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Risky writing: Working with a heteroglossic pedagogy to deepen pre-service teachers' learning

Abstract

This article explores how course design and assessment in a first year pre-service teacher education course for English students can be imbued with academic depth and rigour in ways that enable students to take intellectual and textual risks. We argue for a conceptualisation of risky writing in which we open up student critical engagement with sociolinguistic issues by juxtaposing academic and creative genres in curriculum course material and assessment. Academic writing in its current form is problematised and questions are raised about the extent to which academic courses provide students with an apprenticeship into compliance, conformity and silence. We present the possibilities of using a heteroglossic pedagogy (Blackledge & Creese, 2014) for learning, teaching and writing. The principles underpinning the course (linguistic diversity as a resource, the value of lived experience and the interrelation of epistemological access and academic rigour) constitute a heteroglossic pedagogy. We illustrate these principles using two examples, one from student performance during the course and the second from independent writing for an assignment. Together, the two data snapshots illustrate the pedagogic possibilities of fluid movements between distantiating and appropriation using flexible genres, which ultimately facilitate deeper student engagement and understanding of disciplinary knowledge. The two data snapshots are not "mere descriptions or anecdotes" detached from principles (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2004: 92). They facilitate academic depth and rigour because of the carefully staged moves between the strange and the familiar in a context that encourages students to take creative and intellectual risks.

Keywords: *Heteroglossia, heteroglossic pedagogy, academic writing, risk, critical engagement, creative genres, distantiating, appropriation*

1. Introduction

In this article we explore how course design and assessment in pre-service teacher education can be imbued with academic depth and rigour in ways that enable students to take intellectual and textual risks. The course that we discuss is a first year sociolinguistics course for English students in a Bachelor of Education degree. We argue for a conceptualisation of risky writing in which we open up student critical engagement with sociolinguistic issues by juxtaposing academic and creative genres in both the

curriculum course material and the course assessment. We problematise academic writing in its current form and raise questions about the extent to which academic courses provide students with an apprenticeship into compliance, conformity and silence (and wonder what this suggests about the kind of teachers we produce). In addition, we make a case for working with risk as a productive resource in pre-service teacher education, rather than something to be managed and monitored. We work with Thesen and Cooper's (2014) notion of risk as a productive resource in postgraduate research writing and apply this concept to pre-service teacher education.

The concept of risk is worked with in three different ways: Firstly, we work with the concept of risk in relation to academic discourse and academic writing in the context of teacher language education. Doeke, Kostogriz, and Charles (2004) and Cartwright and Noone (2006) raise critical questions about the way pre-service teachers are positioned by academic discourse as novices required to display and reproduce dominant knowledge through their writing. What this does is raise questions about the academic rigour of courses where students may get superficial access to disciplinary knowledge without substantive depth. This narrow view of academic discourses places teacher language educators in a precarious position, as they must work to produce imaginative language teachers in institutions that marginalise imagination and creativity. Compliance is frequently favoured over creative risk-taking thus silencing student voices (Thesen & Cooper, 2014). We believe that critical engagement and creative risk taking should be foregrounded in academic courses. Secondly, we work with the concept of risk in relation to underprepared students and as a potential issue for all. This plays itself out differently depending on their levels of cultural capital. While "academic discourse is nobody's mother tongue" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994: 8), it is generally more accessible to students who attended privileged schools and for students who have strong English language proficiency. For underprepared students, academic writing is too high stakes for risk-taking, particularly given the perception that it entails reproducing other people's ideas. Shalem *et al.*, (2013), in their research with first year B.Ed. students, found that it was only the strongest students in their sample group (in the 70-80% mark range) who perceived academic writing as a space for creativity, play, risk and freedom. All other students perceived academic writing as depersonalised, offering no space for their own ideas and it simply being about reproducing other people's ideas and facts. We believe that it is critical to give students access to academic discourse and language in ways that allow them to take intellectual risks.

Thirdly, the question of risk is not only about students but also about our own identity positions as academics. Academics need to be aware of the ways in which their own curriculum and assessment practices can be complicit in enforcing hegemonic practices of the institution. Paradoxically, in an attempt to support students' apprenticeship into academic writing, academics are sometimes complicit in silencing students' linguistic histories and identities.

