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Discourse Analysis and Memory Work: Creating a Counter-Hegemonic and Counter-Ethnocentric Practice

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Abstract: Partnerships established for aid and development purposes can be damaging if the hegemonic and ethnocentric assumptions of aid workers are not unearthed, acknowledged, and problematized. These hegemonic and ethnocentric assumptions can be particularly harmful when, within organizations like the United States Peace Corps, workers are encouraged to promote English as the sole language of legitimacy and value within a host country's educational spaces. In this article, the author suggests one potential method for addressing this issue. The author and participants collaborate to mobilize Theo van Leeuwen's (2007) framework for language legitimization, collectively examining discourse within a volunteer-generated narrative. This article examines the practical use of a table, inspired by Frigga Haug's (2008) critical memory work, for narrative deconstruction and reconstruction. Furthermore, the method used appears to allow the participants an opportunity to expose and critique their initially subconscious assumptions and ethnocentric dispositions in a way that could have deep implications for their work within a post-colonial space.

Keywords: hegemony, volunteer teaching training, development

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Introduction

As a volunteer for the United States Peace Corps in the southeastern African country of Malawi, I was troubled by my instruction during training to use only English in the classroom with my students. In time, I noticed that other English-speaking foreign aid and development workers within schools often restricted students' native or "home" language use in their classrooms, too. For my peers and I, this practice stemmed from Malawian policies that required the sole use of the English language in educational contexts. Many post-colonial countries, in fact, create and uphold policies that ensure single-language use in classrooms because within educational environments, "heterogeneity (in terms of language) is still often seen as a threat to good order, and perhaps even to national or community cohesion" (Reid, 1997, p. 27). Complicating this issue further within international contexts is the tendency for short-term development workers and volunteer educators to, at times, lack the motivation to learn the language of their host community beyond simple survival phrases (Rubin, 1975). For many, it is easy to fall back on the claim that students must learn English to be successful in a globalized world.

If, however, educators like myself were able to reflect upon our subconscious and potentially hegemonic ideologies regarding English-only enforcement in educational spaces, we might come to value the use of students' home languages within those contexts in meaningful ways. This, in turn, might help us empower students who are competent in languages other than English, building upon their individual identities (Norton, 1997). The Peace Corps, a volunteer program run by the United States government, is in fact aimed at empowering individuals by teaching volunteers to engage in skills transfer with the local people, broadening the international understanding of American culture, and helping Americans in the United States better understand the cultures of others. Thus, empowerment through the legitimation of languages other than English falls within its intentions. Language learning is a major component of pre-service training (Guntermann, 1995), but the reasons for language acquisition, beyond day-to-day survival, were not discussed or explored at the time of my or my peers' service, which was concerning to us. Such a discussion or exploration component in our training would have allowed us an opportunity to more closely examine our beliefs regarding the importance of accepting students' home languages in educational spaces.

Therefore, I believe that a component of Peace Corps training must be created which includes the exploration of volunteers' potentially ethnocentric or hegemonic assumptions regarding their native languages. Such a component might include collective reflection and the analysis of volunteers' own discourse. Thus, I have come to believe that Frigga Haug's (2008) collective memory work techniques – the examination of educator-generated narratives written in response to a prompt regarding volunteers' fears or apprehensions – may be an impactful method for reflection if used around educators' insistence on language heterogeneity. Through collectively examining peers' narratives for who and what is perceived to have legitimacy, previously subconscious ethnocentric or hegemonic assumptions might be unearthed and named.

My aim here was to explore an educator-generated narrative created by one of my peers, with my peers, using Theo van Leeuwen's (2007) language of legitimation discourse analysis methods. In this text, I describe the ways we examined her narrative and I predict how van Leeuwen's discourse analysis methods, used here in the narrative analysis, might be employed more during Peace Corps training sessions by incorporating Haug's collective memory work techniques more faithfully.

Guiding this narrative analysis are the following research questions: 1) How do van Leeuwen's (2007) categories of language legitimation expose ideologies specifically related to single language enforcement enacted in a teacher's classroom? 2) How might van Leeuwen's categories of language legitimation assist in the adaptation of Frigga Haug's (2008) collective memory work methods and narrative deconstruction/reconstruction table for potential use in Peace Corps trainings?

