. 37). The research conducted by Katz (2001) and Newfield & D'Abdon (2015) contends that learners find poetry disconnected from or irrelevant to the real concerns and issues learners face daily in their everyday life (Maynard et al., 2005, p. 511) which points to a systemic issue surrounding the selection of texts for study. When learners cannot find a link between the prescribed poetry and their everyday lives, the level at which they engage with the texts in the reading process declines (Colby & Lyon, 2004).

Learners are not alone in their pessimism towards poetry and its usefulness within education. Many (Cox, 1989; Hughes, 2007; Cubukcu, 2010, among others) report sentiments of a general nervousness when teaching poetry. Instead of enjoyment and appreciation of the beauty and usefulness of poetry, Xerri (2016) has found that poetry "makes teachers feel alarmed, naked, and inadequate" (p. 3). The feeling of being forced to analyse a poem evokes fear and unease within teachers when faced with classes demanding to know what it "means" (ibid.; Maynard et al., 2005). According to Fleming and Stevens (2015), because of the misconception of poetry being a difficult genre, it has become increasingly prone to assessment. In an increasingly competitive world where the stress of achieving marks that are good enough for admission to university plagues grades as young as Grade 10, and where, in highly performing top-schools such as the two research sites I visited, academic and mark-culture abounds, the unsettling notion of not having the "right answer" or fearing the unseen memorandum can steal the joy from poetry teaching and learning entirely. This sentiment is echoed by Xerri (2016) who holds that anxiety is created "by the belief that the examiners are expecting some kind of response" (p. 3) which causes teachers to have to adopt a scripted and controlled didactic teaching style with poetry to ready the learners for their

examinations (Ofsted, 2007). It is clear, therefore that assessment and examination pose a risk to the enjoyment and engagement with poetry (Xerri, 2016) and the meaning-making thereof. So much so that, according to Sedgwick (2003), teachers feel that their ability to teach poetry as creatively as they would like is a "dangerous" place to be in English teaching, as it strips teachers and learners of their enjoyment of the genre and instead replaces it with a feeling of uncertainty (Calway, 2008). The presently held negative experiences and impressions of poetry as a genre is concerning as it restricts and impedes poetry's potential as a creative expression, artform, and pedagogical tool which could, if used effectively, engender "a sense of social and educational empowerment" (Newfield & D'Abdon, 2015, p. 511). These negative experiences may lead teachers to adopting counter-productive coping mechanisms which constrain the development of critical literacy within the classroom.

2.3 Towards a Pedagogy of Discomfort

The classroom is a pedagogical site of discomfort (Boler, 1999), especially when dealing with poetry that addresses contentious issues in which the engagement with "difficult knowledge", that is, poetry that deals with difficult social and historical themes that are cognitively, psychologically and emotionally destabilising for the learner" (Bryan, 2016, p. 10), is facilitated. However, in contrast to the negative implicature of the word "discomfort", recently there has been a greater shift towards viewing discomfort as a site of growth within the classroom. Zembylas (2015) asserts that experiences of discomfort (and even pain and suffering) when dealing with contentious themes in literature (such as in found in South African Struggle poetry which deals with racism) can be pedagogically valuable within social justice education as they allow learners to learn from and engage with the experiences of those who have been victims of injustice. Thus, a pedagogy of discomfort is one that can encourage learners (and teachers) to go beyond their comfort zones and draw their "cherished beliefs and assumptions" into controversy by questioning them (Boler, 1999, p. 176). It involves an individual's "recognis[ing] what and how [they have] been taught to see or not to see" (Bheekie & van Huyssteen, 2015, p. 5). In other words, a pedagogy of discomfort involves the disruption of an individual's beliefs with which learners develop the tools to develop "alternative ways of seeing, hearing, and "reading the world" (Bryan, 2016). As such, it develops the skills learners need to be critically literate learners who question existing power relations and identify ways in which language is used "to advance the interests of some at the expense of others" (Janks, 2012, p. 153) in the hopes of bringing to light that which perpetuates social inequalities.

This discomfort often comes with emotional risk from which humans naturally shy away. Using Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1837) as analogy[1], Ohito (2016) relates two lessons learnt from the tale: that "Ignorance is a refusal of knowledge that threatens self-perceptions and self-identities" and that "[w]hen we are cocooned in the familiarity of comfort, we are often either unable or unwilling to jeopardise our sense of equilibrium by tackling emotional risks" (Ohito, 2016, p. 455). Indeed, stepping out of one's comfort zone entails discomfort and emotional risk. It is important, therefore, that teachers understand the role they have to play in establishing a pedagogy of discomfort which is fundamentally situated in the belief that feelings of discomfort are important in "challenging dominant beliefs, social habits, and normative practices that sustain social inequities" in which a platform for social transformation is developed (Zembylas, 2015, p. 170). Teachers who understand the importance of uncomfortable encounters with provocative text will therefore choose texts that will challenge their learners and avoid relying too heavily upon texts that will maintain an easy, pleasant, conflict-free experience. They will not shy away from uncomfortable feelings, and instead, work through difficult situations with their learners and navigate the terrain of discomfort as a pathway to growth.

The feeling of being placed outside of one's comfort zone which is a fundamental component to a pedagogy of discomfort is not easy and can be emotionally taxing. Having one's world view dramatically altered can cause an array of difficult emotions such as "vulnerability, anger, guilt, fear, ambivalence, anxiety, resistance and paralysis" (Bryan, 2016, p. 13). It is understandable, therefore, that to mitigate the risk or deal with the emergence of feeling these negative emotions, one would develop coping mechanisms. According to Zembylas & McGlynn (2012), in instances of discomfort, many learners may either "choose the reinforce their own identities" for fear of giving up their "cherished beliefs" (Boler, 1999, p. 176), whereas others may feel overwhelmed and emotionally distraught at being exposed to a historical narrative from which they have been sheltered. What is important, however, is that a pedagogy of discomfort be enacted within the classroom with care about the learners' well-being, especially when teaching results in "some sort of crisis in the [learner]" (Zembylas, 2015, p. 2) so that ethical violence, which is harm caused to

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[1] The Emperor's New Clothes (1837), in short, chronicles a confident emperor who is duped into believing that he is wearing beautiful, new clothes, when in reality the garments are non-existent. When he is alerted to the perfidy of his subjects, he chooses to ignore the claims and continue with the procession despite walking into public completely naked.

learners in an effort "to help them re-examine their identities and worldviews", is not committed (ibid.).

2.4 Sociocultural Theory

This study is fundamentally framed by sociocultural theory which serves as a lens through which poetry teaching and learning practices are viewed. Sociocultural theory is particularly suited for this study which takes a close look at the efficacy of poetry as a tool to develop critical literacy. According to Janks (2000), "critical literacy education, based on a sociocultural theory of language, is particularly concerned with teaching learners to understand and manage the relationships between language and power" (p. 176). Dlamini (2019) outlined the following principles of sociocultural theory as important in developing a thorough understanding of "how poetry is taught and learnt to develop [critical] literacy in learners":

- The teaching and learning of poetry is a fundamentally social, mediated activity.
- The knowledge that learners bring into class is important for the development of new knowledge.
- Teaching and learning are situated in and relevant to the culture and community in which the activity takes place.

Vygotsky's life's work was devoted to sociocultural theory in which learning was seen as "a profoundly social [and cultural] process" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 131). According to him, it is within this social process where higher mental functions are developed within a social setting and transmitted culturally from one party to the next (p. 126). Vygotsky's (1978) view of learning was revolutionary at the time and stood at odds against "traditionalist" educational paradigms which viewed learning through the transmission model and "progressivist" educational paradigms which "advocated discovery learning" (Kozulin, 2004, p. 3). The discrepancy between whether "knowledge is received by the teacher" and whether it was "actively and independently" constructed (Kozulin, 2004, p. 3) as advocated by the traditionalist and progressivist paradigms respectively, did not reconcile with Vygotsky's beliefs. In fact, he posited that educational processes are instead a *source* rather than the *consequence* of the learner's developing new skills (Kozulin, 2004) and that, ultimately, learning is a collaborative effort. Importantly, Vygotsky's view of learning viewed the process as happening long before formal schooling, and that the learning that takes place *within* school is necessarily underpinned by the historical experiences of the learner prior to their scholastic learning (ibid, p. 84).

As opposed to the progressivist paradigm which saw learning as the "result of individual efforts" (Dlamini, 2019), sociocultural theory views mediation as central to the learning experience. According to Vygotskian theory, mediated learning is a quintessential component to a child's higher mental processes in which the more knowledgeable other (MKO) acts as a mediating agent in the learner's interaction with external stimuli (Kozulin, 2003). Mediation, according to Vygotsky (1978), occurs within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is the "distance between the actual developmental level" of a learner and the "level of potential development" of the learner in "collaboration with more capable peers" or adults (in the case of children) (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

As such, Vygotsky's premise of learning necessarily involves collaboration, reinforcing the premise that learning is a social activity. This 'collaboration' happens by way of 'scaffolding'. Though the term was not used by Vygotsky, it was inspired by his work and coined by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) who defined 'scaffolding' as a practice that "enables a [learner] to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (Wood et al. 1976, p. 90), first in a collaborative effort of cooperation with the helper (MKO) and then without the helper or MKO (Leganger-Krogstad, 2014). As such, learners would be able to move from a place of unknowing to knowing. Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976) believed that the teacher has six important roles in the activity of scaffolding which hold important benefits for the learner's learning process: scaffolding directs the learner's attention to the task at hand, the learning situation is simplified so that the learner is able to manage the various components of the process, it focuses the learner's attention towards the task's goal in which the learner's actions are purposefully directed, it highlights important aspects of the task, it manages the frustration of the learner and mitigates the risk of failure, and provides the learner with "idealised models of required actions" (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976, as cited in Fernandez, Wergerif, Mercer & Drummond, 2002, p. 41). Eventually, this scaffolding is removed when the learner has gained the skills they need in order to complete the task themselves (Fernandez, Wergerif, Mercer & Drummond, 2002). Distinctively, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory places tools or artefacts at the centre of the learning interaction which function to mediate reality in order for learners to make meaning and develop an understanding of that which is being learnt. The role of language is the fundamental, dominant tool this mediated interaction (Leganger-Krogstad, 2014).

The implementation of sociocultural theory practices can have benefits to the teaching and learning of poetry. As mentioned previously, learners have a predisposition towards viewing poetry as a genre that is perceived to be difficult (Peskin, 1998). This already places them at a place of uncertainty when it comes to learning poetry as they may see the understanding of the poem as a somewhat unattainable goal. According to Vygotsky (1986), good teaching moves ahead of development and "leads it" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 188). Therefore, teachers, who, within the learning environment, are the more knowledgeable others (MKO), support learners in their learning of poetry by ascertaining the level at which learners are able make sense of the poem on their own and the level at which learners should ideally engage with the text. Through this space, teachers scaffold the learning process within the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD), through the use of "cultural tools" (Engeström, 2001) such as language and prior knowledge, as well as physical tools such as the multimodal poetry text, in order to develop "higher mental processes […] grounded in […] mediation" (Thompson, 2013, p. 248). As such, learners are at the centre of the meaning making process and the teacher does not stand in the way of their developing important transferable skills of meaning making. In a similar study, Dlamini (2019) made use of Dutta's (2001) model, based on the sociocultural theory of learning, to illustrate the manner in which poetry learning takes place with the teacher's guidance. This study draws on these insights to make sense of the teaching and learning of poetry:
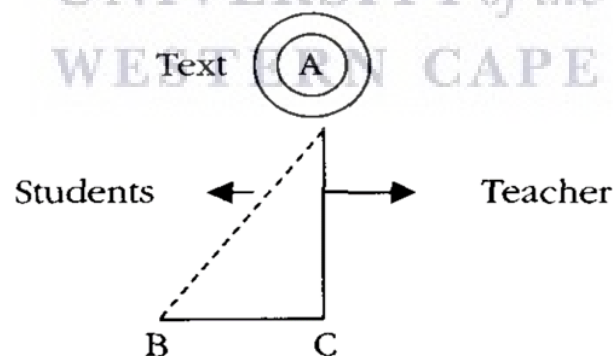
Figure 3 Poetry learning with the teacher's guidance (Dutta, 2001, p. 523)

Dutta (2001) holds that the poem (illustrated within Figure 3 as 'A') is an entity that consists of layers of meaning. Point A represents the ideal, final destination to which the learners will journey through their learning "through a set of activities" (Dutta, 2001, p. 523). The learners within the classroom environment are situated at point B. Dutta (2001) asserts that it is the space illustrated between A and C that learners are guided, and the learning process is controlled so that learners

may reach A, representing a thorough understanding of the text. Importantly, the dotted line between B and C represents the learners' learning process but also the possibility of learners' "getting lost on the way" (Dutta, 2001, p. 523) to the goal of understanding the text (marked A) without the teacher's guidance. This dotted line is something akin to the ZPD in which, through the support of the teacher, learners traverse to reach their educational goal (Vygotsky, 1978). The line is dotted to represent that the line between the learners and the text is not obstructed by the teacher and their meaning making. This is very important for the goal of developing critical literacy as a tool as the learners are supported by the teacher (represented as AC) to reach their destination.

2.5 Poetry Teaching Strategies

2.5.1 Democratic Citizenship Education

This study accepts the belief that learning should contribute towards democratic justice and the advocation for a just world (Waghid, 2007, p. 186), especially in a country such as South Africa, where democracy and social justice are ideals to which the country is presently striving in the quest for true transformation. This is echoed in The Constitution Act 108 of 1996 which aims to

> heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights; improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; and build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, p. 1243).

The CAPS Document (2011) is founded on the values that have inspired the new democratic South Africa. The Minister of Education, Angie Motshekga, reiterates these very values in the foreword that prefaces the vision of the CAPS Document, reinforcing the role of The Constitution (1996) in driving the vision of a democratic and transformed South Africa and the importance of inculcating these values at school level. These values can be achieved through democratic citizenship education practices within the classroom. Waghid (2015) draws upon the iterations of two key theorists in his body of work on democratic citizenship education; I acknowledge both definitions for the purpose of this study. According to Nussbaum (2002), democratic citizenship education involves developing the ability within learners to "imagine what it would be like to be in the position of someone different from oneself" (p. 289). Benhabib (2002) holds that democratic citizenship education involves an action called "democratic iterations" in which learners "talk

back" (p. 127) to one another, thereby speaking to their commonalities and differences, developing the possibility of peaceful co-existence (Waghid, 2015, p. 254).

It is through these practices where an ethos of conversation is engendered within which learners are afforded the opportunities to share their commonalities and differences without disrespecting the life-worlds of another (Waghid, 2015). According to Waghid (2004; 2005; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2015), democratic citizenship education is informed by three primary considerations:

1. to encourage people not to repeat the racist, repressive, and authoritarian apartheid past,
2. to engender public deliberation to ensure that all people are engaged with, situated in, and connected to the democratic aspirations of others,
3. to develop respect for one another through our own interdependence and contribute to building an equitable and just society on the basis of reconciliation and mutual recognition of the other (as cited in Waghid, 2015, p. 254).

Wright et al. (2010) draw upon the work of Mezirow (2000) when they posit that when an individual's view of reality is drawn into controversy within a deliberative educational encounter, a "disorienting dilemma" can arise (Waghid, 2007). They go further to explain that it is during these times of "disequilibrium" that readers turn inwards and are led to a moment of critical reflection and assessment of their long-held assumptions and understandings of the world. (p. 107). Readers therefore undergo a "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1978). This allows the reader to transform into an individual who thinks in a critically reflective way (Wright et al., 2010). According to Waghid (2007), learners who partake in a deliberative encounter listen to the views and subjectivities of the other, respect the other for their worth – and expect respect for their meaningful contribution to the discussion in return. He contends that when learners deliberate, respect for the other is shown when both parties feel able to express themselves in a rational way, they see the other as an equal and recognise that the other is "capable and competent" to articulate their thoughts (p. 188). Wandera (2016) indicates the necessity of an involvement by both learners and teachers in the classroom through the activities and discourse that takes place (p. 309). He further maintains the importance of the teacher's role in designing a space in which this transformative learning can take place. Waghid (2007) echoes this sentiment when he postulates that critical learning can only be successfully implemented by responsible educators who, in their practice, refrain indoctrinating learners, teach learners to act impartially and deliberatively as well as how to be a friend (p. 186).

2.5.2 Multiliterate Pedagogy

Grounded within sociocultural theory, the New London Group (NLG, 1996) took great interest in the multi- component to their conceptualisation of a new, expanded definition of literacy which encompassed not only multimodality, but multilingualism, as well. They assert that a multiliterate pedagogy encompasses four related – yet not mutually dependent – components, all of which have significant implications for this study. Situated Practice (SP), according to the NLG, draws on meaning-making that is contextually situated. It includes the meaning-making of a "community of learners" from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences engaged in "authentic versions" (p. 84) of the practice within the classroom. According to the NLG, SP…

> must crucially consider the affective and sociocultural needs and identities of all learners. It must also constitute an arena in which all learners are secure in taking risks and trusting the guidance of others - peers and teachers (New London Group, 1996, p. 85).

This is especially pertinent in the realm of the study of contentious poems within classrooms of diverse learners and teachers, as is the case with this project. Poetry teaching to foster critical literacy is only effective in practice when diverse life worlds are considered in the meaning-making of poetry and when learners feel safe enough to proffer their views within the class and look critically, or evaluate, the views of others. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory values the incorporation of another's narrative into the learning process as a strength and means to foster growth and development (NLG, 1996, p. 86).

Situated Practice, however, cannot be the only way through which a multiliterate pedagogy can be enacted. The NLG (1996) have identified multiple limitations to Situated Practice. Those most apposite to this study concerned with critical literacy acquisition, are that Situated Practice does not always lay the foundation for learners who are able to be critical of the subject matter with which they are dealing with regards to the "historical, cultural, political, ideological, or value-centred relations" (p. 84). Furthermore, the exploit of "putting knowledge into action" is drawn into controversy. They assert that despite one's ability to put what one knows into words and present critique of the subject matter, the ability to enact knowledge into practice may be an endeavour with which the individual may be incapable (p. 84). Both reservations presented by the NLG feature concerns that are valid in the context of this study where diverse backgrounds in which learners need to be critical of the subject matter and, with the acquired critical literacy skills, put what they learn into everyday use to enact social change in the aim of creating a more tolerant,

democratic society (as per The Constitution Act 108 of 1996 and echoed in the CAPS Document, 2011). Thus, Overt Instruction (OI), as proposed by the NLG (1996) is a supplementary factor to a multiliterate practice. In contrast to what the term implies, "direct transmission, drills, and rote memorization" (p. 86), OI is highly grounded in the Vygotskian (1978) theory of collaborative learning where learning is scaffolded by the teacher. Learners' focus is drawn to sources of information – whether that be prior experiences or activities within the classroom – to allow learners access to information that may be most useful in the learning experience. OI, according to the NLG (1996) builds on collaborative efforts between the teacher and learners that draw on prior knowledge as a strength to advance learning into educational encounters that are more intricate than those they are able to experience on their own (p. 86). Metalanguages, "a language for talking about language, images, texts, and meaning-making interactions" (p. 77), as proposed by the NLG, is noted as a tool for successfully implementing instances of OI within the classroom. According to them,

> the primary purpose of the metalanguage should be to identify and explain differences between texts, and relate these to the contexts of culture and situation in which they seem to work (New London Group, 1996, p. 77).

The use of metalanguage within the English Classroom, and especially in classes where texts laden with meaning and situated so inextricably within a particular context such as poetry, is an important tool for OI. However, worth noting is the assertion that the use of metalanguage should not be to "impose rules to set standards of correctness, or to privilege certain discourses in order to "empower" [learners]" (p. 77). Poetry, as with all texts, is not neutral and neither is the language used to construct these texts (Janks, 2012). Texts are deliberately constructed to convey the writer's Designs upon the reader. Importantly, the concept of Design (with a capital D) as expressed by the NLG (1996) is one that acknowledges the variability of different ways in which meaning is made, especially in relation to factors such as culture and personal historical identity (p. 88). It also ascribes agency to the process of how meaning is made (ibid.). according to the NLG (1996),

> Every act of meaning both appropriates Available Designs and recreates in the Designing, thus producing new meaning as The Redesigned. In an economy of productive diversity [and] yet increasingly divergent lifeworlds, [learners] are ideally creative and responsible makers of meaning (New London Group, 1996, p. 88-89).

Critical Framing (CF) allows for the interpretations of the cultural and cultural context of these Designs of meaning (p. 88). Learners disinterest themselves from the subject matter being studied, and in turn view the text in a critical manner, paying close attention to the context in which it is situated (p. 88). Learners hereby gain meaningful perspective by distancing themselves from that which they have studied, look at it critically, draw into account its culturally situatedness, extend it and look at it through alternative angles, and create and innovate meaning on their own within similar and disparate situations and contexts (ibid.). It is upon CF that the final contributing element to a multiliterate practice is built: Transformed Practice (TP). According to the NLG (1996), TP encompasses a transfer in the meaning-making process where meaning that has been made by the individual is employed within contexts and cultural sites that are different to the original site (p. 88). This, then, would be the manifestation of critical literacy as a tool developed within poetry teaching class and transferred to other texts and contexts. A multiliterate pedagogy includes the use of multimodality and multilingualism, both of which will be discussed in the following subsections.

2.5.3.1 Multimodality

According to Kress (1997, 2000, 2010), multimodality is built upon the acknowledgement that meaning-making takes the form of a range of resources such as spoken, written, visual, gestural, bodily, sonic, and spatial modes. The premise of multimodality is based upon the understanding that different modes of meaning-making are utilised, or come to the fore, in different instances or situations. As such, multimodality is culturally, socially, historically, semiotically, and politically sensitive (ibid.). The semiotic process within multimodality is a fascinating (and multifaceted) concept. According to Newfield & D'Abdon (2015), the theory of multimodality emphasises the "agentive, transformative power of meaning-makers in the process" (p. 515) of the production of meaning in which meaning-makers "*design* their meanings" (ibid.) [italics my own], thus, meaning-makers have power over their own interpretations of signs. Multimodality encompasses a change in focus from that of a text-centric approach to the understanding of communication to one that is comprised of various modes of operation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2003). Wandera (2016) asserts that the term "multimodality" does not rely on language alone. Instead, language is seen as one of the many forms, or "modes" of communication that exist. In fact, Flewitt, Hampel, Hauck & Lancaster (2009) view language-centric approaches to teaching as obscuring the place that other modalities have within the classroom. Kress and van Leeuwen

(2001) see communication as being the product of various modes interacting together within the classroom system, which illustrates the complex nature of the classroom environment where meaning is not only conveyed though language, whether written or oral (Wandera, 2016). In a world that is quickly shaping- and being shaped by technological advancements, to ignore the "increasing complexity and inter-relationship of different modes of meaning" (New London Group, 1996, p. 78) would be an injustice to the goal of a constantly evolving education for a new generation of learners.

2.5.3.2 Multilingualism

According to Cenoz & Gorter (2011), literacy cannot be viewed as a static skill but should instead include practices that "vary across languages, cultures, and contexts" (p. 340). The use of multilingualism, that is, the ability of an individual or society to speak two or more languages (Biseth, 2009), as part of a multiliteracy pedagogy, is a tool that can aid in developing critical literacy. Because language is inextricably tied to identity, culture and contexts, the use of multilingualism within the class is an active inclusion of the prior knowledge of learners. According to Dlamini (2019), the use of other languages in class can "ensure that learners use their home languages, such as [Afrikaans, in the case of this study], as a foundation on which to build" an understanding of the poem, and in so doing, "enhance meaning making" (Dlamini, 2019, p. 28). A multiliterate poetry teaching practice, therefore, that facilitates multilingualism not only has benefits for the interpersonal nature of the classroom, but also to "negotiate identities" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, p. 340). As such, diversity of language should be seen as a resource to educational practice instead of a hinderance to it (Biseth, 2009).

The inclusion of learners' home languages that are not the LOLT (in this case, *not* English) within the classroom also has important implications for democratic practices within the classroom. The practice of multilingualism is especially needed where the "balance between diversity and unity must be found" (Biseth, 2009, p. 6), such as in South Africa where a multiplicity of language exists (including 11 official languages) within a context striving towards unity after a past that was deeply divided. Within an African country that was a former colony such as South Africa, "the language used as the former colonial language is [often] used as the official language and given a higher status than the indigenous African languages" spoken by the majority of people (Biseth, 2009, p. 6). In many cases, the reproduction of unequal power relationships within the school can be

reinforced when the various cultures and languages that learners bring with them into the classroom are not respected and legitimised (Biseth, 2009). This is even true within an EHL class where greater focus is placed on English as the LOLT, often resulting in teachers' active avoidance of any other language that is not English, because in the English class, speaking anything but English may be seen, erroneously, as a counterproductive practice. When learners feel confident to use their home language within the English class despite its not being the official LOLT of the subject, the "challenge of learners' failing to give their personal responses to the poems due to a language barrier" may be curbed, aiding in meaning making and criticality (Dlamini, 2019). Whereas this may be a beneficial practice for meaning making within the classroom, this practice falls short when if learners become reliant on their expressing themselves verbally in their own language in class and struggle to adhere to the LOLT in official formal assessments where other languages do not fit the assessment standard.

2.5.3 Reader-response Approach

Probst (1994) made an important assertion that "meaning lies in that shared ground where the reader and text meet" (p. 37). According to him, meaning is not a "resident" within the text that should be extracted, but instead something that is created by readers when they reflect on their own experiences and histories as sparked by the text (p. 37). Moutray, Pollard and McGinley (2001) establish the reader-response approach as one that encourages learner to engage in reading by interpreting the text and make their own meaning or sense of it (p. 30). According to Moutray et al. (2001), this approach, within a supportive environment will enable meaning making and criticality as it fosters "creative and critical thinking as ideas, feelings, and thoughts flow from text to the individual" (p. 30). Probst (1994) asserts that the point of the reader-response approach is that, even though the writer may have had his own designs for a text, it "may mean to a reader what it did not mean to the author" (Probst, 1994, p. 37) based on the life experiences of the reader which shape the outlook they have on the text. The role of the teacher in teaching literature from the reader-response approach, according to Rosenblatt (1985) is to elaborate on the influence inherent in the text itself, allow the text to "work its effects" on the reader and, as Dutta (2001) suggests, not get in the way of the learner's meaning making and criticality of the text (Rosenblatt, 1985). According to French (1987), much alienation and loss of meaningful interaction with the text occurs when a teacher "gets in the way" by "telling [the learners] what is important in the text,

how it works, what its 'true' structure or substance is, and how to think or feel about it" as is often the case in teacher-centred pedagogy (French, 1987, p. 29). Learners lose enjoyment of the text and are hesitant to propose their own meaning making or are dependent on their teacher to validate their meaning making (French, 1987). This kind of action within the class would constrain meaning making and criticality and cause learners to be "distrustful of their own abilities to respond to [poetry] in personal and important ways" (French, 1987, p. 29). As such, the employment of the reader-response approach within which learners are given the space to make meaning and be critical of the text can enable the development of criticality.

2.6 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter conceptualised critical literacy after which I engaged in a detailed discussion about poetry's significance in the development of literacy, meaning making and criticality, specifically within the South African schooling context. A Pedagogy of Discomfort was detailed as a beneficial practice of the development of critical literacy through poetry. Vygotsky's sociocultural framework within which this study's poetry teaching can be located was detailed as an important component of analysis. Finally, I detailed various poetry teaching strategies and paradigms that have served as a lens through which I was able to analyse classroom practice.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the aim of this study is to answer the main question: *How does the current teaching of poetry in Grade 10 develop meaningful critical literacy?* In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the classroom practices of both teachers and the pedagogical practices they employ to that aim, the following supporting research questions were investigated:

1. What are Grade 10 teachers' dispositions towards poetry?
2. What are Grade 10 learners' dispositions towards poetry?
3. How do current Grade 10 classroom literacy practices enable or constrain learners' development of meaning making and criticality through poetry?

To that end, this chapter will detail the research design that has informed the study's data capturing and analysis. The Cultural Historical Activity theory will be addressed and its suitability as the methodological framework for this study. The sampling techniques used by the researcher to select participants will be detailed as well as how the data was amassed, specifically through the lesson observations, focus-group discussions with learners, and semi-structured interviews with Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn. The study's data analysis approach and validity will be discussed. The chapter close by detailing the ethical considerations of this study as well as its limitations.

3.1 Research Design

This study has made use of the qualitative approach in the study of two Grade 10 EHL teachers in their poetry teaching practice and is framed within the interpretive research paradigm. The interpretive paradigm, according to Thunh and Thunh (2015), accepts that reality is constructed from multiple viewpoints and thus allows the researcher to view the world through the experiences of the research participants. It is within this paradigm that the researcher uses "those experiences to construct and interpret his understanding from gathered data" (Thunh & Thunh, 2015, p. 24). Dlamini (2019) posits that researchers who research within this paradigm endeavour to understand what happens around them during the course of the study by accessing the meaning assigned to it by the teachers and learners. As with Dlamini's (2019) study, I too was an active participant as a meaning-maker interacting with others in the teaching and learning environment, trying to understand how certain practices enable and constrain meaning-making and criticality through poetry.

The qualitative approach was chosen as it enables the researcher to gather substantive data through learning from the research participants in a real-life, familiar setting (Creswell, 2012), such as, in this case, their English classrooms. This method of data capturing was established as best suited to this study, which draws heavily on socio-cultural theory through which it views learning, as qualitative methods enable researchers to "understand the nature of classrooms as socially and culturally organised environments for learning" (Kozleski, 2017, p. 23). Of especial importance to this study, Kozleski (2017) holds that qualitative methods enable deeper insight into "how the role of the teacher and the design of the curriculum shape some [learners'] knowledge and discovery while constraining others' (p. 24). The use of this method is a strength for this study as it "produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). This study therefore used a naturalistic approach where the researcher sought to understand the classroom environment and the real-life interactions that take place within it without "attempting to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). Thus, I integrated myself into the environment and attempted to keep my influence within the classroom ecology as low as possible (further discussed in Section 3.5), even though, naturally, this was difficult.

According to Baxter & Jack (2008), the qualitative *case study* is a research approach that "facilitates an exploration of phenomenon" within its specific context using an array of data sources. In the case of this study, the observation of two separate lessons of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn, a focus group discussion with their respective learners, and a semi-structured interview, each an hour in length, were used to amass data. These data sources enabled the researcher to explore the phenomenon from different perspectives, allowing "multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). However, Dlamini (2019) remarks that, in order for a close examination to occur, "the researcher has to spend time on the research site interacting with the participants" (p. 32) in order to gain a firm grasp on the phenomenon presently studied, which, in the case of this study, is the teaching practices of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn and the impact it has on their learners. To that end, Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn were both studied within their own classrooms, in which the teaching of poetry occurs. I submerged myself within the classroom activity system to gain the data and understanding needed in order to fulfil

the research's aims. The following section will detail the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a lens through which the mechanics of the classroom activity system were analysed.

