Sethunya Mokoko Gall

Abstract

My research will focus on Post Colonialism—the residues of colonial impact. I will examine the false ideologies implanted in the minds of colonized South Africans, post the regime of Apartheid, by the educational systems that deny cultural and traditional epistemology, and favor knowledge of the West—dominating with it. I use Spivak, to initiate my research, "Can the Subaltern Speak", for she discusses the voiceless population left out of the power structures, geographically, socially, and politically. Additionally, I use Maggio, "Can the Subaltern Be Heard", examining whether those in position of power are willing to "hear the crying out" of the oppressed. I include other postcolonial or de-colonial perspectives on literacy education in South Africa, along with South African students' perspectives—expressing their suffered trauma caused by the oppressive ostracism of their native languages and history within the education system. My thesis is on the literacy in Southern Africa—questioning what is being taught in schools, printed in textbooks, and further upheld as superior, with a western language. I accompany my research with a brief digital component from South Africa—pictures and video.

Intellectual Power Masks Mastery—Distortion in the Mind of the Colonized

As I initially composed this research while in the United States and it was raining outside, I couldn't help but feel nostalgic. I reminisced on the days when I used to play inside a cave, which was my home, shelter, and protection throughout my developing years in Lesotho, Southern Africa. I spent most of my days in caves because I was a herd boy, and for herd boys, who are mostly orphans in such regions, school is a dream that rarely becomes a reality. Due to

western domination and the enduring impact of colonialism in African nations, English is deemed the official and international language and thus the controlling language and determiner of success and intelligence. If one does not speak English, he is denied access to all resources that could assist in liberation. Today I conduct this research back in South Africa, walking the streets of Soweto and Johannesburg. It feels real and intriguing—both in my mind and heart. My stomach cringes as I read the following excerpt from Kristen Perry's article, "Primary School Literacy in Southern Africa: African Perspectives":

> "Language policies reflect broader issues of power and control—and the ways in which the western world still exerts considerable influence over literacy education in Africa. These policies serve a powerful gatekeeping function in Africa; that is, language policies have the power to create two separate classes: the included (those who are able to operate easily in the official language, which provides access to economic and political power), and the excluded (those who do not enjoy these powerful linguistic gatekeepers, due to their authority to exclude through high dropout rates, high percentages of repeaters, and high failure rates in examinations" (Perry 73).

Perry shows how African schools are entirely English-medium, and primary schools therefore 'weed out' students who do not have adequate competence in English. This is problematic. The language of the colonizer continues to oppress the youth, determining the success of many African children. Intelligent minds of youth are denied development if they do not possess adequacy in the language of their colonizer. Though Africa has its own languages which prove excellent in developing the cognitive aspects of children, those African linguistic breakthroughs are ignored, and English—the language of western control, is still preferred and idealized, resulting in keeping western epistemic influence superior.

While I delve further into this research, the question I explore is: What are the residues of colonial influence in Southern Africa; what are the false ideologies that uphold western epistemology as superior; what do they continue to do to the minds of colonized Africans; and how can these powers and control be halted?

I am aware that there are false ideologies that the colonized began to adopt and self-identify with—while failing to realize that their assumed identity is, in fact, of the western society or the colonizer. Spivak's main concern in her piece "Can the Subaltern Speak? A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason" is to show that the possibility exists that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of the Other as the self-shadow. When we look at this closely, we realize that she defines the Subaltern, which I will paraphrase as—the population which is socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. We see that the Subaltern is unable to identify *themselves* because they have no voice in the colonial world. Any form of epistemic grasp that the Subaltern holds and attempts to identify with, is a false ideology, for it belongs to the colonizer; thus, they still are a Subaltern. Spivak supports Michael Foucault's view on the negative power of the intellectual colonizer: "The intellectual power functions discursively to produce the very subject over which it then exercises mastery" (Spivak 2115). The western sees their ideals as perfect and well fit for the Subaltern. The colonizer indoctrinates the mind of the Subaltern with false ideologies whether it's through epistemology or not. The Subalterns are similar to the oppressed proletariats of the Marxist society—who are constantly blaming themselves for not being better or being equal to the oppressive power of the bourgeoisies. As they attempt to educate themselves and become equal, they are still not liberated because they are then oppressed with the knowledge of their colonizer.

