Honouring student repertoires: connecting oracy to "ways of being"

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Abstract

This paper employs autoethnography in a multilingual indigenous community in the north of Australia to examine the in-practice challenges of both oracy and dialogue in a classroom in which shared language and culture are minimal. Through narrative, this paper examines some dilemmas of dialogue, particularly in regard to the ontological responsiveness needed to create a classroom in which all members are able to participate dialogically. In seeking to crack open the culturally situated nature of oracy and dialogue, doing so through examinations of other "ways of oracy" that occur in the local indigenous context, this paper proposes that the dilemmas around dialogue for CALD students are not just issues of linguistic and cultural access but also an ontological third space. The nature of this challenge requires teachers to first engage with reflective ontological and pedagogical 'moves' as a precursor to dialogic possibilities in the classroom. Drawing on intercultural communication, third space theory and the cultural interface, this paper illustrates some possibilities for teacher reflection to ensure greater recognition of all students' repertoires and increased dialogic possibility.

Key words: literacy, oracy, indigenous, CALD, linguistic diversity

Preface

While the scope of this paper focuses on the reflexivity required by the predominantly non-indigenous teaching workforce, it also demonstrates the pedagogical power of indigenous educators. The argument for non-indigenous educators' ontological responsiveness ought to be read in the context of the ongoing demand for greater policy and funding support for indigenous educators (see, e.g. Cherednichenko and Rose, 2016; O'Halloran, 2017).

Introduction

In May 2020, the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police catapulted the Black Lives Matter movement and its critique of systemic racism to a more amplified global conversation. The conversations after these events have instigated a kind of global reckoning around racism, with increased and overdue scrutiny to examine and rectify the ways that systemic racial inequalities are exacerbated across industries.

Much of the focus of the conversation in education to date has centred on the more overt interpersonal exchanges and experiences of racism that play out in schooling spaces (see, e.g. Biddle and Priest, 2015; Moodie et al., 2019). These experiences, however, are connected to the systemic nature of racism that takes root at the level of knowledge systems and epistemologies. Education, as a field, has been historically entrenched in superiority logic that centres whiteness and particular epistemologies (Kendi, 2016; Nakata, 2007a, b). In literacy, more specifically, where discourses around English competencies become conflated with race (Lee, 2014), standardised views of what constitutes literate practice can become entangled with notions of cultural superiority and absorbed into an everyday taken for granted.

Authentic reflection on systemic racism in education requires that we examine the ways that some knowledge systems are held in greater esteem than others. One of the areas in which this happens is the ways in which 'talk' is framed in classrooms. The legacies of the work of the New London group in expanding our imagination for multiliteracies (Kalantzis and Cope, 2000), Kamler and Comber's (2005) work "turn around pedagogies" and González et al.'s (2005) work on Funds of Knowledge have radically altered the pedagogic landscape, cracking open literacy pedagogy to be more aware of its ethnocentrisms and more open to the diverse repertoires of students. While it has been broadly accepted that meaning-making practices differ vastly across cultures, (reflective of differing world views, ontologies and epistemologies); talk, too, is deeply connected to the ways that knowledge is framed within a culture. Yet in the classroom, talk is often framed as a cultural given, as a universal set of skills governed by 'standard' ways of communicating (Hogarth, 2019). This orientation towards 'standard' forms of talk can lead

to erasure of the particular oracies, rooted in particular ways of being in the world, that students bring to the classroom. To shift this erasure requires a shift in teachers' expertise, from seeing talk as universal to seeing talk as deeply situated in ways of knowing.

Ways of knowing, ways of being

'Ontology' derives from the Greek root words 'onto' (being) and 'logy' (logic). To think about ontology is to think about the logic that underpins how we understand our 'being' in the world. Ontology (knowledge of the ways that people understand their being in the world) and epistemology (the ways that people make their knowledge of the world around them) are considerations that underpin much of the work that educators do. For educators from a dominant culture, Western perspectives are centred in many of our social systems and structures, such as curriculum and policy. This can result in an unintentional assumption of one universal "way of being" in the world, erasure of other orientations. This becomes fraught terrain when we presume a 'lack' of logic or knowledge when other forms cannot be recognised or located in our own cultural 'grid' (Kalscheuer, 2008) or frames of reference. Such a presumption of lack is the basis from which deficit discourses and disrespect for students' cultures can take root.