3.2 The Cultural Historical Activity Theory

CHAT was used as a methodological framework identified as most apposite to this study which sought to analyse and understand "human interaction through their use of tools and artefacts" (Hashim & Jones, 2007, p. 3). Considering that this study has adopted Vygotsky's (1978) view of learning as primarily socially constructed, CHAT provided me with the tools to view my findings in a holistic manner, grounded within an influential context. As a point of departure, Foot (2014) notes the significance of each word in the term *Cultural Historical Activity Theory*: *Cultural* highlights the importance of understanding that everything humans do is "shaped by and draws upon their cultural values and resources" and since cultures evolve and are "grounded in histories", the actions they take should be viewed against the *Historical* backdrop as a significant aspect in making sense of it. The word *Activity* refers to "what people do together", influenced highly by their cultural and historical situatedness. Finally, the word *Theory* denotes the conceptual framework used to understand and explain human activity (Foot, 2014, p. 330). CHAT, as a dialectical unit of analysis, allows for the embodied mind to be appreciated as "stretching across social and material environments" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 189).

The three generations of CHAT will be discussed very briefly in this section. The first generation, created by Vygotsky and coined the *first-generation activity theory*, comprises a subject, an object, and the tools used to attain the objective (Barrett-Tatum, 2015). See Figure 4 below:
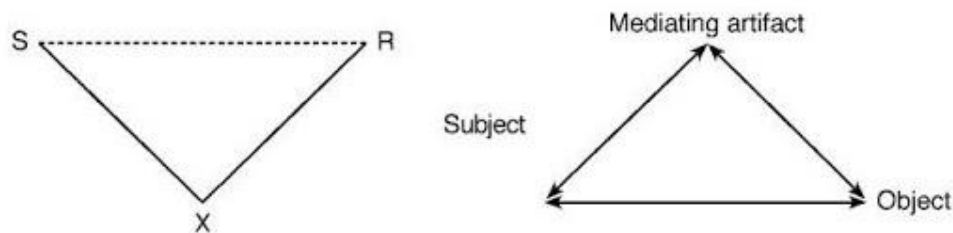
Figure 4 Mediated Action of the first generation CHAT (Engeström, 2001, p. 134)

In viewing the classroom practice through the socio-cultural lens, the teacher, who is the more knowledgeable other (henceforth MKO) (Vygotsky, 1978) makes use of the mediating artefacts

and tools which culminates in the object: meaning-making (Dlamini, 2019). Whether or not the desired outcome is achieved by the subject (in this case, the teacher) is dependent on variables within the environment. However, "the limitation of the first generation [is] that the unit of analysis remain[s] individually focused" (Engeström, 2010, p. 134), and this is problematic considering as the goal of this project is to view learning as a collective effort comprising of various interlocutors with their own funds of knowledge. The second generation of the CHAT features a comprehensive glance at the "complex interrelations between the individual subject and his or her community" (Engeström, 2010, p. 134).

For this reason, the second generation of the CHAT can be seen as much more comprehensive when taking into consideration the fact that individuals are nested into social systems that should not be ignored in the study of an activity system. Figure 5 below shows the interrelatedness of various components of the second generation of the CHAT on which the third generation of the CHAT is built.
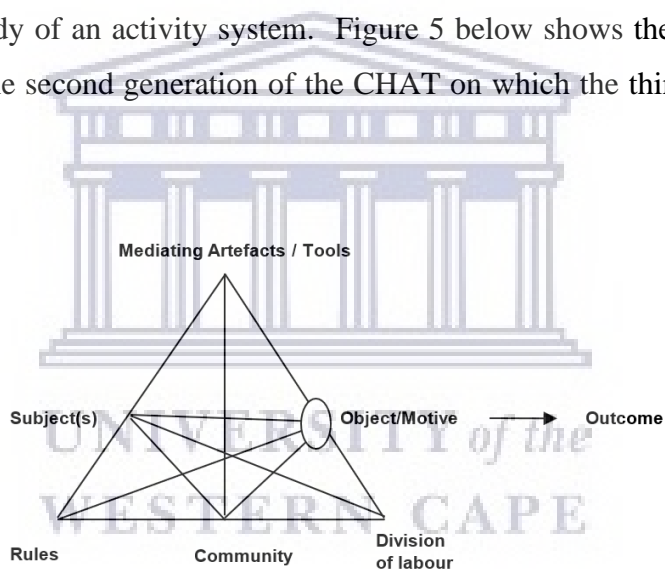
Figure 5 The structure of a human activity system (sourced from Engeström 1987)

The second generation includes the rules, the community, and the division of labour (Engeström, 1987). The rule that governs the activity system, in this case, is the CAPS document which details how the learners will be assessed and how much contact time the teacher has. The division of labour refers to the roles that every person in the classroom environment plays. This includes the teacher's role as mediator and MKO and the learners' role of contributing to the discussion and completing the activities the teacher has set out for them to do. It also includes the researcher as a non-participant observer and the constraints that govern their participation or lack thereof. As the teacher is the primary subject for this study, those with whom she/he interacts comprise the

community. Together, the activity system works towards the goal as mentioned above according to the stipulations of the CAPS.

However, since this study will be comparing activity systems (two different poetry classes in two different schools of the same calibre and in the same district), the third generation of the CHAT becomes especially significant in addressing all the moving parts of this study in one scope. Within the activity systems, the six main elements are integrated inextricably, namely: the subject, object, tools (mediating artefacts) rules and division of labour. According to Barrett-Tatum (2015), the third generation of CHAT "provides for the intersection of two activity systems working towards individual and collective goals" (p. 4), which, in this case, is mastering the CAPS curriculum for EHL and facilitating an environment that works towards…

> critical and creative thinking, [the expression of the classroom community's] opinions on ethical issues and values, [the critical interaction] with a [the given text]; [the] challenging of perspectives, values and power relations embedded in texts, and [the] reading texts of for enjoyment, research, and critique (CAPS EHL FET Phase, 2011, p. 9).

According to Engeström (2001), there are five principles which underpin the third generation of the CHAT, namely: it is object oriented, multi-voiced, historically situated, contradictions play a "central role" as sources of "change and development" (p. 137), and finally that "expansive transformations" are possible when "the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated" leading to an escalation into "collaborative envisioning and deliberate collective change efforts" (p. 137). Engestrom (2001) avers that he artefact-medicated and **object-orientedness** of an activity system is the primary unit of analysis. In both activity systems of School A and B, the common and overarching goal is to administer CAPS (in which the aim is the development of critical literacy). To that end, this study's focus is the meaningful teaching of poetry, which in itself is an object-orientated practice (Dlamini, 2019). Figure 6 depicts the collective goal of both schools as the meeting point between both diagrams.
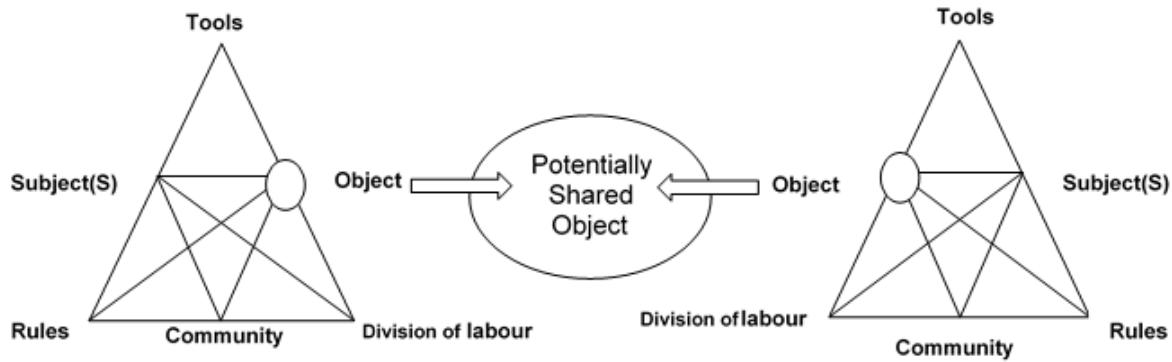
Figure 6 Two interacting CHAT activity systems (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

Both school A and B are held accountable, at a macro-level to the DBE and at a micro-level to the WCED to work within the overarching rules outlined by the CAPS document. The interactions within the Activity Systems take place within the respective classroom communities which necessarily involves an inherent **multivoicedness** in which a "collective activity undertaken by actors with differing roles, positions, and perspectives" (Foot, 2014, p. 331) takes place. This study paid careful attention to the dynamics within the inherent multivoicedness of the learners in Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's class which informed the study's representation of the division of labour within the activity system.

Engeström (2001) holds that "activity systems take shape and [are] transformed over lengthy periods of time" and that the weaknesses and strengths of each activity system may only be understood when evaluated against its situation within a broader historical context. Historicity is this the third principle of Activity Theory. This study's historicity, that is, its situation within post-apartheid South Africa, is a fundamental aspect which has heavily shaped the curriculum to be what it is, the school context of this study (both of which are Ex-Model C schools), and the choices that teachers make within their own classrooms. It is likely that the historicity of the learners may prove to play a large role in their contribution (what they say, what they think) to the class' multivoicedness in their classroom discussions provoked by poetry that deals with contentious issues. Because of these very different viewpoints, there are bound to be instances of contradictions, which are "historically accumulating structural tensions" that come to be within activity systems" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Since each participant in the activity system brings with them their own dispositions, views, and ways of thinking, that inevitable instances of disparities in views may occur, especially when dealing with poetry that touches on contentious

issues. This, as per the CHAT, should not be seen as a negative event within a teaching-learning situation (although at the moment it may seem so), but should be seen as the opportunity to create expansive learning (Engeström, 2001). According to Engeström (2001), expansive learning happens when the "contradictions of an activity system are aggravated" and those involved in the activity system "begin to question and deviate from its established norms" (p. 137). It is an opportunity for those involved to have their paradigms drawn into controversy which facilitates the possibility of these paradigms to be altered. However, Engeström (2001) notes that expansive transformations happen as a journey of collaboration through the Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

According to Patchen and Smithenry (2014), CHAT is especially suited to "capture and analyse the relationships between interconnected elements" that exist within an activity system such as a classroom (p. 607). It also allows me to examine different aspects of teaching in action, by looking at small, unique moments at a time to provide insight into aspects of the teaching practice that are usually not examined or remain invisible (Patchen & Smithenry, 2014 p. 607). Since it is not only the visible, overt, and intentional aspects of the teaching practices that will allow me an informed view of the practices that enable or constrain literacy, but also the practices that are not immediately visible, that the CHAT will be used to analyse meaningful and critical teaching of poetry. Additionally, because of the way in which the third generation of the CHAT accommodates the study's observation of two different activity systems working towards a common goal, it will be the lens through which this study will be analysed.

3.2.1 Description of the Classroom Activity System
Subject
According to Havnes (2010), the subject is a "tool operating and object-orientated" (p. 94) entity. The primary subject of this study is the teacher. The aim of positioning this entity as the subject of this study is to analyse the various classroom practices they employ through poetry study in order to reach the object. The secondary subjects are the learners within the classroom activity system. The learners are observed and interviewed to better support the analysis of the classroom practices and its effect on the learners in whom the object of the classroom activity system through the CHAT theory lens, critical literacy, is engendered.

Object

The target of the activity (Havnes, 2010), known in this study as the object, is the goal of towards which the activity system strives to achieve. The object of the classroom activity system for this study through the CHAT lens is critically literate learners who are able to employ their meaning-making and criticality in order to achieve CAPS's goal through expansive learning within the classroom activity system: learners who are able to use what they have learnt to enact social change in the aim of creating a more tolerant, democratic society.

Community

According to DiSarro (2014), at a macro-level, community is any group of people or organisation that has an influence over the activity that is conducted within the classroom activity system. In the case of this study, the entity that has substantial influence over what happens within the class is the Department of Basic Education who have outlined the CAPS document dictating the tasks that happen within the learning environment. On a micro-level, "community often revolves around the idea of fostering a sense of togetherness or trust amongst participants" (DiSarro, 2014, p. 442) in order for risk-taking to happen within a classroom. As such, the learner body within both Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's classes also function as a micro-community which, to varying degrees, dictate the happenings within the classroom.

Tools

The use of the tools within any activity, according to DiSarro (2014), is dependent upon the Vygotskian concept of mediation and the inherent interconnectedness of human behaviour, the tools, and the classroom surroundings and context. Tools, according to Vygotsky (1981b) are "devices for mastering mental processes" (p. 136-137) and are not only physical but may also be a certain method to reach an aim, such as a particular type of teaching practice. Therefore, the tools to be analysed within this study are the various teaching methods that both Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn employ to reach their end. In the case of this study, the tools are fairly simple since neither of these schools, despite their being well-resourced schools, are E-Learning schools. The physical tools used within the lessons are therefore traditional: the learners' copy of the poems to be studied, their workbooks in which they make notes, the pens and highlighters they use to make and take notes, and in the case of Mrs Steyn's teaching practice, the use of a computer, a data projector and PowerPoints to represent the primary tool (the poem) visually.

Division of Labour

According to DiSarro (2014), the division of labour involves the identification of who does what particular activity within the classroom activity system. It is also "inextricably linked to the amount of authority or power exchanged" between the teacher and her learners (DiSarro, 2014, p. 443). What is interesting to note about division of labour is the paradoxical effect it may have within the learning environment. DiSarro (2014) notes that an environment without the guidance of a facilitator or leader figure, an environment may lack structure that it needs in order to be effective. However, too much power may constrain and limit classroom interaction (p. 443). This study examines the division of labour within the classroom activity system and evaluates the effectiveness of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's manner of dividing labour and the impact it has on the learning environment and learners.

Rules

The rules in any activity system are "the parameters of how a particular activity is or will be done" (DiSarro, 2014, p. 443). Essentially, it dictates the limitations and manner in which a certain activity is conducted including what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. The rules of this particular activity system, the poetry classroom, are governed by multiple tiers which include the DBE's instructions on the assessments that should be done to assess learning, the province-specific guidance (in this case the WCED) that stipulate the manner in which teachers should, to a certain extent, go about their teaching practice, and then of course at a micro- and equally important level, the teacher who dictates how certain activities are to be done including what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, which is framed within the context of the school and its norms and values. This study thus evaluates the rules in each classroom and ultimately the impact that it has on the outcome: critically literate learners through expansive learning.

3.3 Sampling

Sampling, in the realm of qualitative study is primarily to "collect specific cases, events, or actions that can clarify or deepen the researcher's understanding about the phenomenon under study" (Ishak & Bakar, 2014, p. 29). According to Ishak & Bakar (2014), qualitative researchers often opt for non-probability sampling for this reason. Flick (2009) avers that the individuals chosen for study in qualitative case studies such as this, are not chosen for their generalisability but instead for their relevance to the topic being researched. It is also, therefore, a practice that resides within

the researcher's imagination and judgement (Glesne & Peskin, 1992; Babbie, 1992). Because the motivation behind this study is to investigate the practices that teachers employ that enable or constrain meaning making and criticality through poetry, purposive sampling was used. It was judged as suitable to this study as it allows the researcher to use their judgement about a group of people, in this case, teachers who teach poetry, to select participants who represent their population of interest (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). In order to keep to the selection of participants who represent my population of interest, that is, teachers who teach EHL to Grade 10s, I chose two teachers who have experience and expertise in teaching poetry.

3.3.1 Research Sites

The context of this study is highly significant given its history and the impact it has on the reading, teaching, and meaning-making of poetry. It is for that purpose that the choosing of School A and School B (as I refer to both schools henceforth), as Ex-Model C schools, preceded the sampling of both teachers who participated in this study and therefore greatly influenced my selection process. The schooling context in which the data for this study was captured, exemplifies the privilege bestowed upon schools for White learners during the Apartheid regime and are known as Ex-Model C schools, as detailed in Chapter 1. Both School A and B are within 15km of one another within the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town.

The learners in either class each had access to a desk and chair of their own. Both classes conformed to a traditional classroom layout with all the desks facing forward. Mrs Davids' class had traditional school desks with aisles separating each desk whereas Mrs Steyn's desks were long tables where learners sat close together. There was one aisle down the middle of the classroom. Figure 7 and Figure 8 below illustrate the approximate layout of the classroom spaces.
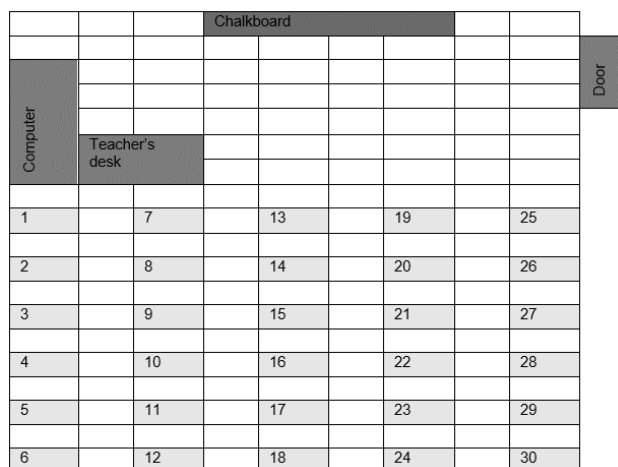
Figure 7 Traditional Classroom Layout, Mrs Davids
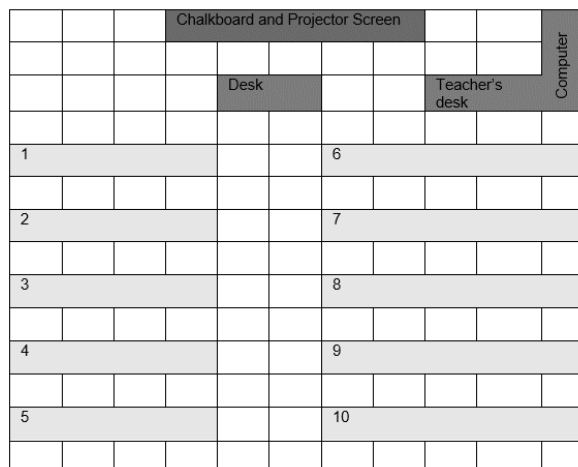
Figure 8 Traditional Classroom Layout, Mrs Steyn

3.2.2 The Teachers

I refer to the teachers who participated in this study using pseudonyms to protect their identities and ensure anonymity. They are therefore styled as Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn, respectively. Both Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn, despite their teaching EHL, speak Afrikaans as home languages and identify as female. Mrs Davids, the first teacher observed, is a 53-year-old woman who identifies as Coloured. She teaches at School A. As a woman with a passion for the humanities, Mrs Davids studied a Bachelor of Arts in Language and Culture (BA) in which she majored in English and Afrikaans, and did a Higher Diploma in Education (HDE). In 2017, after 29 years of teaching, Mrs Davids embarked on an Honours Degree in English. Mrs Davids is the grade planner for Grade 10 EHL and has many years of experience marking the NSC examinations for EHL and English First Additional Language. Mrs Steyn is a 46-year-old woman who identifies as White. Initially indecisive about her career path, Mrs Steyn completed a Bachelor of Arts (BA) majoring in English and Psychology. She went further to do an Honours Degree in Psychology before completing her Higher Diploma in Education (HDE). Mrs Steyn is also the grade planner for Grade 10 EHL and, like Mrs Davids, also has extensive experience as an NSC examination marker, specifically for Paper 2, which is the literature paper, including poetry. She has been teaching for 20 years.

3.3.3 The Learners

I refer to the racial demographic of the learners in Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's classes as an aspect that forms part of their identity and cultural background which they bring with them into the activity system, thereby having an influence in their learning and is thus of interest to the study.

Mrs Davids' Grade 10 EHL class consisted of 28 learners, many of whom appeared to be within the age group of 15-17 years. The class consisted of mostly White learners, with one exception: one learner, a girl, who identified as Coloured. The learners in Mrs Davids' class were all Afrikaans-speaking and chose EHL as an elective subject. Mrs Steyn's class consisted of 29 learners, who, like Mrs Davids' learners, appeared to be within the ages of 15-17 years of age. Mrs Steyn's class consisted of entirely White learners and were all Afrikaans-speaking. Mrs Steyn's class also elected to study EHL as a subject of choice. Two poetry lessons of each teacher were observed.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Lesson Observations

According to Eradze, Rodríguez-Triana & Laanpere (2017), lesson observations are a means to gather data on "individual behaviours, interactions, or the physical setting" by looking at the way people behave, the events that occur, the tools used, and the physical display (p. 76) of those engaged in the activity system. The researcher's role is non-participatory and there are no instances of significant communication or the asking of questions (Maree, 2007) pertaining to the subject dealt with in the activity system. The lesson observations provided me with a comprehensive view of the praxis of poetry teaching and learning. I negotiated a convenient time during which my lesson observations could take place by way of email, after which WhatsApp communication became the modus operandi between myself and Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn, respectively. Examples of WhatsApp messages of communication can be viewed at Appendix 6.4.

Two lessons were observed of each teacher which, due to the nature of the September test series during the course of my observation, greatly influenced the length of time of each period. They generally varied between 38-50 minutes each and varied even more on the days in which the school had their assemblies, or extended breaks for cultural activities. Mrs Davids organised that I observe her teaching of both poems over a double period, which, perhaps as a limitation to this study, allowed me to observe a lesson presented without the usual time constraints. This, however, was not possible with Mrs Steyn's lessons, where her double lessons were split between the first and fifth periods, for example.

In her lesson, Mrs Davids made use of a prescribed textbook from which the learners study their poetry. However, in both poetry teaching lessons, Mrs Davids furnished her learners and me with additional copies of the poems to be studied (See Appendix 6.1). Mrs Steyn made use of a poetry booklet, called *War and Humanity* (see Appendix 6.2) which she compiled herself with the help of her colleagues. It consisted of 10 poems. This was also collected. Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn both agreed to being recorded with audio recording and video recording devices, which were placed on my desk at the back of the class so as not to disturb the learners in front of me and instead blend into the background as a non-participant observer. A camera was set up in the most convenient, yet inconspicuous, place in the classroom. In Mrs Davids' class, it was placed on the floor, facing upwards. In Mrs Steyn's class, the camera was placed on my desk, propped up on books as inconspicuously as possible, as per the explicit requests of Mrs Steyn, who was very camera-shy. These recordings were later transcribed by first typing out the audio recordings verbatim, using Google voice typing, and then checking the accuracy of the transcriptions using the video recordings which also allowed me to see the gestural details of the teacher and learners' body language. Only the extracts used for analysis were included in this thesis. The rest of the transcripts are protected in my research archives and can be available upon request.

As a non-participant observer, I was able to make notes (see Appendix 6.1 to 6.3) on the teaching practice of both teachers. As a researcher, I had to try and safeguard myself from the limitations of this method which include the inherent susceptibility of the researcher to observer bias and the impact my presence has on the classroom ecology (Eradze, Rodríguez-Triana & Laanpere, 2017). It was thus something of which I was constantly and actively aware. It is for this reason that I specifically chose the third term in which to do my observations as it is the term when student teachers are prevalent on the school site. I also asked the teachers to tell their learners about my coming to the school as a way to prepare them. This worked well, as the learners appeared to be comfortable with my presence and continued in their usual, chatty demeanour prior to (and in some cases, during) the lesson.

3.4.2 Focus-group Discussions

I chose to conduct focus-group discussions with the learners of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn as it uses "group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Flick, 2009, p. 203). The focus-group discussion was employed as

a data collection tool to document a collaborative effort at meaning-making in which learners "build on each other's ideas and comments to provide in-depth view" (Maree, 2007, p. 90) on the issues being discussed regarding poetry. Due to the nature of this study, which discussed contentious issues raised through poetry, was a suitable method of data collection with school-going learners as it is especially "helpful with young people" who may become "bored after a sequence of verbal questions" (Colucci, 2007, p. 1424). According to Colucci (2007), focus groups are also helpful in discussing sensitive topics (p. 1422), which in the case of this study were raised though poetry. Thus, the aim was to gain an insight into the learners' experience of the poetry lessons through discussions that were constantly mediated by me so as to remain on topic.

The learners were chosen through non-probability, purposive sampling. I intentionally assigned the agency of whom to choose for the group discussions to the teachers. It quickly dawned upon me that Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's classes were vastly different and that, if I were to choose, I might have chosen the learners who presented as most interactive. As a teacher, I have experienced that even learners who do not say much in class, often have much to say afterwards and I did not want to lose the opportunity of hearing those learners, too. Thus, I advised Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn to choose a balanced sample of six learners they thought would contribute to the discussion meaningfully, as well as learners who were overtly willing. Each learner had to consent to their participation and their parents had to sign a form of assent (See Appendix 3.3), further discussed in Section 3.8 and are referred to by me as Learner A to Learner F for anonymity. As a point of interest, Mrs Davids explicitly mentions her method of choosing learners, which I use as a point of discussion in Chapter 4. In allowing the teachers to choose the learners based on their personal familiarity with the learners' character, I hoped to allow the teachers to feel included in the research process. Additionally, both Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn helped me to organise, with the learners and their other teachers, that the learners stay behind after the final lesson that I observed in order to conduct the discussion with them. Mrs Davids organised an office in which I was able to stage my discussion, and Mrs Steyn allowed me the use of her classroom for the duration of the period following her lesson.

Flick (2009) contends that one of the most important things in conducting such a discussion is to produce informality in the discussion (p. 204). Thusly, I tried to make the learners feel as comfortable as possible through a friendly, light-hearted approach. I made a point of asking my questions in a conversational way and allowed the discussion to link and flow from one point to

the next. I tried to accommodate the learners in my lessons by acknowledging the multilingual nature of their method of conversation. The learners spoke to me in English, but there were instances where they used Afrikaans words to explain what they meant if they were stuck. These discussions were subsequently analysed and that which shed light on the dispositions that they hold towards poetry as well as their views on the teaching practice and classroom dynamic of their respective teachers are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

3.4.3 Semi-structured Post-observation Teacher Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are believed to be an appropriate tool to explore the "perceptions and opinions of [teachers] regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues" (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 330). It is for this reason that, to investigate the dispositions that teachers hold, especially to poetry teaching and the sensitive issues that may arise through it, a semi-structured interview is the tool most apt for engaging teachers. Furthermore, the beliefs that underpin the practices that both teachers employ may be best unearthed through a discussion that is flexible. After the lesson observations at both schools, I returned to Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's classrooms to conduct semi-structured interviews. During the course of my research I had fostered a rapport with both teachers which enabled them to be comfortable with me as a younger teacher seeking to learn from them. Both teachers thus entered easily into cordial discussions guided by predetermined questions (See Appendix 4). Assured that the interviews would not be published anywhere and that the video recordings would remain in my and my supervisor's strictest confidence, the teachers were more open about being recorded than they were during the course of the lesson observations. The interviews were both an hour long and room was provided for the conversation to expand to a certain level of digression and contract to refocus on the questions. As a means of engaging the teachers, I shared some personal details of my own teaching practice as they shared theirs. These discussions were recorded verbatim and what they brought to light about the dispositions teachers hold towards poetry and the aspects that underlie their teaching practice is analysed in detail in Chapter 4.

Throughout the data collection phase of this study, my desire has always been to be as inconspicuous as possible, drawing as little attention to myself as possible. To this end, I purposefully requested to be seated at the very back of each classroom and tried to appear as non-threatening as possible by smiling at the learners and making small-talk when the opportunity

arose. The timing of my class visits was also a calculated decision so that it coincided with student teacher practical period. I did this in the hopes of the learners being used to seeing new and unknown student teachers, thereby not feeling intimidated by my presence. Happily, it worked and the learners, for the most part, were able to conduct themselves within the classrooms as they usually do.

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the act of preparing, organising, and coding the data that has been collected so that the researcher can "make sense of text and images" which will ultimately assist in the answering of the research problem (Creswell, 2012). To that end, I made use of CHAT as the overarching framework for my activity system analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed to break down the codes into meaning and reinforce the role of CHAT in decoding the activity system. Barrett's Taxonomy was used to look into the critical questions that Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn used to develop meaning-making and criticality. Finally, Waghid's (2015) democratic citizenship education was drawn upon as a framework through which the success of CL may be measured.

3.5.1 CHAT and CDA

As detailed in Section 3.2, CHAT was identified as the most suitable method through which my data for this specific study was to be analysed. I used the insights of CHAT to look into the activity systems of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn and analyse the interacting elements within each that ultimately led to my understanding of the practices within each system that enabled and constrained meaning making and criticality. I looked at how Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn, the subjects of this study, used the tools available to them (which included the poems and their teaching style) to mediate the learning process in the classroom in order to reach the objective: critical literacy. I looked at how the actions of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn's teaching practices inherently outlined and enforced the division of labour in the classroom community. The immediate (stipulated classroom rules) and overarching rules (The CAPS document) that frame and inform the classroom dynamics were also examined in their contribution towards the combined object of both activity systems, that is, critically literate learners who have the skills to read the world and make a meaningful impact, as per the third generation of CHAT.

I drew upon Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to strengthen my analysis of meaning making and criticality through poetry through CHAT. Since CDA is not just analysis of discourse but, according to Fairclough (2013) also the analysis of the relations between discourse and other aspects of the social interactions within the community, it enabled me to identify the breaking down or reinforcement of social issues through the classroom discourse and how these issues could be corrected or mitigated (Fairclough, 2013, p. 11).

3.5.2 Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory

Insights from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory were used to ascertain the level of engagement with learners' prior knowledge, cultural background, and history that Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn employed in their respective teaching practices. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development construct, I was able to see the nature of the scaffolding practices and mediation of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn as the MKOs through their engagements with learners in the negotiation of meaning through the use of poetry as a tool.

3.5.3 Barrett's Taxonomy

The engagements (verbally and textually) with learners were further measured using Barrett's Taxonomy (Barret, 1976, as cited in Reeves). Barrett's Taxonomy is a tool implemented by Umalusi and used by the Department of Basic Education in the setting of comprehension questions for Home and First Additional Language examinations. The aim was to establish a language used to assess the various "cognitive demands" of each question asked (Reeves, 2012, p. 34). As such, it comprises five main levels of comprehension:

- Level 1: Literal Comprehension
- Level 2: Reorganisation
- Level 3: Inference
- Level 4: Evaluation
- Level 5: Appreciation

I used Barrett's Taxonomy to identify verbal and textual questions asked by Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn in class and for homework. In so doing, Barrett's Taxonomy enabled me to establish instances where teachers employed questions that actively challenged learners to make "evaluative judgement" on the qualities, acceptability, accuracy, or worth of sentiments conveyed within poetry texts as well as "show emotional…sensitivity to the text" based on its esteemed worth in terms of its psychological and artistic elements (Reeves, 2012, p. 36). Thus, I was able to unearth

instances present within classroom deliberation as well as within the poetry homework set by the teachers where the development of meaning making and criticality is hindered or enabled.

3.5.4 Democratic Citizenship Education

Finally, Waghid's (2015) framework for Democratic Citizenship Education was used against which I measured the success of critically literate learners, which outlines characteristics that I believe are exemplified by critically literate citizens. I adapted Waghid's DCE framework to be pertinent to this study and took the liberty of meshing it with CHAT concepts. I looked at what practices Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn employed

1. to encourage [learners] not to repeat the racist, repressive, and authoritarian apartheid past,
2. to engender [communal/classroom] deliberation to ensure that all [learners] are engaged with, situated in, and connected to the democratic aspirations of others,
3. to develop respect for one another through our own interdependence and contribute to building an equitable and just society on the basis of reconciliation and mutual recognition of the other (as cited in Waghid, 2015, p. 254).

