

## **No rubric can describe the magic: Multimodal designs and assessment challenges in a postgraduate course for English teachers**

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*ABSTRACT: This article narrates and interrogates some of the responses of a group of English teachers, and their lecturer, to an assignment in a post-graduate course entitled Language and assessment. The assignment required the teachers to respond to a text in a mode other than writing, and to design the assessment of this representation. Three of their designs, and their lecturer's assessment of these designs, are described and discussed. It is argued that assessment of multimodal representations of learning is complex and multilayered, and made more so by teachers' and lecturers' assessment histories.*

*KEYWORDS: Multimodal pedagogies; diverse classrooms; designing; assessment challenges; teacher education*

### **PROLOGUE**

“Multimodal pedagogies, with their focus on multiple modes of representation, have the potential to change the nature of the language and literacy class through privileging modes of communication other than spoken and written language; however, such pedagogies only have value if they form an integral part of assessment practices in which each mode is accorded a specific value and the sociocultural diversity of students' local knowledges and modes of representation is valued and privileged in forms of productive diversity” (Stein, 2004, p. 112).

In 2003, two high-school English teachers (Davis and Maungedzo), one Art teacher-educator (Andrew), and three English teacher-educators (Newfield, Reed and Stein) published reflective accounts of “experiments” in multimodal pedagogies – one in an English classroom in a Soweto high school and the others in English classrooms in a suburban school in Johannesburg. Such pedagogies “actively work to provide students with learning opportunities across different semiotic modes” (Newfield *et al.*, 2003, p. 63) and aim to challenge what Shohamy (2004) refers to as “assimilative models” of schooling. In Davis's suburban school, learners designed film storyboards for scenes from a novel they were reading and designed a two- or three-dimensional visual response to a character, theme or “” in the same novel. In Maungedzo's school in Soweto, they wrote and performed praise poems and designed small maps and three-dimensional objects for stitching onto a large cloth which would represent themselves and their lives to students in China.

The work of Newfield, Andrew, Stein and Maungedzo was motivated by a concern to

find ways in which multilingual youth who speak English as an additional language can move beyond the narrow constraints laid down by mainstream schooling in its privileging of written standard English into more open, free spaces, what we call “unpoliced zones” in which to recover their voices, their histories, their multiple languages and identities, as well as to develop their “capacity to aspire”... (Newfield *et al.*, 2003, pp 62-63).

Davis wished to “extend her literacy pedagogy to take greater account of (i) cultural diversity, (ii) diversity of representation and (iii) assessment that promotes learning” (Davis & Reed, 2003, p. 102).

In both Maungedzo’s and Davis’s classrooms the opportunity to work in a range of modes produced sustained collaborations among learners and high quality designs. Previously disaffected learners now expressed pride and pleasure in what they had achieved. With reference to assessment of their designs, one of the learners in Maungedzo’s class did not wish the artifact to be “marked” because “there is no number that can describe how good it was” (Newfield *et al.*, 2003, p. 66), but the majority felt that assessment would be an acknowledgement of their hard work and of the value of their artifacts. The authors of both articles recognised that the assessment of multimodal representations of learning is complex and multilayered. Drawing on the work of the New London Group, who propose that the concept of “Design” is central to a literacy pedagogy that is responsive to workplace innovations and school reforms (New London Group, 2000, p. 19), Davis and Reed suggested that pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes should offer teachers “...opportunities to experiment with Designing in a range of modes and with devising and reflecting on assessment processes in relation to these Designs” (2003, p. 114).