An illustration of the way that language and literacy are rooted in ontology comes from Potawatomi scholar, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013). Kimmerer describes the way that the Potawatomi language, in contrast to English, has fewer nouns and more verbs. The word equivalent to 'mountain', for example, is not a noun but rather a state of being, "to be a mountain". Such a distinction means that when Potawatomi speakers are speaking about a mountain, they are not speaking about an object (Kimmerer likens this to calling your grandmother 'it'), but a being. Such an orientation towards one's physical environment reflects a way of relating to the land as a being to be related to, not an object to be acted on. While this is an example of the relationship between language and a way of being in the world, the same principle applies to oracy practices and their roots in particular orientations to the world. Deep valuing of student repertoires follows these practices back to their ontological roots, focusing not just on the 'doing' of speaking but on how these are informed by ways of being. Much work has already begun to explore the implications of CALD student backgrounds and languages on oracy within the classroom, including explorations of particular cultural norms for speaking the political dimensions of classroom talk participation (see, e.g. Cazden, 1988; Eades, 2013; Hymes, 1996); rarely has this work focused on the ontological aspects of teacher expertise in navigating these forms of talk in a deeply responsive way.

Context for the research

This research draws on an autoethnographic study of one non-indigenous teachers' first 4 years of teaching practice in a "remote indigenous community" in the Northern Territory. The site of study is rich in cultural and linguistic diversity, with 17 distinct languages and dialects spoken. Students in this Year 7–9 classroom spoke up to four languages (and a Kriol dialect) before English. This plurilingual environment (for which I was not equipped and was in many ways a linguistic outsider to my classroom community) provided significant challenges pedagogically, including navigating the dynamics of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007a, b). In addition, like many classrooms around Australia that work with First Nations youth, a tremendous impetus on 'literacy improvement' drove much decision-making in the classroom and rendered a culture of urgency (Kowal, 2015, p. 25) to teaching practice.

As the project sought to explore the ontological shifts occurring within a beginning teachers practice, autoethnographic journals were conceived of as the best way to document the nuance of such shifts, learnings and dispositional moves. This methodology was an iterative process, involving immediate documentation of critical incidents, which were then returned to over time to conduct deeper reflection in relation to a teachers' developing ontology and pedagogy. Excerpts of these autoethnographic journals are included here, verbatim in Narrative 1 and in vignette form (edited for length and succinctness) in Narrative 2, to illustrate some of the major findings of the research. While this methodology provided the affordances of thick, deeply layered "reflection, venting, untangling, documentation and on a teaching praxis and epistemological field" (Mellor, 2001), it also presents the tensions of focusing largely on a non-indigenous practitioners' experience. An additional limitation is that, due to the project focus on teacher ontology, data were not initially captured with a view to analysing talk, in which case transcripts of student talk that permit verbatim analysis would have been an obvious choice. Instead, these data document the ontological work of a teacher navigating the terrain of talk as reflective of epistemological 'difference'. A further tension within this project is that Australia's First Nations constitute a diverse community in and of themselves, and these narratives detail experiences within only one of these communities.

The findings here cannot be essentialised across all First Nations communities and nor should the examination of openness to othered ontologies be limited to cultural expressions like those detailed here. In seeking to minimise the essentialising of these communities, the focus is centred rather on the requirements for non-indigenous teachers to develop further reflexivity and openness to diverse repertoires. This paper interrogates talk across the schooling terrain – including the way policies and stakeholders refer to talk and the way that talk repertoires unfold in ways for which policy and teaching frameworks are not prepared or responsive.