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

Social construction informs the capacity and appropriateness of van Leeuwen's (2007) language of legitimation categories of discourse analysis used here for narrative deconstruction and reconstruction. Social construction suggests that a society groups people together based on specific characteristics and then privileges certain groups over others. This theoretical framework indeed provides a lens for observations about how Western educators working within post-colonial educational contexts construct their reality and how they classify those with whom they are working. Further, this framework helps reveal the consequences of aid workers' perceived realities on those with whom they interact in their work (Patton, 1990).

The Potential of Collective Memory Work

Memory work (Haug, 2008) is a feminist social constructionist method that reveals individuals' perceptions of social constructions and allows for the excavation of divisions between everyday experiences and the basis of knowledge. Although my work here only predicts how collective memory work and van Leeuwen's language legitimation might function together within training sessions, Haug's collective memory work table, Table 1, and her memory work methods were loosely used as inspiration for this example narrative study.

Haug argues that reflection aids in the social construction of the self; memories can allow individuals to tap into their and their colleagues' past experiences, current beliefs, and systemic ideologies (2008). Because an individual's assumptions and ideologies give substance to their actions, my peers and I were concerned that the Peace Corps pre-service training did not specifically enough address our potentially hegemonic beliefs about the perceived importance of English language fluency. Thus, several of us retrospectively worried about the impacts of our initial assumptions regarding the importance of the English language for Malawian students and our insistence that students use only English in spaces of perceived legitimate knowledge. This gap in our pre-service training has been a source of trauma for some of us, as we struggle to make sense of our impact within the schools and communities in which we worked. Engaging in narrative analysis with our peers, I believe, would have helped expose and

articulate, if only to and for ourselves, our potentially hegemonic assumptions about the English language.

If collective memory work (Haug, 2008) methods were used in conjunction with the narrative analysis exemplified here, participants would agree collectively to generate narratives, written in third person point of view, depicting an event or situation in which they have dealt with fear or tension. Fear would be at the center of their narrative because fears and tension generated by language learning and language use impact an individual's efficacy, ability, and motivation to learn language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). By examining their anxiety and fear in regard to language use and learning, painful and important memories might be storied (Haug, 2008), and the language mediating their stories and the systematic structures within them may be analyzed for potentially hegemonic ideologies. Teun van Dijk (1993) claims: "Even though different terms and different points of view are used (within written discourse), most of us deal with power, dominance, hegemony, inequality and the discursive practices of staging, secrecy, legitimization and reproduction" (p. 132). The aim, then, with this particular method of narrative examination would be to locate those reproductions and determine their usefulness and/or harm.

Indeed, the process of collective memory work practiced in generating this text, in conjunction with Theo van Leeuwen's (2007) language of legitimation discourse analysis, might allow for the emergence of hegemonic beliefs among educators working in post-colonial contexts, particularly in terms of English language enforcement in their classrooms. If and when these beliefs, which stem from tensions related to power associated with the English language, surface for the individual and the training group engaging in memory work, conversations leading to the possible mitigation of those tensions and the harm unintentionally caused by single-language enforcement might be examined and overcome. Although collective memory work techniques were not faithfully mobilized when analyzing the narrative in this article, they guided the generation of the narrative deconstruction and reconstruction table, Table 2, and the group's collective analysis of this narrative itself.

Analyzing Legitimation in Language

Critical discourse analysis, and specifically van Leeuwen's (2007) approach to critical discourse analysis, serves to mediate educator ideologies and lived experiences depicted in narrative form. Discourse analysis is about connections to systemic structure and critical memory work is about representation - how we story ourselves in third person, specifically. Therefore, critical discourse analysis serves as an anchor that draws direct links between the author's storied representation of an experience and tangible structures in written text. It allows for clear portrayal of author ideologies through systemic and repeatable methodology.