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To preface this section, I stress the importance of this study's adherence the ethics protocols as stipulated by the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape and the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Trustworthiness is a key concept upon which this project's ethical framework rests and is, in essence, the "concept by which to judge the quality of interpretive qualitative research" (O'Kane, Smith, & Lerman, 2021, p. 105). Generally, trustworthiness denotes the extent to which those who read this study can assess whether I have been honest in my how I conducted my research and whether the conclusions I draw from it are reasonable (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021). For this study to be trustworthy and credible, the data collection had to be reliable and valid (Maree, 2007). Reliability is the ability of an instrument to produce similar or consistent results when the test is administered multiple times at different times (Bush, 2007; Creswell, 2012). However, considering the semi-structured nature of the interviews and focus group discussions that were conducted with the teachers and learners, the subjectivity of their engagements of the topic of poetry, and the unique context in which the study took place, replicating the results found in this study to produce similar or consistent results is not guaranteed. This, I discuss later in section 3.9. To ensure as much reliability as this qualitative study is capable of achieving, the questions used for both teachers and both groups of learners were identical. The

questions were also unambiguous and clear. However, while the scope of reliability is diminished by using semi-structured instruments in which there is low predictability of results, validity, which is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure, however, is enhanced (Bush, 2007). In other words, if a test will not guarantee the same results for various similar settings, then this opens up the potential for a study's validity to be increased if it accurately measures what the unique setting requires of it to measure. Bush (2007) holds that the main potential source for invalidity in using data collection tools such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups, is bias. Bias allows the characteristics of the interviewer or the respondent as well as the content of questions to have an impact on how the respondent replies. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), it is vital that interviewers, do not affect the how the respondent perceives a question or the answer that the respondent gives. Neutrality, objectivity, and professionalism are of paramount importance when dealing with the subjective realities of the participants. In addition, I also ensured that the research took place at two schools where no immediate conflict of interest would arise as I do not teach at either of the schools. Therefore, I was able to avoid researcher's bias and maintain impartiality and objectivity.

In order for a study to be as valid and reliable as possible, Kern (2016) proposes the use of triangulation which is the "analysis of the same event, concept, or variable by combining several different angles or perspectives". Its virtue lies in its ability to reveal "convergence and divergence of different measures" which strengthens one's understanding of the phenomenon being studied (2016, p. 167). This was an especially useful strategy in this study which examined at the multifaceted experiences of learners and teachers in the same activity system. Ultimately, the result of using triangulation increased this study's validity and facilitated a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Kern, 2016). Additionally, the different sources of information by way of lesson observations, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with the teachers "ensured triangulation and accuracy of findings" (Dlamini, 2019, p. 45). I made use of different theoretical and conceptual lenses such as CHAT, CDA, and Barratt's Taxonomy in order to increase the validity of my study through triangulation. Finally, my supervisor provided me with the opportunity to present parts of my findings to a group of my peers which consisted of other MEd and PhD students from whom I received guidance about how my data was presented, especially to mitigate observer's/researcher's bias.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2021) outlines key aspects of ethical research:

> informing participants of the purpose of the study, refraining from deceptive practices, sharing information with participants (including your role as a researcher), being respectful of the research site, reciprocity, using ethical interview practices, maintaining confidentiality, and collaborating with participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 230).

As a researcher, I found a great onus rested on my shoulders to treat my participants the same way I would expect to be treated were I to participate in research the likes of which can include sensitive information. Thus, I took great pains to ensure that the ethical practices of my research were sound. After my thesis research proposal was approved by University of the Western Cape's Faculty of Education Higher Degrees (EDUHD) committee, I applied to the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the University of the Western Cape for ethical clearance. My ethical clearance document can be viewed in Appendix 1.1. Thereafter, I applied for permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to conduct my research at one of their institutions. When this was approved by the WCED (see my letter of permission to conduct research in Appendix 1.2), I sought permission from the principals of the respective schools to conduct my research at their school and informed them, in minute detail, the objectives of my study (see Appendix 2.1 for the letter of information I used as a tool to negotiate access with the respective principals and Appendix 3.1 with which I sought permission). When access to conduct research at the schools was granted, I approached the teachers via email whom I furnished with a letter of information and invitation to the class teacher (Appendix 2.2) and a letter requesting consent to conduct research in their class (see Appendix 3.2).

Considering the nature of my research, which involved the observation of 15-17-year-olds in a school setting, parental consent was of utmost importance. I approached the learners first by means of a letter of invitation to participate in my research in which the details of my study were clearly outlined (Appendix 2.3). This letter of invitation did not constitute a binding agreement but rather a request for the expression of interest in participating in my research. As the learners are minors, their legal guardian's consent necessarily preceded learners' assenting to participate in my research. As such, I sought parental consent from the learners' legal guardians in a letter which detailed the nature of my study and which they had to sign and date (see Appendix 3.3). When learners received parental consent, I was able to approach the learners who expressed interest in

my participating in my research with clear details about when and where my observations would take place, and provide them with a focus group confidentiality form (Appendix 3.4) in which I explained the nature of my envisaged focus group discussion and outlined their responsibilities. One of the boxes which learners had to tick (the first one, in fact) served as their official assent and voluntary participation in my research. Their responsibilities included the display of mutual respect and confidentiality, especially regarding the responses of other learners (see Appendix 3.4), whereas mine included a promise to keep their participation completely confidential. This was reiterated to them in person before the focus group discussions. In order to maintain their anonymity and uphold the confidentiality of their responses, the video recordings and audio, including my notes and the documents given to me by the teachers, were either password protected in my Google Drive folder, or stored as hard-copies in a safe place at home.

In an endeavour to be as transparent as was appropriate, I provided the learners with details about myself – even sharing aspects of my own as it pertained to the study, including that I worked as a teacher in a neighbouring school. I often mentioned my Grade 10s to them as means to connect with them on common ground. I allowed them to ask me questions about my role as a researcher and assured them that their responses would remain confidential. The learners appeared comfortable with me and seemed satisfied with what they were told about the woman sitting before them.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a clear outline of the research design. The use of CHAT was detailed and justified as a fundamental lens of analysis. It detailed the sampling techniques I used and described the methods of data collection I employed. It outlined the way in which data was analysed, and described the way in which the quality, validity, and reliability of this study were ensured. The ethical considerations were discussed, detailing the processes and protocols I followed to protect my participants in the data capturing and analysis phase of this study. Finally, I detailed the limitations of this research. The analysis of data is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter draws on poetry lesson observations, focus group discussions, and post-observation interviews with the teachers to answer the question, *"How does the current teaching of poetry in Grade 10 develop meaningful critical literacy?* In order to answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were investigated:

1. What are Grade 10 teachers' dispositions towards poetry?
2. What are Grade 10 learners' dispositions towards poetry?
3. How do current Grade 10 classroom literacy practices enable or constrain learners' development of meaning making and criticality through poetry?

Because disposition and poetry praxis have proven to be complexly interlinked, this chapter draws on raw data to investigate how these two elements of investigation influence each other. They are thus presented concurrently to reflect this inextricable nature. As such, the chapter begins with a discussion of how disposition influences praxis and the subsequent impact this has on the mechanics of the activity system as per CHAT. Finally, it establishes the manner in which teachers use multilingualism and multimodality as a strength to develop meaning making and criticality.

The following data transcription codes were used in the raw data:

- Words in square brackets standing alone in a line and italicised: to indicate a participant or group's action
- Square brackets […] integrated into utterances: to indicate that some words have been omitted/changed for brevity or clarity
- When a speaker's voice trails off and becomes quieter or stops completely, [*trails off*] is used to illustrate this.
- Round brackets: translation of Afrikaans to English
- Ellipsis: to indicate a pause or interrupted speech

4.1 The Influence of Disposition on Poetry Praxis

The data reveals that teachers are generally favourably disposed towards poetry, though in varying, complex, and nuanced ways. These dispositions towards poetry appear to be motivated by personal experience. In the following extract from the post-observation interview with Mrs Davids about how she goes about choosing the poetry texts to be studied in her capacity as Grade 10 planner, Mrs Davids shares the favourable feelings she has towards poetry and history that have led to her poetry selection process:

> **Extract A**
> **Post-observation Interview: Mrs Davids**
> 1. Researcher: So, how do you choose the poems that you teach, the ones that you teach now?
> 2. Mrs Davids: […] I choose the poems that I love. But I love choosing a mixture of South African poetry, African poetry, and then your classics. I like that. I like to expose my learners to different types of poetry, a little bit of American poetry, so that I... I love history. That's my other passion. It was never a major, I only did [History as a subject] up to Matric, but I could have taught History, as well.

At surface value, an overarching love of literature and history serves as a factor that has led Mrs Davids to be overtly favourably disposed towards poetry. Mrs Davids' disposition towards poetry is a complex interplay between her longstanding personal interests and the experiences in her life that have shaped her as a person and teacher. These dispositions, informed by "prior life experience, beliefs, and assumptions" (West et al., 2020, p. 186), manifest in the way Mrs Davids thinks about poetry and the verbal and non-verbal actions she takes within her poetry teaching practice. For Mrs Davids, specifically, her overtly favourable disposition stems from a complex link between two things towards which she genuinely enjoys, namely poetry and history, and, in so doing, she "choose[s] the poems that [she] loves" (Utterance 2). This favourable disposition towards historical poetry manifests observably within her teaching practice through the choices she makes regarding the selection of texts to be studied, such as *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga* by Ingrid Jonker and *The Runaway Slave* by Walt Whitman. But Mrs Davids' favourable disposition runs deeper than meets the eye. Her disposition, at a covert level, appears to be the driving force behind her underlying critical objective through which she sees poetry as a tool to reach her critical aims. Both of these poems that "[she] love[s]" are not only historically significant but are based within the historical period of institutionalised hardship in both South Africa's apartheid and North America's era of slavery. They shed light on the "historically constructed voices and experiences" (Giroux, 1989, p. 33-34) of the oppressed. As such, these poems align with Mrs Davids' inherent desire for criticality in her classroom as they are valued as a means to create awareness in the pursuit of "human emancipation in circumstances of domination and oppression" (Bohman, 2016). Texts that speak to these aims therefore greatly enhance Mrs Davids' disposition. The generally favourable disposition towards texts that speak to oppression appears to be rooted in her own experiences with unfair treatment at the hands of the apartheid government, illustrating how past experiences shape disposition.

This extract reveals a multi-layered contradiction within the subject (Mrs Davids) and within two different activity systems that appear to coexist in Mrs Davids and within the poetry teaching classroom. Mrs Davids loves poetry and History (so much so that she calls History her "other passion" in Utterance 2). This is a primary contradiction within the subject as both poetry study (English) and History are two different subjects with, at times, overlapping objects, for example: the CAPS (2011) Document for History mentions the objective of teaching learners to "[think] *critically* about the stories people tell us about the past, as well as the stories we tell ourselves" (p. 8) and the EHL CAPS (2011) Document echoes the critical stance in that language should be used to "[interact] *critically* with a wide range of texts" and for "challenging the perspectives, values and power relations embedded in texts" (p. 9). In both English and History, the object of challenging stories and perspectives critically is envisioned. Both English (poetry) and History as subjects and points of interest live within Mrs Davids and influence her poetry teaching practices greatly. What is important to note about Mrs Davids' disposition is that it predisposes the classroom activity system to develop a quaternary contradiction: Mrs Davids' love and desire to teach History and English (two very different subjects, and thereby activity systems, with two very different objects in each) is conflicting. Her love of both subjects predisposes her to inflict disturbances on the activity system if the object for her English activity system and History as a subject are intertwined.

In contrast, Mrs Steyn's overt disposition towards poetry, though generally favourable like Mrs Davids, is complex and varies greatly to Mrs Davids'. When asked by the researcher in the post-observation interview whether she enjoys teaching poetry, Mrs Steyn shared her conflicting feelings towards poetry teaching:

Extract B	
Post-observation Interview: Mrs Steyn	
1. Researcher:	OK, so, […] do you enjoy teaching poetry?
2. Mrs Steyn:	Yes, I do. I don't always feel like I'm *very good* at poetry, but I do enjoy it. So, if I can … It's important for me to get it so that I can get the kids to get, it otherwise … But there are also poems where I sometimes think, like, I don't know if *I* really get it. But I try. […] I do enjoy teaching the poetry though, yeah.
3. Researcher:	It's so refreshing to hear that sometimes [even] you feel like you don't always get it.
4. Mrs Steyn:	Yeah. Sometimes, I just don't really get it. It's like … I mean, you can *tell* it's good and I enjoy it, but […] ... to teach it, it's hard. For example, this Matric poem that we do, the EE Cummings one, *somewhere i have never travelled:gladly beyond* … I find it hard to teach that poem. I sometimes think that [like with] E. E. Cummings: You must just, like, listen to it and feel him and experience him, and then move on.

Mrs Steyn mentions that she does enjoy teaching poetry (Utterance 2), but this favourable disposition is conditional, and therefore complex. Mrs Steyn's disposition, though favourable, aligns with the findings of others (Cox, 1989; Hughes, 2007; Cubukcu, 2010) who report a consensus that poetry teaching causes a general sense of nervousness within teachers. In addition, Mrs Steyn's utterances confirm Xerri's (2016) similar finding that poetry "makes teachers feel alarmed, naked, and inadequate" (p. 3). She speaks frankly when she says that although she knows it is a good poem and that she enjoys it, she experiences the act of teaching it as "hard" (Utterance 4), an utterance which suggests feelings of inadequacy when teaching certain poems. There appears to be an internal shift within Mrs Steyn from an overt display of a favourable disposition of enjoyment and appreciation towards poetry, to one that, through the act of teaching and attempting to unpack it to her learners, becomes less-favourable. As such, Mrs Steyn's feelings give rise to a primary contradiction within the subject: Mrs Steyn enjoys poetry, but her disposition is shrouded in doubt, trepidation, and discomfort.

Foot (2014) mentions that primary contradictions "[serve] as a foundation for other levels of contradiction" (p. 21-22) and this is demonstrated by the contradictions that arise as a result of this primary contradiction and conflict within Mrs Steyn. Because Mrs Steyn is subject to the expectation of society, her peers, or the Department of Education in her capacity as an experienced NSC Marker to be "good" at poetry (constituting the unspoken rules that govern her practice), and her relation to poetry that she finds challenging (tool), Mrs Steyn's feelings of inadequacy and discomfort drive her to assign roles within the classroom to remedy this disjuncture. The pressure she feels to be "good" at poetry and to "get it" (Utterances 2 and 4) ultimately lend her to modify the division of labour within the class in which the focus is placed on her as the knowledge producer. For Mrs Steyn, the importance of *her* understanding of the poem so that her learners might understand it becomes paramount as illustrated when she says, "It's important for me to get it so that I can get the kids to get" (Utterance 2). Her utterance suggests that without her, her learners will fail to "get" the poetry, negating any role and agency learners might have in the meaning making and criticality of the poem. As is clear in Mrs Steyn's use of first-person pronoun and the positioning of her subjectivities as the centre of the discussion in relation to the poems selected for study, Mrs Steyn *inadvertently* positions herself as the key role-player in the learners' success by being the source of knowledge and meaning-making in the classroom. While her

intentions appear to come from a place of wanting to help her learners "get" the poetry, she inadvertently positions her learners as "vessels to be filled" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Mrs Steyn's assumed positionality as the MKO gives rise to a secondary contradiction, as there is tension between the division of labour assigned by her and the community that seems to exclude the learners in the unpacking of it. Contrary to CHAT theory, this action positions the learners as passive recipients of information who are not part of the meaning-making process. This self-imposed positioning of MKO seems to be a source of pressure for Mrs Steyn and may be the reason she does not feel "good at poetry" (Utterance 2). The self-imposed pressure that has been brought on by a traditional division of labour within the classroom appears to diminish Mrs Steyn's favourable disposition to a disposition of discomfort. But instead of seeing discomfort as a means to develop growth in her own practice as advocated by Boler (1999), Mrs Steyn allows her discomfort to lead her into making choices to ease these destabilising feelings.

The analysis of data further reveals that teachers choose texts which function to maintain a degree of safety and familiarity within poetry teaching practice. This practice has far-reaching effects that can hinder the development of meaning making and criticality of poems. The following extract illustrates the manner in which Mrs Steyn's rehearsed poetry selection process allows her to play it safe in her teaching of poetry to minimise feelings of discomfort:

Extract C	
Post-observation Interview: Mrs Steyn	
1. Researcher:	How do you choose the poetry that you teach?
2. Mrs Steyn:	With the Grade 10 one [poetry module] we've had it for a while, and maybe it is time to review it. But, like, I always find that if something works and the kids enjoy it, then I always think then, "Why change it because it's working for them?" […] I put [the War and Humanity Poetry Module] together one day and we looked through it and we decided together. My colleague and I [said to ourselves], "Well, that's all working quite nicely". With the Grade 11 poems we follow the Department. Long time ago, the Department gave us a list of poems that we had to do.
3. Researcher:	So, the Department does give a list?
4. Mrs Steyn:	Not for Grade 11 anymore. As far as I know, it's just prescribed anthologies and then – so that's why I still just do… So, this year, we've changed some of the Grade 11 poems as well. Like, we used the same ones [for] like, forever, and that was a list that the Department gave us. And I just got a bit bored and so now we've changed it and we have – just this year – made up some new ones and kept some of the old ones, and just put some new *old* matric ones from the previous syllabus. You know: Poems that we enjoy.

It is because of the power that textual selection holds that Street (2013) deems it necessary for texts to be chosen with "purpose and thought" (p. 57). However, given Mrs Steyn's feelings of nervousness and insecurity in the teaching of poetry, the purpose and thought that goes into Mrs Steyn's choice of text suggests less of a focus on pushing boundaries that will challenge the

learners and herself to think critically, and more towards that which maintains a degree of comfort within her teaching practice. As such, she inadvertently uses her choice of text to that end. Despite Mrs Steyn's knowledge that there is a need for her textual selection to be reviewed (as established when she mentions that "… [they]'ve had [the poems] for a while and maybe it is time to review it" in Utterance 1), the practice of maintaining the status quo is reinforced and perpetuated. She questions why one would change poetry if it "works for [her learners] and [they] enjoy it" (Utterance 1). Thus, her evaluation of what "works" and is enjoyable appears to be founded on the text's suitability to be used with ease and little resistance. This is an important assertion as it suggests that Mrs Steyn specifically chooses poetry that fosters a comfortable and pleasurable environment for her learners. Whereas a comfortable and pleasurable environment is certainly a goal to strive for in poetry teaching practice, thus making her rationale understandable, it does not necessarily lend itself to the development of healthy discomfort, which Zembylas (2015) suggests as a necessary component to fostering growth (in this case, the development of literacy and criticality). Instead, this practice appears to develop a critical literacy-impeding coping mechanism: the maintenance of a comfort zone through safe, reliable poetry texts.

As a result of Mrs Steyn's deliberate choices in poetry texts, the data shows that Mrs Steyn's learners present with overwhelmingly positive responses to questions about their experiences with poetry which suggests that Mrs Steyn's poetry choices pose little risk to their deep-seated beliefs and ideologies. Extract D, from the focus group discussion with Mrs Steyn's learners, indicates a favourable and open disposition towards poetry as a genre in which they find beauty and meaning:

Extract D	
Focus Group: Mrs Steyn	
1. Researcher:	So, I wanted to ask you guys, firstly... What is your understanding of poetry, firstly? What exactly... What is poetry?
2. Learner A:	Poetry is art, in a sense, because it's expression in the [sense] that you use words in a much more beautiful way than usual. So, it's much more expressive... and art is defined by expressing.
3. Researcher:	Because I'm trying to be able to understand. My study is about poetry, and I can't find a [an exact] definition about poetry, so, I think it's a very abstract thing, right?
4. Learner B:	I think that poetry means something different to each individual person. One example is: For some people, it might be an outlet for, like, certain emotions to, like, to write it down on paper... So yeah, I think it can be considered as an outlet if you need to deal with some emotional stuff. But yeah, like I said, it can be different.
5. Learner A:	Ja, and it's a bit in [contradiction to] that thing that they say: A picture paints a thousand words... I feel like one word can actually really mean a thousand things, as well. And that's what poetry is…
6. Researcher:	Completely. You said something about it being beautiful. Is poetry always beautiful?
7. Learner B:	Well, I think "beautiful" in a sense that it moves you, like it doesn't mean… "Beautiful" does not mean pretty, "beautiful" means, like, something [inside us] changes.

The CAPS document (2011) mentions that the main reason for studying literature is to develop a sensitivity to the special use of language that is "more refined, literary, figurative, symbolic, and deeply meaningful" (p. 12) and Mrs Steyn's learners' view of poetry aligns with the aims of CAPS, indicating a degree of success in Mrs Steyn's literature teaching. Her learners are sensitive to the nuances of language and display some insight into the nature of literature. Mrs Steyn's learners describe poetry as an "art" in which words are used in a "more beautiful way than usual" in which the writer "expresses" themselves (Utterance 2), a definition that suggests positive associations with poetry texts and a generally favourable disposition. Learner A mentions something very important when they say that "one word can mean a thousand things" (Utterance 5). The deconstruction of texts is necessary for meaning making and criticality, and this is something that Mrs Steyn's learners seem to understand. The idea of one word meaning many different things suggests the nature of poetry texts to be layered in which learners need to develop tools to unpack "what is said and what is hidden" (Huang, 2013, p. 66).

The fact that Mrs Steyn's learners are aware of the nature of poetry texts is an important understanding that will likely promote an open disposition towards meaning making and criticality through texts. Though Mrs Steyn's learners' positive dispositions towards poetry may appear to be a good thing for the development of critical literacy, it is not that simple, as "deconstruction is not enough" (Janks, 2005, p. 42), and Mrs Steyn does not, through her textual selection "provide [her] learners with a lived experience of difference" (Janks, 2005, p. 42). The dispositions that learners have towards poetry texts may serve them to develop a degree of meaning making and criticality, but not necessarily criticality that will see them aiding in upsetting oppression and engaging with the world in a critical manner by questioning "dominant systems of power" (Firoi, 2015, p. 813) within their own context. What is important to note about Mrs Steyn's learners and the dispositions that they hold towards poetry is that their dispositions appear to have been acquired within the dispositional climate established by their teacher in the classroom. Mrs Steyn's disposition towards poetry leads her to make pedagogical choices within the classroom that suit her object and lie within her realm of familiarity and comfort. As such, Mrs Steyn's learners are exposed to a variety of poems, but, of the ten poems chosen for study in Grade 10 year, only two poems deal with contextually significant contentious issues (like racial inequality or Black subjectivity, for example, in South Africa). Though Mrs Steyn's learners are exposed to poetry

that touches on difficult issues (See Appendix 6.2 for the War and Humanity poetry bundle), these difficult poems are situated in settings that are far removed from the learners' immediate frame of reference (such as the poem, *Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats* by Robert Lowell about the war in Vietnam, studied by the learners during the course of this study's observations). This is another way in which Mrs Steyn uses her poetry choices to play it safe within her poetry teaching practice. Because of the distance between the learners' frame of reference and the hardships and struggle expressed in the poems selected for study, the learners are likely cognitively dissonant towards these poems as they do not make them immediately uncomfortable as perhaps a South African Struggle/protest poem would.

Whereas the setting of the poems may be different, human hardships remain a shared historical experience and so, despite Mrs Steyn's poetry choices rarely addressing South African issues, there are experiences addressed in the poems through which common experiences can be linked and explored to remedy learners' lack of exposure to contextually significant poetry that addresses contextually significant hardships. Yet, when the opportunity arises for Mrs Steyn to link issues addressed in contentious poetry back to the learners' experiences and within their lifeworlds as South African citizens, she seldom makes use of this practice. This is a missed opportunity. Extract E stands as illustration to such an instance:

Extract E	
Lesson 1: Mrs Steyn	
Poem: *Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats* by Robert Lowell	
1. Mrs Steyn:	It's a very strange title, yes. We gonna get to that now. So, like I said, [the poet] was deeply *particularly* deeply shocked at the allied bombing of the German cities. He said a lot of civilians were killed for no reason, okay. They just bombed the cities so a lot of people died. And then… So, that struck him very deeply, and then when Vietnam... ag, when *America* decided to enter the Vietnam war, he became a conscientious objector, okay? What does that mean?
2. Learner A:	He doesn't want to fight.
3. Mrs Steyn:	Don't [want to] fight and also was against war. He would rile people up against war. He was imprisoned at some stage, okay, but he was very much against the Vietnam War. And, as a result, we have this poem.

Extract E shows how Mrs Steyn deals with an instance of conscientious objection by people who are dissatisfied with the actions of a government (Utterance 1), so much so that the poet, Robert Lowell, was moved to write poetry (Utterance 3) through which he unpacked "complex social issues" (Hughes, 2007, p. 1) found within poetry. Yet, despite many important deliberative encounters that could have been instigated by Mrs Steyn to link it back to a realm within which

learners may comment critically on issues within their own histories and experiences, the opportunity is missed and instead the discussion remains within the scope of the poem's context. (*Where else were instances of senseless, large-scale violence against innocents like this seen? Do they know of any conscientious objectors in their own country's history? What happened to White people who did not agree with/refused the actions of the National Party during apartheid, for example? How important is it to stand up against things which one believes to be wrong in spite of the possibility of dire outcomes?).* There are multiple parallels that could have been drawn between the poet's reality and the reality of many poets and people across South Africa (Ingrid Jonker, for example). Yet, the opportunity to reflect critically on their own experiences and identities" (Wissman and Wiseman, 2011, p. 236) as citizens of South Africa is not readily provided, and is thus a practice that may hinder the development of criticality. As such, once again, Mrs Steyn's poetry teaching classes suggest a safe focus on poetry as isolated and not situated within a global community, and most importantly, their own communities.

Finally, the fact that Mrs Steyn chooses poetry texts that suit her aim naturally entails that the texts have been used over an extensive period of time. This has additional implications for Mrs Steyn's teaching practice and curtails the development of critical literacy within her poetry classes. As illustration of the lengthy timespan across which Mrs Steyn uses her poetry texts, Mrs Steyn mentions in Extract A that the Grade 10 poetry (See Appendix 6.2) that is currently taught is a selection that they have "had […] for a while" (Utterance 1), which Mrs Steyn compiled in collaboration with her colleagues and named *War and Humanity*. According to her, it comprises "old Grade 12 poems from a long time ago" (Utterance 1). Mrs Steyn's use of the words "old" and "a long time ago" emphasise the extent to which these poems have been used over an extensive period of time. Even though some of the poems that Mrs Steyn has chosen feature engagement with "difficult knowledge" (Bryan, 2016, p. 10), a quintessential aspect of a pedagogy of discomfort that promotes growth, the familiarity of the poem as a unit of analysis over a period of time can neutralise feelings of discomfort within Mrs Steyn. The question therefore exists whether, despite Mrs Steyn's intimate familiarity with her texts for study, she will be awake to *new* ways of investigating the explicit and implicit meaning and ideology that lie within the text (Ioannidou, 2015; Dallacqua & Low, 2019) with her learners. Unfortunately, this becomes a challenge when Mrs Steyn herself has chosen texts that predispose her to view the text as a familiar, comfortable tool to maintain a familiar and comfortable practice, potentially blinding her to alternative

perspectives and impacting adversely on her critical teaching practice. The tension between the CHAT elements within the activity system, specifically the tool (the poem) and the subject (Mrs Steyn), are slackened, causing the object of the activity system (critical literacy through poetry) to be inadequately achieved.

Interestingly, and perhaps paradoxically, the data also reveals that *even when* teachers seemingly challenge their learners by selecting poetry texts that deal with contentious themes, and subsequently push the boundaries within learners' realm of comfort, elements of self-preservation and playing it safe still remain, covertly, within the teaching practice. This phenomenon is observable within Mrs Davids' teaching practice even though she presents as being more favourably disposed and comfortable with poetry in general in contrast to Mrs Steyn. This functions simultaneously as both an enabling and constraining factor to the development of literacy and criticality. Extract F illustrates how Mrs Davids chooses poetry texts with the express purpose of challenging her learners, but which, for various reasons, remain a comfortable, safe choice for her within her poetry practice:

Extract F	
Post-observation Interview: Mrs Davids	
1. Researcher:	Both [*The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga* by Ingrid Jonker and *The Runaway Slave* by Walt Whitman are] poems I have never [taught].
2. Mrs Davids:	Really? It's of my favourites! So, I started with the Ingrid Jonker poem. So, Walt Whitman and Sylvia Plath, those are the classic American poets. Very similar, were very similar in their thinking, in their political views, and all of those things… You can't divorce yourself from your writing. So, all of who you are in terms of the way you were raised, your political beliefs your sexual orientation, your religious orientation, all of that, in one way or another, is reflected in your poetry. Whether it's this one poem or that particular poem. It comes from a collection of poetry and if you read the entire collection, there are so many different aspects of the American slave movement that you can learn from.

Mrs Davids, like Mrs Steyn, chooses the poetry to be studied with "purpose and thought" (Street, 2013). In contrast to Mrs Steyn whose "purpose and thought" in textual selection seems to be vested into that which will allow her learners and herself a comfortable, pleasant poetry experience, Mrs Davids' "purpose and thought" is grounded within a critical objective in which she endeavours to expose her learners to texts and teaching that encourage the use of their judgement to investigate instances of oppression and marginalisation (Bohman, 2016). This appeared to be a quintessential aspect of her teaching practice throughout my observations of her, and constitutes an example of the kind of teacher risk-taking that can lead to the development of critical literacy (Moore &

Begoray, 2017). In this regard, Mrs Davids actively employs a principle of a pedagogy of discomfort within her poetry teaching practice through challenging her learners to revaluate their "cherished beliefs and assumptions" (Boler, 1999) and "reflect on language, culture, experiences and memories" (Flint & Laman, 2012, p. 14) so that they might eventually develop sensitivity and tolerance towards these differences in the other, thereby developing empathy (Kaşlıoğlu & Ersin, 2018), an important component of critical literacy development.