Policy context. Education of First Nations youth in Australia has long been subject to deficit discourses, framed around the disparity of achievement between indigenous and non-indigenous students in the National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy (Hogarth, 2016; National Assessment Program, 2019). The policy framework at the time that this research was conducted, as is largely the case today, is framed around 'closing the gaps' in achievement (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009) through metrics oriented around literacy and numeracy outcomes. In the multilingual community where this research takes place, the guidelines for how schools address these intended improvements, and therefore the key determinants of how pedagogy is constructed around these students, are provided in the form of documents such as the English as a Second Language Guidelines (Northern Territory Department of Education, 2015). It is important to note that where a distinction between literacy and oracy exists in some policy contexts, in Australia, 'Literacy' is seen as one category having four domains that include Speaking & Listening, Reading and Writing.

At the time of study, the school site of study was utilising a scaffolded literacy pedagogy (Rose et al., 1999), involving gradual handover of talk for students (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983), recycling vocabulary through repeated exposures, and the strategic modelling of grammatically sound and academically dense phrases in teacher talk so that students can adopt these into their own long turns in speech. This approach sought to bridge the language learning that students were undertaking, to learn English while simultaneously learning through English as the "language of learning" (Northern Territory Education CEO Gary Barnes, in Whitmont, 2009) in Northern Territory schools. This highly structured approach to teacher talk superceded more open-ended and discursive classroom exchanges in the classroom and seemed disconnected from my personal aims of a more dialogic classroom environment.

It is also worth noting the policy silences in this context. At the time of writing, the Northern Territory, in spite of having more than 100 languages in use within their schools and communities (Northern Territory Government, 2015), policy documentation has not yet made mention of the plurilingual nature of their classrooms in relation to literacy, and the translanguaging practices at work for indigenous students learning English in these classrooms, as other states have begun to acknowledge with their CALD cohorts (see, e.g. Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2020). Additionally, these data were collected within 6 years of the cessation of bilingual education in this community and many others across the North of Australia (Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, 2009), with implications for the status of indigenous languages within school spaces. Recent work nationally to ensure indigenous perspectives are taught as a cross-curriculum priority nationally and policy documentation such as "Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong – A Plan for the Teaching and Learning of Indigenous Languages and Cultures in Northern Territory Schools" (Northern Territory Department of Education, 2017) outlines a strategy to support students' language and culture through stand-alone programmes. There is, however, no clear point of intersection or dialogue between these seemingly siloed measures to value indigenous students' linguistic and cultural repertoires, on the one hand, and the literacy pedagogies and the structure of the teaching of Standard Australian English to indigenous students on the other. This interstitial silence betrays the way in which indigenous languages and cultures are siloed from, rather than seen in relation to, the literacy learning of indigenous students. Further, from my standpoint as a teacher (whose practice was framed by such policy documents, strategies and guidelines), I struggled to locate a meaningful conception of 'multiplicity' in the way that these literacy improvement goals were represented. I found them to be geared towards a relatively singular lane of English literacy acquisition, not contextualised within multiple ways of knowing, being, doing and speaking in a substantive way.

Challenges

The following narratives seek to map out some of the challenges that exist within the domain of talk in the classroom, in the context of these monologic policy directives, considered through the lens of cultural and linguistic diversity of repertoires that students bring to the classroom.

These writings occur against the backdrop of my emerging struggles to enact a dialogic environment in the classroom. The notions of dialogue that I had brought with me were seemingly, unintentionally predicated on assumptions of monoculture – shared language, shared ontologies and shared cultural capital. I had envisaged that seats would be arranged in circles, discussion prompts in a shared language would be responded to (or at least, scaffolded towards), and the cultural capital of 'how to' engage with dialogue would be more or less the same than I had grown up enculturated into or, if not, could be easily scaffolded and taught. In practice, attempts at discussion were met with resounding silence, even after the vocabulary and meaning were unpacked, scaffolded and deconstructed to facilitate shared understanding. Cultural and linguistic 'alterity' (Rollock, 2012) played a role here: not only is 'big noting' by speaking at length in the classroom a cultural taboo, but for my students for whom English was a fourth or fifth language, the burden of translation fell squarely on my students' shoulders, with my deficiencies in these multiple dialects impeding any capacity to share that burden.