In this study, van Leeuwen's (2007) language of legitimation is used as a framework for examining a participant's narrative. Van Leeuwen notes four major categories of legitimation in his work, which were examined in this study by the group within the narrative provided in Appendix A. Authorization, Moral Evaluation, Rationalization, and Mythopoesis can be used individually or together to examine what is made legitimate or illegitimate through language

within a text. The use of these four categories in this work allowed for critical analysis of the construction of legitimation in discourse and provided specific structure for a deeper collective reflection of educator ideologies regarding single-language enforcement in classrooms.

Methods

For this work, I recruited three former Peace Corps volunteers from my training group to write narratives that we could examine using van Leeuwen's (2007) categories of language legitimation. All participants completed their Peace Corps service in the Republic of Malawi where, although the national language was English, three major languages were primarily spoken: Chichewa, Chitimbuka, and Chiyao. I chose these three participants because they had at one point expressed concern over the enforcement of English in their classrooms during our Peace Corps service. They had also expressed apprehension regarding how the sole legitimation of the English language might impact students' identities. I also wrote a short narrative response to the prompt.

Because I suspected that Frigga Haug's (2008) collective memory work techniques might pair well with narrative deconstruction and reconstruction using van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimation categories, I generated a prompt that explicitly mentioned fear. Haug's memory work assumes that memories written about in narrative are colored by fear and, thus, fear was central to the prompt. All three participants responded to the prompt: "Describe a time in your teaching with the U.S. Peace Corps when you felt fear regarding, or tension because of, language use in your classroom."

All three participants read the prompt and responded to it within one week. Through phone and Google Hangout conversations over the course of another week, we were able to generate a table for analyzing the narratives inspired by Haug's (2008) table for collective memory work. All participants' contributions to the table creation were valuable in clarifying its design. After deciding how the narratives should be analyzed, we selected one narrative to examine using our Language Legitimation table, Table 2. At the time of our work together, two of the three participants were no longer working in international educational contexts. Thus, we selected the narrative written by Margret², at the time a practicing international educator, for this analysis.

What follows is the analysis that resulted from our collective generation of a deconstruction and reconstruction table and our examination of the narrative with van Leeuwen's (2007) categories of legitimation. We discussed portions of the narrative over email, via phone, and over Google Hangout. The author of the narrative, Margret, wrote the text used here while outside of the United States for work; therefore, she took part remotely, understanding the voluntary nature of her participation and agreeing to contribute to the examination of her own narrative via email when possible. What follows is the participants' analysis of Margret's narrative using our modified collective memory work table and van Leeuwen's language of legitimation categories.

² pseudonym

Admittedly, one limitation of this study is the reality that faithfulness to the exact techniques used in Haug's (2008) collective memory work was difficult due to geographic distance between participants. Therefore, the purpose of this text is simply to exhibit how our discourse analysis table might be used to expose volunteers' assumptions and predict the benefit of using collective memory work methods during Peace Corps training sessions. We did, however, use Haug's collective memory work methods as much as was possible. Hence, further research might uncover exactly how the narrative deconstruction and reconstruction table we've created and exemplified might pair with Haug's exact notion of collective memory work.

As was done in Haug's (2008) collective memory work, all participants wrote their narratives in third person. In her narrative, Margret reflected upon her experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in the country of Malawi. As the dominant discourse surrounding single-language enforcement within international educational contexts suggests one language, generally English, is legitimate and privileged, we used Theo van Leeuwen's (2007) approach to discourse analysis and the table we generated together to examine the language used to legitimize the enforcement of English within this narrative.

Through deconstructing Margret's narrative and collectively reconstructing it using our table, we exposed the effectiveness of narrative analysis in unearthing author ideologies and ethnocentrism.

Analysis and Discussion

Van Leeuwen's (2007) study of legitimation in discourse includes four main categories: authorization, moral evaluation, realization, and mythopoesis. After Margret wrote her narrative, we examined it together using these four components to guide our analysis. What follows are descriptions of each category and our observations of Margret's text as they are associated with each. The entire narrative, in its original form, is included in Appendix A.

Authorization

Authorization examines language legitimation in terms of authority of tradition, custom and law, and persons who hold institutional authority. It answers the question "Who says we should do this?" and comes in the forms of personal, expert, role model, impersonal, traditional, and conformity authority (van Leeuwen, 2007).

