Decolonization, epistemic access and language curriculum transformation

Leketi Makalela

Hub for Multilingual Education and Literacies,

University of the Witwatersrand

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Historical consciousness: how do we start?

"Perhaps in the future there will be some African history...But at present, there is none; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa"

Trevor-Roper (1963)

"People without history/culture become <u>mimics</u> who have placed their memories in a psychic tomb" Ngugi wa Thiong'o

What are the issues?

- In search for high quality education, there is an expressed need to engage with:

  - Decolonization: Shifting the lens from Eurocentric to Afrocentric world views (Afrocentricity)-perspectives that move the Africana to the centre stage of world history

  - Transformation: Synthesis and development through <u>infusion of local epistemologies</u> and methodologies into the orthodox curriculum (Multiculturalism- multilingualism)

Educational Challenge

- Monolingual-colonial and epistemological biases- a burden for educational development
  - Educational disadvantage
  - Policy crisis
  - The politics of costs
  - Linguistic curtain
  - Marginalization

What are the issues?

- Centering indigenous/African knowledge systems assumes that something is fundamentally amiss about how knowledge is organized: falsification, misrepresentation and omissions

- Intellectual minorities are disproportionately disadvantaged through wholesale borrowing of <u>what they know</u> and <u>how they know</u>

- Imbalances in the knowledge systems create identity crisis and limits epistemic access= mental enslavement [Mohonk conferences in 1890 and 1891]

- There is a need for curricular programmes push-back against de/mis-education

Trifocal challenge: Epistemological, colonial and monolingual biases

- Epistemology: <u>what and how</u> one comes to know

- Assessment regimes devise proxies for knowledge around philosophical/epistemological and methodological issues

- Because assessment regimes implicate particular epistemological stances, <u>they are not neutral</u>

PATTERNS of one-ness ideology

- Multilingualism misconceived as multiple monolingualisms
- Literacy reified as letteracy– skilling and drilling (rather than meaning-based social practice
- Decoding + comprehension; transcription + composition (linearity)
- Versioning from English to African languages
- A mistaken belief that using of more than one language in the classrooms will create mental confusion
- L1+ L2; L1- L2; L2 Only

My argument

- From silence co-existence to **argumentative dialogue between local and orthodox knowledge systems; between English and African languages**

In the beginning:
Ipseity and the Enlightenment Period

- Pre-modern speech is understood as a linguistic repertoire; enumerative modality begins with the Enlightenment period

- Nation statism: A world vision of territorized national languages (one-nation, one language) through an isomorph of monolingualisms

- Ipseity (I-ness) vs Otherness (foreigner) due to lessons from the medieval period;

- One-ness ideology: using more than one language creates both mental confusion

Education? A sense making project

- To "**know**" and to "**be**"

- Ways of knowing- reading the world and making sense of it

- Ways of being: Making sense of <u>self</u> in relation to the world
  - " Those who master the curriculum master themselves".