Spivak states, “White men are saving brown women from interventions if white men are taken as saviors and brown men are scapegoated as oppressors of brown women.” (2114). Spivak here addresses the issue of the white savior. Whether it’s related to anthropology or sociology, and colonialism—we relentlessly see and hear about the perfect heart of the white person who came to the nation of poor people to save them from their misery and liberate them with western ideals. We see this in education where the western comes and educates underdeveloped nations, such as in South Africa, with white knowledge. The new knowledge that the colonized perceives to be ideal further oppresses the colonized as the colonizer’s hand leaves unshakable consequences in the minds of the innocent. The education that originates from the west is being indoctrinated to the mind of the illiterate, resulting in the superiority of the western. We see the western—*the missionaries*—going to other nations and forcing their religious ideals on others—*the Africans*. They promise food to make those less fortunate subject to their biased and false teachings and alter the long traditional ways of the colonized and oppress them with their own. This is the example of how the white men are used as the saviors of brown women in Spivak’s example of the Subaltern. Kristen Perry, in her article, states, “Current literacy levels in Africa have been achieved largely through formal schooling and institution introduced by European colonizers and Christian missionaries. Colonial administrators allowed religious missionaries the relative freedom to develop and implement education in Africa, including the language policies used in education” (Perry 60). Perry establishes how Europeans, therefore, have controlled language and education through the imposition of colonial languages of power and through the written development of African languages by producing grammars, dictionaries, and other text books.

Kristen Perry establishes a strong argument as she makes us aware that African perspectives are nevertheless influenced by western perspectives and agendas, as a result of colonialism, post colonialism, and globalization. There is a growth in the number of African scholars who increasingly recognize the inadequacy of western 'solutions' to constraints in African literacy development and who advocate African solutions for African issues. In other words, the 'white savior' is being slowly being recognized in need to be exiled out of Africa, post realizing that his impact only further oppresses and consequence false allusions that deem western ideals perfect and fit for the black man, or the colonized. South Africa consists of nine countries organized as the SADC (South African Development Community): Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These countries are the ones that have been struggling for economic and political survival against the past Apartheid regime in Southern Africa. Geographically, these are Southern African countries that also use English as their official language; that means, these countries are under the domination of western language. We must realize that literacy is not merely a cognitive phenomenon; it is closely linked to social and cultural practice, to power and ideology. Perry emphasizes that literacy has been used in multiple ways in the literature concerning South Africa; however, because scholars and policy makers define literacy in many ways, literacy development can be difficult to evaluate and compare in a given region. For example, literacy is defined as the ability to read and write in the mother tongue, which is a fairly common definition, for those who think about education in the developing world. Perry announces, "This definition is far too limiting, especially for Southern Africa, because it not only fails to acknowledge that many may be able to read and write in a colonial language but not in their mother tongue, but also it does not take into account the cultural values, beliefs, and practices that surround literacy" (Perry 59). Perry wants

people to be aware that literacy consists of far more than the simple technical ability to read and write, and should not be considered a single phenomenon, which excludes the values and traditions of a nation. The main focus is to pay attention to the local literacies, which are often overlooked or undervalued by those in power—commonly the western colonizers.

Throughout South Africa we see the notion of ignoring traditional or African epistemology and favoring ideals of the west, since that is what is taught, printed, and translated in South African schools and textbooks. School literacy often enough becomes the gold standard for a narrower view of 'literacy', and children who are not adept at school literacies are marked as somehow culturally deficient or linguistically incompetent—though the culture that they are deemed and stereotyped incompetent of is not theirs, but of the West. Perry declares, "When we look at the shaping of literacy in Southern Africa, it is important to note that it is western perspective, largely developed by theorists in Great Britain, the United States, and Australia" (Perry 59). Perry emphasizes that we must observe that inadvertently, African scholars, particularly those in South Africa, have contributed to this perspective; thus, thinking about literacy in the region of South Africa still is largely guided by Western perspective. This demonstrates that colonial impact is still evident in Africa and progresses to exist in education. The remaining question that is assisting to navigate my research is: "Should children be taught in their mother tongues, in a dominant regional language, or in a colonial language (European—English) language?