Five years later, the short chapters that follow this prologue narrate and interrogate some of the responses of a group of in-service teachers and their lecturer to the challenges of designing in a range of semiotic modes and of designing the assessment of their Designs. The eight teachers were students in a course titled *Language and assessment*, which is part of the post-graduate programme in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

## CHAPTER ONE: A NEW KIND OF ASSIGNMENT TASK

Throughout the *Language and assessment* course, students (teachers) are encouraged to reflect on their experiences of the assessment tasks and on the feedback they receive on their work. In the first class the four main assignments for the course are presented for discussion and possible modification. In 2008, assignment one (a review of recent journal articles on an aspect of assessment that interested each student), assignment three (an assessment glossary and a reflection on learning from the course) and assignment four (designing a summative assessment task for learners in one’s own teaching context and writing a rationale for this task) were accepted with minimal discussion. Assignment two, presented below, elicited anxious requests for clarification and examples.

*Assignment Two*

1. Choose a text from your ‘pleasure reading’. The text could be a novel, short story, poem, play, biography, autobiography, newspaper or magazine article.
2. Design a visual or performative representation of one of the writer’s main themes or key ideas to present to the class.
3. Design an assessment rubric for your lecturer to use in assessing your representation.

The focus of the teachers’ concerns was the nature of the “visual or performative” rather than the designing of a rubric. This was unexplored territory for all of them. Lerato<sup>1</sup> commented in her reflections on the course that it had never occurred to her that “authentic assessment is not all about standardized tests, but has to do with students’ feelings, what they know and bring to class and its application”. The quotation from Siphos reflection which is used to introduce Chapter Five expresses a similar orientation to “traditional” assessment tasks. After brainstorming some possible responses to texts with which everyone in the group was familiar, the teachers agreed to accept the challenge of the new.

In the next three chapters I describe the Designs presented to the class by three of the teachers, the accompanying assessment rubrics and my feedback to the designers. In the final chapter, I discuss some of the issues raised by the assignment design and the teachers’ responses.

## CHAPTER TWO: BELINDA’S STORY

### Belinda’s design

Belinda chose to respond to *Shirley, goodness & mercy: A childhood memoir* by Chris van Wyk (2004), described in the publisher’s promotional blurb as a “heart warming, yet compellingly honest, story about a young boy growing up in the coloured townships of Newclare, Coronationville and Riverlea during the apartheid era.” In post-apartheid South Africa, “racial” terms are still used in demographic discourse and in these terms Belinda is classified as “coloured”. Though much younger than van Wyk, when she stood in front of the class to introduce her representation of a theme from his memoir, it was evident that she identified with his experiences and his community. The New London Group refer to Gestural Design as one important mode of meaning-making and give, as examples of elements of the gestural “behaviour, bodily physicality, gesture, sensuality, feelings and affect” (2000, p. 26). Belinda used the gestural productively: her sparkling eyes, confident demeanour, expansive gestures and clear and confident speech (the latter one of the elements of Linguistic Design) all focused the attention of her audience on her artifact.

Chris van Wyk’s memoir begins with the sentence “Today is the day I see magic” (2004, p. 1). The closing sentences are: “Miracle. Wonder. Call it what you will. On 27 April 1994 it happens for over 40 million South Africans” (2004, p. 328). Belinda

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<sup>1</sup> The teachers gave permission for their work to be described and discussed in this article. A pseudonym has been used for each of the three teachers who are named.

performed as a magician. With a flourish she drew aside the black cloth that covered her Visual Design to reveal a shiny magician's hat containing representations of some of the new freedoms and structural changes resulting from post-apartheid democracy.



*Belinda's design: the magic of South Africa's new democracy*

The pole held by Nelson Mandela and the vibrant orange and yellow stripes that frame his image act as vectors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) which draw the eye to the stars and the rainbow. The present and future are colour-filled, in contrast to the black and white of the apartheid past represented in the newspaper base. The raised, outstretched arm in the photograph of the statue of a heroic struggle icon, positioned at the bottom right hand corner of the base, acts as a vector to lead the viewer to the magic of the new. A magical rainbow nation, with an iconic and charismatic leader, is

what van Wyk was excited about in 1994. Belinda’s performance and her artifact conveyed this excitement to her audience.