Thesen (2014) provides a valuable way out of this quagmire by reconceptualising risk in academic writing as a productive resource rather than a problem. She challenges the "cold" version of risk that is dominant in universities, the notion of risk associated with risk management. In this cold version, risk refers to a "danger or hazard" (Thesen, 2014: 11) that universities need to manage to ensure that their reputations remain intact. In the undergraduate context, risk management is played out through the focus on plagiarism and managing 'at risk' students, generally a euphemism in South Africa for underprepared black students from poorly functioning schools.

Thesen (2014) argues that the written product is central to academic success; at undergraduate level, it takes the form of the academic essay. No matter who the writer is, losses and compromises are experienced in the writing process so that the writer can move safely through each level of gatekeeping. Thesen (2014: 1) raises critical questions about the process of erasure and silencing: “What forms of knowledge are erased? Why? Who benefits? Whose voice is silent?” She poses these questions in relation to the production and reception of the intended meaning of the writer and the resonance of the writer’s voice.

Having outlined the problems and challenges of erasure of voice through trying too hard to “play it safe,” Thesen (2014: 12) offers a “warm and productive notion of risk” that emerges from the lived experiences of researchers – allowing for uncertainty, emergent meanings and possibilities for tracing ideas that are realised in writing and those that are lost. She conceptualises risk as follows:

Our concept of risk is that it is an analytical space for bringing into focus the tilting point between self and other, where the other refers to ideas, places, relationships, audiences and forms. This tilting point is realised in writing through voice or the erasure of voice. Risk lies on the cusp, unstable and volatile, between the production and reception of the written word (Thesen, 2014: 15).

Thesen’s (2014) focus is on postgraduate students and research writing. The question is how risk translates into undergraduate teaching and writing. As mentioned previously, academic writing is a high risk, high stakes activity in undergraduate studies. It facilitates learning and displays of learning but also serves as a mechanism for filtering successful and unsuccessful students. This high stakes aspect of academic writing lends itself to the perpetuation of formulaic and restrictive styles of writing, that seem to offer students and academics an insurance policy against failure and low throughput rates.

We share Thesen’s (2014: 4) concerns about “the consequences of these styles for how and what we know”. Our interest is in the impact of these restrictive styles on student voice in academic writing. We use Thesen’s (2014: 5) conceptualisation of voice as “a way of tracking writer agency across spaces” and “the capacity for semiotic mobility” across time, space and place. Voice is conceptualised in both the abovementioned definitions as dynamic, socio-culturally located and constrained by “gatekeeping practices” (2014: 5).

In this article, we explore how a heteroglossic pedagogy enables first year students to take risks and to experiment with genres of writing that are more flexible. We adapt Thesen’s (2014) notion of risk, voice and erasure to an undergraduate first year course and explore the relationship between academic depth, rigour and risk.

2. A heteroglossic pedagogy: Theoretical underpinnings of the sociolinguistics course

The sociolinguistics course for first year education students majoring in English is taught over a period of six weeks. Since its conceptualisation in 2005, it has undergone a number of changes. When the course began, there was recognition of “minimal points of connection” between students (Mendelowitz & Ferreira, 2007: 490). The challenge was to find ways to engage all the students whose backgrounds in terms of race, language, gender, class, culture, location and education were vastly different. The driving force of this course has always been to enhance epistemological access and pedagogical responsiveness for academic depth (Slonimsky

& Shalem, 2004; Ferreira & Mendelowitz, 2009a). However, the pedagogical approach has shifted in response to changes in the field and findings from our ongoing research on the course (Mendelowitz & Ferreira, 2007; Ferreira & Mendelowitz, 2009b; Mendelowitz & Davis, 2011). While epistemological access is still a critical concern more than a decade after Slonimsky and Shalem's (2004) seminal article, new ideas are surfacing about how to create access to academic writing and disciplinary knowledge. There has been a move away from teaching the academic writing genre through total immersion in the genre and a move towards engaging students with "diverse forms of writing which allow for, and value, greater expression and development of the student as a person and a writer" (Mitchell & Evison, 2006: 81). This focus on diverse forms of writing and varied writing tasks allows students to play with register and voice "and to make more connection across sections of courses than they may have done working within the stranglehold of the conventional essay" (Mitchell & Evison, 2006: 81). Hence, Mitchell and Evison suggest that diverse forms of writing can generate a deeper understanding of content as well as more personal engagement and agency.