In as much as these texts advance the aims of critical literacy, there are also constraining factors that exist within the more implicit layers of Mrs Davids' practice. Although these texts are difficult and challenging to read, they are also texts with which she holds some kind of personal connection. Because Mrs Davids loves and feels safe in dealing with historical protest poetry, this genre is a pervasive choice in her teaching practice. In fact, the poems that Mrs Davids chooses are termed by her as "[her] *favourites*" (Utterance 2), confirming this favourable disposition and the degree of keen familiarity she holds towards the poems that *she* chooses. But it is through Mrs Davids' poetry choices where the assertion of Ioannidou (2015), echoed by Dallacqua & Low (2019), that texts contain layers of implicit and explicit meaning and ideology, becomes especially apparent in practice. It is this implicit and explicit meaning and ideology appreciated by Mrs Davids that seems to draw her to certain poems within her teaching practice *because* they appear to align quite closely to the world view, beliefs, and political stances she herself holds. Mrs Davids mentions that the poems she selects as her "favourites" are written by "classic" poets (such as Walt Whitman and Sylvia Plath) who share the commonality of having similar ways of thinking and "political views" (Utterance 2). And so, as an overtly political teacher, Mrs Davids appears to use her poetry teaching practice to drive a political agenda where texts are purposefully and intelligently used by her to convey the messages she deems necessary for her learners to receive (evidently, to create awareness of the injustices of the past). But because the messages and ideologies that lie within these texts are sentiments with which Mrs Davids sides, and, as such, suit her purpose, she is likely not challenged by their underlying ideologies or how they may position one entity at the expense of the others (Janks, 2012). Her textual choices thus maintain a poetry teaching pedagogy of comfort within which Mrs Davids's dominant views go unchallenged by that which is communicated within the text while expecting her learners to be challenged. This phenomenon is likely to cause a disconnect or disjuncture between Mrs Davids and her learners as both parties (Mrs Davids and her learners) are actively engaged in meaning making processes that run adjacent

to each other as opposed to sharing the meaning making process through "mediation" and "collaboration" as sociocultural theory deems optimal (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), especially in a genre that is perceived to be difficult (Peskin, 1998). *Can Mrs Davids work effectively with learners' feelings of discomfort when she is situated within a realm of safety and security in the texts she has chosen and thereby potentially blinded to their meaning making process resulting from the "interplay between reader and text" (Mbelani, 2014, p. 14)?* The question also exists whether learners will feel comfortable with presenting oppositional readings of the poem and its ideological underpinnings knowing that it will conflict with the inherent views of their teacher which are so openly advocated. If not, the relationship that exists between Mrs Davids and the poetry text silences the multivoicedness of the activity system, constraining meaning making and criticality.

Mrs Davids' implicit need to prepare herself for her lessons to feel safe and in control manifests in other covert ways too. The analysis of data further revealed that teachers' extensive preparation of poems can constrain the meaning making and criticality practices within the classroom activity system. The following extract illustrates Mrs Davids' introduction to the poem *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga* by Ingrid Jonker in which Mrs Davids displays extensive content and historical knowledge underpinning the poem and poet. Consider Extract G:

Extract G	
Lesson 1: Mrs Davids	
Poem: *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga* **by Ingrid Jonker**	
1. Mrs Davids:	**A. 1.** […] Grade 10, Ingrid Jonker, a phenomenal poet. Born on the African continent, born in South Africa, took her life at the age of 32, sadly, simply walking into the sea at Bantry Bay. A life gone too soon. A life gone too soon. A brilliant, brilliant mind, snuffed out just like that by her own hands, yes. She had a tumultuous childhood. Grew up – how many of you come from the Northern Cape? – […] to parents who had a very stormy, a very rocky relationship and ended up getting divorced. **2.** The dad, being for the time that he lived in, a typical, Afrikaans-speaking […] person, mom very different to what one would normally expect of an Afrikaans woman. Uhm… For some reason or the other, they eventually came to [town]. Can you believe it? They lived in [town] at some stage. […]. She went to school in Wynberg […].
	B. 1. if you read a little bit about the background of Ingrid Jonker: what she said when she was still alive was that her childhood after the divorce, after her parents' divorce, was actually a happy childhood. It's an amazing thing; you don't often get that. **2.** Because her grandma and her own mother allowed her to express herself freely whereas her dad was an extremely conservative person. And if you were interested in the arts during that time, which Ingrid was, you were considered to be very alternative, almost. You didn't fit the mainstream […].
	C. 1. Ingrid then also happened to become involved with a group of poets, and we've spoken about this before. I'm sure you've learnt about this in Afrikaans. It was a group of poets called "Die Sestigers". Did you learn about that? Brayton Breytenbach […] Andre P. Brink? Jack Cope is another one; he's an Englishman. Adam Smal, [who] was the Coloured renowned poet from Cape Town. […].

D. 1. The fact that they had a Coloured person in the mix said something about the "Sestigers". They called themselves "The Sestigers" and she became involved with them and their way of thinking which was very contrary to the predominant Politics of the time. They felt that what was happening in South Africa with apartheid, with the National Party subjugating, in a way, Coloured and Black people and Indian people to their rule, them not believing that is the right thing to do and then working on using the art of writing as a way of protesting, as a way of standing up against the regime of the time.

E. 1. Because of this, Ingrid Jonker's dad completely denounced her. And again: If you read up a little bit about this particular poem, it was based on a particular incident that she apparently had witnessed herself and that was seeing a child being shot by soldiers. […] **2.** The soldiers were inside the Kaspirs and now these soldiers shot dead a child who was literally playing on the streets in Nyanga. They shot the child and the child eventually died in the arms of the mother. **F.1** It had a profound effect on in Jonker. Until that time, she was probably wondering whether she was doing the right thing and this particular incident that she witnessed with her own eyes changed her life completely. But the poem then speaks of that incident, based completely on that incident, but it has a far wider message than just being about a child who was killed.

The extract above suggests that Mrs Davids is a knowledgeable teacher who takes her job of teaching seriously. To that end, Extract G is representative of the "observable behaviour" (Shiveley & Misco, 2010) through which Mrs Davids' favourable disposition towards EHL and poetry, in alignment with her critical objective manifests. In support of this, I noted that Mrs Davids appeared earnest when speaking about the troubling contextual situation of the poem (that is, racism and grossly unfair treatment of People of Colour) through pained facial expressions which conveyed concern, and a fervent, serious, and emphatic tone of voice, suggesting that the information she was sharing with her learners held sentimental value. Consider my notes on her voice and tone which softened when speaking about "heart-wrenching topics" (Figure 9). This was a pervasive occurrence across her practice, even in Lesson 2.

Figure 9 Researcher's field notes on folio, Lesson 2, 11 September 2019

Because of Mrs Davids' personal investment into Struggle poetry such as this, a great deal of personal investment of time and resources goes into the preparation for teaching them. As such, the preparation that Mrs Davids does for her lessons is extensive and can be seen in the sheer volume of information about the poet, the poem, and the historical context within which the poem is situated. Mrs Davids' act of preparation is good teaching practice as it prepares her to teach the poem knowledgeably and confidently. However, the exhaustive preparation also suggested a certain degree of overcompensation. On the one hand, Mrs Davids' extensive preparation of the poem may have been due to a myriad of factors including general nervousness that someone (the

researcher) was watching her teach. Considering as she confessed (off the record) to the researcher before the observation that she was nervous about the researcher's presence, Mrs Davids' nervousness was completely understandable on the one hand. On the other hand, and on a deeper level, Mrs Davids' preparation of the poem also appeared to serve another purpose: to safeguard herself against uncomfortable feelings of nakedness and inadequacy that, according to Xerri (2016), often arises when teachers teach poetry. By supplying her learners with an abundance of information, Mrs Davids left little to be desired, perhaps in an attempt to mitigate against an instance where learners may demand to know what a poem "means" (Maynard et al., 2005) and where Mrs Davids may not. In so doing, Mrs Davids' extensive preparation of the poem functioned as a protective mechanism against discomfort and being 'caught off-guard'. Unfortunately, as can be seen through Mrs Davids' exclusivity of speech, linear mode of information-sharing, and clear, unbroken line of thought in many instances (Utterances A and B, for example), Mrs Davids' overpreparation of the poem served to reinforce a scripted and controlled practice, reinforcing a similar finding by Ofsted (2007). When Mrs Davids did meaningfully problematise the questionable actions of people during the apartheid system with close reference to the poem, she failed to engage her learners in deliberation on any of the hard-hitting accounts of reality with which she presented them. Instead of meaningful discussion with the class about what they knew about Ingrid Jonker, what they knew about the political climate within which the poem is set, and whether they, as predominantly White South Africans, could relate to Jonker (in the many ways she was described: socially [Utterance C1], politically [Utterance D1], ideologically [Utterance D1], emotionally [Utterance F1]), Mrs Davids allowed the discussion about the lesson to be centred around her retelling of facts. This goes directly against the envisaged poetry practice of CAPS in which poetry should be taught and not poems (CAPS, 2011, p. 12). It also prevented the learners from being active participants in the meaning making process as ideally envisioned through the constructivist lens (Kress, 2010), and corroborated with the objectivist philosophy of meaning making which sees the readers as passive recipients of meaning in an uncritical, bottom-up style (Mbelani, 2014).

Extract G is a condensed version of the full 11 minutes and 18 seconds for which Mrs Davids spoke uninterruptedly. As such, Extract G brought to light an additional finding: a reliance on secondary sources in preparation for a poem can have a constraining effect on meaning making

and criticality of the poem. This too appears to be a mitigatory practice in response to feelings of nakedness and inadequacy (Xerri, 2016). Mrs Davids mentioned in Utterance E1 how reading up on the poem ("…if you read up a little bit about this particular poem…", Utterance E1) has provided her with insight into Jonker's own direct experience with the subject of the poem. The secondary sources that Mrs Davids consulted in preparation of this poem (besides the primary source: the poem), whether to make sense of the poem or to flesh out the contextual backdrop of the political climate or the poet's life, are all texts which, at their very core, are not neutral (Janks, 2012), and, as such, carry the meanings that the authors have intended for it to carry. By relying on secondary sources of information as Mrs Davids appears to have done, she allows herself to become a vessel for the meaning making of others, possibly detracting from her own meaning making and that of her learners.

This practice interfered with the discourse practice of unlocking the poem within the classroom through the process of meaning production and interpretation, within the dimensions of discourse as put forth by Fairclough (1989). Mrs Davids appeared to accept, unquestioningly, the information that she had found on Jonker, the time within which this poem was written, as well as the very actions that occurred within the poem, and passed this onto her learners. Mrs Davids' practice of overreliance on secondary material functioned to constrain meaning making and criticality of the poem in this regard. Given that the attention span of 16-year-olds is not long, Mrs Davids used crucial focusing time to detail a plethora of information, that, while interesting and useful for the learners to connect to the life of the poet and develop a sound understanding of the political climate in which the poet wrote the poem, does not enable meaning making and criticality as a skill or meaning making and criticality *of the poem*. Instead, Mrs Davids misses important moments of potential deliberation as she continues to ply the learners with information in a linear fashion, illustrating a skewed division of labour and disregard for the multivoicedness of the activity system. Learners' silence within the poetry lesson functions only to achieve partial success in their meaning making as per Freebody & Luke's (1990) four reader roles. Their inactivity/passivity in a great portion of Mrs Davids' lesson does not enable them to practice being an active code breaker, nor text participant, where, for example, they might be encouraged to ask themselves how they understand a particular text, especially given the significant background (Firkins, 2015). The learners are saturated with information, and one wonders how much of the

information sits meaningfully within the learners when they are not given time to process the information and are instead presented with a narrative they are seemingly forced to accept.

Mrs Davids' overtly favourable disposition, as is visible in her passionate and knowledgeable teaching style displayed in Extract G, specifically towards Struggle poetry employed to realise her envisaged critical goal, has a direct impact on the dispositions of her learners which are varied and complex. Evidently, an oversaturation of contentious poems appears to develop resistant dispositions towards poetry in some learners. Consider the following extract from the focus group discussion with Mrs Davids' learners which presents an account of the conflicted and complex nature of Mrs Davids' learners' dispositions towards poetry:

Extract H
Focus Group: Mrs Davids

1. Researcher:	Okay, you guys. So, first and foremost, what exactly is your understanding of poetry? Let's think about this. What is poetry? What *is* poetry? You've been studying it since Grade… whenever, since forever, but there's definitely something that you've picked up about it, so what is it?
2. Learner A:	[giggle nervously] Should we go down the line?
3. Researcher:	No, we're not going down, we're just talking.
4. Learner A:	Okay, so I think it's an... a way to express your feelings and most of the time it doesn't rhyme. [*Learners laugh*] No, but, like, I understand in Afrikaans, it's like *'n gedig* … (a poem) and then you [are] used to [thinking], okay, it's gonna rhyme, but sometimes it doesn't rhyme, and it makes sense because your feelings and everything doesn't always go as planned.
5. Researcher:	That's so true. So, you're saying something about it being about feelings?
6. Learner B:	Ja, and emotions…
7. Learner C:	I think because it's such an abstract thing that there's not one way to describe it. It's, like, all over the place…
8. Learner D:	Ja, like it's very subjective.
9. Researcher:	Very subjective, that's what I'm hoping for, right? It's subjective, and whose subjectivities?
10. Learner E:	Everyone, everyone who reads [it], it's…
11. Learner D:	[*The joker of the group makes a joke.*] The teacher who is marking the test. [Learners laugh]
12. Researcher:	Or the teacher who's marking the test [jokingly], but mostly the person who's writing it right, and you say the people who write the poems come from places of what?
13. Learner E:	Hardship, maybe?
14. Learner D:	Tragedy.
15. Researcher:	Tragedy, okay...
16. Researcher:	Okay, we have those kinds of tragedies and today we spoke about a poem about racism and slavery. You guys have encountered many works like that? No?
17. Learner A:	Ja, like the immigrants one.
18. Learner E:	The mom and child.
19. Learner D:	[sigh] …and just apartheid in general, as well, yeah. *Many* apartheid poems [seeming tone of annoyance or irritation].
20. Researcher:	Alright, so the poetry that you guys deal with largely has to do with human subjectivities in hardships and, [from] what I hear mostly, apartheid poems… poetry. Do you think there is still a place for that in our curriculum? Because, I mean, we have moved on to a certain extent…?
21. Learner A:	That's a real controversial topic, I think.
22. Researcher:	It is a very controversial topic – what do you mean now, apartheid or poetry?
23. Learner A:	Well, I think apartheid in schools, but obviously this is about poetry… But… [unsure] should I talk about apartheid now?

24. Researcher:	No. I want to know… I want to know: Do you think that poetry that still touches on apartheid is relevant?	
25. Learner A:	Ma'am, I think that the pain that apartheid had for the oppressed people was really… it was real, and it is part of their history, but I think that if we keep bringing it back to the present times, the manifestation of that hate will never go away. It will always be with the people and that will never… that will limit the people of South Africa to never get rid of racism. Racism is never gonna end if you keep bringing back the old things.	
26. Researcher:	Who has a different view to her?	
27. Learner E:	Um, okay, wait, I have to think now. I think that, obviously, apartheid… it caused many hardships and I think great poetry sprung out of that because... [changes train of thought] But some of these works, like *The Child Who Was Shot Dead in Nyanga*... it's a great poem and… *[Learner becomes nervous and hesitant. The atmosphere is tense because they are speaking about a difficult topic, so I think that there is some anxiousness about saying the wrong thing.]* I think many of the poems that come out of apartheid or… all the ones that I have read, aren't really hateful. It's... many of them are inspiring and, ja...	
28. Researcher:	Inspiring in what way?	
29. Learner A:	To grow.	
30. Learner E:	Ja, to grow.	
31. Researcher:	To grow in what way?	
32. Learner A:	From the past. It shows how we already have grown from where we were in apartheid and where we are now…	
33. Learner E:	...and that we should continue.	

Extract H suggests the existence of mixed feelings within Mrs Davids' learners. These feelings were challenging to identify and appeared to swing on a pendulum between hesitance, oppositionality and favourability. Utterances 4-15 display this inherent hesitance through learners' trepidatious responses (illustrated through the use of ellipses, nervous giggles, and short, superficial answers). Despite the presentation of a similar understanding of poetry as compared to Mrs Steyn's learners (that poetry is "abstract", Utterance 7 and "subjective", Utterance 8, and "doesn't go as planned" Utterance 4), I noted through CDA how the learners constantly looked to each other for assistance in answering a question of which they were inherently unsure. The hesitance portrayed in their engagement about poetry in Utterances 4-15 was the first indication that suggested that poetry, and the poems they have studied in the past, has served to make them uncomfortable and insecure at some stage. Contrary, perhaps, to popular belief, this sense of discomfort is good to have when dealing with poetry texts because "difficult emotions [such as discomfort] are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain stereotypes and social injustice" so that instances in which "empathy, solidarity and transformation" may occur (Porto & Zembylas, 2020, p. 359). Thus, Mrs Davids' learners' disposition of discomfort is a climate fostered within her class that aids in learners' potential development of a meaning making and criticality. Mrs Davids' learners' dispositions vary greatly to that of Mrs Steyn's and are inherently complex.

Learners' general sense of hesitation towards poetry changed dramatically after Utterances 13 and 14 prompted me to ask them if they have encountered many works which deal with themes of tragedy and hardship. Whereas Mrs Steyn's learners generally ascribe positive associations towards poetry that they study, Mrs Davids' learners present a picture of poetry's representation of negative concepts such as "hardship" (Utterance 13) and "tragedy (Utterance 14). When the idea of "tragedy" was further explored by the researcher, the learners were able to mention another poem to which Mrs Davids has exposed her learners. When the learners mentioned "the immigrants one" (Utterance 17) and "The mom and child" (Utterance 18), it became clear that Mrs Davids had also taught them *Refugee Mother and Child* by Chinua Achebe, another hard-hitting poem about the harsh realities of people in third-world countries and themes of love, death, and decay. It is no wonder, then, why Mrs Davids' learners may feel jaded by the poems they study in her class – they are heavy poems, and an oversaturation is likely to cause fatigue. Learner D exemplifies this fatigue in Utterance 19 when he says, "*Many* apartheid poems" in which he stressed the "Many" in a tone of annoyance, confirming Hughes's (2007) assertion that, because of poetry's perceived difficulty, sometimes it exacts "groans from [learners]" (p. 1). This is an example of a multi-layered contradiction wherein it is visible that tension exists between the community (learners) and the tool (poetry), the community (learners) and the object (the desires Mrs Davids has for her learners in her choice of poetry to be studied), and finally, between the community (learners) and the subject (Mrs Davids). This tension, where Learner D harbours resistant feelings towards poems of this nature, what he calls "apartheid poems" (Utterance 19), is an impediment to Mrs Davids' object for the activity system, and thereby poses a threat to meaning making and criticality through poetry.

When asked by the researcher whether the learners think that there is still a place for "apartheid poems" in the curriculum, the Learner A made an interesting remark, that it is a "controversial topic" (Utterance 23). Feeling more comfortable with the focus group discussion process at this stage of the discussion, Learner A revealed, through her language, how she truly felt. And, how she felt was concerning to me as a researcher and pointed to a deep-rooted issue. Learner A mentions:

> **Extract I**
> **Focus Group: Mrs Davids**
> 25. Learner A: Ma'am, I think that the pain that apartheid had for the oppressed people was really… It was real, and it is part of **their** history, but I think that if we keep bringing it back to the present times, the manifestation of that hate will never go away. It will always be with the people, and that will never… that will limit the people of South Africa to never get rid of racism. Racism is never gonna end if you keep bringing back the old things.

What is important to note is how Learner A inadvertently creates an Us and a Them by using the pronoun "their" when discussing the history of *our* country. *Is apartheid not also part of her history as a South African?* The use of passive voice and omission of the subject of the oppression (leaving only the object, "the oppressed people", Utterance 25), is seemingly an attempt at exonerating White people from accountability for the role they played. Furthermore, she seems to blame poetry for bringing back or maintaining racism when she says, "racism is never [going to] end when we keep bringing back the old things" (Utterance 2). This Utterance suggests that she does not see poetry as useful tool that could be used to encourage "social transformation" and "[establish] a society based on democratic values [and] social justice" (CAPS, 2011, p. 4). Rather, poetry is seen as a hinderance to real, meaningful, societal change, a cause for more harm than good, showing that she finds poetry to be disconnected or irrelevant to real concerns and issues that need more urgent attention (Maynard et al., 2005, p. 511). Learner A's assertion is problematic as it suggests that she feels that racism is still alive and well, and presents a sense of fear that poetry may exacerbate the negative emotions still present in many people instead of achieving Mrs Davids' object for the activity system which is social transformation and justice. Instead of understanding the pain that leads to actions motivated by anger from people who were formerly oppressed, the learner seems to misrepresent the reason for these outbursts as a result of the "bringing back the old things" (Utterance 2) instead of the much larger, more difficult thing to face: real pain. This, once again, is an impediment to Mrs Davids' object for the activity system. The underlying motivation for Learner A's assertion seems to be a general sense of fear. This is illustrated further in something she mentions much later in the discussion (not part of Extract I):

> **Extract J**
> **Focus Group: Mrs Davids**
> 1. Learner D: I think that when Mrs Davids shared her testimony about when she was in the struggle and when she was in apartheid it obviously had an effect on all of our lives and she's like, our teacher, and she's telling us about all these stuff. And you're like woah, *you* survived *that*.
> 2. Researcher: It becomes real.
> 3. Learner D: We don't always see our teachers as people.
> 4. Researcher: I understand what you're saying.

5. Learner A:	And then what I wanted to mention is: Sometimes, not usually, but one time, I did feel, but why are we handling this now, in 2019? Race is still a problem, but I think that some of us can agree that the tables have almost turned….	
	[*Learners seem very nervous about her comment that implies reverse-racism.*]	
6. Learner A:	I don't want to be political or anything, but it's almost like… I don't want to say it, but it's almost like White people are now oppressed because…. *Dit klink nou rasisties, dit klink nou rasisties* (this sounds racist, this sounds racist). [*Learner's eyebrows are raised, and hands are positioned in front of her body in a defensive stance.*]	
7. Learner B:	Ja, I… I ... We are a bit… Like for instance, in university, getting into university disadvantaged but I think we are very privileged.	
8. Learner E:	But we're not oppressed like in the sense that it was...	
9. Learner A:	Not oppressed but … I think we are privileged, but if you look at it in general, like, the farm murders and stuff …	
10. Learner E:	We are not oppressed in the sense, like, apartheid but still oppressed, like they still give our generation the faults when we didn't [have anything to do with it] …	
11. Learner B:	It's holding us back.	
12. Learner A:	And that's when I felt a bit offended, because obviously it was way back and all. And she did say that we should be the change and she did say all of this stuff which I feel that we have to be to change and everything, but bringing back apartheid the whole time... That's why I wanted to mention in the beginning: Bringing back apartheid the whole time almost brings back the bitter memories for, not the bitter memories for maybe the People of Colour, but bitter memories for the white people because I have to live with the fact that, maybe not my parents, but maybe my grandparents, they may have been racist….	

Learner A mentions feelings of frustration when she recalls asking herself "why are we handling this now in 2019?" (Utterance 5). She seems to feel no use for poetry that speaks to the subjectivities of Black and Coloured people during apartheid because, for her, "the tables have almost turned" (Utterance 5), suggesting that it is now White people who are oppressed and, this, seemingly nullifies the need for Struggle poetry from the perspective of People of Colour because, to her mind, things are now equal. This was a deeply disturbing assertion which she was bold enough to say out loud and mention that she thought that "some of *us* [her fellow classmates could] agree" (Utterance 5). The learners did appear nervous at what she said, but nobody disagreed with her. She was emboldened by their silence and continued to say that "White people are now oppressed" (Utterance 5), another shocking revelation, which she knew sounded racist (she appeared to be defensive yet assertive about her stance, holding up her hands in a defensive pose in front of her body). Learner A used the many unfortunate instances of "farm murders" in South Africa – an often racialised attack on primarily White farmers in the country – (Utterance 9) as an example of White oppression, which is the crux of her problematic string of utterances and an underlying, unresolved source of anger and fear that has presented, symptomatically, as what appears to be mildly racial slurs and resentment towards protest poetry. For her, protest poetry is an impediment and something to which she harbours resentment because it is a constant reminder for the oppressed people of the wrongs that were inflicted upon them, and her fear is that these

realisations and emotional responses may trigger violent actions from the formerly oppressed people. Her utterances point to a nervous condition and genuine concern about anything that may provoke actions she calls "manifestations of hate" (Utterance 2, Extract J). Thus, she seems to vilify the protest and Struggle poetry to which she has come to be exposed in Mrs Davids' class. Learner A's string of problematic utterances exemplify the assertion and corroborate the findings of McKinney (2004) in her study of learners' experiences with texts that deal with contentious issues, most notably the repressive past of South Africa. There is a clear "desire to escape the past" and in which "feelings of guilt, and a real desire for a new, non-racist and equal South Africa" (McKinney, 2004, p. 68) make themselves apparent. Discussion about the problematic actions of White people during the past seems to have challenged the position she wishes to establish within the new South Africa, reinforcing McKinney's (2004) observation that the "social positions and discourses" that people hold or are trying to establish for themselves are precious and "not lightly given up" (McKinney, 2004, p. 65). This, in the hands of a thoughtful teacher can foster an environment grounded within a pedagogy of discomfort, within which learners can "recognise what and how [they have] been taught to see or not to see" (Bheekie & van Huyssteen, 2015, p. 5), in the hopes of their drawing their "cherished beliefs and assumptions" into controversy by questioning them (Boler, 1999, p. 176). This would be a collaboration between poetry practice and disposition, if managed and mediated with care, that may promote critical literacy development. If these emotions are bubbling beneath the surface in each class that deals with contentious poetry, it is no wonder that, to some extent, Mrs Davids attempts to control the direction of discussion and place herself at the centre of discussion rather than spending too much time on giving their lived experiences airtime.

Importantly, evidence from Mrs Steyn's class suggests that learners are aware of the importance that their dispositions hold in the success in poetry teaching lessons to develop critical literacy. Consider the following extract from Mrs Steyn's learners in which they share their insight into their own responsibility and agency in the meaning making and criticality of poetry:

Extract K
Focus Group: Mrs Steyn
1. Researcher:	[…] Do you think that […] that you are more conscientious citizens because of Mrs Steyn's class?	
2. Learner: D	Well, I think yes, we are, but I don't think everyone will say the same thing.	
3. Researcher:	Of course not, hey? Because everyone is so different, and everyone has their own interpretations of the class.	

| 4. Learner D: | Ja, and if you don't walk into the class with the will to actually, like, think differently, [arrive with the mindset that] I want to, like, try and look at it this way today, [poetry is] not going to have any impact. |

Utterance 4 by Learner D positions learners as active role players in their own meaning making process and as active members of the classroom community in which learners also hold an influence over the division of labour they take on within the activity system. In fact, in response to my question about whether they feel they have become more conscientious citizens because of Mrs Steyn, Learner D agreed to a certain extent but asserted that "not everyone will say the same thing" (Utterance 3). This assertion sees Learner D acknowledging the importance of his own agency in his development which is important. This sentiment extends further into a highly important statement: Learner D mentions that if one does not come into the poetry learning environment "with the will to actually think differently" or change one's perspective, poetry, and the meaning conveyed therein, will have no impact (Utterance 4). This assertion ties closely to Danesh and Shirkani's (2015) assertion that "if learners have a positive attitude towards English poetry, the use of poetry as a type of teaching material can benefit" them (p. 32). This suggests that a tool's efficacy within an activity system is only as effective as the community and other role players within the activity system will allow it to be in the development of critical literacy. Without a willing and open mindset, poetry study for the development of criticality is not likely to have an "impact" (Utterance 3) on learners. It confirms Dlamini's (2019) belief that the dispositions that learners hold towards poetry are likely to impact their meaning making experience through poetry. Learner D's assertion suggests a responsibility that learners have towards the quality of their own learning. Given the manner in which teachers and learners' dispositions have an impact on how they perceive poetry texts, the following section will detail the subsequent mechanics of the activity system.

4.2 The Mechanics of the Poetry Teaching and Learning Activity System

As discussed in Section 4.1, despite the generally favourable *overt* dispositions that teachers hold at surface value, teachers also display covert nervousness when it comes to the teaching of poetry. This filters into how they choose texts and how they prepare for their lessons. It also seeps into practice. The analysis of data found that to further maintain safe, predictable control over the activity system's mediation of the tool, teachers are dominant role players within the activity system, though to varying degrees.

4.2.1 Mrs Davids

The following extract from Mrs Davids' lesson on the poem *Runaway Slave* by Walt Whitman

shows the dominance Mrs Davids holds in the classroom activity system:

Extract L	
Lesson 2: Mrs Davids	
Poem: *Runaway Slave* by Walt Whitman	
1. Mrs Davids:	[…] Remember we spoke about slaves? What about "runaway"? Now that you know what a slave is, we know that [a] runaway is a slave who wanted to regain his freedom, who wanted to get away from the circumstances. But you can now imagine how treacherous their journeys were. At great peril, they would do that. […] [Teacher reads the poem for a second time.]
2. Mrs Davids:	What type of perspective do we have in the poem, Grade 10? From whose point of view do we read this poem?
3. Learner A:	The owner of the house.
4. Mrs Davids:	The owner, right? So, it's first-person perspective. What is the… what is the *benefit*, if I may use that word, of reading something from a first-person perspective? What effect does it have Grade 10? First person perspective?
5. Learner:	It's more intimate.
6. Mrs Davids:	It's more intimate. Come, the rest of you? Yes, Learner B?
7. Learner B:	You know it's true.
8. Mrs Davids:	You get the sense that it's more truthful because the person... It's not a second-hand story that is being told, it's a personal story, [a] first-hand experience that's being related. So, the honesty level goes up, and so that is exactly what this particular… What are the effects of the first-person perspective on this poem? That you can believe it is more intimate. We get an account of what happened on a very intimate level. And so, let's start with the first line: "The Runaway slave came to my house and stopped outside". Why do you think he came to his house? His house is probably a safehouse. "I heard his motions cracking the twigs of the woodpile" ... Yes, it's a male slave in this case, "cracking the twigs of the woodpile". "through the half door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak". Underline the word "limpsy". "Limpsy" means feeble, weak. So, immediately we get an idea, we have… He is painting a picture of the slave. It's a male slave, but as he's outside. [Mrs Davids paraphrases] "Through the half-swung door, I saw he was frail, weak". Probably either had suffered already, where he was employed, where he was a slave, because they were brutally beaten and harassed by their slave owners, and weak. So, he needed some nourishment. And then, I want you to look at the next five lines. What do you notice about it? The repetition of the word "and" every time. What does that create? The fact that he repeats the word "and" at the beginning of each sentence? It tells us… And if we look at what he is doing there…
9. Learner B:	It emphasises the things that he did.
10. Mrs Davids:	Ja. It's almost as if he is listing what he did for this man, and if you look at it, five times. He's done so much for this man because they are five consecutive ands, and he says "and where he sat on the log, I went in and assured him". Underline the word "assured". What effect will that have had on the slave? Assured him of what?
11. Learners:	Safety.
12. Mrs Davids:	Assured him of? Come, what else? What do you think he would do as a person who will be harbouring him for a while?
13. Learner C:	His intentions.
14. Mrs Davids:	[affirmatively] His intentions! That they were pure. Assured him of care, that I will look after you. I won't hand you over to The Fugitive Slave Law. I won't hand you over to the authorities, right? so the safety aspect. … "and where he sat on the log and I let him in and assured him". […] "sweated body and bruised feet". […] If you watch the movie *12 Years a Slave,* one of the most gruesome scenes, and I am going to tell you about it, as gruesome as it is, they hanged a slave who tried to run away. It's not "hung", it's "hanged" him around his neck, with a rope. [Addresses the researcher] Researcher, have you seen it? That movie? From a branch, a very strong branch overhead, and they made sure that he's just about this much from the ground. And you see how the slave is hanging like

	that, and from time to time his toes touch the soil, touch the ground, and eventually, they lowered and lowered it until it becomes this much. You can see the desperation as he was borrowing through the ground there, with his feet, trying to get a hold, a grip, on the ground. […] And all the while that's happening, he's being hit with a whip, naked of course. His body is lean and by the time that he is taken off this branch, he was just simply a bloodied mess. And it's one of the scenes in any story in any – whether it's a movie or a novel – that you sit back as part of the audience and you […] cannot be left unscathed […] unless there's something demonic inside of you. But you sit back, and […] you wonder to yourself, "How is it possible that one human being can do this to another? *How?* What gets you to that level where you think it's okay, I can do that? Why? Simply because you are black-skinned I can do that to you? And remember, the story, I hope I said it, is based on a true story, *12 Years a Slave*. […] His messages were relayed up North and, eventually, people came and collected the slaves. So, you can imagine how this slave must have felt. This runaway slave. Nowhere is he identified. He's just someone, but his identity lies in the fact that he's a slave. And if we continue, it says, "and I gave him a room that entered from my own". What does that tell, Grade 10? It's a room that you can enter from [your] room, and it tells us, I think I heard the answer somewhere…
15. Learner D:	Trust.
16. Mrs Davids:	Trust, yes! You can imagine: Many of these slaves were bitter and angry and hated especially White people. So, there was always the chance that the slave could do something. Right? Kill you. Yet that is what this man did for him. What does this tell us about the intentions of the speaker, Grade 10? [pause] His intentions? [pause] Yes, he wanted to help this man. He wanted to be part of this man's journey to freedom. And then it says, "and gave him some coarse clean clothes". Let's just first identify [the figure of speech], for old times' sake? It's the alliteration of the c-sound. What is the effect of the c? "Coarse clean clothes"? What's the effect of the alliteration? You shouldn't just be able to identify, I should be able to say what the *effect* of it is. [*Teacher sounds it out for the learners*] Kuh kuh kuh? It's a very... It's quite a harsh sound, right? Kuh kuh kuh. And it's a reflection. What are they describing? The clothes, what do the clothes look like? They're clean, but they're also coarse. What does that mean? Grof? (*In English: "Rough"*) Yes! Grof! Rough! So, it, sort of, imitates… there's a reflection of the coarseness. There's a reflection of the roughness of the clothing. And there's another "and", "and I remember perfectly well…".
17. Learner E:	Ma'am, why would he give him rough clothes?
18. Mrs Davids:	Do you think he could have given him a nice fancy clothes Learner E? Remember, he was still going up North and he was going to have to go through… Come, what are some of the… maybe bushes, trees? So that'll probably be… And he would be indistinguishable in clothes like that, right? So, it helped him. It would have helped him to blend in wearing that kind of clothes, okay?