Narrative 1: framing student talk (verbatim journal entry). This first reflective journal excerpt takes place after a literacy professional development session and provides insight into the complexities of navigating differing cultures of communication in the interstitial space of the classroom and the school's discourse around talk. Attempts at bridging cultural differences in communication were piecemeal and without a clear framework, illustrating the complexity of navigating this ontological terrain.

> *When I raise the ideas of generating open-ended, dialogic exchanges in the classroom, I have been told that I cannot ask open-ended questions with indigenous or low-socioec[onomic demographic] students. This throws them out to sea, I am told, open-ended question asking is [more suited to] middle class students (Wells, 2007). [There was some discussion of] local indigenous structures for stories – as in songlines, they are more continuous and open-ended, not as 'introduction – complication – resolution' oriented as [western narrative structures]. I asked our trainers today about how I have noticed that all ESL teaching strategies are highly explicit, I expressed my constructivist leanings and asked how highly explicit scaffolding pedagogies align with constructivist pedagogy. [The trainer] then said that constructivism is dependent on drawing on a students own knowledge, which works fine when the student has many resources to draw from, but not in the context where a student has 'no resources' for an English classroom. […] The undiscussed point there, though, was that the students do have abundant resources available to them, and that the thing stopping us from drawing on those resources are that they do not fall in line with Western education, [but rather, are located within Indigenous knowledge systems]. To frame the students this way was to erase the resources they brought to the classroom.*
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> *The consensus seems to be that if I take on constructivist approaches to talk, we are trying to get students to access their own knowledge, but asking them to do it with a western framework (open ended questioning, discovery learning) which is of itself a contradiction. My colleagues today speculated that Indigenous discourse tends to be closed-ended, facts known because they were passed down for centuries, hypotheses that are known because they were taught and not because they were discovered for oneself. Is this why when I pose 'big questions' to my class, there is a resounding silence? Is it because speculation and thinking aloud is something I am bringing from my cultural habitus that is not necessarily part of theirs? Or is that more down to the language barrier we are also navigating?*
>
> *How do I consider these things without seeing my students in deficit? How do I continue to acknowledge imbalances of power if explicit teaching seems to be the most effective way of seeing my students read and write?*
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> *In the sequence of the type of learning we are trying to promote, we highly scaffold (offer the students the knowledge they do not have yet to 'borrow') then gently ease off the scaffold until they are able to complete these tasks independently. The theory is there is an imbalance of power at the start, then somewhere in the middle equal shared power, then at the end another imbalance of power where the power has been transferred over to the students. I do not feel this is quite accurate. The imbalance of power lies in the fact that the teacher is always only the holder of the dominant discourse and dominant language [while students are acquiring an additional discourse and language], and while independence is handed over, there is still an imbalance of power. What does authentic handover of power look like when there is linguistic diversity (of which I have no access), an oral culture, and a history of colonial subjugation through education?*

The reflective excerpt illustrates the fraught nature of navigating these cultural differences, the propensity towards othering and essentialising students in how teachers were collectively seeking to make sense of the communication 'differences' they observed, of general assumptions about capabilities, and the deficit framing that has implications for students' identity formation in schooling spaces and their confidence in their own repertoires.

Narrative 2: schooled by community talk (vignette). The following vignette describes an experience of being immersed in an episode of community-led classroom talk, to which I was a linguistic outsider and yet where I had the opportunity to observe a range of different and unfamiliar (to me) protocols and norms for communication. I include this narrative as a key example of ontological shift for me as an educator. This narrative takes place within the context of team-teaching with an indigenous teaching colleague, named here under the pseudonym Jan. Jan and I had collaborated on a task that involved students conducting interviews with local elders. She would take the lead, I would bring the keys for the school's four-wheel drive truck and we would gather students into the back of it and drive to the house she directed me to, where she would yell out of the window for a particular *gapula* or *jingapula* (old lady or old man) as per local custom. With our interviewee located and picked up, she would take us to a location where we could comfortably conduct an interview, sometimes under a tree, sometimes in a quiet room of the library and sometimes on our classroom floor. Jan's pedagogy involved directing the students like a choir to speak up and ask different questions, prompting the elders to tell longer stories when she thought they had broached something that was important knowledge that needed to be imparted.