- Language is a foundational skill/resource without which education becomes imitative rather than deep learning.
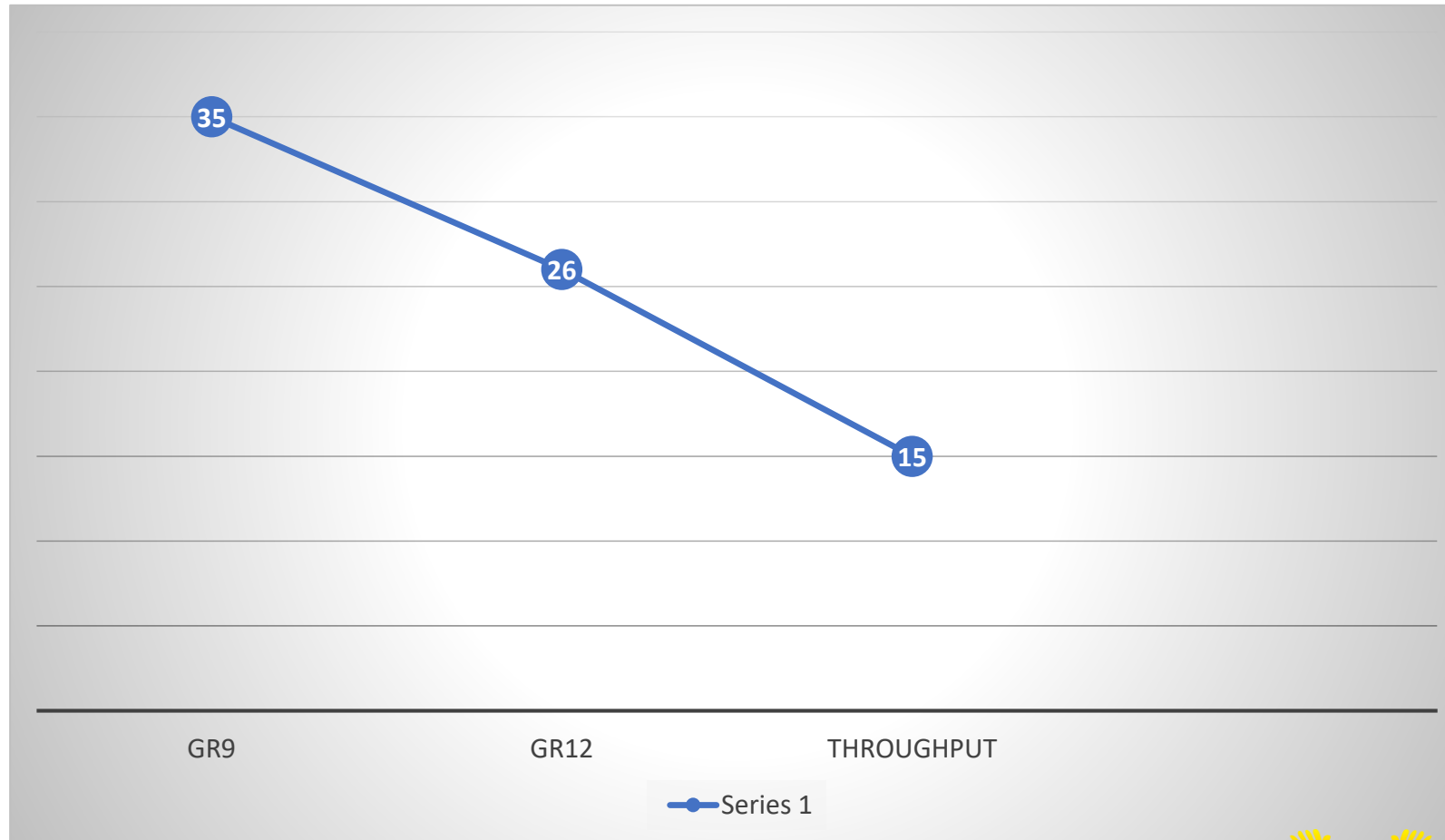
Ways of seeing and being in the world: To know and to be

Literacy trajectories

The Mathew effect
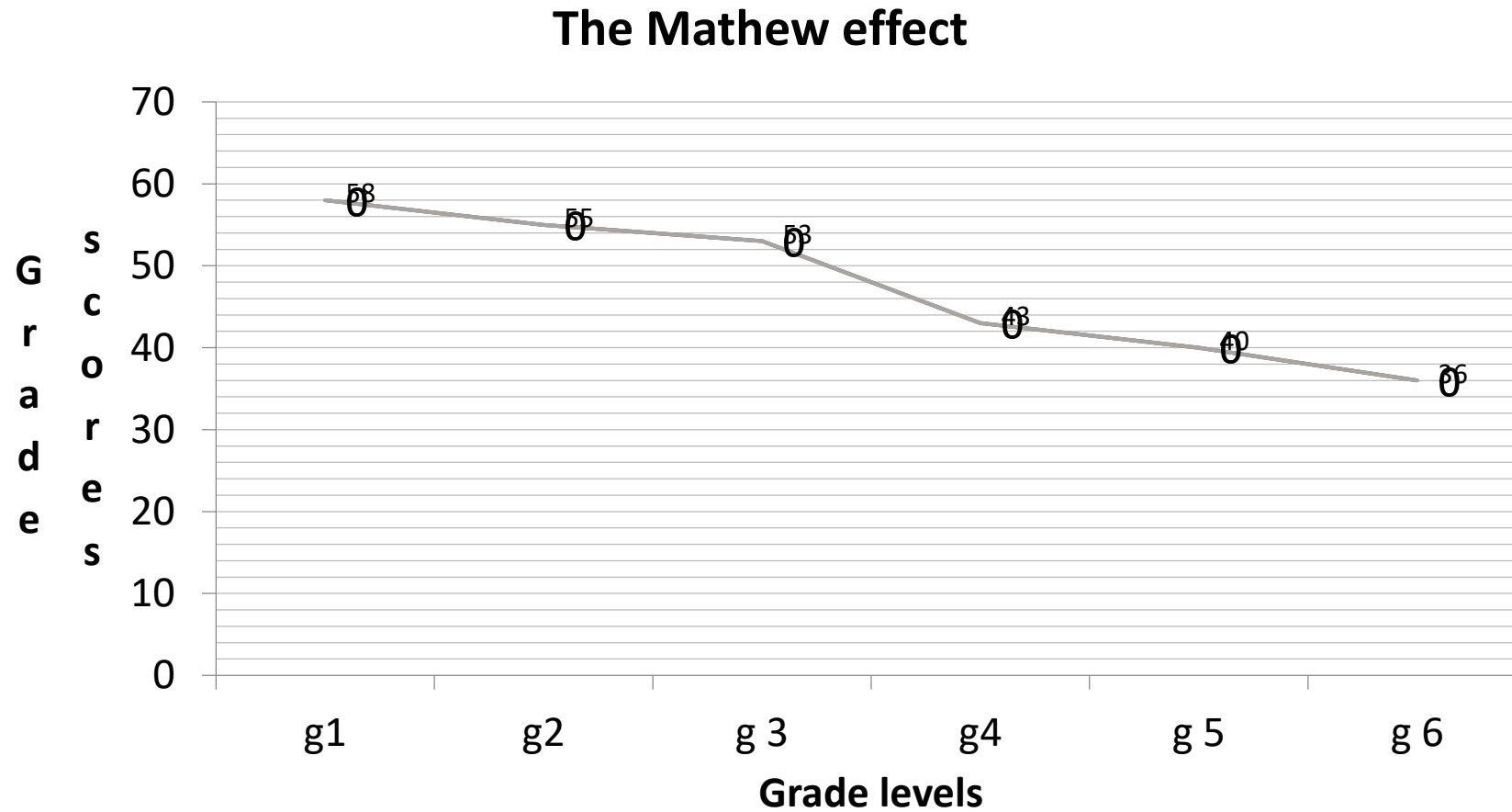
'Unauthentic forms of existence and thought'

Two main frameworks (theoretical bias)

- Cognitive efficiency mechanism (sequential)
  - Two brain system
    - (i) Automaticity (autopilot) and (ii) working memory (deliberate, rational, logical)
- Environmental opportunity hypothesis
  - Experiential factors- reading volume/print exposure

  - DEFICIT attitudes

Working Memory Model

- ⌘ **Visuospatial sketch pad - holds visual and spatial info**
- ⌘ **Phonological loop - holds verbal information**
- ⌘ **Central executive - coordinates all activities of working memory; brings new information into working memory from sensory and long-term memory**

Visuospatial Sketch Pad ⟷ **Central Executive** ⟷ **Phonological Loop**
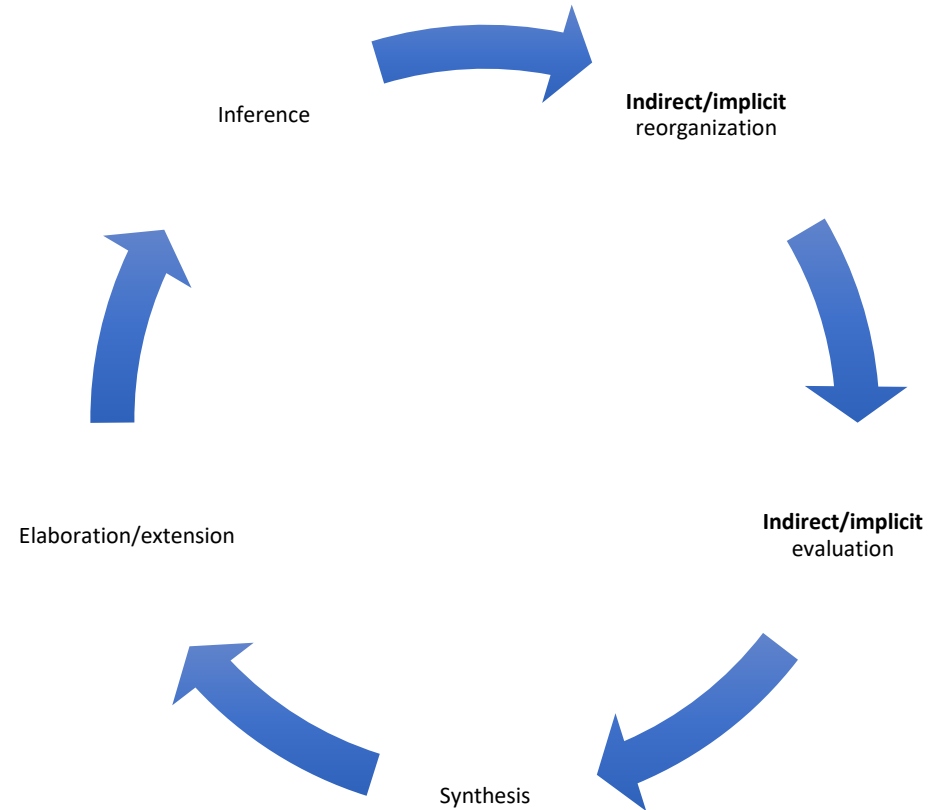
29

Language policy of south Africa

- Subject to any law dealing with language in education and the Constitutional rights of learners, in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through **using more than one language of learning and teaching,** and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department.

Assessment: Taxonomies

Cognitive level	Example
Literal (Level 1)	Questions that deal with information explicitly stated in the text
Reorganisation (Level 2)	Questions that require analysis, synthesis or organisation of information explicitly stated in the text.
Inference (Level 3)	Questions that require learners to interpret messages that are not explicitly stated by linking information from different parts of the text or relating clues in the text to their prior knowledge or experience and drawing conclusions.
Evaluation (Level 4)	These questions deal with judgements concerning value and worth. These include judgements regarding reality, credibility, facts and opinions, validity, logic and reasoning, and issues such as the desirability and acceptability of decisions and actions in terms of moral values.
Appreciation (Level 5)	These questions are intended to assess the psychological and aesthetic impact of the text on the candidate. They focus on emotional responses to the content, identification with characters or incidents, and reactions to the writer's use of language (such as word choice and imagery).

Non-hierarchical taxonomies (horizontal cognitive layout, cyclical)

Inference

Indirect/implicit reorganization

Indirect/implicit evaluation

Synthesis

Elaboration/extension

Versioning: Language typologies

- **Phonemic awareness** vs **morphological awareness**

Noun Class Prefix vs phonemes S- /s/, /iz/, /z / (Orthographic transparency)

- **Multisyllabic orthography vs monosyllables_** … e.g., No vs aowa (syllabic integrity)
  - eat, sleep, walk, go vs sa, se, si, so, su
- **Reading speed**: working memory- 7 pieces of information for 12 seconds….vs decoding long words (knock-over effect)
- **Reading/writing Paragraphs**: circumlocution vs straight to the point
- **Reader/hearer-responsible vs writer/speaker responsible languages** (external and internal cohesion structure)

Versioning: from curriculum to testing

- Transactional texts

Home Language, Additional Language challenges

- English Home language vs
- **Academic language?**
- African languages HL- an irony of our times; 1st and 2nd additional levels

From fixity to fluidity: Translanguaging

- Epistemological shift: what people do with language, not what a language looks like (sociological, ideological).

- Lang/s should not be viewed as fixed systems capable of being placed in closed boxes nor should literacies be viewed as a conglomeration of autonomous skills.

- There is a need to account for multilingual situations where **input: output** are exchanged in different languages or modes in the process of **meaning making**.

- Critical to notions such as L1, L2, diglossia as these suggest sequential view of multilingual development and favour monoglossic curriculum.