I made these notes to use with Belinda’s assessment rubric:

Confident presence – got everyone’s attention immediately; direct gaze and sparkling eyes; on top of her “content”; strong identification with the author; sweeping gesture to reveal the magician’s hat under the black cloth – nice touch – like a magician’s cloak; thoughtfully chosen visual representations of aspects of the new South Africa; excellent composition in the design.

	0	1	2	3
<b>1. Professionalism of oral presentation</b>	Mumbles, audience has difficulty hearing, confusing	Thoughts do not flow; unclear, does not engage audience	Thoughts articulated clearly though does not fully engage audience	Presentation is organized. Interest level of audience maintained
<b>2. Artifact</b>	Adds nothing to presentation	Poor, distracts audience	Presentable	Artifact enhances presentation: all thoughts articulated clearly and keeps audience interested
<b>3. Interpretation of theme through artifact</b>	Theme is not introduced. Audience is ( <i>sentence unfinished</i> )	Theme is interpreted but not explored	Interpretation of theme is explored but lacks interest	Theme and purpose of artifact is discussed. Interpretation of theme through artifact is interesting
<b>4. Attractiveness of artifact</b>	Artifact is messy and clumsy	Amateur: lacks substance	The artifact looks good	Visually attractive and impressive in terms of design

**Table 1. Belinda’s assessment rubric**

#### *Lecturer’s assessment and feedback*

B, your response was exactly the kind of response to a theme in a text that I was hoping for. I award you full marks (100%) for your presentation and artifact and 65% for a rubric that is “on track” but could be improved. While I made some use of it in assessing your performance and your artifact (and decided on a “perfect 3” for each criterion), I have the following suggestions for improving it:

- Reorganize it to combine criteria 2 and 4 and then make 3 your category for interpretation;
- Try to be more precise about what should be assessed in regard to the design of the artifact and to your performance with it. For example, what does “presentable” mean? What did you do to “maintain the interest” of the audience and how should these elements of your performance be assessed (e.g. your use of gestures)?

- Think about weighting. Did you want your presentation and your designed artifact to be equally weighted? (I decided to assess holistically)?
- This is the best work you have produced this year. Well done.

Belinda's design and rubric and the assessment of both are referred to again in Chapter Five.

### CHAPTER THREE: SIPHO'S STORY

Sipho teaches in an academic literacy programme for first-year university students. Like his students he is multilingual, with English being one of his additional languages. He chose to redesign a short story, narrated in the third person, as a first-person monologue narrated by the central character and to perform the story of this old woman. Sipho's version of an extract from Phaswane Mpe's *Brooding clouds* (2008) is reproduced in Appendix A. What his fellow students and I found quite extraordinary about his performance was that a very tall, very deep-voiced young man became a frail, frightened, fragile old woman. Sipho used his body and voice as semiotic resources together with the simplest of props – a shawl and a stick to “inhabit” (Yandell, 2008, p. 54) the old woman. Sipho's memory was also an impressive resource. Not once did he falter in his delivery of the monologue; not once did his gaze shift from our attentive faces. Makgolo addressed his/her audience directly – inviting us to listen to the story, offering us peanuts and commenting on our status as members of a university-educated elite.

Yandell quotes the argument of Anton Franks that in improvised drama “the body acts as a form of representation and allows the possibility of transforming everyday spaces (everyday classrooms, for instance) into theatrical spaces” (Franks, 1996, p. 107, cited in Yandell, 2008, p. 50). Our classroom became such a theatrical space and so spellbound were we by Sipho's enactment of Makgolo's plight that we responded critically when, instead of sinking to the ground in despair at the conclusion of his/her story, Sipho/Makgolo moved off stage singing a sad song. (In the discussion after his performance, Sipho said that his first inclination had been to do what we suggested and agreed that this would have been a more powerful ending.)