This narrative examines an experience the educator, Margret, had with single-language enforcement in her classroom as a Peace Corps volunteer. As she taught students whose home language was not English, Margret situated herself within this narrative as the expert authority on that topic. In lines 5 and 6 of the text, she says that she discovered her "methods [for teaching English] would be used for teaching to her 321 students." In naming the exact number of students Margret was teaching, she situated herself as an expert since, according to the *AERA Handbook on Educational Policy* (Sykes, Schneider, & Plank, 2012), most teachers stateside work with an average class size of 24. Thus, teachers in the United States typically

work with far fewer students in a single day than Margret was within this international context.

Margret further exhibits expert authority when she mentions that she has obtained a master's degree in EAL (English as an Additional Language) in lines 3 and 4. She writes of herself, "she completed her master's degree and English as an Additional Language" exemplifying her expertise and knowledge in this area. Near the end of the narrative, Margret again positions herself as the expert authority by writing that "her younger students didn't know any better to question her" (line 25) in her methods and thus they learned more English than the older students. This statement exemplifies again the expert authority she has in this context and the high value she assigns to learning the English language.

As English is seen as the language necessary for success in many educational contexts and all students are assumed to have a strong desire to learn it in order to become successful, authority of conformity is also at work in this narrative. Margret writes, "English was a coveted language to excel in" (line 6), confirming that, in order to be successful, she thought that students must learn and use the English language just as others do and have done in the past. Through examining this text in light of van Leeuwen's (2007) authoritative category of legitimation, the English language, and Margret's superior ability to perform and teach it, is situated by her use of discourse here as highly beneficial to students.

Margret does, however, forgo some authority in suggesting students' motivation for learning the English language. In line 7 of the narrative, she states that her students were "eager to do what was necessary to pass their national exams." This gives some authority to the students themselves by positioning them as the actors taking up the material being taught (alluding to the idea that she is not working alone in her efforts). It also positions tradition as authoritative by suggesting that students are learning English, not solely because of her, but because that is what they must do, and traditionally do, to pass their examinations. The exams themselves are positioned by Margret as a form of authority as they are impersonal and a component of a larger structure of laws and regulations that determine mandates for all students.

Moral Evaluation

Van Leeuwen (2007) defines moral evaluation as legitimation in reference to value systems. Moral evaluation can appear in three ways: as evaluation, as an abstraction, or as an analogy. In the case of this particular text, it is important to make note of Margret's use of abstraction because, as she admitted in our narrative analysis discussions, she uses it here to seemingly place herself apart from something that continues to trouble her.

Through our discussions, Margret also made it clear that she was concerned about Westerners entering "developing countries" with a motive to change them, to help them advance. Her concern here can be seen covertly as she mentions in lines 1 and 2 that, "It was her first time teaching overseas." By not being more specific here, as the text in total discusses the experience of teaching English overseas and not simply teaching overseas, she suggested that

she may have been abstracting the experience of teaching and enforcing American English to separate herself from a potential source of tension in relation to her teaching practice.

The author's realization of this tension, then, and hesitation to outwardly identify with a pro-Western ideology regarding English language education and enforcement in the classroom is also apparent in the brief moral evaluation that surfaces in lines 14-16. She writes, "Margret initially tried to encourage students to write and speak the 'right' way, but chipping away at fossilized behavior proved exhausting and, ultimately, caused her to question her, seemingly, good intentions." The word "right" has been placed in quotation marks to suggest that normalized perceptions of American English (as a superior mode of communication) are no longer assumed by the author after she experiences some difficulty with her traditional English teaching techniques. She alludes that her mentality has changed along with her methodology as she goes on to use the word "seemingly" to qualify her previous "good intentions."