I felt unprepared. While I had scaffolded the students into selecting and phrasing questions, and asking for clarification while recording these stories, I was operating outside of my realm of expertise, both in terms of subject matter, linguistic capability, and cultural protocols. I was relieved that Jan took charge. She made a brief introduction to Susie, the old lady she had arranged to interview, and sat down to go through the questions with her and pre-think their responses. This was a protocol Jan engaged with to offset the cultural discomfort of being bombarded with questions, by discussing them in detail with Susie before we even began.

The students seemed to be feeling a bit awkward at this stage. They read the questions verbatim from the page we had prepared, and Susie responded with the answers she and Jan had just discussed. Our list of questions was demolished quickly, in pre-scribbled down, pre- formulated answers that Jan and Susie had quickly rehearsed together:

What is your skin name?
What is your moiety?
Where is your country?
What is your tribe?
What is your dreaming?
Where did you get an education?
What is an important story you can share with us?
Who told you this story?

Following this pre-ordained and prepared session, Jan put the question-inscribed paper down. The group transitioned into speaking exclusively in Burarra (local language), and a different manner of communication unfolded. Something had just taken place the shifted gear into a different nature of interaction – because here, Susie started to speak more freely, telling a story of her own education through ceremony. Jan initiated a few more questions about Rom (from what I can gather, one aspect of traditional education, a ceremony, related to trading gifts and diplomacy) and prompted the students to ask these questions in language. Here, things took form more organically, with people speaking up to share their knowledge out of pre-established kinship relationships and understanding how they fit within the networks of connection within the room. Here, the members of the classroom spoke from pre-established roles in terms of important knowledge to be shared, a sense of communal responsibility to ensure this knowledge is passedon. Jan pulled out a book about Rom (from my rudimentary understanding, a system of Yolngu law). She was using it to guide the course of the interview, letting the photos prompt the important stories that Susie could share.

At this point a turn happened in which I transitioned into the role of learner – I was the one keen to learn and to find out what I did not know – to grasp at the edges of the Indigenous knowledge systems at work in this altered educational space. I squinted, trying to catch even the tail of the flying conversation going over my head. "Marn.gi" – they must be talking about what you know. "Sugar bag" – must be talking about honey. I took in the layers of non-verbal communication – gestures, eye contact, nods – an entire repertoire with which students and elders augmented their verbal exchanges. Susie pulled at her own hair and gestured to a photo – that pole with the raw rope hanging from it must be adorned with human hair. The book had captions in English – these I craned to read while keeping an ear open to the steady stream of language going back and forth, that I would only ever have access to by means of oversimplified English translations and my clunky attempts to interpret through my own lens on the world.

I grasped that Rom was for establishing relationships and partnerships between clans and/or communities, seemingly a form of diplomacy and communication protocol in its own right. I grasped that it culminated in creation of a totem pole to be given as a gift – feathers, hair, etc., from the appropriate moiety. I gathered that it plays a role in education and that it can be repeated many times over a life time, i.e.: not a one-off ceremony. I observed my students, engaged in exchange, asking further questions,

confirming between themselves, pointing at the images and repeating phrases. I contemplated that, while in my classroom I was working to scaffold independent, individual utterances from my students, that there was some thickly contextualized socialization at play around me, through which my students spoke in context of their relationships within the community, in deference to senior knowledge holders, potentially through protocols I did not fully understand. Yet something about the context of these protocols seemed to provide a security to engage openly, that I did not seem to be able to supply in the classroom.

In these moments of exchange, I was conscious of the literate practices that I was learning as a literacy educator here. A new manner of listening and interpreting that I had seldom needed to embrace in my monolingual life to date, a recognition that worldview, language and manner of conveying knowledge and communicating are all thickly interwoven. I was struck by the contrast and apparent disconnect between these oracy practices I was observing in real time, and the struggles I had experienced in trying to establish this kind of rapport and exchange in the classroom. (August 2015)

The experience detailed here reflects that there was intense ontological work being undertaken as teacher trying to navigate cultural alterity in communications, and the lack of frameworks available to support this navigation. This is an area of teacher expertise for which we must build capacity, providing teachers with frameworks for navigating cultural differences in communication with sensitivity to "the concept of knowledges, in contrast to a single knowledge", assuming "the existence of multiple ways of seeing the world" (Spring, 2009, p. 145). This work, however, is not straightforward. Kalscheuer (2008) describes the challenges of seeking to navigate such 'difference' – namely, the propensity of dominant culture to simply locate another's communication practices "in their own grid", resulting in misinterpretation or erasure. This illustrates the depth of the intellectual work required of such 'ontological responsiveness' – genuinely coming to understand diversity in communication and bearings on the world.

Monologic to dialogic: from one way to multiple ways

Reading about a Bakhtinian framework for moving from a monologic (single-voiced) classroom to a dialogic (many-voiced) one (Bakhtin, 1981; Nesari, 2015) gave me pause to consider that, so far, my attempts at dialogue within the classroom had not succeeded: they made my students uncomfortable and uncertain and placed a cognitive load on them that was both culturally and systemically foreign. It soon dawned on me that was significant work required on my part to create an environment where dialogue was possible. Ellsworth (1997) describes "cultivating a third ear that listens not for what a student knows (discrete packages of knowledge) but for the *terms* that shape a student's knowledge, her not knowing, her forgetting, her circles of stuck places and resistances" (p. 71). In the spaces where students are least inclined to speak, namely, a settler-colonial classroom in which the dominant language is not their own and their educators are not from the same culture, it is the teacher who must learn the skills of listening and hearing, imagining the knowledge worlds that a student has grown in and beginning to take the steps towards a classroom environment where multiple knowledges are welcomed. I began to see such a 'multilogicality' as a precursor to Bakhtinian dialogic pedagogy. Baynes has explored Kincheloe and Steinberg's original usage of this term as a pedagogical device for becoming open to other ways of knowing:

> *Multilogicality can be described as a critical complex concept that focuses on transcending reductionism by gaining access to a wide diversity of perspectives when involved with research, knowledge work, and pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2006). Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) explain enacting multilogicality as replacing the single photograph of Cartesian thinking with the multiple angles of the holographic photograph.* (Baynes, 2016, p. 82)

This notion holds potential as a starting point to developing teacher dispositions that render them radically open to othered "ways of being". I use the term 'logic' to denote our systems for deciding what is legitimate knowledge and what is not; however, I use it while holding in mind the systematic way that "culture selects what is and isn't perceived by its members, to prevent information overload" (Beck, 2009, p. 31). To enter into a disposition of multilogicality, seeing multiple ways of being, is to open up oneself to that very information overload once again, to work to perceive the elements of the world around us to which we are traditionally closed off, in order to try to 'see' the world the way marginalised Others do. As Kincheloe (2006) describes this state of thinking, binoculars represent "a singular and undivided picture" that draws on images in both left and right sides of the brain, "where the sum of the images is greater than the separate parts". In bringing these two images together, the view is enriched and enhanced through "resolution and contrast", creating a new perspective (p. 886). While Kincheloe's usage refers to bringing multiple discrete perspectives and methodologies together in the

research act, it can also represent the relationship between knowledge systems and the multiplicity of ways of being and presents itself as a precursor to dialogue in which the subaltern are more able to speak (Spivak, 1988).

Pedagogical implications: ontological responsiveness

Embracing a disposition of openness to multiple "ways of being" is a pedagogical shift that opens up the possibility to incorporate a visible multiplicity of cultural communication forms in our classrooms, situating ourselves as learners of 'ever-expanding repertoires' (Derewianka and Humphrey, 2014). A great contribution of literacy pedagogies in recent decades has been its relentless efforts to make "taken for granted" rules explicit and visible. The terrain of how different cultures produce and communicate knowledge is also a ripe field for making explicit the dynamics that underpin how language and power work around us.