ELEMENT	WEIGHT	POINTS	SCORE
<b>1. DELIVERY</b>			
Voice projection and tone	1	1 2 3 4	<b>4</b>
Articulation is clear	2	1 2 3 4	<b>8</b>
Maintains eye contact with audience/gets audience involved	2	1 2 3 4	<b>8</b>
Costume, props and song appropriate	1	1 2 3 4	<b>4</b>
Acting is good	1	1 2 3 4	<b>4</b>
Characterization is convincing	1	1 2 3 4	<b>4</b>
<b>2. CONTENT</b>			
Introduction captures attention	2	1 2 3 4	<b>8</b>
Themes and key ideas are	2	1 2 3 4	<b>8</b>

clear			
Pathos, feelings and emotions are captured	2	1 2 3 4	<b>8</b>
Conclusion is clear cut	1	1 2 3 4	<b>2</b>
			<b>58 / 60</b>

**Table 2. Siphó’s rubric and lecturer’s score**

*Lecturer’s feedback:*

S, your performance was spellbinding. You had all of us believing that you were Makgolo! As we discussed, your first inclination to end by sinking to the ground and remaining still, rather than walking off singing, would have been the more powerful ending. I note that you have taken the “easy” route by not specifying what 1, 2, 3, 4 “stand for”. What brief description or category label could you use for each one – e.g. inadequate/satisfactory/meritorious/outstanding?

While I could work with your rubric and have awarded you 96% for your performance, I don’t entirely agree with your weightings and categories so here are a few things to think about:

- Why should clear articulation be weighted more heavily than voice projection and tone? In your performance tone was crucially important to your meaning making.
- Why are “eye contact” and “getting the audience involved” bracketed together? It would be possible to perform well on the one without necessarily performing well on the other.
- Your costume, props and song were thoughtfully chosen and creatively used and I would weight these more “heavily” than “articulation”.
- I’m not sure what you mean by “conclusion is clear cut” – perhaps “conclusion is powerful”?

Rubric mark: 70%

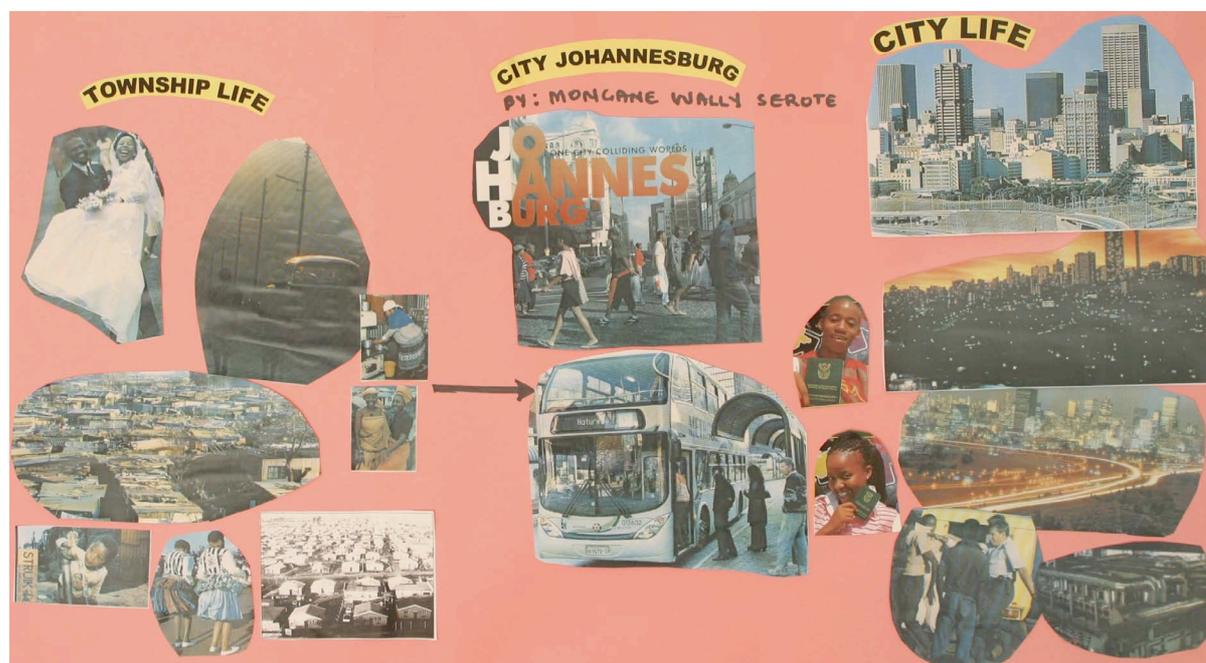
When I read the story from which you designed your monologue, I was impressed by the way in which you combined words from Mpe’s story with your own adaptation. The mood of his story was retained while the character of Makgolo was more strongly foregrounded. So, I wondered why you did not include transformation of the story in your assessment criteria. Perhaps it was because of your focus on performance and perhaps you were right to do this as your performance was a memorable one.