The author uses analogy as moral evaluation, however, in several places throughout the text in a way that suggests she might still hold English to be the most legitimate language. An early reference to the students' behavior as a fossil (line 15) reveals that she perceives her students to be impressionable, as is stone when a fossil is created, but that the impressions are long-lasting. She writes that "chipping away at fossilized behavior proved exhausting." Thus, she seems to be suggesting with her use of the word "fossil" that challenges to those learned behaviors – in this case, the way they use English – are hard won. Additionally, negative connotations often associated with variations of the word "fossil" in English suggest Margret's perception that the students' use of British English over American English is not appreciated. This again surfaces near the end of the text when the author discusses her success with students who are "fresh" (line 26) and have not yet hardened their behaviors. Line 25 runs into line 26 with the sentence, "Her younger students did not know any better to question her coming fresh out of the primary school." Students who are labeled as "fresh" are seemingly better at conforming to her mode of instruction as they take up American English as the dominant and sole language in the classroom.

Rationalization

Different from moralization, but closely linked to it, is rationalization, which includes instrumental rationalization and theoretical rationalization. Instrumental rationalization refers to the goals and effects of institutionalized social actions and specifically teleological action, a sub-category of instrumental rationalization important to van Leeuwen (2007). Essentially it examines success – whether or not something is working. Theoretical rationalization, on the other hand, aims to reveal some kind of truth (van Leeuwen, 2007).

This narrative is largely concerned with teleological action: it works toward a resolution stating that new methodologies implemented by the educator when working with "fresh" students were successful. Margret uses EAL strategies, as she discusses in line 18, rather than her traditional methodologies learned in her own schooling, to teach the students American English. Students end up scoring well on the national examinations, and Margret sees this as

proof of success, serving as validation for her that English education in international contexts can impact change and development.

Turning to theoretical rationalization, in line 6 of the narrative, Margret states that students “were eager to do what was necessary to pass their national English exams.” The term “necessary” is attributive in that the activity of learning English to pass the national exams is both objectified and generalized (van Leeuwen, 2007). Hence she rationalizes her teaching English as a dominant language as fundamental to students’ success on national examinations.

Mythopoesis

Notably, Margret’s narrative was self-generated, in a particular moment in time, and in response to a prompt regarding an event that elicited fear or tension. It is a representation of the event that has taken place. Therefore, it is a story or a tale, as all memories are allegorical in nature and require the use of imagination (Symcox, 2002). In stories that are moral, the protagonist is normalized and rewarded for adhering to socially-constructed standards or restoring social order (van Leeuwen, 2007). In cases where the resolution does not reward the protagonist or restore social order, the story is generally a cautionary tale conveying what will happen if conformity to social norms is not achieved.

In this text, Margret, the protagonist of her own text, pushed back against the social norms of the culture in which she was living by trying to teach American English her way (lines 26 and 27). She wrote that “they [students] did what she taught them to do and, hence, they scored the best” on their exams. In teaching in the way she perceived to be best, she was incorporating the societal norms of Western culture in her teaching and expecting them of her students. English is valued as the language of educational success in Western cultures, and her Western perception that American English was the most valued language was firmly established within this text. Additionally, she felt the need to restore that norm within her classroom. She stated that younger students did as they were told when it came to English language learning, and, thus, “they scored the best” (line 27) on the examinations. Her restoration of Western societal order – English as the language of success – positioned her as the heroine of her story.

Conclusion

Haug’s (2008) table for narrative analysis, Table 1, may provide a framework within which a text can be deconstructed and interpreted, but it is not pointed enough to unmask foreign aid workers’ potentially hegemonic and ethnocentric assumptions on its own. Van Leeuwen (2007) provides categories for critical discourse analysis that articulate specific word markers and questions that help individuals locate legitimation within the text that might accomplish this more effectively. His work also provides a lens for narrative analysis that practically brings critical discourse analysis to the educator and the educator’s peers for the constructive purpose of ideological revelation. In addition, Haug’s methods of collective work, however, would make the process of revelation a shared one. Therefore, the responsibility for transformational revelation would not solely be rooted in the method and the author alone. The collective nature of this work allows for greater oral reflection and support.