Throughout the course of this extract, it is clear that Mrs Davids possesses substantial content knowledge that has been cultivated through a genuine love of literature and history. The skewed division of labour present in Mrs Davids' poetry teaching largely echoes Dlamini's (2019) finding that teachers generally view learners as "passive recipients of knowledge, which in this case, is the meaning of the poems taught" (p. 73), and so doing, engages in teacher-centred classroom practice. As such, Mrs Davids assumes an active role in the meaning making process and learners are taught the meaning of the poem like "vessels to be filled" (Freire, 1970, p. 72) and are primarily silent. Utterance 8 is representative of classroom interactions where the banking model may be observed: Mrs Davids typically recites the line of the poem ("I heard his motions cracking the twigs of the woodpile", Utterance 8) and then proceeds to make an implicit trait of the slave, his being a male, apparent to the learners (Utterance 8). This instance, though seemingly insignificant, could have

been used as an opportunity in which learners would have to read the lines for what is said as well as what is not said (Huang, 2013). (*Who is represented? Who is not represented? What is significant about the slave's being male? Would the speaker, and indeed, the reader, have reacted differently were the slave female?*) Unfortunately, the learners are presented with the information instead of actively deconstructing the meaning themselves. In addition, this also is a missed opportunity to practice criticality and engage learners in practicing how to be code breaker where they might investigate how the "sounds, vocabulary, and grammar" presented within the poem are used to produce meaning (Firkins, 2015, p. 2). Later, in a similar behavioural pattern, Mrs Davids instructs her learners to underline the word "limpsy" and proceeded to present the learners with the meaning: "'Limpsy' means feeble, weak" (Utterance 8). The learners are lifted from a place of not knowing to a place of knowing, bypassing the ZPD sans *meaningful* mediation by Mrs Davids. This is problematic as learners are not engaged in the meaningful learning process that will afford them the skills to make meaning of poems themselves, such as in the unseen poem (typically Question 5 in the literature paper, Paper 2). All the while, the researcher noted that the learners took notes intently and clung to Mrs Davids' every word, suggesting a practiced action to which the learners have been socialised. The multivoicedness of the activity system is not encouraged as Mrs Davids remains the only person whose meaning is acknowledged and evidently valued. In so doing, Mrs Davids inadvertently removes the opportunity for the learners to practice meaning making and criticality. Mrs Davids actively monopolises the meaning making and criticality within the activity system and continues to shoulder the bulk of the labour within the lesson. This is a practice that actively constrains meaning making and criticality as learners are not afforded the opportunity to engage and construct knowledge as active agents of their own transformation (Babkina & Stephanova, 2016).

The data further suggests that teachers often engage in discussions with learners while holding a preconceived idea of the responses they expect from learners. In the poem, the speaker mentions that the slave sat on the log and that the speaker "went in and assured him". Mrs Davids proceeded to ask the learners to critique the effect that this assurance would have meant for the slave and of what the speaker might have assured him (Utterance 10). Firstly, this is a Barrett's Taxonomy Level 5 question which aims at engaging the "psychological and aesthetic impact of the text" with focus on "emotional responses to content [and] identification with characters or incidents" within

the text (Reeves, 2012, p. 39). Not only is this an excellent question in terms of engaging higher order discussion and engagement with the text to decipher meaning, but it is also a meaningful question which would have engaged the learners in practicing the DCE principle of developing empathy and understanding of the other (Waghid, 2015). Learners are hereby encouraged to put themselves into the slave's shoes and is a facet of Mrs Davids' practice that can lead to the development of criticality if followed through as the text "work[s] its effects on the reader (Dutta, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1985). Multiple learners simply said, "Safety" (Utterance 11). This is true, yet rudimentary and evidentially not entirely the answer for which Mrs Davids was searching and she says, "Come, what *else*? What do you think he would do as a person who will be harbouring him for a while?" (Utterance 12). On the one hand Mrs Davids's response is good as it suggests that she expects her learners to search for deeper meaning. There is also an attempt at scaffolding in her attempts to direct her learners to think in a certain way when she mentions, "What do you think he would do…" (Utterance 12). But Mrs Davids' response does not follow through with her initial critical literacy enabling practice of allowing learners to critique the text and put themselves into the shoes of the other and essentially to work with the learners' existing response through scaffolding their thinking process to a thicker, deeper description. It reinforces the idea that learners need to work towards getting to the answer that Mrs Davids *expects* of them to present and that their interpretations and inferences do not necessarily have merit in their own right. This, once again, points to a deficit of true multivoicedness within Mrs Davids' activity system. Even though Mrs Davids tries to engage her learners within the meaning making process, learners create but a fraction of the meaning within the class, often one-word responses like "safety" (Utterance 11) or short phrases like "His intentions" (Utterance 13), upon which Mrs Davids builds to create meaning for the learners in a more sophisticated way. It is likely that neither of these responses would have been accepted as sufficient in a literature examination, either, as level 5 questions often require an in-depth, well-reasoned response.

A close reading of the data suggests that these preconceived ideas held by teachers lead them to "hijack" (a word I found apt) learners on the road to meaning making and criticality, actively removing their opportunity to traverse the ZPD from not knowing to knowing. This is a prevalent pattern where Mrs Davids appears to draw the learners into the meaning making process, attempts to scaffold their understanding and the development of meaning, but fails to expect *more* from

their simple responses. Later, Mrs Davids reads the line "And I gave him a room that entered from my own" (Utterance 14) and asked, "What does that tell us, Grade 10?". This, as per Barrett's Taxonomy, is a level 3 question within which learners are expected engage in inferential reasoning based on "his/her personal experience" (Reeves, 2012, p. 38). This is a good question which would require learners to read what is said and what is not said (Huang, 2013). Unfortunately, Mrs Davids' natural inclination to engage in teacher-centred practice and produce meaning for her learners leads her to explain the concept for them, without hesitation, thereby "hijacking" the meaning making moment and travel through the ZPD: she explained the concept of a room that is connected by one doorway. When the learners, once again, supplied a one-word, rudimentary suggestion, "Trust" (Utterance 16), Mrs Davids embroidered on the concept of trust by suggesting how the slaves must have felt (and why: They hated White people) and what the intentions of the speaker must have been, once again "hijacking" their traveling from basic understanding to a sophisticated understanding through meaning making and criticality. There are numerous opportunities for meaning making and criticality that exist within this interaction between Mrs Davids and her learners: *What does the interaction between the slave and the speaker indicate about the power dynamic between both people? Do the slaves have reason to be bitter and angry? How do you think the slave must have felt? Can you empathise with the slave? Mrs Davids suggests that the speaker might fear that the slave might kill him – is this justified/fair?* but they never materialise because Mrs Davids' role in the class dominates theirs. In so doing, Mrs Davids maintains monopoly over meaning making and criticality and the learners remain relatively silent passengers of the event. Mrs Davids' classroom practices present an account of teacher-centredness involving learners whose interactions are scant and sparse within the activity system.

Mrs Davids' complementary tools, the questions she has set for them to answer on the text, often engage learners' meaning making and criticality despite certain teaching practices that may function to constrain it. Her complementary tools are thus effective when they ask meaningful, critical questions. Consider Figure 10 and Figure 11 on the following page:

4.1. This poem has a very specific political context without which it cannot be understood. — *Clim<...>*
     Discuss this statement. (2)

4.2. Discuss the significance of the word "locations" (line 5) in the context of the poem. (1)

4.3. How would you define the tone and mood of the poem? Does it align with the content? Explain your answer and quote at least one word which serves as proof for your answer. (3)

4.4. Discuss the perceived dichotomy between the title and the first line of the poem. (2)

4.5. Why can the last two lines of the poem be seen as ironic? Discuss your answer within the political context of the time. (2)

f Freedom /10/

Figure 10 Questions set on Poem 1 (The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga by Ingrid Jonker)

2.1. Briefly discuss the political context of this poem. (2)

2.2. From whose perspective is the poem written and what is the result of this on the credibility of the events? (2)

2.3. The word 'and' is repeated five times at the beginning of sentences. Discuss the effect of the repetition. (2)

2.4. Why would the slave need plasters on his neck and ankles? (1)

2.5. Why would the slave want to go north? (1)

2.6. Deliberate the impact of the final sentence on the reader. (2)

/10/

Figure 11 Questions set on Poem 2 (The Runaway Slave by Walt Whitman)

Mrs Davids' accompanying questions, while good, vary greatly in terms of what they expect from learners and their development of meaning making and criticality. Mrs Davids' poetry questions for Poem 1 do not comprise any Barrett's Taxonomy level 5 questions in which learners would engage with the envisaged outcomes of the level such as: react to the impact the text has on them, identify with characters or incidents, or evaluate the "writer's use of language such as word choice and imagery" (Reeves, 2012, p. 39). These are all critical questions which corroborate with critical literacy aims. Questions like this would have aided in the development of meaning making and criticality. In many instances, it appears that the focus of Poem 1's questions are more often vested

in the significance of the political context of the poem than encouraging the learners to identify ways in which language is used "to advance the interests of some at the expense of others" (Janks, 2012, p. 153) in the hopes of bringing to light that which perpetuates social inequalities. Given the value Mrs Davids places in her own experiences of the torrid political climate within which apartheid was based, and her desire to create awareness thereof, it seems fitting that she would ask such questions of her learners. While disguised as challenging questions, the reality is that Poem 1's questions do not expect learners to engage with the text on an emotional level, rather a factual one. As such, there are few instances where learners have to engage with the text regarding their critical reading of the "value and worth" of specific "decisions and actions in terms of moral values" as is expected in a true level 4 question (Reeves, 2012, p. 39). To that end, a primary CHAT contradiction exists between the tool (the questions on the poem) and the object (the envisaged goal: critical literacy). Unfortunately, in this case, the tool is ineffective in achieving the object.

However, in contrast, Mrs Davids' Poem 2's questions are more effective. Question 2.2 asks from whose perspective the poem is written and the impact this has on the learners' judgement of the narrative's credibility. This actively engages learners' judgement of whose interest is served within the text, supporting learners' appreciation of texts as loaded with meaning and ideology that is often implicit (Ioannidou, 2015; Dallacqua & Low, 2019). Question 2.5 is another question which, on one hand, exacts a response grounded in literal knowledge, but on the other, also encourages the learner to engage in the democratic practice of placing themselves into the shoes of another (Nussbaum, 2002) when trying to establish why the slave "would want to go North" (Figure 11). Finally, question 2.6 engages learners in a level 5 question as per Barrett's Taxonomy which sees them engaging with the text and evaluating the emotional effect/impact the final line of the poem has on them. The original last line of the poem reads: *I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner* (line 10). This question actively engages learners as code-breakers in which they establish how sounds, vocabulary, and grammar work together to produce meaning (Firkins, 2015), as well as being a text participant in which learners might ask themselves how they understand the text in the final line of the poem. The evaluation of the text's effectiveness in communicating the message of the poem is engaged, thereby allowing learners to be text analysts. Eventually, learners can develop into text users wherein they have developed the means to use

their reading skills and what they have learnt from this poem for application in other "cultural and social contexts" (Dlamini, 2019, p. 20). By engaging learners in the various practices of the four reader roles (Freebody & Luke, 1990) through her supplementary tool, the questions, Mrs Davids is able to develop meaning making and criticality through the poem where her classroom practice constrains it. Mrs Steyn's classroom practices will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.2 Mrs Steyn

Importantly, and contrastingly, the data suggests that the overt practice of encouraging multivoicedness in the activity system by some teachers can serve to hide a covert, teacher-centred practice. Consider the following extract from Mrs Steyn's lesson on the poem *Hotel Room, 12th Floor* by Norman MacCaig, which illustrates the tacit nature of Mrs Steyn's dominance hidden behind an active and vocal classroom dynamic:

Extract M	
Lesson 2: Mrs Steyn	
Poem: *Hotel Room, 12th Floor* by Norman MacCaig	
1. Mrs Steyn:	Could you take a minute and then read it by yourselves again, and then I'll ask you a question or two? [*Learners read the poem in the class by themselves, quietly.*] Okay, what is this poem saying? What is this poem about? What is the tone of the poem, like, especially towards the end there? Is it a positive tone?
2. Learners:	It's doom and gloom…
3. Mrs Steyn:	It's doom and gloom, ja, okay. There is despair. "Doom and gloom" are a good way to describe it. So, what is he saying?
4. Learner A:	Crimes at night.
5. Mrs Steyn:	Crimes at night, okay, there's definitely some elements of crime going on there, ja.
6. Learner B:	Ma'am, is it, like, the war is actually very, like, close to you? Like ... there's blood on the sidewalks, like, the war isn't somewhere else. It's here. Like, at your doorstep.
7. Mrs Steyn:	The frontier is at your doorstep, yes. So, the war is here. It's not somewhere else, yes, and? Sorry, what – who is he talking about here?
8. Learner C:	Crime.
9. Mrs Steyn:	Is it just crime? You think it's just crime? What's that… Uhm...?
10. Learner D:	Isn't it, say, war on drugs?
11. Mrs Steyn:	It's actually not drugs at all, no. No drugs involved in this. Yes?
12. Learner E:	Maybe [Learner E suggests in broken language that he is on a helicopter ride].
13. Mrs Steyn:	Oh, okay. So, he's not actually going on the helicopter ride, but there's a distinction between people with money and, like, the skyscrapers and then the poor, okay? There's that. So, there's, like, maybe a comment on society, okay? And the way that some people have to live and the way the other people can live, okay? Um, why... [Acknowledges Learner F] Yes? Why did he mention of all those buildings in America? Did you get that it's an American…? Ja. Why the mention of those buildings and then the rest of the poem? Why does he create that setting for us apart from the fact that he talks about, like, obviously the barrier between rich and poor?
14. Learner F:	I think it's, like, the fact that you're never safe, and even there, on top of the building, you're never safe. You can still get buildings thrown on you and stuff happening.
15. Mrs Steyn:	Okay...
16. Learner G:	Can't it also be that the wall he refers to is man-made and that's why he refers to, like, the buildings and everything there? [*Learner speaks as if speaking for the speaker*] "We created it".
17. Mrs Steyn:	We created it, ja…

18. Learner F:	I don't know, but I sort of see an element of suicide. Like jumping off…
19. Mrs Steyn:	No, no, no, no-one's jumping ... Well, I get what you say with the blood glazed on the sidewalks and stuff, but I don't think anybody jumped off the building as such. Or maybe they did, because it is a common... [*trails off*] Yes, Learner H?
20. Learner H:	Doesn't it create a sense of familiarity, since everyone can kind of relate to certain buildings…?
21. Mrs Steyn:	There's definitely a comment, a social comment, going on. But there's also a comment about the fact that when he says, "The Frontier's never somewhere else", it's here, that whatever is bothering him is here, with all of us. It's not like he can just say, "But it's not like, actually me", or "I'm not involved in any of that". It's like: It's relative to all of us. But he's actually making a comment about technology, okay, and his comment about technology is that… Okay, before I get to that part, […] That little section again, about the "wildness of War Hoops and the glittering canyons and the gulches and the sounds ululating..." What does that make you think of? What does a hoop sound like? Think of the Native Americans, the Indians [teacher demonstrates native American sound] ... […] So, what is that sort of sound we're referring to? And if you think about ambulances and… [notices that the learners understand the reference] Okay. Americans, back in the day. Like, that was […] the cowboys, and the Indians? That was the? The frontier. Okay... But do we call it? The Wild, Wild West, in a way, okay? And things were like quite barbaric and sort of out of control. Maybe, in a way, he's basically... What his comment about technology is […]: Look how far we've come in life, okay? Look at us. We can create buildings like the Pan Am skyscraper the Empire State Building which are rather feats of... those are amazing things to build, okay? And look how far we've come as opposed to… Let me just quickly go down [in the PowerPoint]. As opposed to...? Those of the canyons and the...? This is a typical [reference to] Wild Wild West… Cow boys… You know? Like that kind of scenario. And he says we have managed to create all these amazing things, but has it changed us as a human race? Are we now more sophisticated in the way that we treat other people? Are we more advanced in how we view our fellow people? No. We're still barbarians at heart, okay? And we actually haven't evolved at all. We've managed to create amazing technology, and, like, sort of leaps and bounds in certain things – in science and everything – but we are technically still just barbarians. Okay, and? you agree with that?
22. Learners:	[many learners agree] Yes.
23. Mrs Steyn:	Do you agree with that? Are we still barbarians?
24. Learners:	Yes.
25. Mrs Steyn:	I think we are.
26. Learner I:	Not everybody.
27. Mrs Steyn:	I mean, in the light of all the news that we see these days, and what we hear, and what is happening, it's almost hard to say we're not *really* – in the way that we treat other people – not barbarians. And you would have to make a good case to argue that we are actually involved in the way that we actually treat people. Yes, Learner A, do you want to say something?
28. Learner A:	I just wanted to say something about the Empire State Building. Is he comparing it to a giant dentist drill?
29. Mrs Steyn:	He is, look I even did it for you! [*Teacher shows learners the PowerPoint she has made for them. Learners giggle.*]
30. Mrs Steyn:	And look, the picture's a bit distorted because I had to make it bigger, and there's a helicopter circling it there…
31. Learner I:	I do think we have advanced as a nation and we have become less barbaric. The problem is that society has [made that] that certain people [be disadvantaged]. So, they had to resort to these barbaric methods to try and catch up... I'm not saying [strictly] economically, but like…
32. Mrs Steyn:	It's like a socio-economic issue that's definitely creating space for people to…
33. Learner I:	Because we have advanced, but society, in a way, has conditioned certain groups of people to still, like, need to go to those ends and to those means to …[survive].
34. Mrs Steyn:	To survive. Do you agree with him?
35. Learner I:	Well, like... [defensive].
36. Mrs Steyn:	I hear what you're saying, it's a valid point.

The data shows that a teacher-centred classroom practice does not mean that the learners are silent or speak infrequently (as perhaps they do in Mrs Davids' class). Mrs Steyn's learners are vocal, and she actively encourages them to respond to her questions. But the reality is that, like Mrs Davids, the powerful discourses that live within Mrs Steyn speak to her and through her (Janks, 2012, p. 150) and enjoy prevalence over any other role players in the activity system despite her well-meaning attempts at establishing multivoicedness. Unlike the *overtly* domineering manner of Mrs Davids' engrained understandings and interpretations through prior reading, experiences with memorandums at the NSC, or her own proclivities, Mrs Steyn's manner of dominating the activity system is *tacit* and only truly uncovered through a close CDA analysis.

To prepare/prime her class for its teacher-centred orientation in which Mrs Steyn's inherent discourses enjoyed dominance, she positioned herself as the centre of the discussion through a seemingly harmless, common assertion: Directly after Mrs Steyn read the poem for the first time, she gave her learners some time to read the poem again on their own after which she informed them that she would *ask them "a question or two"* (Utterance 1). This appears to be a good meaning making practice as it allows the poem to "work its effects" on the learners as readers (Dutta, 2001). But a close reading of Mrs Steyn's language use suggests her pivotal role in moving the discussion forward when she positions herself as the person who will be asking the questions and driving the discussion. (*What about the learners' questions? What about the value that exists in their unprovoked, visceral reactions to the text?*) In this instance, it may have been more profitable if she had allowed the text to work its effects on them and allow these "effects" to surface through authentic questions or comments from the learners. In this instance, Mrs Steyn "gets in the way" (Rosenblatt, 1985) of her learners' instinctual roles as text participants where they might have asked themselves "*How do I understand this text?*" (Firkins, 2015, p. 2). In this instance, Mrs Steyn inadvertently engages in a practice that constrains meaning making and criticality.

Despite the meaningful questions teachers pose to their learners, the manner in which engagement is conducted is crucial to how the multivoicedness of the classroom activity system will materialise. Unfortunately, Mrs Steyn's hasty method of classroom engagement negates the positive impact it could have within the activity system. Mrs Steyn's previous exercise of letting her learners read the text for themselves was followed by good questions that encouraged meaning making such as, "What is the poem saying? What is the poem about? What is the tone of the poem,

like especially towards the end there? Is it a positive tone?" (Utterance 1). This spate of questions is a mixture between level 1 and 2 Barrett's Taxonomy questions and is a good point of departure into systematically unpacking the poem as they deal with information explicitly stated within the text and the reorganisation or synthesis thereof (Reeves, 2012, p. 38). As such, it became clear that Mrs Steyn genuinely desires for her learners to be involved in the meaning making process. To that end, she offers them opportunities to take risks and engage on the poem openly: An important component of Situated Practice through which a multiliterate pedagogy can be engendered (New London Group, 1996). But despite her envisioned goals of inclusion and engagement, the manner in which these questions were conducted let her down. They were completely random and provided all at once. Unfortunately, for learners in a classroom replete with stimulus and whose attention spans are short, some of those good entry-level questions are bound to either have been forgotten or poorly answered (due to the number of questions to which they were expected to attend), making for little meaningful engagement. This was visible in the group response: "It's doom and gloom" (Utterance 2) to the question of tone identification. Clearly, the learners only latched onto her last question, forgoing the benefit of exploring her other questions asked beforehand. In Utterance 3, she accepted their answer but proceeded to reiterate her earlier questions in the question, "So, what is he saying? (Utterance 3) to which Learner A answered poorly and shallowly: "Crimes at night" (Utterance 4). This engagement surfaces a primary contradiction between the tools (the questions by Mrs Steyn) and the community of learners. In the end, the outcome, that is, engagement with the poem through Mrs Steyn's questions, is not sufficiently achieved. Meaning making and criticality are constrained through this practice.

Mrs Steyn's response to Learner A, "Crimes at night, ok, there's definitely some elements of crime going on there, ja" (Utterance 5), however, is significant of another finding presented by the data that runs throughout the course of Extract M: the meaningful development of ideas through scaffolding is crucial for meaning making and criticality. In as much as Mrs Steyn welcomes input and responses to her questions, she does not assist in the *development* of ideas presented by her learners. And, despite the multivoicedness of the activity system fostered by Mrs Steyn, she fails to lead the learning process effectively as sociocultural theory would advise (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 188). There is no traversing of the zone of proximal development and no meaningful feedback on their input, causing the learners to "get lost along the way" (Dutta, 2001, p. 523). Instead, when

the learners suggest interpretations such as in Utterances 4, 6, 8, of Extract M, Mrs Steyn presents them with responses that indicate that what they are saying *may* be correct, but she seldom engages with their responses meaningfully. Once again, this appears to me as something she does to protect herself and play it safe within her teaching practice. (*Perhaps her fear is that she might cause the learners to feel that their answers are not "right", thereby inadvertently discouraging them. Maybe she fears not giving everybody a fair chance to air their view. Perhaps her fear stems from the view of her own inadequacy to engage meaningfully on a topic.*) It is almost like the learners are playing Bingo and they have to keep suggesting answers until someone guesses correctly, somewhat akin to the practices of Mrs Davids.

A study of Mrs Steyn's utterances in this extract revealed that, like with Mrs Davids, Mrs Steyn carries her prior understandings and interpretations with her into the poetry class, impinging on the multivoicedness of the activity system. Despite Mrs Steyn's seemingly open stance towards learners' answers and interpretations, there are times where it is clear that she still holds preconceived ideas of what she expects from her learners' answers. These preconceived ideas cause her to act in an undemocratic manner. When Learner B, for example, presents a relatively cogent, yet elementary, response showing meaning making (that, "The war is actually very […] close to you [and not] somewhere else", Utterance 6), Mrs Steyn does not develop the idea (*What is the war? What does the blood on the sidewalks represent? What does it mean that the war is at your doorstep?*). Although Mrs Steyn's practices appear democratic, there are moments which suggest that they are not. Instead of using Learner B's response as a moment to engender "democratic iterations" wherein the various parties within the discussion "talk back" (Benhabib, 2002, p. 127) to each other to air their commonalities or differences (Waghid, 2015, p. 254), she continues to encourage and accept various guesses by repeating the learner's answer and continuing to ask another question ("What, who is he talking about here?", Utterance 7) in an attempt at finding the answer she deems correct or most fitting.

In another instance, Learner F presented an interesting, alternative perspective about what is suggested in the poem: The element of suicide from jumping off a building (Utterance 18). One can see why this would be a plausible thought given the line quoted by Mrs Steyn: "Blood glazed on the sidewalks" (Utterance 19). This is something that I would also have suggested as it is not outside the realm of plausibility given the idea of blood on the sidewalks and the "doom and

gloom" atmosphere mentioned in Utterance 2 by the learners, suggesting that the text has worked its effects on them (Dutta, 2001). Grappling with her desire for her own discourses to maintain monopoly which are, evidently, not lightly given up (McKinney, 2004, p. 65), coupled with her inherent desire to include and engage her learners, Mrs Steyn goes through a range of confusing responses that leave the learners with little closure on their answers, yet she ends the engagement swiftly, effectively having the final say. Mrs Steyn's response to Learner F was first to deny the validity of the interpretation ("No, no, no, no-one's jumping..."), then see the plausibility of the learner's answer by saying, "Well, I get what you say with the blood glazed sidewalks and stuff" (Utterance 19) perhaps to make them feel heard. She then proceeded to acknowledge the plausibility of Learner F's suggestion very briefly and inconclusively ("…or maybe they did, because it is a common… [*trails off*]", Utterance 19)" after which the discussion was closed by her acknowledgement of another learner's response (Learner H in Utterance 20). The meaning making and "talk[ing] back" which Benhabib (2002, p. 127) happened entirely within Mrs Steyn and was exclusive of her learners. Although, in one way, Mrs Steyn's response to Learner F is good as it shows her flexibility of thinking and ability to award meritorious input, unfortunately, this practice not only constrains the development of meaning making and criticality, but also learners' experience in learning how to engage in democratic practices. In this case, the *quantity* of responses appears to be an attempt to facilitate an equal division of labour and to encourage the principle of multivoicedness, but unfortunately, the practice's execution causes it to have the opposite effect. Instead, Mrs Steyn's poor scaffolding practices, and desire to exact the response she deems correct, detract from the *quality* of engagement and the potential for learners to make good, quality meaning of the poem. As such, learners are encouraged to be code-breakers and text participants (Freebody & Luke, 1990) but the process is not followed through by working with the learners' responses.

The data further corroborates with similar findings of Dlamini (2019) that learners' socialisation within an authoritarian society may function to impede meaning making and criticality. In such an environment, the rules of the activity system are inherently in place and position the learners primarily as passive subjects. Utterance 21 illustrates how Mrs Steyn is primarily inclined to share what she believes the speaker suggests through the poem: that the speaker is using the poem to make a social comment on the contradiction that exists between our advancement as a human race

and yet "barbarian" ways in which we treat our fellow man (the latter part of Utterance 21). Her words and the conviction with which she delivers her message suggest that Mrs Steyn believes in what she is telling her learners ("Are we more advanced in how we view our fellow people? No. We're still barbarians at heart and we haven't actually evolved at all", Utterance 21). This was an especially meaningful moment in the lesson where Mrs Steyn put forth her view, revealing how the text is positioned and has positioned Mrs Steyn (Janks, 2005). This practice in itself would have been damning for the meaning making and criticality in the class had Mrs Steyn not proceeded to ask the learners, "Okay, and? You agree with that?" (Utterance 21). This is good as it shows that even though Mrs Steyn's voice is dominant and that it enjoys the privilege of her authority, Mrs Steyn does, to some degree, expect her views to be challenged. This dispositional approach can lend itself to a favourable environment for meaning making and criticality. But, in times of challenge, the learners in Mrs Steyn's class flock together in their responses, perhaps an action, like Mrs Steyn does with her rotary battalion of questions and response-taking, to act as a protective mechanism in times when they feel unsure or insecure in the face of an opinion that is 'stronger' than theirs. The learners replied in chorus, "Yes" (Utterances 22 and 24). This choral "Yes" suggests that "they are expected to share the opinion of the teachers rather than discovering their own meaning" (Dlamini, 2019, p. 73) through thinking about what the teacher has said and judging it on its merit. The learners' responses, as such, represent the blind acceptance of a teacher's responses which is an impediment to the development of critical literacy within the classroom.