Siphó’s design and rubric and the assessment of both are also referred to again in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: LERATO’S STORY**

Lerato is an experienced, high-school teacher from Soweto, where she teaches English as First Additional Language to learners who speak a range of African languages. Like her students she is multilingual, with English being one of her additional languages. The text she chose is a poem frequently included in anthologies studied for the Grade 12 public examination in English Literature. It is reproduced in full in Appendix 2 to facilitate comparison with her artifact. Lerato was extremely

anxious about this assignment, claiming to have no experience of the visual designing which she wished to attempt.



**Lerato's poster: Johannesburg: city of contrasts**

This design is a triptych in which “City Johannesburg” bridges and mediates (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 198) two realities: township life and city life. In the image positioned top and centre, people are walking in both directions: into and out of the city. On the left, Lerato's choice of township images interprets and adds to some of the burdens and the joys of township life described in Serote's poem: matchbox houses, a congested informal housing settlement, a polluted sky, a woman cooking in a corrugated iron-walled kitchen, a child at a water tap, the celebration of a wedding, dancing in the street. On the right, in the top image there is a “forest” of “cement trees” in the foreground – electricity poles on a freeway. The “neon flowers” are blooming in the next two images below, with arguably the most negative images at the bottom: a police search, a factory space suffocatingly filled with pipes. The pass system, to which the poet refers in the opening lines, operated in the apartheid era to permit or deny African people the right to live and work in South Africa's cities. Today all South African citizens use a common identity document and Lerato has included two small images of smiling young people with their ID books – perhaps to indicate a more hopeful future.

Lerato held her Design in front of her audience and addressed us as a school class – perhaps an indication that it was difficult for her to imagine performing in a role other than that of teacher. She asked us to tell her what we noticed in the poster and led a discussion of our responses before giving each of us a copy of the poem. As with the photograph of Belinda's artifact, the photograph of Lerato's poster does not do justice to her Design because some of the images are too small to be clearly visible.

<b>Criteria for Assessment</b>	<b>Unacceptable/Poor</b>	<b>Acceptable/Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good/exceeds expectations</b>
1. Design and presentation of chart	Illegible concepts represented in a confused way. Facts are not logical	Legible, some of the concepts are shown. Facts are represented in a logical way.	Neat presentation. All concepts are presented in a logical way.
2. Relevant facts indicating the contrasts	Less than 5 contrasts depicted on chart. Contrasts no clearly depicted.	5 contrasts depicted; contrasts satisfactorily depicted	5 or more contrasts depicted. Contrasts accurately depicted and insight shown.
3. Comprehension of content	Inability to communicate effectively about the topic	Ability to communicate satisfactorily about the topic; shows some originality in presentation	Exceeds expectations. Ability to communicate effectively about the topic. Shows originality and creativity.