Indeed, critical discourse analysis seems to prove here a successful tool linking systemic structures apparent in text to constructions of reality portrayed through narrative writing. Margret's narrative makes apparent the specific usefulness of van Leeuwen's (2007) approach to discourse analysis in examining educator ideologies regarding single-language (American English) enforcement within international educational contexts. Seemingly, the use of narratives to initiate conversations around educators' previously held subconscious hegemonic and ethnocentric ideologies might be ideal within teacher development programs, specifically in post-colonial contexts. Furthermore, this technique might prove particularly valuable if incorporated into the pre-service or mid-service training the volunteers undergo together.

In dissecting narratives produced by educators working in international development contexts, tensions of power in relation to culture and language not previously apparent to the educator move to center stage for both the educator and the collective group. If educators serving as Peace Corps Volunteers in foreign contexts continue to blindly enter developing countries and particularly post-colonial countries without examining and reflecting upon their own biases and ethnocentrism, the mobilization of Western aid will continue to carry with it troubling questions. To what extent are Peace Corps volunteers, particularly teachers of English, enforcing a type of Western assimilation? What impact does the practice of single-language enforcement have on student identity? I believe that the collective work described here has the potential to foster greater contemplation of these questions and allow for deeper examination of educator ideologies before and during their engagement in international development work.

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Appendix A

Margret served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi, Southern Africa. It was her first time teaching overseas. She knew that most volunteers earned their graduate degrees post-service; however, she completed her master's degree and English as an Additional Language (EAL) certification prior to her departure to Africa. During her graduate program, she had no idea how invaluable those EAL strategies and methods would be for teaching to her 321 students. English was a coveted language to excel in and master, and her students were eager to do what was necessary to pass their national English exams.

Margret was frustrated sometimes during her first few months of teaching. She noticed little things about her students' grammar that irritated her, such as spelling differences in their compositions (color/colour, neighbor/neighbour, while/whilst, spelled/spelt, airplane/aeroplane, etc.); or the lack of paragraph structure (i.e., indenting before the beginning of each paragraph and skipping a space between each paragraph); and the incessant reference to Math as Maths (she assumed it was slang for Mathematics, but still...). Margret initially tried to encourage students to write and speak the 'right' way, but chipping away at fossilized behavior proved exhausting and, ultimately, caused her to question her, seemingly, good intentions.

Instead of focusing on the way she thought she had been taught proper English in elementary, high school and college, she used the EAL strategies and methods to give the extra support her students needed to improve their English language acquisition. Interestingly, she made a prediction that came true. Since she taught 9th and 11th graders during her first year and then those same students during their 10th and 12th grade years, she believed that her 10th

graders would outperform the 12th graders on their national English exams...and they did. The reason: because her older students were resistant to her way of teaching EAL, which at times went against how they had been taught from primary through secondary school. Her younger students did not know any better to question her coming fresh out of the primary school (K-8th grade), so they did what she taught them to do and, hence, they scored the best.

Table 1

Discourse Analysis Table for Frigga Haug's (1997) Collective Memory Work

Initial Thesis Statement of Author's Meaning:
Common Sense Theory:

Analysis of Elements of Language

List of Verbs as Activity:	Linguistic Peculiarities:	Emotion:	Motivation:	Others Presented in Narrative:	Vacuums:	Contradictions:

Construction of "I":
Construction of Others:

Final Analysis

Thesis Statement Based on Deconstruction and Reconstruction:
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Table 2

Van Leeuwen's (2007) Discourse Analysis Table for Collective Memory Work

Initial Thesis Statement of Author's Fears/Tensions:

Authority	Moral Evaluation
Personal Authority (personal status or role):	Evaluation (Are there adjectives that trigger a moral concept? – “good,” “natural,” “normal”):
Expert Authority (credentials, notoriety, expertise):	Abstraction (Are there concrete practices connected to abstract concepts? – “independence” or “excellence”):
Role Model Authority (respect):	Analogies (Does the text describe particular practices using analogies that conjure up commonsense values? – “like” or “as”):
Impersonal Authority (laws, rules, government):	
Traditional Authority (institution history – “practice,” “habit,” “custom,” “culture”):	
Authority of Conformity (masses, comparison):	

Mythopoesis
 Moral or Cautionary Tale (how is the protagonist of the text positioned as the norm or as the hero/heroine who is restoring social order?):

Final Analysis
 Thesis Statement Based on Analysis: