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### Editorial

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In academic institutions, globally, language remains an undisputed channel for expressing authority, power, privilege, racial superiority, and social class (hooks, 1994; Nieto, 2010). The plurality of linguistic resources that people use in their everyday lives for meaning making have not been recognised as legitimate practices (McKinney, 2016); instead, African languages remain at the periphery of the education system. Languages are not unequal—languages do not oppress other languages—that is, it is not the language itself that oppresses “but what the oppressors do with it, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize” (hooks, 1994, p. 168). The ERSC journal is concerned with disseminating research that contributes to social change. As such, this themed issue focuses on linking language to social justice and critical pedagogy. Linking language to social justice and critical pedagogy calls for an education system that has a strong agenda for change, and is aimed at developing students who are active, engaged citizens who will be able to question the practice of hegemonising certain languages and silencing others. In this collected issue, we present six papers contributed by a group of experts in language practice, language in education, and academic literacy-related discourse who have successfully addressed salient issues in relation to language, social justice, and critical pedagogy in higher education.

These papers illustrate the various dimensions, as well as considerable complexities, associated with linking language to social justice and critical pedagogy in higher education. Relevant to this observation, Paris and Alim (2014) have made a convincing argument in advocating for linguistic and cultural recognition of expertise and knowledge production of the youth of colour rather than their marginalisation in educational spaces; they pointed out that

*as those of us committed to educational justices seek to perpetuate and foster a pluralist present and future through our pedagogy, it is crucial that we understand the ways young people are enacting race, ethnicity, language, literacy, and cultural practices in both traditional and evolving ways.” (p. 90)*

Echoing this position, Bucholtz, Casillas, and Lee (2016, p. 29) made a somewhat similar submission: that a “student-centered perspective also informs our own pedagogical approach. Most speakers of minoritized linguistic varieties, especially those who are racially and/or economically subordinated, have experienced the deprecation of their linguistic and cultural practices.” Arguably, the contributions in this themed issue do not only address issues drawn from relevant research and scholarship in professional practice in the domain of education where, for example, language and academic literacy take a centre stage; these writings also seek to underscore the value of human agency as well as critical transformative liberating fundamentals against the injustices of the past. Strikingly illustrated, which also stands out in the collection of papers that comprise this volume, is the manner in which the authors address seemingly disparate yet interconnected social justice perspectives from diverse angles and approaches, as well as the manner in which these themes appropriately respond to the notions of critical pedagogy and language in terms of “both [its] structural and functional dimensions, socially implicated as discourse and thus involved in the construction of individuals and maintenance and change of societal structures” (Crookes, 2012, p. 1). Put mildly, in Freire’s terms,

*My language and thinking, I believe, are a dialectical unity. They are deeply rooted in a context. So if there is a change of context, it will not be enough to propagate a distinct form of thinking-speaking; it will have to come about by necessity.” (1985, p. 187)*

Accordingly, the interface between our historical and current educational contexts is not only filled with complex ambiguities but, rather, presents and reminisces pedagogical challenges that demand new ways of knowing and thinking—meant to create an enabling environment for expressions of our new world order. In a nutshell, these contributions have dealt with the related issues pretty well.

**Nokhanyo Mayaba, Monwabisi K. Ralarala, and Pineteh E. Angu** argue that if higher education aims to address marginalised and new knowledge through a decolonised curriculum, fundamental questions are worth being asked. In particular, the questions they are asking and responding to are: How does student voice become a force for social change? How can student voice enable HEIs to deal with the issue of language? They suggest and support the view that the issue of language should be recognised as a social justice issue, that student voice can enlighten curriculum designers and society on the dangers of reproducing inequalities through the hegemony of English, and that graduate attributes, as an essential notion, should recognise multilingualism as a core skill that students should acquire.

**Bridget Campbell** brings an interesting dimension to the theme through the employment of a narratology framework. In her paper, the author adopts a reflective critical pedagogic approach meant to facilitate culturally responsiveness and an active participatory approach in respect of students’ learning and experiences. Such pedagogic endeavours were directed towards stepping into the others’ worldview and thus submerging in their cultural idiosyncrasies and thus bringing to the fore better and improved ways of knowing and doing in pedagogy. Important connections in relation to critical pedagogy and social justice are unveiled in terms of teacher and learner agency initiative.

**Adam Cooper’s** multi-site ethnographic study examines how different linguistic repertoires intersect to perpetuate race, class, and power tensions in educational places on the Cape Flats. His article interrogates multiple language ideologies and identities that played out in a classroom environment when learners used different cultural practices and versions of Afrikaans to communicate. Here, he argues that hegemonic language ideologies in the Cape Flats are entrenched by semiotic processes such as iconicity, recursiveness, and erasure. To address forms of social injustice that emanated from these semiotic processes, the article urges educators to create spaces for the different linguistic

practices that learners bring to classroom spaces because they should equip marginalised youth with language ideologies that can assist them to resist and disrupt domination.

**Avasha Rambiritch** explores the connection between social justice and critical pedagogy from a writing centre perspective. Her article examines how writing centre consultants draw on core principles of social justice to provide academic writing support to a linguistically diverse cohort of students. Using qualitative data from students and consultants, she argues that the student-centred approach to writing consultation establishes a dialogic relationship between students and consultants. For her, this relationship empowers students and makes them active participants in the consultation process. She, therefore, concludes that strategies used by writing consultants to provide academic writing support can contribute to address some of the social injustices that marginalised students experience in higher education.

**Berrington Ntombela** revisits the unassailable position of English as a medium of teaching and learning in an erstwhile black university in South Africa, and the implications for the promotion of Western epistemic and cultural hegemony. In his article, he uses empirical evidence from a challenge test and an entry test into a BA honours programme to examine how using English only to assess students' academic potential can result in silencing alternative ways of knowing—and marginalise students' agency. For the author, English in this context does not only serve as a gatekeeper, it also bestows more power and authority on academic staff.

**Vuyokazi Nomlomo** and **Misiwe Katiya** interrogate the critical issue of epistemological access through student experiences of discipline-specific multilingual glossaries. Their article acknowledges the key role of multilingualism as an instrument for transformation in higher education but emphasises the importance of honing students' reading and writing skills in their home languages. The article, therefore, argues that simply exposing students to multilingual glossaries would not guarantee epistemological access to disciplinary knowledge if students cannot read or write proficiently in their home languages. It concludes that the use of multilingual glossaries is important but should not be privileged over the development of core academic reading and writing skills in African languages.

Both the book review and the conference report that appear in this issue link well with the theme of the issue: "Linking language to critical pedagogy and social justice." The book, *African Languages and Language Practice Research in the 21st Century: Interdisciplinary Themes and Perspectives* (edited by Monwabisi K. Ralarala, Ken Barris, Eunice Ivala, and Sibawu Siyepu), was reviewed by **Nogwaja Zulu**; its themes collectively advocate for the recognition and use of African languages as resources for access and learning in educational spaces. The conference report from **Leketi Makalela** shows clearly that the themes debated in the conference, "Imagining a Thriving Multilingual World," were deeply critical of the danger of perpetuating monolingual education and suppressing African indigenous languages.

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