Gayatry Spivak questions whether the Subaltern can speak; in response to this, I found new insight which I find rather intriguing and furthering this notion of the Subaltern to current times. In her article, "Can the Subaltern Be Heard?" J. Maggio proposes an interesting academic discourse which makes us wonder if anything has changed for the Subaltern. Innately, we are

aware that "speaking" is intimately linked to "being heard"; thus, Maggio makes a compelling statement that, "The 'cannot speak' in "the subaltern cannot speak" is gesturing the impossibility of speech to an audience that refuses to hear and respond to the crying out. It is this incomplete transaction that suppresses the subaltern" (Maggio 430). The author here desires for us to acknowledge that speaking, as a complete transaction, is only possible on the contingency of the reception of the sent message. There is an obvious link between speaking and being heard while communicating. In Spivak's point of view the "self or other" distinction is tied up in the tension that relies on the notion of "speaking" and "being heard." To attend to this, Maggio suggest the aspect of hybridity as a potential solution. She defines hybridity as a theory in communication studies that seeks a way to theorize the conflicted and multiple affiliations of diasporic groups. She states, "Hybridity is configured at the conjunction of the local, global, social, political, and legal to name some dimensions" (Maggio 430). Maggio is suggesting that, nonetheless, the concept of hybridity is still based on the very Western concept of an active speaker. However, this speaker makes little sense in the context of the ability to communicate.

Maggio's reason for composing another article in response to Spivak and to discuss the distinctions of the Subaltern is because she wants to offer a reading that challenges the convectional interpretation of Spivak's essay. She feels that Spivak's scholarship focuses on her reading of Marx through the prism of Derrida, on her contention that the "native informant" is simultaneously created and destroyed. In contrast, Maggio contends that Spivak's terms of engagement always imply a liberal-independent subject that is actively speaking. The argument that Maggio brings forth is that the western critic ought to open up the way he/she listens and understands. She suggests that an effective way to do this—to translate the non-western—is to try to comprehend all actions as a form of communication and to construe such communications

on their own terms. Maggio declares, "I advocate a reading of cultures based on the assumption that all actions, to a certain extent, offer a communicative role" (421). Maggio is making us be aware that one can understand a culture by translating the various conducts of their cultures. If we adapt to this rather open-ended view of discourse and communication, one that aspires to non-privilege western culture, one can attempt to understand across cultures. What we must remember about the silencing of the Subaltern is that the Subaltern can never speak because they are both being stood in for and embodied by others in the dominant discourse. According to Maggio, while using Marxist terms, the relationship between global capitalism and national alliance cannot explain the textures of power. Marxists silence the Subaltern by representing them in discourse in which they have no speaking role. This definition thus brings me to the next point I want to address. The voiceless populations are left out of the political, economic, social, and geographical power structures, and are still being silenced in nations such as Southern Africa, in terms of literacy in the educational systems.

In the Southern Hemisphere of Africa, post the regime of apartheid, much had been damaged to the functioning ways of South Africa, for the black people—the natives. The domination of the Dutch, Afrikaans, had left the county in dreadful magnitudes. The worst part is that the educators in most schools were the white Dutch and had only their books printed and translated in their own interpretations filled with white epistemology. After Nelson Mandela had been president of South Africa, and the nation had come to agreeable terms that much had to change and be done right, the nation positively moved towards changing the schools' curriculum and created one that neither demean the blacks nor further distort the minds of the colonized. They created a curriculum that historically told the truth of what happened in South Africa, a progressive move of acknowledging the truth, but choosing to look past it and have the Blacks