Despite ongoing course revisions, the course has always been underpinned by three non-negotiable principles. The first is that linguistic diversity is foregrounded. This course is an opportunity for students to engage with each other across their differences where difference is framed as a resource. All students have rich linguistic resources and language histories shaped by their contexts. Whether or not students had been flagged by the institution as 'at risk' or 'underprepared', they are not positioned in the course by lack but rather strength. As student teachers who will work in multilingual classrooms this acknowledgement of linguistic diversity as a productive resource with complex ties to identity is important.

The second principle is the value of lived experience. This means valuing students' personal experiences and intentionally making space for them in the classroom. For a number of years students were required to write language biographies as one of the assessment tasks. The task was grounded in content covered as students drew on other narratives of published authors and previous students' work to reflect on their experiences. This form of writing was generative in consolidating students' learning, thinking and reflection (Ferreira & Mendelowitz, 2009a; Ferreira & Mendelowitz, 2009b). Because the reflective genre's focus is on the individual, it lends itself to writing that does not silence student voices.

The third principle is that epistemological access goes hand in hand with academic depth, neither works at the expense of the other. This means that students need to be given access to academic discourses, in this case, the language of sociolinguistics. However, it is important for us that students do not replicate concepts or theories located in academic disciplines in unthinking ways. Students need to be initiated into academic discourses and begin to learn to use academic language purposefully as they engage with disciplinary knowledge. In other words, the course works with both the principles of distantiation and appropriation (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2004). It begins with appropriation by drawing on the students' lived experience of language and then pushes students to analyse these experiences with sociolinguistic disciplinary lenses in a broader context (i.e. distantiation). The familiar is thus rendered strange and becomes an object of critical inquiry. The course moves between these two principles throughout using "an iterative, spiral pedagogy" (Ferreira & Mendelowitz, 2009a: 85) where students revisit "old" ideas encountered earlier in the course and learn to look at them in new ways.

However, focusing on what students bring to the course linguistically and the ways in which they can use their own lived experiences as entry points to engage with academic concepts, does not necessarily facilitate a level of critical academic engagement, especially as expressed in their writing. One reason for this is the limitation of the genres students are expected to produce. Although powerful and generative, one of the disadvantages of working with reflective writing in this course is that it can promote a discourse of victimhood where students reproduce stereotypes and prejudice rather than using the conceptual tools from sociolinguistics to analyse experiences (Dixon & Mendelowitz, 2016). This led us to rethink the use of reflective writing and we replaced the original assessment task with a creative genre, a dialogue, which was accompanied by a more analytical critical commentary in order to shift the balance from appropriation to distantiating.

These decisions to alter course design and assessment practices, based on our experiences of teaching the course, are inseparable from pedagogy. We intentionally work with the idea of a heteroglossic pedagogy (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). Heteroglossia, a concept from Bakhtin (1981), is multifaceted and contested (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). It has been described as a play of conflicting voices and explains the ways in which historical forces shape language varieties and non-standard dialects. For Bakhtin (1981) there are two ideological forces in society that manifest in discourses. Centripetal discourses are monoglossic, aiming to fix meaning; centrifugal discourses, on the other hand, resist this fixing by diversifying language and articulating alternative and often marginal worldviews. The coming together of these forces in conflict is the operation of heteroglossia:

The centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a 'unitary language', operate in the midst of heteroglossia. At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word...but... into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth...Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralisation and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralisation and disunification go forward (Bakhtin, 1981: 271-272).

Busch (2014) argues that when considering heteroglossia one should distinguish between multi-discursivity, multivoicedness and linguistic diversity. Multi-discursivity frames discourse as socio-ideological where discourses are shaped by time periods and social spaces. Relatively stable genres develop within these discourses. In our context, as students master specific academic discourses this mastery would need to be reflected in their writing. Multivoicedness refers to the diversity of individual voices that speak in multi-discursive interactions. The word, according to Bakhtin (1981), belongs to the individual and the other. The speaker/writer needs to appropriate the discourse and adapt it so that it meets his/her intentions before it becomes his/her 'own'. Linguistic diversity does not refer to different languages. From a Bakhtinian perspective, linguistic diversity refers to the traces left behind as a result of social differentiation (Busch, 2014). Thus, the intentional use of language by speakers results in a dialogue of languages.

The operation of centripetal and centrifugal forces within communicative acts is important for student language teachers. Understanding how language circulates unequally and that language is discursively constructed under social and historical conditions (Piller & Takahashi, 2014) is something language teachers need to know. Our aim is to produce teachers who can work in

ways that open meaning, allow for the play of conflicting voices, do not unthinkingly reproduce dominant forms of knowledge (Doeke *et al.*, 2004), and do not silence their students' voices.

A heteroglossic pedagogy opens space for an interrogation of language varieties, discourses and practices in the South African context. Although there is little work that focuses on heteroglossic practices in education (Busch, 2014), Blackledge and Creese (2014) advocate using a heteroglossic pedagogy in language teaching. The advantage of such an approach is that "voices which index students' localities, social histories, circumstances and identities" (Blackledge & Creese, 2014: 18) are foregrounded as centripetal and centrifugal forces come into play.

This is illustrated in figure 1 below. A heteroglossic pedagogy that enables voices, discourses and multiple representations of the world to be heard, frames the course. The three interrelated principles that underpin the course are key. The first is students' own linguistic repertoires, which reflect the multivoicedness of these individual voices drawing on their own lived experiences. These voices are shaped by other discourses students have appropriated in their particular contexts to articulate and understand their own experiences, thus making language their 'own'. In terms of course design, this positions students' voices and linguistic repertoires as resources. Positioned often as marginal voices in the academic space, this would be an example of the presence of centrifugal forces. The second principle is the discourse of sociolinguistics, whose existence as a sub-discipline within the field of linguistics has been shaped over time and space. As an academic discipline, the ways in which language is used is reflected in its written genres. Students need to be able to work with these text-based realities to succeed in the academy (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2004). The ways in which academic knowledge constructs the world and is transmitted to students is an example of a centripetal force. The linked nature of the two circles is also an example of multi-discursivity. A dialogue emerges between the multivocal voices of students, course texts and multiple discourses brought into the course so that academic rigour and epistemological access can combine.

This manifests in the third idea, which focuses on student writing where linguistic diversity comes to the fore. Linguistic diversity arises from the written assessment students completed in the course. Students' often silenced linguistic practices are validated as being worthy of analysis. Placing the creative writing and critical commentary side-by-side creates a heteroglossic text. The two different genres enter into dialogue with each other as do non-standard and standard varieties of language. It is in this space that students' risk-taking became a possibility as critical student voices emerged and students began to use a powerful academic discourse to trouble other powerful discourses operating in their lives.

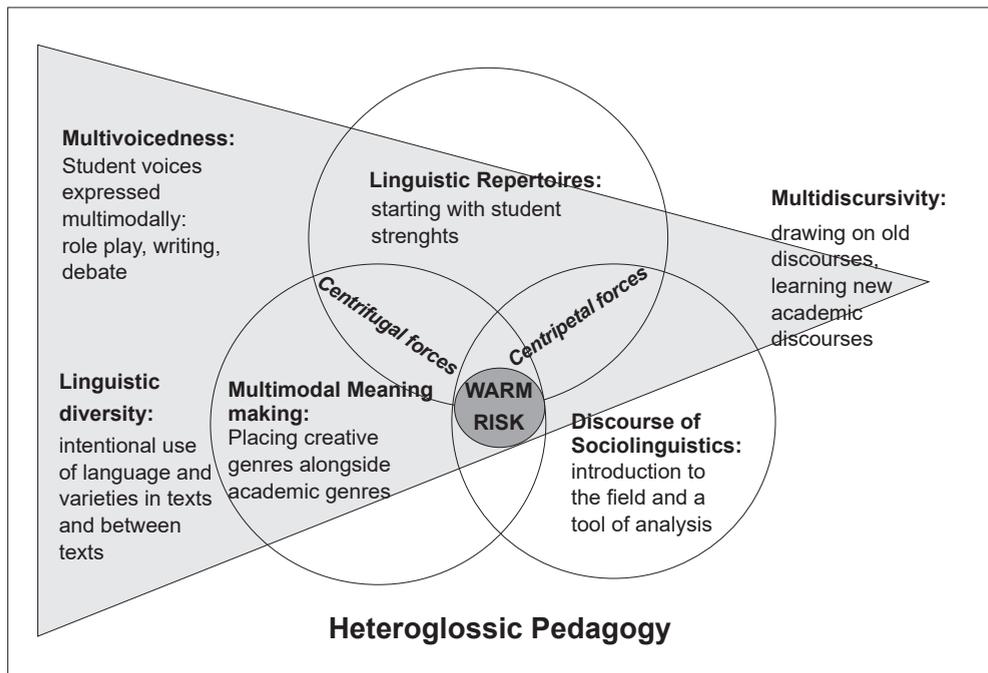


Figure 1: A model of the heteroglossic pedagogy in a first year sociolinguistics course