Extract M revealed that despite many learners' blind acceptance of Mrs Steyn's assertions without question, there are some whose criticality and risk-taking is encouraged by teachers who provide a risk-taking environment. But even so, meaning making and criticality is constrained and quashed through the dominance of Mrs Steyn's voice. Mrs Steyn develops a favourable environment for risk taking by asking the class, on multiple occasions, whether they agree (Utterances 21 and 23). Learner I took the risk of disagreeing with Mrs Steyn's position (Mrs Steyn's assertion of: "I think we are", Utterance 25) by saying, "Not everybody" (Utterance 26). This instance presented Mrs Steyn with the opportunity to develop the learners' answer and pick their brains about why they feel the way they do through engaging in democratic iterations (Waghid, 2015), but Mrs Steyn

elected to further support her position, silencing the learners, and maintaining monopoly over the meaning making and criticality within the activity system.

This surfaces a multi-layered contradiction between the subject, the tool, and the outcome. Mrs Steyn actively encourages her learners to engage in deliberation through the use of questions (tool) but when the learners' response proved to contradict her own beliefs (outcome), Mrs Steyn (the subject) continued to reinforce her position. She mentioned, "…in the light of all the news that we see these days and what we hear and what is happening, it's almost hard to say that we're not really [barbarians] in the way we treat other people" and that the learner would have to "make a good case to argue that we have actually evolved" (Utterance 27). Mrs Steyn's statements would make it difficult for any learner to present a counter argument, actively discouraging criticality. This further ratifies the assertion by McKinney (2004) that the discourses we hold are not lightly relinquished. When Learner I continued to make his point despite Mrs Steyn's moving on by mentioning a very important thing: that people treat others badly because they have been disadvantaged and have had to resort to extreme measures to "try and catch up" (Utterance 31 and 33), Mrs Steyn once again refrained from further engagement and instead diverted the possible meaning making moment to the class. This, once again, is a pattern of protective behaviour employed by Mrs Steyn to avoid contentious deliberation and is a practice that constrains meaning making and criticality. The tool that Mrs Steyn uses to engage her learners in classroom discussion (questions posed to the class), though appearing to support meaning making and criticality, does not reach that aim. Instead the discussion that could have been meaningful reaches an unfortunate dead end.

A contradiction exists between what Mrs Steyn does within the activity system as uncovered through a close CDA and CHAT analysis of the lessons, and how the learners perceive it. Even though Mrs Steyn's voice enjoys covert dominance over the activity system, this is not read as an infringing or impeding factor by the learners. In fact, the data shows that the very act of inviting engagement and meaning making of the text within an environment perceived as safe promotes learners' favourable disposition towards poetry. Consider Extract N:

Extract N	
Focus Group: Mrs Steyn	
1. Learner B:	I think… I feel... I really like it, and I think the one thing that poetry lets us do is think for ourselves like the school system usually doesn't allow us to do. Because we get a poem, and we get stuff to write down. But, if we get, like, an unseen poem, that teaches you to think of it differently. But I think it's also hard, because it's not like they can always accept the way you interpret it.
2. Researcher:	But Mrs Steyn?
3. Learners:	... She really does…
4. Learner B:	She really does…
5. Researcher:	She really... Like, have you experienced her being very open-minded?
6. Learner C:	I think that if she wasn't, I wouldn't enjoy poetry as much as I do, because then I would, like, learn it as a textbook, but she doesn't see it as 'textbook', and I think that's why we all love poetry, because Mrs Steyn is like… [*trails off*].
7. Researcher:	So, how does she approach poetry that makes you... [...]. What do you like about her poetry lessons, especially? And also, in general, I think?
8. Learner C:	She likes to bring everything out of the poetry: the feelings but also more…like, the intricate things.

Mrs Steyn's learners gush about the freedom they feel to "think…differently" (that is, make meaning of a poem) in Mrs Steyn's class and the enjoyment that it brings for them to be in an environment where meaning making is not "textbook" (Utterance 6), that is, static and unyielding. What is seemingly important to them is that "she really does" accept the way in which they make meaning or "interpret" the poetry (Utterances 1, 3, and 4). Ironically, this stands in direct contrast to what was uncovered through analysis of the lesson and is not, at a fundamental, covert level, a trait of Mrs Steyn's activity system. This contradiction suggests that despite the effectiveness of Mrs Steyn's engagement processes for the development of meaning making and criticality and her (often closed) mental memorandum to their answers, her dispositional approach allows learners to feel safe and feel heard. Learners therefore appear to appreciate the disposition that Mrs Steyn displays overtly. Learner C mentions that if it were not for Mrs Steyn and her open nature and stance towards their input, they would not enjoy poetry as much (Utterance 6). Thus, Mrs Steyn's overt dispositional approach serves to develop a favourable disposition within her learners which is a vital component in how learners engage with poetry and, ultimately, their willingness to develop the skills of meaning making and criticality. As such, despite the limited efficacy in developing meaning making and criticality exhibited through Mrs Steyn's pedagogical practices, her inviting stance towards learner engagement is a factor that appears to enable meaning making and criticality.

Finally, like Mrs Davids, Mrs Steyn also includes and uses questions on the poems as secondary, complementary tools to reach her desired object. However, like Mrs Davids, these complementary tools present with limited efficacy to develop meaning making and criticality due to the nature of

the questions. Consider Mrs Steyn's questions on Poems 1 and 2 (in Figure 12 and Figure 13 respectively), retyped for clarity and available at Appendix 6.2:

1. Comment on the significance of the title, repeated again in line 5.

2. What is the significance of not knowing the actual place where the incident took place?

3. What is the effect of the line "We had all night to think about it"?

4. This poem is a dramatic monologue – why does this make it an effective poem?

5. Is there evidence in the poem that the soldier did shoot 'the lady'?

Figure 12 Questions set on Poem 1 (Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats by Robert Lowell)

1. Where is the poem set – provide evidence for your answer.

2. What characteristics of the helicopter is being emphasised by the simile in line 2?

3. Comment on the metaphor in line 4.

4. Comment on the extended metaphor from lines 12 onward.

5. What does the poet suggest with the words "the frontier is never somewhere else"?

Figure 13 Questions set on Poem 2 (Hotel Room, 12th Floor by Norman MacCaig)

For the most part, Mrs Steyn's questions are comprehensive. There is a good variation between levels 1 to 5 of Barrett's Taxonomy. Unfortunately, inasmuch as the questions encourage meaning making of the poem though questions that require learners to discuss and evaluate poetic devices of the text such as the title, the setting, the format of the poem, as well as the impact of literary devices such metaphorical language, there are few questions which truly engage learners' criticality. As such, learners are encouraged to be, as per Freebody & Luke's (1990) Four Reader Roles, code-breakers and text participants who are able to understand how "sounds, vocabulary, and grammar" are used to produce meaning (Firkins, 2015, p. 2) and use their own experiences and subjectivities to make meaning of the poem. Learners are even provided with the opportunities to develop into text analysts in which they ultimately evaluate the effectiveness of the text through an understanding of its application and relationship to other texts (Firkins, 2015). But aspects of investigation which will enable learners to transpose their skills and the meaning of the poem to other cultural and social contexts (Dlamini, 2019) through acting as text users is lacking. I agree with Foster (2012) that poetry "should be a stimulus for social criticism and social action" (p. 751), and yet Mrs Steyn maintains a level of impersonality in her questions which are grounded in the

text, though never truly expecting learners to evaluate the actions within the text to establish key aspects of criticality which, according to Bohman (2016), should encourage the identification and engagement with issues within society. As with Mrs Steyn's classroom practice, her questions are devoid of the inclusion of the learners' contextual background or "funds of knowledge": that is, their "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). *Whose perspective/narrative is favoured? Whose voice is silenced? How does the poem (Poem 1) represent the Americans vs the Vietnamese? What effect does the killing of an innocent have on the reader? To which events can similar unjust actions be linked in the context of South Africa? Regarding Poem 2: Do you agree that the "frontier is never somewhere else"? Provide examples from within your own context to reinforce your answer. What battles do you find within your own context?* I am left wondering where the critical questions are. In both poems, important commentaries are made about the human condition and yet the questions do not feature an engagement wherein learners investigate the political underpinning of language (Freire, 2009) through which "asymmetrical distributions of institutionalised power across societies" are often served (Whatley, Banda, Bryan, 2000). As such, a disjuncture exists between the poetry discussions which, to a certain extent, explored these aspects, and the poetry questions which do not represent a critical evaluation of the poem. Unfortunately, Mrs Steyn's poetry questions do not serve to supplement the development of criticality within her class and are thus a constraining factor to fostering critical literacy within her learners.

4.3 Multilingualism as a CL-Developing Strength

Analysis of data revealed that multilingualism can be an effective tool in developing meaning making of poetry in multilingual learners when used appropriately and with intention. Consider the following extract which illustrates Mrs Davids' intentional use of multilingualism in teaching the poem "*The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga*" by Ingrid Jonker to assist in her learners' meaning making and appreciation of the poem:

Extract O
Lesson 1: Mrs Davids
Poem: *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga* by Ingrid Jonker
1. Mrs Davids: […] Let's read. Learner A, I want you to have the Afrikaans version [of the poem, *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga*] and come and read it to us.
  [Learner A reads the Afrikaans version.]
2. Mrs Davids: Thanks, Learner A.
3. Learner A: You're welcome, Ma'am.

4. Learner E:	The poem that you just handed out now, [the English version], is basically a word for word translation [of the Afrikaans version].
5. Mrs Davids:	Word for word translation [agrees]. So, yeah. It's a brilliant translation, I think. Very often, you know, things really get lost in translation. This… not. You might say I'm biased, but I almost want to say that the English version is slightly…sounds slightly better than the Afrikaans, the original. That should never be, because the original should always be the best. But I think the person who did the translation for this, [it] was not Ingrid Jonker, did a brilliant job translating this poem.
[…]	
6. Mrs Davids:	Nelson Mandela did a wonderful job by quoting this in Afrikaans, '*nogaal*' (English: *actually*), when […] when he opened the first democratic parliament. It's shortened. I think the name in Afrikaans is just called "*Die Kind*".
	[*Some learners say that there is a discrepancy with the name of the poem. The teacher concedes that there must be many other names for the poem.*]
	[…] Nelson Mandela actually quoted Ingrid Jonker in Afrikaans. [He] read her poem, not the entire one, wanting to demonstrate how far they've come, how far we as South Africans have come, from that time [apartheid] to now – to the democracy that we find ourselves in.

Figure 14 below, shows a side-by-side view of the English and Afrikaans versions of the poem, *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga* by Ingrid Jonker, referred to in Utterance 1 of Extract M:

English Version	**Afrikaans Version**
The child is not dead	Die kind is nie dood nie
The child lifts his fists against his mother	die kind lig sy vuiste teen sy moeder
Who shouts Afrika ! shouts the breath	wat Afrika skreeu skreeu die geur van vryheid en
Of freedom and the veld	heide
In the locations of the cordoned heart	in die lokasies van die omsingelde hart
The child lifts his fists against his father	Die kind lig sy vuiste teen sy vader
in the march of the generations	in die optog van die generasies
who shouts Afrika ! shout the breath	wat Afrika skreeu skreeu die geur
of righteousness and blood	van geregtigheid en bloed
in the streets of his embattled pride	in die strate van sy gewapende trots
The child is not dead	Die kind is nie dood nie
not at Langa nor at Nyanga	nòg by Langa nòg by Nyanga
not at Orlando nor at Sharpeville	nòg by Orlando nòg by Sharpville
nor at the police station at Philippi	nòg by die polisiestasie in Philippi
where he lies with a bullet through his brain	waar hy lê met 'n koeël deur sy kop
The child is the dark shadow of the soldiers	
on guard with rifles Saracens and batons	Die kind is die skaduwee van die soldate
the child is present at all assemblies and law-givings	op wag met gewere sarasene en knuppels
the child peers through the windows of houses and	die kind is teenwoordig by alle vergaderings en
into the hearts of mothers	wetgewings
this child who just wanted to play in the sun at	die kind loer deur die vensters van huise en in die
Nyanga is everywhere	harte van moeders
the child grown to a man treks through all Africa	die kind wat net wou speel in die son by Nyanga is
the child grown into a giant journeys through the	orals
whole world	die kind wat 'n man geword het trek deur die ganse
Without a pass	Afrika
	die kind wat 'n reus geword het reis deur die hele
	wêreld
	Sonder 'n pas

Figure 14 Translation of Poem 1: The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga by Ingrid Jonker

As detailed in Section 3.3.3, Mrs Davids' learners are Afrikaans Home Language learners who have elected to study English Home Language. The learners are thus Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers. To include the learners' home language in the unpacking of the poem is a deliberate act of inclusion of learners' prior knowledge on Mrs Davids' part, thereby increasing learners' chance of understanding the nuance within a rather challenging text at Grade 10 level. It is through this practice that Mrs Davids makes the act of meaning making, particularly of the subtleties of figurative language and literary devices, accessible to her learners. Therefore, it is clear that Mrs Davids sees the inclusion of other languages, in this case Afrikaans, as a resource to her practice and not a hinderance (Biseth, 2009). This is good as it actively sees Mrs Davids forgoing puritanic ways of looking at EHL and its various subject areas in the aim of attaining something greater (in this case, relatable meaning making). As such, it ensures that learners' home language is used as a "foundation from which to build" and in so doing, "enhance meaning making" (Dlamini, 2019, p. 28). Whereas it provides a good point of departure to enhance meaning making, the effectiveness of this practice is greatly contingent on how it is executed *throughout* the lesson. Mrs Davids' use of the Afrikaans version, however, is not sustained throughout the lesson. After this introductory section to the lesson, she never refers back to the Afrikaans version of the text and reserves the impact of reading it solely for the beginning of it. The use of the Afrikaans text may have been of greater use if Mrs Davids had used the text as a parallel point of reference for learners' sense-making and even critique of the poem, but this does not occur. As such, the benefit of the bilingualism in her lesson is forgone. This is unfortunate as there are so few poems of the like where the English and Afrikaans versions are so well translated and known within South Africa. Learner E made a critical observation in her comparison of the two texts by saying that the poems are word-for word translations (Utterance 4), and she is right. This would have been an opportunity in which the classroom community could have been engaged in deliberation about the two tools presented by Mrs Davids and their appreciation of it: *Does their mother tongue predispose them to liking the Afrikaans version more? Which translation do they like more? Why? Is the meaning the same? Does the language impact the effect of the poem or their understanding of it? Which poem has the greatest impact on them?* Since the learners are all English and Afrikaans Home Language learners, their advanced bilingualism allows them the advantage of being able to comprehend the diction used in the poem and make a reasonably informed judgement. However, as discussed in Section 4.3, Mrs Davids' propensity to monopolise the division of labour within

the class overshadows the opportunity for learners to present their authentic, visceral responses to the two texts. Instead, Mrs Davids commented that the English version is "a brilliant translation" and that the "English version…sounds slightly better than the Afrikaans" which she believes "should never be the case" (Utterance 29). In this utterance, the learners' voices are silenced and their moments of meaning making and criticality are eclipsed by Mrs Davids' meaning making and judgement. In so doing, Mrs Davids' response reveals her positionality towards the poem (favourable disposition), most likely impacting the learners' positionality towards it and creating a space in which voicing alternative perspectives or feelings may pose a risk for the learners too big to take. (Perhaps learners did not enjoy the poem, or perhaps they thought the Afrikaans version was more impactful for them, for example.) As such, Mrs Davids' neutrality would have proven to be advantageous for learners' meaning making and criticality of the poem through the use of multilingual representations of it.

In the teaching of her lesson, Mrs Davids uses emotive Afrikaans diction appropriately and impactfully to promote meaning making and criticality. The following extract illustrates Mrs Davids' use of Afrikaans to create an emotional response within her learners:

Extract P
Lesson 1: Mrs Davids
Poem: *The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga* **by Ingrid Jonker**
1. Mrs Davids: The original word that was coined during the apartheid times it was a form of identification for Black people. Come on, you are doing History, you should know. There's a specific *word* that was used. It was called a "*dompas*". [*Learners look shocked*]. And when we say, "*dom*", we're talking "*dom*" as in: You have no braincells. […] It's an Afrikaans word that went to the heart of people's dignity. [*Speaking as if to speak for racists in the apartheid era:*] 'Because you are a Black person, I've given you a *dompas*, and I identify you as a "*dom*" person – as a person with no…. brains? You [are] stupid! You have no dignity. You're not on my level'. And that is the Afrikaans word for it. What did the *dompas* do? What was the function? It was a way of identifying you, and a way of giving you permission to be outside of your area. You could not find work, you could not travel outside of your area, without a pass. Mahatma Gandhi, you know about him, the Indian, the man with glasses? One of his first… [*trails off*]. He came as a lawyer, to South Africa, for many years. One of his first acts of resistance – it was a nonviolent action – was the burning of the *dompasses*. "*Passe*", if you want the Afrikaans word, because that became a symbol, that little thing, became a symbol of people's dignity and how people's humanity was completely stripped away.

At the end of the poem, the speaker mentions that "the child grown into a giant, journeys though the whole world // Without a pass". It is common South African knowledge that Black people were issued identification documents, called passes, which gave them permission to move outside their place of residence during the apartheid era (Alexander & Chan, 2004). I noticed that Mrs Davids' learners were visibly shocked when Mrs Davids shared the original, full Afrikaans word with them:

that the pass was known as the dompas (dumb pass). Perhaps what the learners found so shocking about the use of the term was the fact that it was not only an incredibly demeaning, premeditated, emotional weapon, but that it was also an Afrikaans word – a language closely tied to their identities. Mrs Davids, feeding off the learners' shock, continued to drive home the shocking reality: "And when we say "dom", we're talking "dom" as in you have no braincells. I've given you a *dompas*, and I identify you as a "dom" person... as a person with no…. Brains? You [are] stupid! You have no dignity; you're not on my level" (Utterance 1). For Mrs Davids, the connotation of such language features the dehumanisation and disregard for the dignity of Black people. As such, Mrs Davids' use of multilingualism, though scant, enabled the poem's meaning to be conveyed successfully to the learners, supporting the DCE practice of inspiring empathy and understanding of the other (Waghid, 2015).

Although Mrs Steyn did not use multilingualism *within the class* as a tool to teach poetry, it became apparent that it was present within the classroom activity system as a means through which learners made meaning and shared their responses to the poem, openly. The following extract happened shortly after Mrs Steyn read the poem to the learners which shows how Mrs Steyn uses their immediate, visceral responses in their home language as a point from which to develop meaning:

Extract Q	
Lesson 1: Mrs Steyn	
Poem: *Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats* by Robert Lowell	
The learners deliberate about the ending line of the poem, "it kind of cracked me up".	
1. Mrs Steyn:	[…] Poem? Impact? What happened at the end there?
2. Learner A:	The guy shot a baby on the back of a woman which he originally thought was a gun. And then, when he saw it was just a baby, he, like...laughed at the thought that he wanted to shoot her.
3. Mrs Steyn:	He did shoot her.
4. Learner B:	Or he tried to shoot her.
5. Learner C:	[visibly confused] En toe lag hy? (English: *And so he laughed?*) [*There is a buzz in the class. The learners in front of the researcher speak to one another in Afrikaans and there is visible confusion about the phrase "cracked me up".*]
6. Learners:	Ek het gedink hy lag. (English: *I thought he was laughing*)
7. Mrs Steyn:	He did shoot her. And so, the "it cracked me up", [is] not in a, in like a… it's not a laugh. It's not like when you crack up laughing. It's anguish and pain and torment and terror at the thought of shooting a woman with a baby.

The last line of the poem ("it kind of cracked me up") is ambiguous given the modern context within which the poem is currently read. The intended meaning, according to Mrs Steyn, is that the fact that the soldier shot a woman with her baby caused him "anguish and pain and torment and terror" (Utterance 9). However, given the context, the phrase "to crack up" is understood to mean to laugh. The learners actively attempted to try and make sense of the poem as well as express

shock in Afrikaans ("En toe lag hy?" in Utterance 5) and then later "Ek het gedink hy lag" (Utterance 6). Mrs Steyn, hearing and sensing the confusion and outcry that someone would break out in laughter at the sight of having shot a woman with a baby, used their Afrikaans as part of a response which she could use to explain the confusion to her learners. Mrs Steyn's acceptance of their Afrikaans reactions is good as the learners feel comfortable enough to share their visceral reactions to the poem in their home language. This is a practice that enables the development of meaning making.

4.4 Multimodality as a CL-Developing Strength

Evidence suggests that multimodality functions to enhance learners' favourable disposition towards poetry study. Thus, the careful, intentional use of multimodal techniques within the classroom has the potential to create a favourable platform for the development of meaning making and criticality. Consider the following extract from the focus group discussion with Mrs Steyn's learners illustrating the impact that Mrs Steyn's employment of multimodal practices has on her learners:

Extract R.1
Focus Group: Mrs Steyn

1. Researcher:	Yes, okay. So, you guys really enjoy her way of teaching [poetry] because she is so…?	
2. Learner A:	Passionate [about her subject].	
3. Learner B:	I think that it's [Mrs Steyn] ... but also English Home Language as a subject. I feel it's the only subject that actually lets you think freely. Because we, like, if I have to compare it to Afrikaans: Afrikaans is very, like, "Okay, this is what you write down, this is what you write. You don't put your own idea in there. This is right or wrong, and I think… [*Leaner's train of thought appears to change*]. In English, we watched *Dead Poet Society* and I think… [*Addresses the researcher directly*.] Have you watched that?	
4. Researcher:	No, I haven't.	
5. Learner B:	[Shock] You have to watch it! Basically, it will like really help... So, like, basically, that [movie] just, like, emphasises what poetry is, because it's about poetry and just what it can do for us to start thinking differently.	
6. Researcher:	So, Mrs Steyn lets you guys watch movies and stuff that link to the poetry?	
7. Learner B:	Yes. And listen to songs… [*Learner is very enthusiastic, along with the other learners. They are clearly very excited about speaking about the things they do in poetry classes that make it fun for them. They are all unanimous in this sentiment.*]	
8. Researcher:	I saw that you guys were asking, "Ma'am, can we listen to a song? Ma'am, can we watch a movie?" I love that about her way of teaching because I don't make time for my learners to watch movies and I think I should.	
9. Learner C:	Ja, I think it makes poetry, like, the whole concept of poetry, a lot more fun and a lot more interesting [when] we can also, like, listen [to music] and watch some movies.	
10. Learner B:	It gives us a lot more insight about what really happened and also, like, [in] *Dead Poets Society*, you can also see how other people, like, interpret poetry in a much more deeper way. Like, it's hours of movies that we see, and it's much more than just five minutes of a teacher saying, "You must enjoy poetry; poetry is art".	

Mrs Steyn employs multimodality in her classroom which is built upon the premise that meaning making takes the form of a range of resources such as spoken, written, visual, gestural, bodily, sonic, and spatial modes (Kress, 1997, 2000, 2010). The data suggests that this is a practice in which Mrs Steyn shows significant prowess and willingness to take risks – an aspect of her teaching practice that greatly enhances her learners' disposition to and meaning making of poetry. As a result, her learners see poetry as a subject in which they can "think freely" (Utterance 3), linking to the notion that a multiliterate approach encourages learners' "*imagination* and emotional development" (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003, p. 5).

The learners' further utterances reinforced their account of Mrs Steyn's successful use of multimodality that extended beyond this study's observational period. Through Learner B's Utterance 5, I learnt of an impactful movie, *Dead Poets Society* (1989), that Mrs Steyn made her learners watch which has had a profound effect on how learners view the study of poetry. It is about an English teacher who encourages his learners to break free from societal norms and live life unapologetically: a sentiment which he uses to inspire his learners through his unorthodox teaching of poetry. The use of this movie as a multimodal tool has enhanced the learners' appreciation of poetry to be an engaging, perspective-altering genre: They mention that it "emphasises what poetry is […] and can do for us to start thinking differently" (Utterance 5), suggesting the introduction to a critical mode of thinking. Importantly, Learner B makes the assertion that the use of complementary multimodal tools such as movies allows learners "insight about what *really* happened" (Utterance 10, italics my own), developing within learners a sensitivity to the various modes of representation that exist within texts that are inherently positioned and positioning and constructed from the view of the author (Janks, 2010; 2012). This can develop a DCE practice of appreciating the experiences of what a narrative present within a poem may be like from the perspective of someone else (Nussbaum, 2002). Learners suggest that the sentiments conveyed in complementary multimodal tools such as movies are more effective in developing an appreciation of a genre than a teacher's simply saying, "Enjoy poetry; poetry is art" (Utterance 10), reinforcing the benefit of multimodality in poetry teaching.

The following extract is a continuation of Extract R but is an excerpt from later in the discussion where the learners brought up the movie, *Dead Poets Society* (1989) *again*, highlighting how the

experience has remained with them. It shows how Mrs Steyn uses bodily and special modes (Kress 1997, 2000, 2010), inspired by the movie, to enhance meaning:

Extract R.2
Focus Group: Mrs Steyn

1. Learner A: We watched *Dead Poet Society* and one of the scenes is that they all stand on the tables to look at something from a different perspective, and we did that, and it was quite fun!
2. Learner B: Mrs Steyn was like, "Everyone on a desk!" and everyone stood on the tables!

Extract R.2 reinforces the veracity of Utterance 9 of Extract R.1 in which Learner C mentioned that Mrs Steyn's multimodal approach to teaching poetry "makes the whole […] concept of poetry a lot more fun and a lot more interesting" (Utterance 9). In it, Mrs Steyn used the classroom space (the room, chairs, and desks) and the learners' bodies (standing on the desks) to communicate the message that, at any time, a multiplicity of perspectives exists within a single, familiar space, if only one changes one's position and is willing to see things differently. Mrs Steyn actively used the unorthodox teacher's risky practices within *Dead Poets Society* (which eventually landed the character in great trouble within the setting of his highly traditional school), to risk her traditional teaching environment (and the behaviour typical within such an institution) to teach learners a meaningful lesson. To a certain extent, the implementation of this practice may have proven to be uncomfortable for all parties involved as it sees both parties (Mrs Steyn and her learners) doing an action (standing on desks) which is frowned upon in traditional teaching environments. In so doing, Mrs Steyn manages not only to implement multimodality, but also a pedagogy of discomfort.

The data suggests that a multimodal approach not only enhances favourable dispositions within learners but may also aid aids in the development of meaning making and criticality. Mrs Steyn's lesson on the poem *Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats* by Robert Lowell, illustrates how she uses visual modes of multimodality within her classroom to complement the written mode of the text. The following extract places the visual modes in line with the discussion:

Extract S
Lesson 1: Mrs Steyn
Poem: *Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats* by Robert Lowell

1. Learner A: Ma'am, did these people go to jail when they got back?
2. Mrs Steyn: No, I don't think so, no. Because they were shooting under orders of the army to do so.
   [*Learners seem visibly distressed at the thought that these atrocities happened, and nobody paid for it.*]
3. Mrs Steyn: [*In response to the class' visible distress.*] I know, right. But it did cause a big outcry in America, and I think they sort of… [*Trails off.*] And the death toll was 505, and I wrote here: The only person who was injured was this GI dude who shot himself in the foot. Okay? So, there were no guns there

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and here are some pictures of that… [*Mrs Steyn shows Figure 15*]. And [Figure 15], a very famous picture. I think they use that once on a… I can't remember…

Figure 15 PowerPoint Slide, Vietnamese children running away from perceived harm

3. Mrs Steyn: [*Mrs Steyn shows Figure 16.*]
And I thought [Figure 16] was just pretty amusing if, you look at it. Kind of satire going on there.

Figure 16 PowerPoint Slide, A cartoon depicting the atrocities of the Vietnam War

4. Learner B: [*Turns to friend next to her with an expression of shock*.] That's so bad!
5. Mrs Steyn: It *is* bad, right? It's really, really bad. But, yeah. A lot of people were like, "What was America doing there anyway?" They didn't have any reason other than perhaps, what? What could their reasons be? Say, communism to stop it or something like that?

It became clear that, implicitly within her practice, Mrs Steyn values the notion that communication is comprised of various modes of operation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2003) and so acts to realise this within her lessons. As is evident from the images in Figure 15 and

Figure 16 (two examples from a multi-slide PowerPoint presentation) used as complementary tools within the activity system, Mrs Steyn shows her learners the abject horror experienced by the Vietnamese civilians when the United States of America attacked the country in pursuit of the Viet Cong, only to find and kill innocents instead. In the image (Figure 15), Vietnamese children can be seen running and crying in horror. This image would have served to impress upon the learners the harsh reality the Vietnamese civilians underwent during this attack. In the background of Figure 15, American soldiers are seen to run behind the children. This emotive image is likely to have provoked strong emotions from the learners, aiding in their appreciation of the lived experiences of others who have undergone hardship. Although not aligned with the verbal images within the poem which would have been a strength to the meaning making of the poem, Figure 15 presents the contextual reality through which many innocent Vietnamese suffered in the war and thus complemented the poet's message successfully. Unfortunately, without giving the image much more deliberation than simply saying that it is "a very famous picture" used publicly on some or other platform (Utterance 3), the presentation of the image constitutes a missed opportunity for criticality. *How are participants presented? How does this make the learners feel and why? Is it fair that these images have been circulated on the Internet (and used in this PowerPoint) given the sensitive nature of it? If so, why? With whom is the viewer made sympathise with or negate? Does representation on these images speak to the poet's envisaged representation of the traumatic events that occurred? What comment can learners make on the victims in these images and what does that tell us about representation in these images?* As such, Mrs Steyn inadvertently deactivates the meaning making and criticality-developing power that Figure 15 could have had within the classroom.

Figure 16, like Figure 15, shows a rather graphic depiction of a woman whose brain has been shot out, her body bleeding into a pool of blood on the ground. An American soldier has his foot on her dead body while houses burn in the background and fresh smoke billows from his gun. This image brought up strong emotion from Mrs Steyn's learners despite indirectly reducing the power of the image to its usefulness in "amusing" her (Utterance 3). Learner B, sitting right in front of me in the class, looked at her friend next to her and said, "That's so bad!" (Utterance 4). This utterance suggests a real emotional reaction to the graphic nature of this image which is good. However, what let this moment of meaning making and criticality slip by, once again, is Mrs Steyn's brief

engagement with the image and lack of linking it to meaningful discussion with the learner. *What is "so bad" about this image for Learner B? What about the image is "amusing" for Mrs Steyn? What does the positioning of the soldier imply about the role and positionality of the Americans in the war and perhaps in the world at large? What impact does the fact that the victim is a woman have on the learners? How does it link to the contents of the poem? Where are the Vietnamese men?* Instead, Mrs Steyn simply agrees: "It is bad, right? It's really, really bad (Utterance 5). There is understanding for the limit of time that teachers have when dealing with poetry. There is also understanding for teachers choosing not to engage with every image of a PowerPoint lest it cause them to veer too far off course of the poem at hand. However, when highly effective images like Figure 15 and Figure 16 are presented, it is vital that teachers facilitate learners' making a meaningful link between the artefacts (in this case, the poem, and the PowerPoint presentation) so that the artefact truly can be an enabling device within the poetry classroom and not simply something to spark "amuse[ment]" (Utterance 3). As such, though Mrs Steyn's PowerPoints are effective, the execution of it in conjunction with the poem causes them to lose their efficacy, constraining the development of meaning making and criticality.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected within this study and provided valuable insight on the dispositions that teachers and learners hold towards poetry. It highlighted that the dispositions that teachers hold, though favourable, vary greatly and are inherently complex. It illustrated that teachers generally choose poetry that they deem fit to meet the objects they envision for their classroom activity systems. Although these choices may serve to promote teachers' favourable dispositions towards poetry, they function to maintain a level of comfort that impedes teachers' own criticality, and subsequently the criticality of their learners. The data shows that teachers view poetry as a tool to provoke meaningful discussion. It further presented an account of the variation in dispositions that exists within, and between, learners in both classes ranging from favourable to resistant. Data analysis highlighted the important role that the choice of texts has in learner dispositions towards poetry, but that a multilingual and multimodal approach to teaching serves to enhance the poetry learning experience for learners. Finally, the data illustrated the existence of learner agency in their development of critical literacy through poetry.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter draws upon the research conducted and analysed in Chapter 4 to answer the main research question outlined in Chapter 1: *How does the current teaching of poetry in Grade 10 develop meaningful critical literacy?* It will address the three research questions that underpin this study which detail the dispositions that teachers and learners have towards poetry as well as the practices employed by the teachers within the classrooms that enable or constrain meaning making and criticality through poetry. My own reflections as a researcher as well as the limitations I encountered in my study are detailed. Finally, this chapter concludes with my recommendations for further research.

5.1 Responding to the research questions

5.1.1 What are teachers' dispositions towards poetry?

This study found that, at surface level, teachers are generally favourably disposed towards poetry as a genre. This favourable disposition, however, is varied, complex and nuanced, often socialised into being through lived experiences, individual subjectivities, and general personal preferences. Interestingly, the data showed that disposition takes on an observable form (I refer to this as overt disposition), and one that lies beneath the surface and is only apparent upon careful investigation into the subtleties of practice (covert disposition). However, these dispositions are by no means straightforward.

A major finding of this study unearthed a contradiction: Whereas teachers are generally favourably disposed towards poetry, poetry teaching presents them with varying degrees of discomfort. This discomfort was presented overtly or covertly and included feelings of anxiety, exposure, and inadequacy. Although theory suggests that discomforting feelings are a useful means to aid growth and development in person and practice (Boler, 1999), teachers actively take mitigatory steps in their poetry teaching practice to avoid discomforting feelings around poetry (I refer to this as 'safe-play' or 'playing it safe'). These mechanisms for coping with conflicting and unsettling feelings towards the teaching of poetry manifested in the following ways:

- **Teachers actively modify the division of labour within the classroom.** In so doing, they pre-position themselves and their learners into predetermined roles. Due to various factors such as pressure to know all the answers, pressure to ensure learners understand the texts for academic

purposes, and pressure within their traditionally established roles of 'teacher as knowledge producer', the focus is placed on them, *by them*, as the fixed (and often only) MKO within the activity system. This naturally results in positioning learners as passive recipients of knowledge, and seldom individuals with agency in their own learning. This practice was found to be enabled and reinforced by learners' socialisation into schooling within authoritarian principles. In practice, this served to maintain control over the environment wherein teachers felt safe: Only the detail and readings of the texts they felt necessary, and comfortable, to teach were discussed and the level of open engagement with learners (often a challenging phenomenon to control as the permeations of human interaction with contentious topics are variable and unpredictable terrain to navigate) was carefully managed. Since teachers effectively employ the banking model of teaching, learners are seldom encouraged to engage in practising independent meaning making and criticality of their own. As a result, a skewed division of labour biased towards the teacher is a practice that teachers employ which curtails the development of critical literacy.

- **Teachers choose poetry texts to maintain safety within their poetry teaching practices.** To achieve this, teachers exercise a careful and deliberate poetry-selection practice. Whereas this mitigatory practice promotes teachers' favourable dispositions towards poetry, data has proven it to be a constraining factor to a pedagogy of discomfort, stunting the development of critical literacy within their practice. Investigation into teachers' mitigatory practices shows teachers' selection criteria:
  - *Teachers choose familiar texts.* These poetry texts are often used over an extended period of time – multiple years in many instances – despite an awareness that change is necessary. On the one hand, teachers appear to engage in this practice based on their judgement of its ease of use as the texts are tried and tested to produce reliable, repeatable favourable results. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that this practice hinders the development of meaning making and criticality, likely because the meaning of texts, and their expectation of learner engagement based on prior experience, have been galvanised within them. This may impede their ability to view texts in a flexible, adaptable manner. As a result, teachers were seen to slip unwittingly into the reinforcement of long-held interpretations of the texts, leaving little room for that of their learners. This curtails teachers' willingness to engage learners in meaning making and criticality.

o *Teachers choose texts that align with their world views, their designs upon the activity system, and their personal preferences*. The data illustrated an interesting pattern: Teachers often appear to engage in risk-taking within their poetry teaching practices, but this, in reality, is not always the case. Even when teachers choose texts expressly for the benefit of exposing learners to contentious themes and to push the boundaries of comfort, elements of self-preservation and playing it safe yet remain as teachers often choose texts that align with their own world- and political views and avoid those that may be uncomfortable or challenging to teach. In so doing, Grade 10 learners are exposed only to that which the teacher deems fit. This prevents them from experiencing important, and often necessary challenging emotions. Being able to place themselves in the shoes of another (a DCE practice), having their "cherished beliefs and assumptions" (Boler, 1999) brought into controversy (a pedagogy of discomfort practice), and the reflection on "language, culture, experiences and memories" (Flint & Laman, 2012, p. 14) to develop meaning making and criticality becomes difficult without highly skilled teacher mediation practices, unfortunately, not often observed within this study. In so doing, the texts chosen for study remain within their realm of comfort and familiarity, reinforcing teachers' poetry-teaching coping mechanism.

- **Teachers' preparatory methods for teaching poetry are extensive.** This study found that teachers tend to consult, and thereby consume, multiple secondary sources to prepare a poem in an effort to know enough about it so as not to be caught off-guard. This practice is a concerted effort in limiting feelings of inadequacy and insecurity and minimise instances of unknowing and consists of a careful analysis of the poem beforehand through the use of secondary texts such as poetry analysis articles and memoranda. In so doing, however, teachers become carriers, whether unwittingly or purposefully, of the meaning offered in the secondary texts. These "powerful discourses" found within the texts speak to them and through them (Janks, 2012, p. 150). Though this serves as good teaching practice, it negates opportunities for the practice of a pedagogy of discomfort and holds repercussions on the development of critical literacy as it reinforces a scripted and controlled practice (Ofsted, 2007). This serves to reinforce a division of labour biased towards the teacher, rendering learners as passive recipients of the teacher and

secondary texts' meaning in the joint activity of unpacking the poem. This acts not only as a coping mechanism to play it safe, but also serves as an impediment to critical literacy.

The findings within this study illustrated that teachers' dispositions are varied, nuanced and complex, yet a commonality exists: Teachers harbour feelings of variable discomfort in teaching poetry. This discomfort proved to manifest observably and, at times, indistinctly; teachers were either keenly aware of these feelings, or unwitting victims of it. This section further offered insight into how teachers engage in safe-play in aspects of their teaching practices under their control. Consequently, the following section will address the second research question investigating the dispositions that learners hold towards poetry.

5.1.2   *What are learners' dispositions towards poetry?*

This study found that learners' dispositions towards poetry study are highly contingent upon their teachers'. Teachers' actions, motivated by their espoused dispositions, have great bearings upon how their learners see poetry. This proved to impact the efficacy of poetry to be used as a tool to develop meaning making and criticality. The data, however, displayed great variance in disposition between classes and even within single focus groups. It illustrated that, while the majority of learners are generally favourably disposed towards poetry as a genre, there are those who harbour inauspicious dispositions towards it. A careful analysis of data showed a contradictory occurrence: *Favourable dispositions* do not *always* result in optimal grounds for the development of critical literacy and *adverse dispositions* are *not necessarily an impediment* to it. Learner dispositions, as with teachers', are therefore equally nuanced and complex. Favourable, critical literacy-enabling dispositions towards poetry are developed within learners…

- *when teachers share their personal vulnerabilities and subjectivities evoked by the poem.* Learners showed favourable dispositions to poetry study when reflecting upon instances where their teachers have been open with them. This was demonstrated through teachers' sharing their challenges, family histories, and contentious life experiences linked to the subject matter of the poems, with their learners. Learners appreciate the humanisation of teachers that discussions unearthed through poetry brings into the learning environment, allowing them to see their teachers as relatable fellow humans. This proved to enhance the study of poetry for learners.

- *When teachers engage learners in discussion as valued knowledge contributors.* Instances where the DCE practice of engendering public deliberation (Waghid, 2015) within the classroom was employed, proved to enhance learners' experience of poetry, predisposing them to view poetry as a tool wherein they perceive themselves to have power and agency within the learning environment, even when this is not always true in reality. Simply put: Learners enjoy poetry when teachers engage them in discussion where they feel heard, and their interpretations (the meaning they make independently) are 'accepted'.

- *When learners feel free to share their views openly, without fear of judgement.* This study found that when teachers endeavour to create a non-judgemental, open environment for discussion and practicing basic self-expression, they develop favourable associations with poetry study as a safe space wherein they can explore the poetry text and its implications as well as theirs and others' views of the world. In such environments, learners feel some measure of comfort within the discomforting activity of taking risks when sharing their views.

- *When learners are challenged to think in unique, different ways.* The data presents an account that learners value seeing the extent to which they can think independently and recognised for their attempts. Even though not always successfully implemented, learners presented a great need to be challenged to think critically. In addition, learners *enjoy* discussions about poetry that veer from rigid 'textbook' interpretations and the assigned meaning therein. Naturally, teachers have a significant role to play in this: Learners noted teachers' open-mindedness and perceived flexibility as an important component to their positive poetry learning experience.

- *When teachers use multimodal tools within the class.* The learners within classes where teachers made use of tools (purposefully and with intent) such as movies, songs, physical activities, and PowerPoints, noted that their enjoyment and fun in studying poetry was increased because of it. Importantly, they found this practice to be more effective in enhancing their dispositions towards poetry than strictly verbal methods of teaching or conveying the beauty and use of poetry. This finding is discussed in further detail in Section 5.3.2.2.

The study also found that favourable dispositions towards poetry, while enabling the development of criticality, come with an important caveat: While these dispositions may prove auspicious for the development of critical literacy, discerning *the manner* in which these dispositions are developed within learners is vital. The study found that if a teacher's motives for choosing poetry

serves to reinforce their own practice of safe-play within the poetry learning environment, these safe-play driven practices can have a hampering influence on the development of critical literacy despite developing favourable dispositions within learners.

Adverse dispositions were found in this study to be based on two aspects: an oversaturation of historically contentious South African/Struggle poetry (especially given the positionality of a class with predominantly White learners as in this study's learner population) and the interactions these texts have with the deep-seated beliefs, identities, and ideologies learners inherently hold. While lessons and engagements on such poetry, for some learners, were eye-opening and allowed them to view the texts critically, for others it unearthed oppositional, even hostile, feelings towards the genre. It highlighted a disjuncture between the identities they currently hold as a modern, egalitarian youth, and the identity of the White population during times of racial oppression with whom they hold historical, even possibly generational ties. This was illustrated in Learner A's assertion that "[She has] to live with the fact that, maybe not [her] parents, but maybe [her] grandparents, […] may have been racist…" (Extract J, Utterance 12). The data found such instances of contradiction to be disorienting for learners in that they unearthed confusing feelings of opposition and hostility towards contentious South African poetry; often learners purposefully reduced them to irrelevance. Interestingly, these contradictions, when viewed as "disorienting dilemma[s]" (Waghid, 2007) have value. Whereas they often appear to be critical literacy-constraining, it is through such moments where, guided by a conscientious teacher, the potential for a moment of reassessment and critical reflection presents itself, leading to a moment where a "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1978) is possible. Unfortunately, I found that actually having learners speak frankly about their true feelings towards poetry is a challenge; data suggests that learners withhold their true feelings towards such texts from their teachers. As a result, the opportunity for transformative learning is lost in this regard.

Finally, this study found that learners are aware of their agency in their poetry learning experience. Whereas teachers play a pivotal role in developing favourable dispositions within learners, subsequently impacting their world view, part of the onus to learn resides within the learners themselves. This study found that they are cognisant of this. Learners are aware of the impact that their willingness has on their experience of poetry and, consequently, their development of meaning making and criticality through it.

This section offered insight into the dispositions that learners hold towards poetry study and the significant roles teachers play in its development. It briefly illustrated the various practices teachers employ which enhance learners' experience of poetry as well as those which inadvertently provoke adverse dispositions. The following section will detail the teaching practices that enable and constrain the development of critical literacy through the use of poetry, as informed by teachers' and learners' espoused dispositions towards it (detailed in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2).

5.1.3   *What Classroom Practices Enable or Constrain the Development of CL?*
5.1.3.1 *Critical Literacy-Constraining Teaching Practices*

This study found that a dominant, teacher-centred practice constrains the development of critical literacy. This teacher-centredness occurs despite observable cues which suggest a varying degrees of democratic multivoicedness. These cues were often misleading and led to a paradoxical finding: Whereas teachers generally make efforts to collaborate with learners in the unpacking of the poetry (wherein learners appear actively to engage with the poem, the teacher, and fellow classmates), these practices often function to mask an inherently teacher-centred practice wherein teachers can feel safe and in control. Practically, this finding was uncovered through the following sub-findings which came to the fore in predictable, well-rehearsed sequences of events:

- ***Teachers have the final say.*** Teachers engage learners in the initial unpacking of the poem when it comes to small-stakes introductory class discussions about the poem (suggesting multivoicedness), only to end up explaining the meaning to learners when it becomes important that they have the 'correct' interpretation (revealing teacher-centredness and inherent dominance). In such instances, learners were often seen to accept, uncritically, the views and meanings ascribed to the poem (and thereby their worldviews subsumed within these sentiments) by the teacher through actions like taking down notes of the teacher's assertions, often without question. This further highlighted the prevalence of the banking model of teaching wherein teachers maintained their roles as active MKOs in the activity system and, through their actions, positioned learners as passive recipients of knowledge. This sequence of events is characteristic of a traditional, authoritarian teaching paradigm wherein both parties within this study (teachers and learners) appeared comfortable and well-socialised. Unfortunately, teacher-centredness comes at the expense of learner-agency and their role as active participants in meaning making and criticality of the poem. Not only does this stand at odds with what CAPS (2011) envisages for the teaching of poetry (to teach poems, not poetry, p. 12), but it also

reinforces prior socialisation patterns where learners engage in uncritical, bottom-up style (Mbelani, 2014) of learning. This is an impediment to the development of critical literacy.

- ***Teachers' preconceived ideas and interpretations about the texts are limiting.*** This study found that teachers bring with them their own (often inflexible) preconceived ideas about the text – and thereby what responses they expect learners to have to their questions – into the discussions, predisposing the activity system to be teacher-centred before discussions even begin. These preconceived eclipse moments of authentic, collaborative meaning making with learners. The powerful discourses which they have assimilated into their schema (through their own research in preparation for the poem, memoranda set by other examiners, or even their own readings of the poems based on the lens through which they make sense of the world as detailed in Section 5.2.1) speak through them, often silencing the multivoicedness of the activity system. Whereas teachers often 'open' the discussion to learners' meaning making (suggesting multivoicedness), teachers' behaviour patterns betrayed that they already knew what they were expecting (revealing teacher-centredness and inherent dominance), leaving little room for learners' meaning making within the activity system. In addition, the study found that teachers have little patience for meaningful mediation as learners traverse the ZPD when the desired responses based on preconceived ideas about the text are not met or met poorly. The data showed, in many instances, that teachers effectively 'hijack' learners on their trajectory from unknowing to knowing. In practice, this involved speeding up the process to reach their desired answer or interpretation by offering their interpretation or answer when the learners do not 'get' it instead of more patient mediation. This was often due to factors such as the volume of responses offered, time constraints, and frustration at 'incorrect' answers/interpretations. This practice constrains the development of meaning making and criticality as teachers effectively "get in the way" (Dutta, 2001) of learners' meaning making and criticality. This is a practice that constrains the development of critical literacy.

- ***Teachers' engagement-management styles impede the development of meaning making.*** The manner with which teachers manage and mediate their classroom engagement was found to impact greatly on the outcome of the discussions about the poetry texts. The study found that teachers accept a high *quantity* of responses at the expense of high-*quality* engagement. This appeared to be due to multiple factors: The high volume of responses offered by learners, the

preservation of learners' feelings (in cases where they were 'wrong' or presented an impertinent assertion), the desire to give everyone a fair chance to air their views/interpretations, time constraints, and even a simple lack of patience with a learner(s). The practice of engaging many learners in offering their meaning making, opinions, and interpretations *appears* to encourage multivoicedness within the activity system and yet the manner in which it is conducted often lacked the skill to make it successful. Resultantly, this rendered the engagement within the activity system superficial. Practically, this came to the fore in a distinguishable pattern: Learners' answers were accepted by the teacher after which the teacher, once offering a brief acknowledgement or placatory response to allow the learner to feel heard, often moved along swiftly to the next learner, resulting in a one-way learner-teacher engagement. This occurred frequently at the expense of dialogic engagement where, ideally, the teacher is also engaged as a learning partner. Subsequently, the teacher's views remain intact, safe, unchallenged, further reinforced, and, as such, privileged above learners' who willingly open their views to scrutiny. This fashioned an environment characterised by a lack of mediation and meaningful feedback to develop nuanced interpretations of the text or criticality of its contents.

In the end, a teacher-centred practice was found to be a protective mechanism for teachers in many ways. The maintenance of monopoly over classroom engagements (including when, and with whom, to engage and to what *extent* the engagements may be entertained) allows teachers to feel safe within their positions while teaching a challenging genre. This inherent teacher-centredness negates the activity system's potential for a pedagogy of discomfort.

5.1.3.2 Critical Literacy-Enabling Practices

- ***The inclusion of multilingualism can aid in the development of critical literacy.*** Multilingualism was found to be an effective tool in the development of meaning making and criticality in multilingual learners where their home language is not the LOLT. However, the degree to which it was successfully implemented in this study varied between teachers. Unanimously, teachers appeared to welcome the use of Afrikaans as a language which ran adjacent to the LOLT, acknowledging the potential for multilingualism to be used as a strength in the development of meaning making in learners whose mother-tongue was not the LOLT. However, the data showed that there was no set manner or discernible pattern in which teachers implemented multilingualism, and each teacher implemented it in a different way with varying

degrees of efficacy. The practice of multilingualism, primarily, took the form of the deliberate use of poem translations, careful language use in the learners' mother tongue for greater emotive impact when discussing the poems, and the general accommodation and engagement with learners' visceral or immediate responses to the text in Afrikaans. What came to light through exploring multilingualism as a tool was that it is most effective when used with intention. However, whereas the initial practice of multilingualism proved to enhance learners' initial understanding of the content of the poem, the data found that teachers lack the skill of using it effectively. As such, multilingualism was implemented at a basic, meaning making level, but seldom to develop criticality.

- ***The use of complementary texts can aid in the independent development of critical literacy.*** This study found that in all cases, teachers made use of questions on the poems to consolidate that which was learnt in class. However, the efficacy of these question sets were limited and varied greatly between teachers and between poems due to various factors.
  - *Successful complementary tools*, in this case, the questions on the texts, were effective when they required learners to present critical discussion. In such questions, learners were offered the platform to critique the social, political, or moral actions of the people represented (or not represented) within the poems as well as its message. An analysis of the questions showed that successful question sets adhered to Barrett's Taxonomy in its prescribed ratio, assigning at least 20% of the marks to Levels 4 and 5 where evaluation an appreciation of the text are required. And, within these questions, successful questions did not refrain from problematising important, contextually significant, even contentious issues. These question sets can prove to be an enabling factor for the development of critical literacy, especially where classroom practice falls short thereof.
  - *Less-successful complementary tools* or questions on the texts, in contrast, did not offer learners the platform for social, political, or moral critique. Very often instead, this study saw a pattern arise where the set questions enabled meaning making of the text, often based in factuality (Barrett's Taxonomy Levels 1 and 2), but limited the development of criticality (through questions posed at Levels 4 and 5 of Barrett's Taxonomy). And, when questions *were* posed at Levels 4 and 5, they often showed an avoidance in problematising aspects of the poem which may prove too contentious. Herein, teachers, once again, play it safe. As a

result, in the less effective question sets, learners are generally offered the platform to become adept at commenting on figures of speech and literary devices, but seldom expected to critique the message, representation (or lack thereof), and historical (or current) actions undertaken by role-players within the poems.

- ***The use of complementary multimodal tools can aid in the development of critical literacy.*** The cultivation of a favourable disposition towards poetry became an important aspect of investigation within this study. Evidence suggested it to be an antecedent which predisposes learners to be receptive to poetry as a tool for the development of meaning making and criticality. This study found that the use of complementary multimodal tools (such as songs, movies, physical activities, and PowerPoints), when used with intention, greatly enhances learners' experience of poetry as a genre and their willingness to engage with it. Whereas multimodality was not incorporated by all teachers involved, where it was used, data presented an account of how its effective use can have a two-pronged benefit for poetry teaching.
  - o Firstly, it enhances favourable dispositions towards poetry. As such, it opens learners up to the use of poetry as a mode of engaging in important conversations and shifts in perspectives. Learners are more willing to see poetry as a genre offering a meaningful source of learning, and engage with it, when they harbour favourable feelings towards it. Multimodal practices, in this regard, enable the development of critical literacy.
  - o Secondly, it proved successful at exposing learners to the alternative realities and subjectivities presented in the texts, often more effectively grasped when presented visually, sonically, or through bodily gestures. Evidence suggested that the use of multimodal tools allows learners to react emotionally and critically to the sentiments communicated within the poems. However, this study also found that an emotional and/or critical reaction is not sufficient in the development of meaning making and criticality and that teachers often offer superficial engagement with the multimodal tools. Instead, mediated critical engagement, wherein the multimodal tool and the poem are negotiated meaningfully, critically, and concurrently, is needed but was found to be lacking.

In essence, whereas both teachers and learners are generally favourably disposed towards poetry, both parties possess varied, nuanced and highly complex dispositions towards poetry study. This has a direct impact on the efficacy of the use of poetry in developing critical literacy. Whereas the

teachers who participated in this study were exceptionally knowledgeable, display a keen awareness of the importance that including learners in the unpacking of the poem has in teaching it, and take action to make poetry study enjoyable and relatable to learners, they engage in teacher-centred practice which often negates the positive aspects of their practice.

5.2 Reflections on my own learning

Despite the stipulations put in place by CAPS about how we ought to approach the teaching of poetry, I have learnt that poetry teaching remains a deeply personal thing. Because of the open-ended nature of poetry, there is a lot of space with which teachers are able to do amazing things within their classrooms: many of which I was privileged to see with my own eyes. Within the sociocultural contexts of School A and B, I noticed how far removed the subject matter of South African Struggle poetry is from the minds of learners for whom institutionalised racism is a concept that does not form part of their experiential frame of reference. As such, I have realised how incredibly necessary it is to expose our learners to poems that speak to a world far removed from their own yet present all around them. Seeing learners with open hearts and minds towards meaningful change was incredibly heartening for me. I have come to realise how much learners inherently know and how desperately they desire to be given a voice to air their views, thoughts, and concerns. Learners thrive in an environment where they also have a say and an influence in the direction a lesson may be going. However, equally as wonderful to witness was the amazing teachers our country, South Africa, has. There are still incredibly hard-working individuals whose practices are driven by their passion for their subject and their learners. I learnt that a successful teacher is one who is always themselves and allows their unique personality to colour their lessons.

Unfortunately, I also saw the great divide that still exists in our nation's educational landscape and the privilege with which many learners are furnished in the completion of their secondary studies. The facilities at Schools A and B undoubtably make teachers' jobs more comfortable if not easier than their township counterparts. Learners at schools structured in this manner have incredible general knowledge due to their access to the Internet and resources that facilitate their learning. Having generally come from similar backgrounds, the teachers seldom have to deal with incredibly discrepant home environments or literacy levels, which allows the learners to work at a steady pace towards a common goal.

The research methods which I employed throughout the course of this study were well-suited to the study and me. I was able to gather quality data that enabled me to gain a firm understanding of the research problem at hand, learn about it, and present it with ease. However, hindsight is always crystal clear, and I as I compiled my findings, I realised that there were many things that I would have loved to ask the teachers and learners had I been given the chance to do so.

The journey through which I have come in putting together this thesis has seen unquantifiable personal, emotional, practical, and academic growth. The privilege of viewing both teachers living out their passions in their classrooms, unhampered by the current restrictions placed upon the world during the era of COVID-19, is a practice afforded to so few these days but for which I will be eternally grateful. I have come to find a profound sense of self within my own teaching. Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn have inspired me greatly. I have taken a piece of them with me into my own teaching and learning. Despite the admiration I hold for both teachers, I have come to realise that there is no such thing as a perfect teacher because the learners who sit in front of us all have very diverse needs. I have learnt that one can only be an imperfect teacher trying his or her level best to teach an imperfect body of learners, trying their best to find themselves in an imperfect world.

In *Life of Pi* (currently a Grade 12 novel), the protagonist, Pi Patel, has the privilege of knowing two influential men, both named Satish Kumar. One Mr Kumar is Pi's favourite biology teacher, the other a devout Muslim who has a profound impact on Pi's journey of faith. Essentially, both Mr Kumars represent a quintessential part of who Pi is and have each inspired him greatly, having a hand in the man he ultimately becomes. Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn are my Mr Kumars.

5.3 Limitations of the Research

The negotiation of access to schools was an enormous challenge which showed me that schools can be unhelpful to researchers. In a few cases, schools simply did not respond to my request, or they denied me access citing that their school was already at capacity in terms of the number of student teachers they could accommodate. Some schools appeared willing, but their administrative processes caused negotiating access with stakeholders to be an arduous task with little reward. As providence would have it, the only schools that granted me access were Schools A and B, and in retrospect, I could not have found better, more welcoming schools in which to conduct my research. However, the access granted to Schools A and B meant a significant shift in my study

with which I had to make peace. The initial purpose of this study was to do research on teachers *who taught diverse classes*. Despite the apparent diversity of the schools as a whole, the classes I observed were mostly homogenous. All the learners (besides one learner in School A who identified as Coloured) were White and spoke Afrikaans as their mother tongue despite their taking EHL as a "choice subject". The perceived constraint placed upon my sampling proved to be serendipitous. With the help of my supervisor, my research was sharpened, and my conceptualisation of this study changed. Instead of focussing on diversity as a key aspect of this study, my focus was shifted to *learners* (regardless of their race or ethnicity). To this moment, there is nothing I would change about the research sites and the participants who so graciously allowed me to study their interactions.

Secondly, on the very day of my first observation, I was met with a challenge: my voice recorder did not work! Instead, I had to make use of my cell phone to do the audio-recordings. Thankfully, the recordings were very clear, and the use of my cell phone proved to be a device with which I am familiar and thus made for easy use. Both teachers were incredibly shy about a video camera, as well, and thus, to set them at ease, I made the decision to place the video recorder (and myself) in an inconspicuous place. In fact, Mrs Steyn was so uneasy about the video recording that she asked me to start the recording later in the lesson when she was not looking. These reservations on the parts of Mrs Davids and Mrs Steyn resulted in video footage which was from a poor vantage point and often did not include the teacher in the frame.

Finally, as I can imagine must be the case with most qualitative studies that include the participation of humans who behave in different ways, within different contexts and with different "funds of knowledge", this research is limited in its ability to be generalised to the broader population. Instead, it presents an account of the poetry teaching practices employed at Schools A and B *alone*. It may shed light on new ways in which poetry may be approached, but the unique nature of humans dictates that, even when the practices employed within this study may have presented the results contained herein, it is not necessarily going to result in a similar outcome in a different context.

5.4 Recommendations

- As a point of departure: Often, teachers feel immense pressure to know exactly what a poem means, but in over-studying or over-preparing for a poem, teachers effectively predesign meaning which the learners consume and store as knowledge banks. It is within becoming comfortable in a place of relative uncertainty wherein teachers may learn practice greater reliance on their learners to contribute to the meaning making and criticality of the poem. This pedagogy of discomfort holds benefits to foster an environment where meaning making and criticality may be developed.

- Both teachers who participated in this study have either been teaching the same poetry for many years or they choose poetry to which they take a personal liking. Since Grade 10 teachers have a great deal of freedom in their choosing of poetry, when choosing poetry, teachers ought to have their learners and the current times in mind. Teachers should change poetry with the times in order to stimulate their learners and themselves with new narratives and perspectives and be reflective upon their choices. To that end, teachers should be aware that an oversaturation of a specific theme may have adverse effects and thus, they should choose poems that address a variety of important themes. I suggest a greater inclusion of other African voices and poems from countries in the greater world that were similarly oppressed.

- Teachers should work to include an increasingly multimodal approach to their lessons, even if that means more preparation. It became clear to me how learners benefit from seeing the content of the poem they are studying to be represented visually or through a song, even an interesting class action of standing on desks to "see a new perspective". Where there is no access to technological devices within the classrooms, teachers might find alternative sources to represent what they are teaching, be that newspaper clippings, images and sounds on their personal cellular devices, or a visual reproduction of the thematic content through learner-role-play in class. The benefit that multimodality affords teaching is incontrovertible.

- Finally, teachers should constantly strive to reflect, deconstruct, and reconstruct their teaching practice, and tailor it to suit the ever-changing body of learners that will continue to grace their classrooms for years to come. Teachers need to learn to become comfortable with allowing the role of MKO within an activity system to be a flexible, shifting one, and in so doing, foster an environment in which the focus is less on the teacher and more on the learner.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

The following musings represent aspects I believe, if explored, may contribute meaningfully to the knowledge-base about the use of poetry to develop critical literacy.

1. It would be interesting to do a study that investigates the thought processes of teachers when preparing a (new) poem to be taught. This would be a deepening of the analysis in Chapter 4, and my finding in Chapter 5, that current practices employed by teachers to prepare poems constrain the development of meaning making and criticality.

2. It would be interesting to do research on the subjectivities, thoughts, and experiences of White teachers teaching Struggle poetry which are laden with difficult themes, to a diverse learner body, making for challenging conversations. This aspect was initially a question that spurred this project's conceptualisation. However, the population to which I was granted access for this study did not fit this description. This study's population of learners was mostly homogenous. It would be interesting to see the results of a similar study conducted within a more diverse school with learners whose backgrounds resonate to some degree with the themes addressed in South African Struggle poetry.

3. Given the recent outcry regarding residual, institutionalised, covert racism in South African schools, it would be interesting to find out how poetry (as an expression of subjectivities, emotions, and experiences) could be used as a tool for transformation in schools.