and Whites unite, not fighting for who was in the land in the first place. Books were then printed that did not only have white people being represented as superior or their knowledge as being the best one. However, what I find to be still hypocritical and problematic through my research, the few days that I have been here in South Africa, is that though the books are printed and acknowledgements are made, the people teaching the students using the revamped curriculum make their own biased conclusions and interpretations of the text books as they teach. This is a direct relation to Maggio's notion of the Subaltern. The understanding and interpretations of the listener to the speaker is the only thing that offers a possible liberation of the Subaltern to be able to *speak* and *be heard*. If the new syllabus and curriculum are being printed to represent the voices of the silenced South African population, that means there is an acknowledgement of the cry out of the Subaltern; however, if the teachers are then ignoring the printed words on the textbooks and make their own conclusions and interpretations, they are not offering a listening ear to the cry out of the Subaltern; they are thus further silencing them and oppressing them, making them not be heard. This is the most hurtful manner of ignoring the obvious.

Henning Hues, in his articles, "Mandela, the Terrorist", Mandela is depicted, by the white Afrikaans, Dutch, as the terrorist in South Africa. His fight for the people of South Africa, his vigorous struggle to being the first black president of South Africa and his political and racial changes, are presently deemed acts of terror by the colonizers, post his death (2013). The article discusses the ethnography in South African history classroom settings, namely the narrative structures that appear to influence the history teaching process more than the curriculum. What I discovered is that the application of the curriculum, modified in a particular Afrikaans (Dutch) environment along with the teachers' personal experience, influences the learning process of the students. Hues declares, "Curriculum documents in South Africa serve generally as an important

benchmark for teachers who face challenges of applying new contents and rely on curriculum documents far more than on approved textbooks when planning their teaching" (78). There is an approved curriculum which teachers are supposed to abide by as they teach the students. This means that the curriculum and the people who have it in their hands have immense power in regards to what they chose to give to the students and have them absorb.

Hues also mentions that since 1995 and in 2003 there were phases that pushed for immediate cleansing of the curriculum and text books to exclude the most obvious sexist and racist contents. He articulates, "It is clear those South African education systems as a whole needed not just some minor textbook revisions and rearranging of content, but a general overhaul in terms of pedagogy and methodology as well" (Hues 78). What Hues wants us to realize is that the fault in the education system is that newly presented curriculum is intended to align the still functioning apartheid curriculum symbolically with the new democratic dispensations. The other consequential detriment is that in case of history, the interim curriculum was created almost exclusively by political administrators, while academic historians and educators, of whom many had been debating antiapartheid historiographies before 1994, were not involved. There is no way we can expect change for educational systems in South Africa if the progressive minds are not involved in the decision making and changes implemented. What is also significant is that many of the black teachers supported the new government's initiative, which marked a drastic political change, while many white teachers in private and progressive schools identified the new curriculum as critical and learner centered, and something they felt they had been doing before anyway, without having labeled it as such. This is direct pretense to have been adopting new changes that are beneficial for South Africa.

The most obvious way to show that the new changes made to the curriculum have no positive effect, as long as the teachers choose to interpret the information in a biased manner, is how the curriculum is applied in class rooms. In the article Henning Hues writes about an exchange between a leaner and a student having a dialogue, the leaner asks the teacher a question.

Learner: "Miss, was the African National Congress communist?"

Teacher: "Yes, *sure!* The African National Congress is *still* communist! They believed in the communist system, and during the Cold War Russia financed the African National Congress to be on their side. If Russia got South Africa…and this is why our parents went to the borders to fight the Russians away, so that they cannot come into South Africa (1 March 2010)" (Hues 84).

There is an obvious differentiation between *us* (whites) and *them* (blacks), in the reference to "our parents" in the assertion above. Hues wants us to be aware that while the curriculum documents propose the understanding of the past to be examined with greater insight and sensitivity, presumably implying that such blatant "us" and "them" divisions are not what the curriculum writers had in mind, the teachers, however, come to these false conclusions and interpretations that indoctrinates the minds of the students in unfair and unjust manners.