3. The assignment

The course covered the following topics before the assignment brief was provided to students: self, identity and language attitudes (week 1), language, context and culture (week 2) and language variation (week 3). Students were briefed on the assignment during week 4, which focused on language practices, race and youth identities. The course readings consisted of a diverse mix of academic articles, narratives and newspaper articles. Students were exposed to new disciplinary knowledge through engaging with formal academic texts, narratives and media texts. By the time students wrote this assignment, they had been introduced to sociolinguistic concepts such as language, dialects, standard and non-standard varieties, power and group membership, prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language and linguistic prejudice (see appendix 1: course outline)

The assignment required students to write a dialogue between two or more participants using a youth language variety and to analyse the dialogue using key sociolinguistic concepts. The assignment was thus a blend of a creative/non-traditional genre (the dialogue) with a more traditional academic genre (the critical commentary):

Section 1: Write a dialogue between two or more participants which illustrates the use of your own youth variety. Your dialogue must be situated in a specific context and the audience and purpose of the dialogue must be made explicit at the outset.

The dialogue may be written in any language or dialect of your choice (e.g. Tsotsitaal, Afrikaans). However, you must provide translations. If the entire dialogue is written in a language or dialect other than Standard English, the entire text must be translated. If

the text is written in Standard English with specific slang words, then a glossary must be provided. Follow the format of Cook's dialogue transcript on page 58 in the reading pack.

Section 2: *Analyse the role of your youth variety in this dialogue in relation to the following categories:*

- *Intended audience*
- *Context and purpose*
- *Group membership and expression of specific identities (for example, gender and cultural identities)*

Because the assignment required students to create a dialogue using a youth variety, it was critical that the scaffolding for the assignment was performative, enabling students to develop an authentic, 'slice of life' dialogue that played with language varieties in interesting ways and to literally use their voices, first in small groups and then in front of the whole group. We use Bauman's (conceptualisation of verbal art and performance in action) as modes of speaking which are characterised by "heightened attention to language" (1977 cited in Deumart and Lexander, 2013: 530) and the display of linguistic skills as well as by reflexivity and audience appreciation to analyse student role plays in the section below.

4. Scaffolding for risky writing: Performing and rehearsing

The data section of this article has two components. One is drawn from interaction and performances in the lecture, which illustrates a heteroglossic pedagogy in action, while the second form of data is drawn from a student assignment to show the end product of risky writing, what risky writing looks like and how it demonstrates a synthesis of academic depth, rigour and creativity. We have made conscious choices to use snapshots of data in this paper, as examples to illustrate our argument, rather than using extensive data for in-depth analysis.

In the section that follows, we discuss scaffolding for the dialogue assignment. We work with a version of scaffolding that foregrounds student agency and creativity rather than a "one way process wherein the 'scaffolder' constructs the scaffold and presents it for use to the novice" (Daniels, 2001: 59). This negotiated approach to scaffolding foregrounds "the dialectic of creative synthesis" (John-Steiner & Meehan, 2000: 35), which entails a collaboration between the individual's mind and the social environment, including the negotiation between the learner and peers and the learner and the scaffolder.

Volunteers presented their role-plays to the whole class, which covered a range of interactions (e.g. an errant boyfriend and irate girlfriend, hostile neighbours, lecturer and student, employer and employee). Each role-play elicited a different response but overall there was a high level of enjoyment and amusement (Bauman's 'audience appreciation') at seeing classmates take on roles, negotiate conflict situations with verbal dexterity and the use of a mix of standard and non-standard varieties in a space that is usually only the domain of Standard English. Laughing together as a class cannot be underestimated as a way of opening up space and removing some of the formalities of the lecture as a mode of interaction. However, besides being engaging and entertaining, the role-plays served a number of important functions in scaffolding and facilitating risk-taking. It provided students with opportunities to "inhabit creative contexts" (Grainger, Gooch & Lambirth 2005: 24) using

oral and kinaesthetic modalities and to rehearse for the written assignment in a relatively unthreatening, low-stakes context.

The second function of the task entailed critical reflection and analysis of the role-plays presented to the group. The focus of this analysis was on the linguistic choices, language variety and register shifts in different contexts and more importantly an explanation of these shifts. The role-plays were analysed collaboratively by the lecturers and students. We framed the key issues emerging from each presentation using the relevant sociolinguistic discourses, hence modelling the process of analysing dialogues as preparation for the assignment. Both the performative and reflexive components of the lecture served as important support for the two writing genres required by the assignment. From this perspective, the lecture as a whole is an enactment of multi-discursivity, the co-presence of academic and creative genres and discourses and their interrelatedness.

Below is a snapshot from one of the role-plays and the analysis of issues raised:

'Where were you?' Evasive boyfriend and angry girlfriend role-play

Two female students volunteer to present their role-play to the class, taking on the role of a Zulu male and his Zulu girlfriend. The girlfriend is angry and hurt that her boyfriend didn't attend her twenty first birthday party. She confronts him but he does not provide the response that she really needs: an explanation, an apology and confirmation that she is the 'main chick' (This is a term that assumes that men have more than one girlfriend but that one of the girlfriends has more status than the others). The boyfriend replies that he was busy and has a lot going on. The girlfriend becomes quite shrill and continues to probe, to try and get the response she needs. The boyfriend paces up and down the room, mumbling to himself in Tsotsitaal, and occasionally spouting terms of endearment in standard Zulu ('isitandwe') then reverting back to Tsotsitaal. The role-play ends with the girlfriend's devastating realisation that she is not 'the main chick'. The dialogue alternates between Standard English, Standard Zulu (used by the girlfriend) and Tsotsitaal (used by the boyfriend).

This was a fascinating, if disturbing, role-play to analyse with the students. The actresses and the class were clear that even though the boyfriend was in the wrong and the girlfriend had the moral high ground, the boyfriend held the power in the interaction because of Zulu cultural and gender practices and beliefs. Because of this gendered power dynamic, he is in a position to withhold his explanation. The reaction to the role-play was mixed. There were vocal protestations (mostly from female students) about the gendered power imbalance alongside the acknowledgement of a particular social practice entrenched in certain communities.

The role-plays (and our reflection that follows) illustrate Bauman's (1977) framework of performance in action. Firstly, there was a powerful sense of 'audience appreciation' evident in laughter and gasping while watching the performance and clapping, commenting and engagement with the issues afterwards. The two female students displayed their verbal dexterity by using multiple voices, gender crossing, and codeswitching between English, Zulu and Tsotsitaal. Their heightened attention to language was evident in their selection of language varieties to convey specific messages about language, gender and power. The 'boyfriend' codeswitched to Tsotsitaal as a way of escaping and avoiding having to communicate and account for his actions. Students explained that this is because Tsotsitaal is used and understood more widely by men than women (Hurst, 2009; Bembe & Beukes, 2007). The students illustrate multivocality by not only taking on the role of a male and speaking the relevant language variety but also by emulating the imagined masculine body language. The

'girlfriend' speaks mostly Standard English and Standard Zulu, which are high status and dominant varieties in certain contexts. However, in this context it is ironic that the standard form is silenced. Although the girlfriend is articulate and assertive, she is ultimately silenced and her voice is rendered less powerful because of the discursive practices.

Reflexivity, Bauman's final element of performance (1977), was evident in the discussions that followed the role-plays. Students brought everyday experience to the role-plays. When left unanalysed they can simply reproduce dominance. However, the reflexive questions and the use of sociolinguistic concepts facilitated an unpacking of the meaning of the role-play. The role-play task illustrates the fluid movements between appropriation of the students' everyday experiences and distantiation by making the role-plays the objects of analysis, using sociolinguistic categories. The students are thus challenged to interrogate and critically analyse the role-plays with a rigorous disciplinary gaze.

We return to Thesen's (2014) notion of risk as a productive resource and our central argument that a heteroglossic pedagogy, which foregrounds productive notions of risk, can facilitate creativity, academic depth and rigour. The student role-plays generated a rich array of voices and social issues that we jointly problematised and analysed. The presentation and exploration of contentious issues through roles created important 'safety valves', enabling students to distantiate by exploring the issues with an outsider perspective. The students were required to take on two different roles: the role of creative dramatist and the role of emerging academic writer. When these two processes were in dialogue with each other, they generated depth and critical engagement with key sociolinguistic issues. Working with Thesen's warm and productive notion of risk, we too are "interested in emergent meanings" (2014: 12) and opening up possibilities and tracing meanings. The lecture described above, with its combination of performance and reflection, created a space for the exploration of "emergent meanings", which students had to consolidate in their individual written assignments.

5. Doing risky writing: You should have a sugar daddy

Over the years that this assignment has been set (with ongoing refinements), it is evident that students have grappled with language practices in the communities in which they are located. The dialogue requires a high level of understanding about the ways language is used in context. The task of writing a convincing, authentic dialogue requires an application of the concepts and knowledge students have been exposed to on the course. Students need to be able to identify an incident where language plays a key role, show how characters' ideas, values and beliefs are evident in their choice of language and explain how language is used to reflect a wider set of inclusionary and/or exclusionary practices and power relations.

Student dialogues have covered a range of topics reflecting serious social issues. Dialogues have been written about teenage pregnancy, homophobia, constructions of sexual and gender identity, sexism and racism. Many of these dialogues combine the mundane and the taboo. We discuss one example, an exemplar of many others that shows how harnessing the known provides a platform for a more rigorous academic engagement with course content.

The dialogue is set in Nongoma KwaZulu-Natal. The mundane everyday practice of girls chatting in a yard is placed in stark contrast to the content of the discussion. There are three characters in this dialogue, two girls from Nongoma and one who grew up in Durban but has moved to Nongoma. The girl from Durban tries to convince the other two girls of the

need to 'procure' a sugar daddy. The clash of rural and urban cultures comes to the fore as traditional and consumption discourses compete with each other raising the issue of respect for adults and the girls as individuals in this community. The natural emergence of sexual identity and curiosity about sex is juxtaposed against complex socio-economic reasons that create environments for transactional sex. This is a real social issue faced by young women and those within our institution, where gender-based violence, HIV and STD infections are just some of the long term consequences of transactional sex (Hunter, 2002; Luke, 2005).

Thandiwe, the writer of this dialogue, uses language varieties intentionally. The urban sophisticate's language is full of slang, English and isiZulu:

Ok, dizzy moon kumele nithole amadoda enu kodwa a-g8. (Ok, loose girls, you must find your own boyfriends but they must be rich.)

This is in contrast to the isiZulu the other girls speak:

Ngicela ungaqalike nalesi silingu sakho. (Please don't start with that English of yours.)

In Thandiwe's critical commentary, she is keenly aware of gendered cultural practices. She explains how "Our cultures don't allow us to go about and play with our peers, girls have to do home chores...sometimes their parents do not want girls to be seen to gather together without an elder between them". The taboo nature of the conversation is highlighted when one of the characters tells the other girls to keep quiet. Thandiwe notes in her analysis, "She [Samke] knows what they are talking about is wrong...and they do not want their parents to hear".

Choosing this particular incident and highlighting the discomfort and excitement of the girls in considering the possibility of a sugar daddy is an example of risky writing. As we commented earlier in the paper, real issues in students' lives are often not the subject of lectures. As is evident in this case, Thandiwe takes the risk of interrogating something that is culturally taboo and outside the academy. The assignment opens a space that enables centrifugal discourses to be validated.

Thandiwe's own linguistic resources are validated in her heteroglossic dialogue. Here, rural and urban practices and beliefs about girls' behaviour come into conflict with each other. Thandiwe successfully 'speaks' in these conflicting voices. Thandiwe's own voice adds to the multivocality of the text as a whole when one reads the critical commentary. At one point in the dialogue, the two girls from Nongoma say that they do not understand the language the urban sophisticate is using. It is clear from the dialogue she is showing off and positioning herself as superior to the other girls. Thandiwe writes in her critical commentary,

This is how youth now use the social functions of codeswitching as I have shown in the above example to accommodate each other and sometimes to exclude other participants who have never been in other places from home...that increases the social distance between them (sic).

Using terms like 'social functions', 'codeswitching', 'accommodate', 'exclude' and 'social distance' are indications that Thandiwe is taking on the discourse of sociolinguistics and academic writing more generally. The construction of this sentence contains traces of other discourses. For example, the phrasing of "never been in other places from home" has an informality that someone with full mastery of academic writing is unlikely to use. It also indicates her status as a second language speaker. This can be contrasted with the phrase

“as I have shown in the above example” which indicates an awareness of the formality and signposting prevalent in academic writing. The entire sentence demonstrates that she is able to use academic language as a tool to critically interrogate social practices. What is of importance for us is the emergence of her academic voice alongside the development of academic literacy. Her emergent writerly voice that begins to take on the authoritative tone from academic discourse reveals a critical engagement that the course aimed to promote. The assignment as a whole, illustrates both the processes of appropriation and distanciation. In order to write the dialogue, Thandiwe has appropriated her everyday knowledge but she has also drawn on her evolving disciplinary knowledge in order to select appropriate subject matter that lends itself to critical analysis. Thandiwe’s critical commentary illustrates the process of “applying principles to familiar objects” (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2004: 92).

6. Conclusion

At the outset of this article, we problematised academic writing in its current form and raised concerns about the consequences of these styles on student voice and agency in academic writing. We would like to conclude by thinking about the consequences of the heteroglossic pedagogy described in this paper and its impact on “how and what we know” (Thesen, 2014: 4).

In this article we have illustrated how Thesen’s notion of “warm risk” (2014) can be applied to initial teacher language education to generate critical student engagement in ways that promote academic depth and rigour. We have argued that this can be achieved using a heteroglossic pedagogy that foregrounds linguistic diversity, multivoicedness and multi-discursivity. Allowing for multi-discursivity opens up possibilities for creative forms of engagement that are often absent in teacher education. A careful consideration of these interrelationships is important in the design of course curricula and assessment if the goal is deep, critical student engagement. For us, the juxtaposition of creative and academic genres and pedagogies generated critical student engagement with sociolinguistics and enabled students to explore emergent meaning.

However, it is important to highlight that while most students produced vivid, rich dialogues; the critical commentaries were for the most part indicative of a slow emergence of academic voices alongside the development of academic literacy. No doubt, for some students meanings were lost along the way and did not travel across space as they might have hoped. For others, the gap between production, reception and intention were narrower. We recognise that acquisition is not an overnight process but also that focusing explicitly on developing students’ academic literacy and an academic voice remains an ongoing challenge in individual course design and courses across the degree.

The two data snapshots, the role-plays and the exemplar from Thandiwe’s assignment illustrate the operation of risk at different levels and in different ways: for the student who performs in a role-play for the whole group, for the lecturer who lets go of her authority and encourages every student in the class to become a resource for learning and for the students as they write the assignment, exploring risky topics and moving between the creative dramatist role and the emerging academic role.

Together, the two data snapshots illustrate the pedagogic possibilities of fluid movements between distanciation and appropriation using flexible, risky genres, which ultimately facilitate deeper student engagement and understanding of disciplinary knowledge. The two data

snapshots are not “mere descriptions or anecdotes” detached from principles (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2004: 92). They facilitate academic depth and rigour because of the carefully staged moves between the strange and the familiar. In particular, the use of a creative genre alongside an academic genre facilitates intellectual and affective engagement and deeper insights.

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Appendix 1: Course outline

WEEK	CORE READINGS	EXTENDED READINGS	TASKS
Week 1 Self, identity and language attitudes	Janks (1993) – pp.4-6 Moya, Johnston, Merten, Kamaldien (2006) - pp. 9-10	Khuluma (2003) – p.7	Preparation for section 1 of assignment (language narrative) Interview each other about language histories; language diary & metaphor exercise Debating Ekasi articles
Week 2 Language, context and culture	Naylor (2000) – pp. 24-25 Student language narratives (2009): 11-23 Zodwa (pp. 11-15) Candace (pp. 16-19) Michelle (pp. 20 - 23)	Trevor's biography (2005 - pp. 30-31) Tshegofatso's biography (2007) – pp. 32-34	Assignment section 1 draft due: Monday 2 March
Week 3 Language variation	Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995) – pp. 35-41 Crystal (1994) – pp. 44-46 Anzaldúa (2000) – pp. 50-54	Power (2005) – pp. 47-49	Writing workshop 1: Monday 2 March (2-4pm) – edit drafts of assignment section 1
Week 4 Language practices, race and youth identities	Obama (2007) – pp. 59-60; Wolfe (2004) – pp. 60-61; Bembe & Beukes (2015) – pp. 63-73		Assignment section 2 draft due: Monday 16 March Compile youth dictionary; role-plays
Week 5 Language profiling and prejudice	DVD: Afrikaans Cook (2009) p. 93 blog on micro-aggression – pp. 76-77	Full Cook article available on request Smitherman & Alim (2012) pp. 78-92	Writing workshop 2: Monday 16 March (2-4pm) – edit drafts of assignment section 2
Week 6 Language in diverse classrooms	Alim (2012) – pp. 94-96 Zuidema (2005) – pp. 97-106		Preparation for section 3 of assignment (analysis and reflection on narrative and dialogue)