Such a way of constituting talk requires a form of teacher professional expertise, to not only navigate intercultural communication but to also understand the issues of power that go about deciding which forms of speaking 'count'. This aspect of teacher expertise requires ontological work, consciousness of not constructing students and community identities in problematic ways, and frameworks around oracies that are aware of the constraints of world view. This expands the potential reach of dialogic pedagogy, as rather than imagining that all members of the classroom participate on equal footing in relation to dominant culture and dominant oracy practices, teachers can understand the differing standpoints from which students make sense of talk, an extension of teacher's own critical literacy practice. Such an approach opens possibilities to take classroom talk out of a framework of assumed universality and into the realm of highly cultural, highly contextualised and reflective of multiple ways of knowing, being, doing and speaking. This would enable a cultural competency, strength-based approach to embracing different ways of oracy in the classroom – without othering students or orientalising their communication as marginal to white English-centric norms.

To take the conversation about these diverse repertoires deeper requires a recognition of the connection between knowledge systems and oral traditions. Particularly for oral cultures, these communication norms are intrinsic to particular ways of seeing the world and thus hold an essential connection to student identity. Such norms cannot be conceived of as separate to other initiatives to affirm students' communities, heritage, language and culture. Hammond's work in culturally responsive pedagogy outlines this distinction between valuing students' cultures at a shallow level and valuing funds of knowledge or 'deep culture' (2015). We cannot seek to only value and include student's repertoires for communication without valuing the knowledge systems from which they arise.

A tension here is that the ways these multiplicities of "ways of knowing and doing" are positioned are fraught. Navigating cultural 'difference' is, in and of itself, fraught and complex territory, requiring a type of nuance and racial literacy that is only beginning to emerge in teacher education. To refer to difference without examining race is to locate diverse practices as 'different' to "the invisible omnipresent norm", a framework in which 'race' is the prison reserved for the 'Other' (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. xix). Different and 'othered' literate practices tend to be described in hierarchical relationship and degrees of 'sophistication', betraying a belief in superiority of Western communication of which teachers should be critical. The pedagogical turn for teachers ought not to involve seeking connoisseurship of communication protocols and diverse repertoires but rather centre on the taken for granted "rules of talk", which can themselves become othered, contrasted with other possibilities that serve different functions according to different communities. The connection to 'function' – how particular ways of being are connected to oral traditions, may be a missing piece in existing models of student repertoires. For example, the practice of Dadirri or 'deep listening' (Ungunmerr, 2017) is rooted in a very relational way of being in the world oriented around connection, serving an interpersonal function. To understand, illuminate and make explicit how these functions express particular ways of being is to continue to extend the way we make explicit in our classrooms how language use shapes our worlds.

A final consideration is how we might re-imagine the ways that expanding repertoires are mapped into progressions and frameworks. How might we conceive of the diverse ways that students might communicate and their movement between repertoires: as 'border crossings' (Giroux, 2005), 'cultural interface' (Nakata, 2007a, b), a third space ripe with potential (Bhabha, 1994) or, as the EAL/D frameworks map them, a continuum from 'beginning' to 'consolidated' in progressing towards Englishness? If these documents that frame progression for EAL/D students are silent on the repertoires of oral practice of indigenous students, they inherently position indigenous ways of oracy as non-existent and in deficit. As they stand, these frameworks, without acknowledgement of multiple communicative repertoires, often position indigenous youth in the beginning stages of

before SAE Speaking and Listening is acquired, the equivalent of empty buckets. Notwithstanding the usefulness of these frameworks to support the understanding of a developmental sequence and a trajectory of English-language learning, the framing of indigenous students English literacy competencies to the exclusion of all other repertoires perpetuates deficit discourses. In light of the impetus to address systemic injustice and to enact deep ontological responsiveness, an opportunity avails itself to re-imagine the development of oral practices into a genuinely multifocal 'repertoire' orientation, in place of more siloed representations of language and literacy development. With so many metaphors offered to us by the fields of indigenous knowledge systems, intercultural communication and postcolonial studies for how we can conceive of the interactions and interplays between ways of being in the world, perhaps the framing of 'progressions' can be retired and invigorated by more bifocaled ways of understanding talk and the acquisition of English as an additional repertoire.

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