Another discovery through my exploration and what Hues exposes in his article is that the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, is viewed in a biased and negative view by Dutch—Afrikaans—teachers. This is wrong because Mandela is a humanitarian and philanthropist who is worldly. The author makes it clear for us that Mandela appears exclusively in the context of a guerilla fighter; he is presented extensively as an assassin, which causes some shock for learners, who know Mandela from the media in a different way. He declares,

"Afrikaans use demeaning words like j*onge*, which is remarkably a common way that for many white people to address black people in a childlike and inferior way. By using terms like this, the teacher is reinstating the old-fashioned reference to Mandela as a terrorist and as a specifically black man, which is in dramatic contrast to the great respect for the former president that is common in South Africa today" (Hues 87). If students have their parents teach them a different version of history and epistemology, but in schools—places that are supposed to give them truth and knowledge—they are deceived with false ideologies, change does not exist in South Africa and is worse in educational systems. The minds of the youth are being distorted, the youth who are the future and those we trust and hope to change the way things function.

In an autobiographical book written by a South African, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*, Mark Mathabane contents that much has been written about and spoken about the politics of apartheid: the forced removals of black communities from their ancestral lands, the Influx Control and Pass laws that mandate where Blacks can work, raise families, be buried; the migrant labor system that forces black men to live away from their families eleven months out of year; the breaking up of black families in the ghettos as authorities seeks to create the so-called White South Africa; the brutal suppression of the black majority as it agitates for equal rights. Additionally, what I find significant is that Mathabane wants us to really question what these all mean in human terms. He states, "I saw at a young age that apartheid was using tribalism to deny me equal rights, to separate me from my black brothers and sisters, to justify segregation and perpetuate white power and privilege, to render me subservient, docile and, therefore, exploitable" (Mathabane 9). Mark Mathabane here discusses the ways in which his time of growing up in South Africa impacted him and others. However, since I am composing this research in South Africa, I figured it would be appropriate

and fitting to interview three students from three different secondary and high schools in South Africa. Thus, I asked three students to drive with me to their various schools—places they hang out, and locations that mean a lot to them. I wanted to see if their experiences differ from the ones mentioned by Mathabane.

I interviewed the following:

I. **Khotso Mokoena**, a grade eleven student at *Phulong Senior Secondary school.*

> "In our schools, they teach us two different things in comparison to what books say. This is because they also teach us with their own knowledge, not being aware what the book says. Therefore, we find that at the end of the day we have one topic in opposing and illegal forms. During class lessons, we disbelief of what happened in those past times" (16 December 2016).

II. **Lebogang Nkogatse**, a grade twelve student at *Laban Motlhabi Comprehensive School.*

> "English is not a choice, but it's a forced language. Other countries intellectually advance us because they are privileged the chance to use their own language in schools. The main reason that makes South Africa to learn most subjects in English is because of its name "South Africa" it's an English named country—unlike before the whites arrived" (16 December 2016).

III. **Charles Sebereke Phore**, a grade eleven student at *Langaville Secondary school.*

> "English is not important because even if you fail it, you still know a lot and are a smart person" (16 December 2016).

The declarations above, from the students, show that there still remain large silenced populations of the Subaltern (South Africans) in the Southern Hemisphere of Africa, in multiple schools. The epistemology of the west still appears dominant and upheld by those in position of

power, though it's functioning in a subtle manner. The results of this are lack of participation in South African black students; for they feel that the education systems are giving them false information. I have decided to reduce the jargon of research that I had gathered, while still in the US, for most of it was composed by intellectuals, majority being white, discussing the left influence of colonialism in the South African literacy in the educational systems. The video that I have attached to this research—the dialogue between these three students from different schools here in South Africa—I feel is more applicable and relevant to this topic. I plan to visit more schools and converse with people in the power structures and see how they react to the statements made by their students. I plan to further this research.

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