- L1+ L2= L1+ L2 (additive bilingual/multilingual policy) X

- L1+L2-L1= L2 (Subtractive policies) X

IS THERE A TEMPLATE? SANKOFA
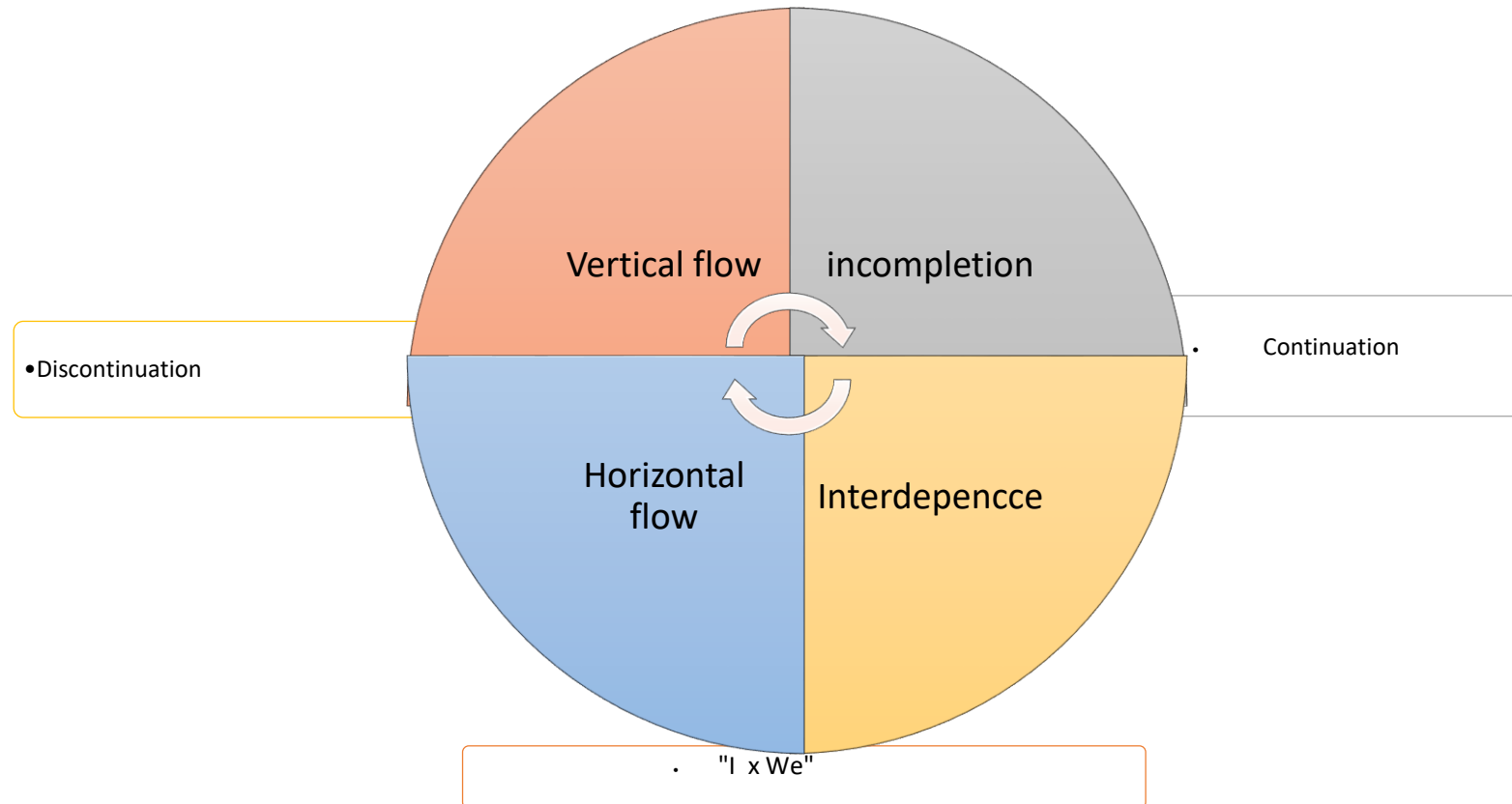
The Limpopo Valley: Story of Confluence
Alignment: ontology, epistemology- methodology/pedagogy

Civilization in more than one language (1220-1290)

Ubuntu translanguaging: ontology, epistemology and methodology

Vertical flow

incompletion

•Discontinuation

Continuation

Horizontal flow

Interdepencce

"I x We"

Deeper learning- Not simple copying

It is possible in a monolingual teaching situation, for students to answer questions or write an essay about a subject without fully understanding it. Processing for meaning may not have occurred. Whole sentences or paragraphs can be copied or adapted out of a textbook, from the internet or from dictation by the teacher without real understanding. It is less easy to do this with 'translanguaging'. To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be processed and 'digested'.(Baker, 2011, p. 289)

Ubuntu Cultural Competence

- In *ubuntu*, one rediscovers a plural vision of interdependence of the language systems and their fluid, overlapping and discursive nature to match the everyday ways of communicating where the **use of one language is incomplete without the other.**

Concluding remarks

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Concluding Remarks…cont

- Falsification and omissions of local knowledge systems have de/miseducation

- Complexity, agility, ubuntu/multilingual education

- Transforming language and literacy means addressing monolingual and epistemological biases

- Sankofa: decolonized education to be drawn from cultural history and perspectives/ways of knowing

- **Translanguaging** as a candidate for transformation of linguistic pluralism and cultural competence of the learners

- Need to transform curriculum to reflect multilingual pathways of knowing and being

Thank you; Ke a leboga; Ngiyabonga

- Leketi.makalela@wits.ac.za
- Twitter:@leketimakalela

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