4. As a deepening of the analysis in Chapter 4 and findings in Chapter 5, it would be interesting to investigate what additional practices teachers could employ that would impact learner disposition towards poetry favourably.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the key findings in answering the main research question, unearthed by a careful study of the data. It looked into the dispositions that teachers and learners hold towards poetry, as well as the classroom practices, employed by teachers, that enable or constrain meaning making and criticality through the study of poetry. Further, I presented my reflections about my own learning process over the course of this study and concluded by addressing aspects I found to be interesting points of potential investigation for future research projects or articles.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Researcher's Documents

Appendix 1.1 Ethical Clearance

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535
South Africa
T: +27 21 959 2988/2948
F: +27 21 959 3170
E: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
www.uwc.ac.za

17 July 2019

Mrs N Abrahams
Education
Faculty of Education

Ethics Reference Number: HS19/5/23

Project Title: Exploring poetry as a tool for critical literacy in Grade 10 English home language

Approval Period: 17 July 2019 – 17 July 2020

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

Appendix 1.2 Permission to Conduct Research: WCED

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20190729-7350
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Nicole Abrahams
12 Il Castello Complex
Park Road
Durbanville
7550

Dear Ms Nicole Abrahams

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING POETRY AS A TOOL FOR CRITICAL LITERACY IN GRADE 10 ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:
1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 August 2019 till 20 September 2019**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 31 July 2019

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272   fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
www.westerncape.gov.za

Appendix 1.3: Lesson Observation Schedule

The six elements of the CHAT will be used to observe the poetry lessons.

Activity System element	**Questions to respond to**
Activity	What activity is taking place?
Object	What is the outcome of the activity taking place?
Subject	Who is involved in conducting the activity?
Community	What is the nature of the classroom in which the activity is performed?
Tools	What tools are used by the teacher? How are these tools used to enable or constrain meaningful and critical teaching and learning of poetry?
Rules	What and whose rules are used and how does the implementation of such rules enable or hinder the desired poetry teaching and learning outcome?
Division of labour	How is labour divided within the classroom activity system? What are the roles of teachers and learners? How do the roles performed affect the object?

<div align="right">(Adapted from Mwanza, 2001)</div>

Appendix 1.4: Research Matrix

Research Question	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Tool	Data Analysis Tool
What are teachers' dispositions towards poetry?	One-on-one semi-structured interviews with teachers Lesson observations	Interview schedule Interview questions Video and audio recordings	CHAT CDA
What are learners' dispositions towards poetry?	Focus-group discussions with learners Lesson observations	Focus Group Schedule Focus group questions Audio and visual recording devices	CHAT CDA
How do teachers' current poetry teaching practices enable or constrain the meaning making and criticality of poetry?	One-on-one semi-structured interviews, Document collection, Lesson observations, Observational field notes	Interview schedule Lesson observation schedule Video and audio recordings	CHAT CDA Understandings of Vygotsky's sociocultural Theory

Appendix 2: Information Documents

Appendix 2.1: Letter of Information to the Institution

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

15 April 2019

Researcher: Ms Nicole Abrahams
Cellular number: 0848236784
Email Address: 3869159@myuwc.ac.za
Institution: University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education, Bellville, South Africa
Institutional Association: Student

Research Title: **Exploring Poetry as a Tool for Critical Literacy in Grade 10 English Home language**

This proposed interpretive case study aims to explore how poetry is used as a tool to teach critical literacy in Grade 10 EHL learners. Purposive and convenience sampling will be employed to select learners and teachers from two Grade 10 EHL classes at two schools in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. Data collection will involve lesson observations, document collection, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. It is assumed that the study will illuminate interesting findings that could inform critical literacy development through poetry teaching in Grade 10 EHL.

The anonymity of participants of this study is guaranteed. No learner will be identified by anything in the study or publication

Supervisor: Prof Madeyandile Mbelani
Institution: University of the Western Cape
Institution Association: Associate Professor

Faculty of Education
Department of Language Education
Bellville
Tel: 021959 2650
Email: mmbelani@uwc.ac.za

HSSREC
Research development
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Tel: 0219594111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Ms Nicole Abrahams (Master's Student)
Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000
28 June 2019

Dear Teacher

You are invited to participate in a Master's research study entitled "***Exploring Poetry as Tool for a Critical Literacy Teaching Practice***". The aim of this study is to understand the way in which poetry, as a literary text, can be used by teachers in the English Home Language classroom as a tool for the cultivation of meaningful critical literacy within the learners.

Your participation will help me provide an understanding of how poetry is taught and learnt and will be an invaluable source of information for teachers and future teachers in the facilitation of effective teaching practices that will advance critical literacy and thinking skills within their classrooms.

What will be expected of you?
I would like to observe TWO of your Grade 10 English Home Language poetry lessons to gain a firm grasp on the teaching practices within your classroom. This will allow me to see how critical literacy is nurtured through poetry. I would also like to have an interview with you of about 30 minutes in which I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the various perspectives and understandings on poetry teaching and learning.

How will your confidentiality be protected?
Your anonymity and the confidentiality of what you say in class, discuss with me, or your individual teaching practice is of the utmost importance to me. Therefore, it is important that you know that your name and the name of your school will be held in strict confidence and your poetry lesson transcriptions and (my notes on them) will not be revealed to anybody but myself and my supervisor.

You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to provide a reason as to why or suffering any consequences as a result of it.
Should you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand and agree to the conditions prior to any observation or interview commencing. If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about how the research has been conducted, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Professor M. Mbelani directly.

Thank you in advance.
Yours sincerely

_____
Nicole Irene Abrahams (Student Nr. 3869159)
Email: 3869159@myuwc.ac.za
Cell: 084 823 6784

_____
Professor Madeyandile Mbelani
Email: mmbelani@uwc.ac.za
Tel: 021 959 2650

The university, in common with all other organisations in South Africa, is subject to the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety act No. 85 of 1993. All questions relating to this act and its application should be directed to the Occupational Health and Safety Manager, Risk Management Services, ext 2818.

If you wish, you may also contact the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethical Council (HSSREC) at HSSREC, Research Development, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7635, or at Tel: 021 959 4111, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Participant's Name _____
Cape Town: Metro-North District

Dear (child's name)

Re: Invitation to participate in a research study

You are invited to participate in a Master's Research study entitled "Exploring Poetry as Tool for a Critical Literacy Teaching Practice". The aim of this study is to understand the way in which poetry, as a literary text, can be used by teachers in the English Home Language classroom as a to allow learners to be critically literate.

Your participation will help me provide an understanding of how poetry is taught and learnt and will be an invaluable source of information for teachers and future teachers in creating effective (and fun) teaching practices that will advance critical literacy and thinking skills.
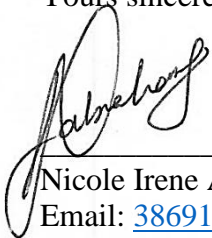
My research will be conducted by observing your class in TWO poetry lessons to try to understand the different ways teachers teach poetry, and how you and your class respond and learn. I will also conduct group discussions with you and your fellow classmates on poetry.

Your participation will be anonymous. You will also be able to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to provide a reason as to why. As a researcher I am bound by a code of ethics to ensure that risks are mediated. You will not be jeopardised in any way by participating in this study and your safety and wellbeing will be respected at all costs.

To participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand and agree to the conditions before I begin to study your class.

Thank you in advance.
Yours sincerely

_____
Nicole Irene Abrahams (Student Nr. 3869159)
Email: 3869159@myuwc.ac.za
Cell: 084 823 6784

……

I, _____, hereby volunteer to participate in the Master's research on the teaching and learning of critical literacy. I agree to be recorded answering questions in class and in the group discussions. I consent to the that data being collected, photocopied and used in analysis.

Signed: _____Date_____

The university, in common with all other organisations in South Africa, is subject to the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety act No. 85 of 1993. All questions relating to this act and its application should be directed to the Occupational Health and Safety Manager, Risk Management Services, ext 2818.

If you wish, you may also contact the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethical Council (HSSREC) at HSSREC, Research Development, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7635, or at Tel: 021 959 4111, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Appendix 3: Permission Letters and Responses

Appendix 3.1: Permission Letter to the Head of the Institution

_____ HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Re: Request for permission to conduct research at (insert name) School.</u>

To whom it may concern

I am a Master's student at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. The research that I wish to conduct, entitled "Exploring Poetry as Tool for a Critical Literacy Teaching Practice" involves the observation of English Home Language poetry teaching at two high schools.

The aim of my research is to look at the current teaching of poetry within the classroom and its ability to aid in the development of critical literacy, a skillset which will allow learners the opportunity to look into what constitutes knowledge, historically and socially, and then allow them to look into their own "historically constructed voices and experiences" in the development of self and social empowerment (Giroux, 1989, p. 33-34). In so doing, learners become aware, conscientious, and socially just citizens of South Africa and the world.

The qualitative data I need to complete my study will be garnered from observing one class at your school on two occasions (both being poetry lessons) and two interviews with the class teacher. My research is conducted under the supervision of Prof. Madeyandile Mbelani.

This letter serves to seek formal consent to approach the teacher, **Mrs _____**, the learners and the parents of the learners in his/ her class as participants for my research. I would be grateful to be allowed access to certain documents to her discretion in order to gain a full understanding of the poetry-teaching practices in her classroom. For this reason, I request permission to visit your school on **Wednesday the 4th of September and Thursday the 5th of September 2019**, capture the data I need to complete my study.
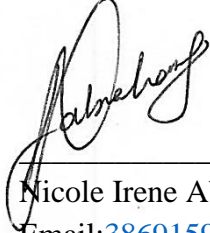
Ethical research practice is a vital aspect of my work and has great bearings on how people view me as a researcher, my work, and my institution. My research has been approved by the Western Cape Education Department as well as the Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape.

The name of the school and all participants will be replaced with pseudonyms and all the material I amass will be accessible only to myself and my supervisor. Upon completion of this study, I will provide you and the teacher with access to the research findings.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further information.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely

_____

Nicole Irene Abrahams (Student Nr. 3869159)
Email:3869159@myuwc.ac.za
Cell: 084 823 6784

I, _____ (Principal), hereby give my consent for Ms NI Abrahams to conduct her research on the premises. I agree that the data can be collected, photocopied, and used in analysis. I understand that the participation of the teachers and learners participation is voluntary and that I can refuse Ms NI Abrahams from conducting her research on the premises the project at any time.

Signed_____Date_____

The university, in common with all other organisations in South Africa, is subject to the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety act No. 85 of 1993. All questions relating to this act and its application should be directed to the Occupational Health and Safety Manager, Risk Management Services, ext 2818.

If you wish, you may also contact the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethical Council (HSSREC) at HSSREC, Research Development, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7635, or at Tel: 021 959 4111, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Appendix 3.2: Teacher Consent Form

I, _____, hereby volunteer to participate in the Master's research study on the teaching and learning poetry to develop critical literacy by allowing Ms N. Abrahams access to my classroom for observation and recording purposes. The researcher, Ms N. Abrahams, has informed me about the nature, purpose, and procedures of the study.

I agree to be recorded as I teach TWO Grade 10 English Home Language Poetry lessons. I consent to the data being collected, (and/or) photocopied, and used in analysis. I am aware that my name **will not** be used in the study and all the information collected will be used for the sole purpose of the study.

I understand that **I may withdraw from the research project at any time**, without having to provide a reason or suffering any consequence.

Please indicate with an X in the appropriate column if you agree/do not agree to the following:

	AGREE	DISAGREE
I would like to participate in this research project.		
I agree to being interviewed by Ms Abrahams about poetry teaching practices and my own personal style of teaching.		
I agree to being recorded with an audio/video recording device while I teach.		
I agree to being recorded with an audio/video recording device during the interview with Ms Abrahams.		
I understand that everything I say within the interviews as well as my classroom practice will be kept in strict confidence. I understand that I will be anonymous.		

Signed_____   Date_____

Yours sincerely
Nicole Irene Abrahams (Student Nr. 3869159)   Professor Madeyiandile Mbelani
Email: 3869159@myuwc.ac.za   Email: mmbelani@uwc.ac.za
Cell: 084 823 6784   Tel: 021 959 2650

Appendix 3.3: Parental Consent Form

<u>Re: Request for Permission to Approach Your Child</u>

Dear Parent

My name is Nicole Abrahams and I am a Master's student at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. The research that I wish to conduct, entitled "Exploring Poetry as Tool for a Critical Literacy Teaching Practice" involves the observation of English Home Language poetry teaching at a high school.

The aim of my research is to look at the current teaching of poetry within the classroom and its ability to aid in the development of critical literacy, a skillset which will allow learners the opportunity to look into what constitutes knowledge, historically and socially, and then allow them to look into their own "historically constructed voices and experiences" in the development of self and social empowerment (Giroux, 1989, p. 33-34). In so doing, learners become aware, conscientious, and socially just citizens of South Africa and the world.

The qualitative data I need to complete my study will be garnered from observing two of your child's poetry lessons and two semi-structured group discussions about the poetry. My research is conducted under the supervision of Prof. Madeyandile Mbelani.
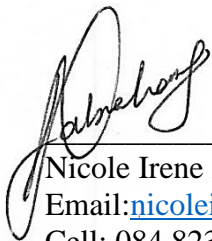
This letter serves to seek formal consent to approach your child, ..., as a participant for my research.

Once I have received ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape to conduct my research, I provide you with the ethical clearance letter for your perusal.

The name of the school and all participants will be replaced with pseudonyms and all the material I amass will be accessible only to myself and my supervisor. As a researcher (and teacher) it is of utmost importance that I assure you that your child will not be harmed, physically or emotionally, in my research. I will try, to the best of my abilities to make the experience an enjoyable and educational one for your child. Participation is completely free.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further information.

Thank you in advance.
Yours sincerely

Nicole Irene Abrahams (Student Nr. 3869159)
Email:nicoleirenea@gmail.com
Cell: 084 823 6784

I, _____ (Parent/Guardian), hereby give my consent for my child to take part in the research. I agree that the data can be collected, photocopied and used in analysis. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my child from the project at any time.

Signed_____Date_____

The university, in common with all other organisations in South Africa, is subject to the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety act No. 85 of 1993. All questions relating to this act and its application should be directed to the Occupational Health and Safety Manager, Risk Management Services, ext 2818.

If you wish, you may also contact the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethical Council (HSSREC) at HSSREC, Research Development, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7635, or at Tel: 021 959 4111, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Appendix 3.4: Focus Group Confidentiality Form

Dear ……………………………………….

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a **focus-group discussion** as part of my research study to investigate how learners experience and perceive poetry and poetry teaching in their English Home Language classes.

I will be facilitating the focus-group discussion in which you, along with a few other classmates whom I have selected, will be discussing poetry as the general topic of conversation. I will guide the discussion using questions I have set. I will provide you with the questions a few days before the discussion.

As a teacher myself, I would like you to know that there are no right or wrong answers within the focus-group discussions. All I want is honest input from you and your classmates even if your feelings/views are different to the other learners. I aim to provide an opportunity for you to contribute to the discussion honestly and openly without fear of being judged by me or your peers and I expect of you to be respectful to your peers, so they may enjoy the same freedom of expression.

The focus group will be audio-recorded. However, the identities and responses of all the participants will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final study.

Please put an X in the appropriate box to indicate if you agree/disagree to the following:

I wish to participate in the **focus group** phase of the research project.	Agree	Disagree
I understand that I can withdraw from this focus group at any time without being judged or disadvantaged.	Agree	Disagree
I understand that **my identity and responses** will not be disclosed by the other research participants.	Agree	Disagree
I also hereby undertake to not disclose **the identities of the other research participants and their responses** to anyone outside the focus group.	Agree	Disagree

Signature of learner: _____   Date: _____

Nicole Irene Abrahams (Student Nr. 3869159)   Professor Madeyandile Mbelani

Email: 3869159@myuwc.ac.za   Email: mmbelani@uwc.ac.za

Cell: 084 823 6784   Tel: 021 959 2650

Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Teachers' Semi-structured Interview Questions

The following questions are designed to find out more information about the teachers' attitudes and understanding of poetry. These questions will also assist in collecting data on what pedagogical practices are used for meaningful and critical poetry teaching and learning.

Personal Information Regarding Poetry

1.1.   What were the motivations behind your becoming an English teacher? How long have you been teaching?

1.2.   Do you enjoy poetry?

1.3.   Who prescribes the poems that you teach? Are you happy with the prescribed poetry?

1.4.   Do you enjoy teaching poetry? Why?

Learner Performance

2.1   How has the learner performance in poetry been over the past three years? Why do you think this is?

Teaching Practice

3.1   What strategies do you use to teach poetry? What is the most effective teaching strategy that you have used and why do you consider it effective?

3.2.1   Do you find prior knowledge, life experiences, history and culture to be important in learning poetry?

3.2.2   How do you ensure that learners the above mentioned aspects in your poetry lessons?

Class Engagement

4.1   Do learners contribute to class discussions in your poetry lessons?

4.2   What helps you to ensure maximum learner participation and collaboration during poetry lessons?

4.3   What challenges have you encountered in poetry teaching?

4.4   How have you, as a white female teacher, experienced teaching poems that touch on contentious issues to classes of diverse learners?

Support

5.1   Do you receive any support from your subject adviser/subject head? What kind of support do you receive? Has it been effective?

Personal Input Regarding the Improvement of Poetry Teaching and Learning

6.1   What do you think can be done differently to ensure meaningful and critical teaching of poetry?

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Focus Group Discussion Questions

The following questions, which are subject to revision, are designed to gain insight about learners' attitudes and feelings towards poetry as a literary genre and will be used as prompters for the semi-structured discussion on poetry.

1.1   What is poetry?

1.2   Do you like poetry? Why/Why not?

1.3   When you think about the poetry that you have to learn for the exams, what feelings does it bring up? Why?

1.4   How does your teacher teach poetry? What do you like about the lessons?

1.5   Suppose that you were given a chance to talk to the English teacher about how you like poetry to be taught. What would you say?

1.6   How do you feel about questions that ask for you to give your opinion on a poem?

1.7   How do you feel about poems that deal with racial or cultural issues? Do you think they are necessary?

1.8   How do you feel when learners in your class who are from different racial denominations comment on a poem that has racially sensitive issues? Are the learners in your class generally respectful?

1.9   How does your teacher deal with sensitive issues within poems?

1.10   Do you feel challenged by poetry? In which way?

1.11   Do you think that the poetry with which you deal enables you to see the world differently? If so, in which way?

1.12   Do you think that poetry that speaks of the injustices of the past is necessary?

1.13   What do you like most about the study of poetry?

Read through the following poem and answer the questions set on it.

The child who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga

by Ingrid Jonker

The child is not dead
The child lifts his fists against his mother
Who shouts Afrika! shouts the breath
Of freedom and the veld
In the locations of the cordoned heart

The child lifts his fists against his father
in the march of the generations
who shouts Afrika! shout the breath
of righteousness and blood
In the streets of his embattled pride   10

The child is not dead, not at Langa nor at Nyanga
not at Orlando nor at Sharpeville
nor at the police station at Philippi
where he lies with a bullet through his brain

The child is the dark shadow of the soldiers   15
on guard with rifles, Saracens and batons
the child is present at all assemblies and law-givings
the child peers through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers
this child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere
the child grown to a man treks through all Africa   20
the child grown into a giant journeys through the whole world

Without a pass

Handwritten annotations include:
- innocence — a person who has his/her life ahead of them. — there's no telling what he could have become.
- past tense
- man with guns.
- contextualised — black townships
- usually euphemistic — but this is crude. — to the point
- The child is not dead — sign of power
- South Africanism
- trapped / not free
- pun — double meaning
- reminder of poet's own life
- meaningful digressions
- took generations — not overnight
- hotspots for apartheid
- Soweto
- Kaspers
- realism — reality of what happened.
- metaphor — stain that follows soldiers everywhere.
- Without a pass — in death he is free — Liberated.
- dompas
- Juxtapose dead child with spirit of defiance
- symbolic of Freedom / people are longing and hoping for.
- poem ends on hopeful note that death was not in vain.

4.1. This poem has a very specific political context without which it cannot be understood.
     Discuss this statement.   (2)

4.2. Discuss the significance of the word "locations" (line 5) in the context of the poem.   (1)

4.3. How would you define the tone and mood of the poem? Does it align with the content?
     Explain your answer and quote at least one word which serves as proof for your answer.   (3)

4.4. Discuss the perceived dichotomy between the title and the first line of the poem.   (2)

4.5. Why can the last two lines of the poem be seen as ironic? Discuss your answer within
     the political context of the time.   (2)

/10/

Read the poem below and then answer the questions that follow.

[handwritten: loaded title]

[handwritten top right: + 1st person perspective · honest account/intimate · more truthful]

The runaway slave *[handwritten: powerful title]*   by Walt Whitman

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak, *[handwritten: feeble / suffered / alliteration]*
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him, → *[handwritten: of his safety]*
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruis'd feet, — *[handwritten: barefeet]* 5
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness, → *[handwritten: Trust]*
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles; *[handwritten: safety]*
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north, *[handwritten: moving from side to side. Be attentive to danger]*
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

[handwritten left margin: emphasises the listing of the things he did for the man.]

[handwritten right margin: intentions of the speaker are to help the man.]

[handwritten: old fashion spelling] *[handwritten: healing physically + emotionally]* *[handwritten: sores]* *[handwritten: parts of body tied up]*

2.1. Briefly discuss the political context of this poem. *[handwritten: unsure/uncomfortable]* (2)

2.2. From whose perspective is the poem written and what is the result of this on the credibility
of the events? (2)

2.3. The word 'and' is repeated five times at the beginning of sentences.
Discuss the effect of the repetition. (2)

[handwritten: presents the idea of gross mis-treatment.]

2.4. Why would the slave need plasters on his neck and ankles? (1)

2.5. Why would the slave want to go north? *[handwritten: safe north. regaining dignity as a person.]* (1)

2.6. Deliberate the impact of the final sentence on the reader. (2)

/10/

[handwritten: gun]

[handwritten: "It just doesn't make sense to me..."]

...MANITY

Written from soldier's perspective.

Men not mentioned — *Soldier jargon* — *Women not sent to war.* — *men = excluded* — *men assumed to die.*

all innocent — *comment on civilians* — Robert Lowell ~~Neel~~

WOMEN, CHILDREN, BABIES, COWS, CATS — *indiscriminate*

So many — blurred — no exact memory   *Dramatic monolog*

"It was at My Lai or Sonmy or something, — *unsure.*

It was this afternoon — We had these orders,

We had all night to think about it — *trauma/thoughts going with it.*

We was to burn and kill, then there'd be nothing

Standing, women, children, babies, cows, cats — *emotional thought* — *carrying on* — *fill in*

As soon as we hopped the choppers, we started shooting. *as soon as they jumped out of helicopter blanks.*

I remember... as we was coming up upon one area — *uneducated soldier* — *normal everyday language*

In Pinkville, a man with a gun running — this lady... *My Lai* / *American Soldier*

Lieutenant La Guerre said, "Shoot her." I said, — *War in French.* — *Shows a little bit of respect.*

"You shoot her, I don't want to shoot no lady." — *running*

She had one foot in the door... when I turned her, — *halfway close / would have escaped*

There was this little one-month-year-old baby — *so age does not matter*

I thought was her gun. It kind of cracked me up." — *a massacre* — *stayed with the people.*

A thought process / justification

irony

1. Comment on the significance of the title, repeated again in line 5.
2. What is the significance of not knowing the actual place where the incident took place?
3. What is the effect of the line "We had all night to think about it"?
4. This poem is a dramatic monologue — why does this make it an effective poem?
5. Is there evidence in the poem that the soldier did shoot 'the lady'?

— *details become lost because of large amount of killings.*

* *It's a baby — an innocent baby. Not potential weapon.*

* *American soldiers not savages.*

HOTEL ROOM, 12TH FLOOR – NORMAN MACCAIG

This morning I watched from here

a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect

the Empire State building, that

jumbo-sized dentist drill, and landing

on the roof of the PanAm skyscraper.

But now Midnight has come in

from foreign places. Its uncivilised darkness

is shot at by a million lit windows, all

ups and acrosses.

I lie in bed, between

a radio and a television set,

the wildest of warwhoops continually ululating through

police cars and ambulances racing to

the glittering canyons and gulches –

... the broken bones, the harsh screaming

from coldwater flats, the blood

glazed on the sidewalks.

The frontier is never

somewhere else.

And no Stockades

can keep the midnight out.

1. Where is the poem set – provide evidence for your answer.
2. What characteristics of the helicopter is being emphasised by the simile in line 2?
3. Comment on the metaphor in line 4.
4. Comment on the extended metaphor from lines 12 onward.
5. What does the poet suggest with the words "the frontier is never somewhere else"?

field Notes - N. Abrahams   22 August 2019
The Child who Was shot dead

* Teacher seems slightly nervous
* Normal class dynamic

— Georgia is asked to read a poem
in afrikaans — learners seem comfortable —
speaks about translated version of a
poem —   to read alternative translation
use of phone — multimodality

— Some learners do not have a copy of the
poem. Teacher hands out copies.

Teacher reads poem — many learners read the poem —
there is a difference in translations — American
— African

Learners speak to one another in Afrikaans — in the class.
— eng. to kadu.
"Mengels".

Really good diadacheal approach to issues in
class.

Teacher rereads poem — correct version.
Teacher reads Afrikaans version ☺
⌐ learners make very interesting remark about how
accurate the translation is.

— Very interesting back story of the poet.
⌐ Teacher is incredibly ~~rate~~ interesting to
listen to. Learners are transfixed.

Teacher is very comfortable in class.

"We are not where we should be but we are
not where we were."

field notes   3t September 2019

Teacher mentions the song "Ware Wêreld" — in reference to another
Teacher seems very comfortable and conversational.   poem.
Good relationship with learners — friendship?
learners seem comfortable.
Speaks about Movies being made from american perspectives
and "meanwhile 'it the ranch"
* Speaks about The poet — history behind it.
* Poem is quite interesting

* Teacher is very animated! Learners are transfixed.
* Senslessness of war — a clear theme.   conflict
* Learners are very informed and opinionated.
    — Teacher goes on conversational tangeants — very
        interesting.
* use google — learners seem comfortable to do it.
* Teacher sitting on table comfortably.
* "Mass husteria" "American soldiers nor savages".
    "Nothing justifies raping"
    "people do strange things when under threat".

Field Notes 5 September

* "We should listen to a song."
* Forrest Gump — can we watch that?
* Good Morning etc...
    — Many learners asking about possibly watching Pride and Prejudice — with zombies.

Learners google images of ~~speakers~~ movie actors.

"Ma'am, what's the textbook answer about the foreign?"
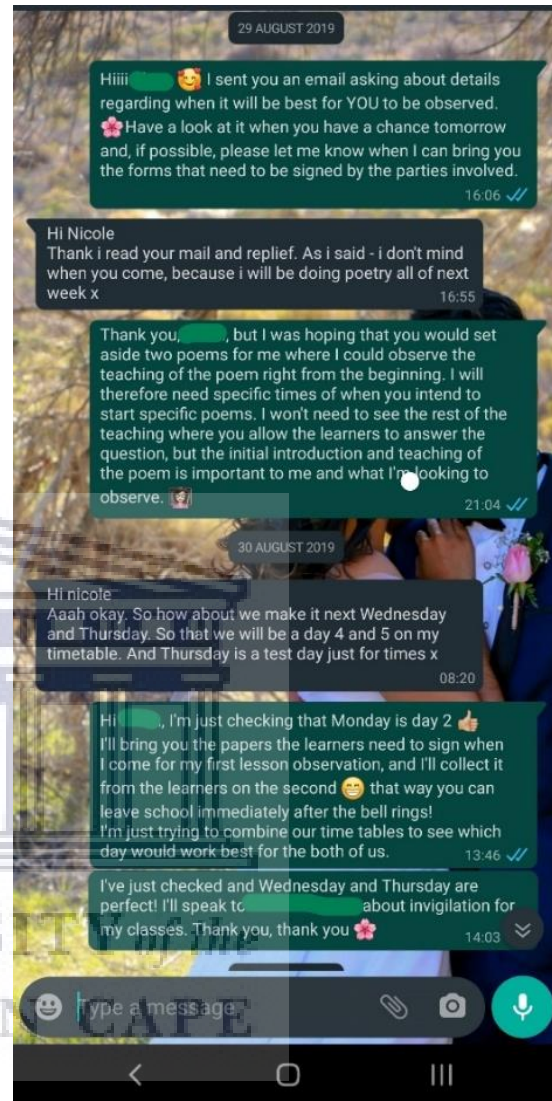
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11 September 2019   caucasians

Poem — Mrs Farmer

* Teacher does not seem to feel well.   abolitionist — worked tirelessly for abolishment of slavery
* The runaway slave: Walt Whitman

* Teacher encourages class to speak up — think about title.
* At beginning engagement is slow, towards discussion — learners offer responses.
* Refers to movie: 12 years a slave
* Intertextuality — to kill a mockingbird

* Segregation

* Voice and tone slows down and softens when speaking about heart-wrenching topics.
* Teacher constantly asks for the learner' opinions.
* "So, Ma'am, you can get caught after that?" "Shame."

* Many learners are interested and proffer responses, but equally many are uninterested in adding to the discussion.

Appendix 6.4: Examples of Communication with teachers
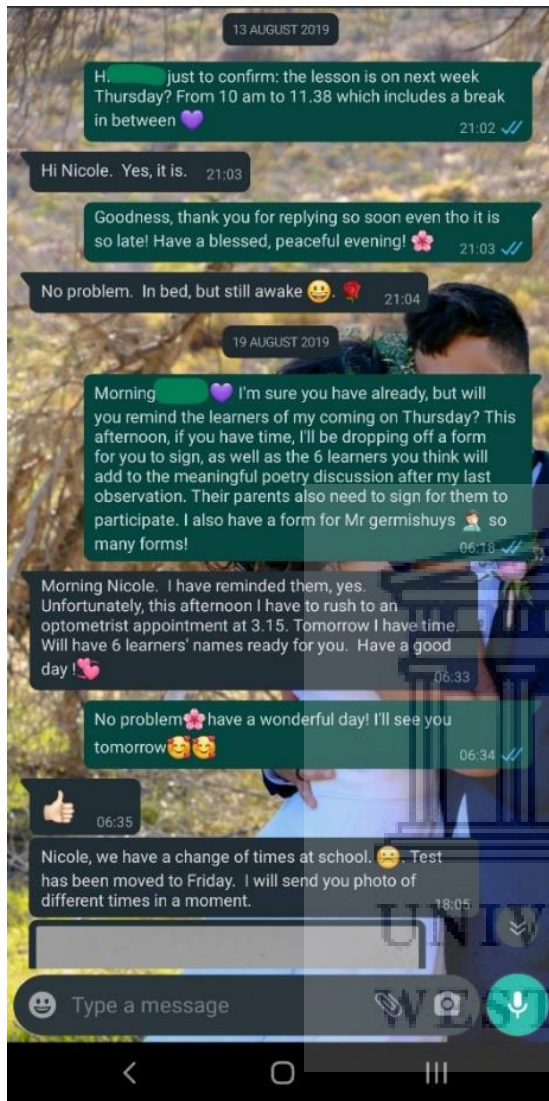
Example of Whatsapp Communication with Mrs Davids

Example of Whatsapp Communication with Mrs Steyn