**Table 3. Lerato's rubric**

*Lecturer's assessment and feedback*

L, I really liked the design principles that you used in your chart / poster to illustrate the contrasts in the poem. You could ask learners to do something similar when they study this poem. While I can see from your rubric that you have understood some of the principles of rubric design, I don't think yours does justice to your representation so I have awarded your poster a holistic mark of 75%. I have awarded your rubric 62%. You have demonstrated understanding of some of the principles of rubric design but I offer the following comments and suggestions for improving it:

- If you wish to use "level" descriptors such as acceptable / unacceptable, I suggest that you separate "Good" from "Exceeds Expectations". You need a category that responds to exceptional work that is better than good!
- In two of your statements you refer to "facts" but your poster is not really a response to "facts". It is your representation of how Serote interprets the city.
- None of your category statements capture what was so well done in your design – the three sections, the movement between them, the choice and placement of the magazine photographs. The words "neat" and "logical" in your "Good" category don't do justice to what you have achieved.
- Some of your category statements suggest that you may have been influenced by traditional textbook "comprehension" exercises or exam questions. For example, I'm not sure why it would be important to have "at least 5 contrasts" depicted in your poster.

Lerato's design and rubric and the assessment of both are referred to again in the final chapter of this story.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RESTORING AND CELEBRATING THE MAGIC**

In the assignment in which the teachers were asked to reflect on their learning from the course, all of them referred to encounters with new ideas for alternatives to traditional pencil and paper tests. Belinda and Siphon wrote at length about their

experiences of multimodal representation and of designing an accompanying assessment rubric. Extracts from Siphó's reflection serve as a starting point for the discussion in this chapter.

My interest in multiliteracies began with the presentation assignment that we were given... (Siphó then describes the assignment). For me this was a new and first assessment experience of its kind. I was sceptical of the viability of such a project. In my mind it seemed a waste of time and effort. Initially I could not conceptualize how we could seriously move away from traditional modes of meaning representation such as the academic essay. I thought it was impossible to teach and assess students in modes other than the written word. I was to be surprised and proven wrong by both my own successful effort and the efforts of my classmates in performing the above task successfully. Everything worked like magic.

I used drama and performed with remarkable success the ideas from an excerpt that I adapted from a short story. Some students made picture books which summarised the plot of a novel. Others had posters and pictures representing vividly ideas they had come across in their reading. One student particularly impressed me with her model which consisted of a magician's hat with all sorts of fascinating visual artifacts (which were charged with meaning) and represented the theme of magic in the book she had read.

Siphó writes with the zeal of a convert! In a subsequent section of his reflection he describes his developing understanding of multimodal pedagogy and its possibilities for his teaching. The paragraphs quoted suggest that he is not only extremely pleased with his own performance but that he greatly enjoyed the artifacts and performances of his fellow students – particularly Belinda's.

Belinda's reflection is more circumspect. She stated that while she had been interested in multimodal pedagogy for some time, she found the assessment task difficult:

I found this task difficult to approach...I consulted two technology teachers who advised me that the artifact needs to look visually appealing but most importantly, it needs to be understood...I wanted Ms Reed and my fellow classmates to look at it; "read" into it – in other words, see the representational aspects through pictures "popping out" of the old fashioned magician's hat...

Yes, the response to my artifact was good and I have to say that the freedom to respond in a range of modes is fantastic. However, I found the design of my assessment rubric problematic as I did not quite know how to go about assessing my artifact in terms of criteria and performance indicators.

Davis and Reed, (2003) and Newfield *et al.* (2003) argue that the outcomes-based approach to education which underpins the school curriculum in South Africa is likely to work in opposition to the project which multimodality suggests. The "performance indicators" referred to by Belinda are detailed specifications of the knowledge and skills that learners in South African schools are expected to achieve at a particular grade-level in each subject. In the current National Curriculum Statement the term has been changed to "assessment standards" but the emphasis on teachers and learners working towards the achievement of narrowly specified outcomes

remains. The Department of Education advocates the use of rubrics which offer learners detailed descriptions of levels of achievement along a continuum from “inadequate”/“not achieved” to “outstanding”. However, “serious questions have been raised about whether assigning a quantitative score and ordering performance on a continuum are compatible with socio-cultural and constructivist perspectives” on learning (Shepard, 2001, pp. 1088-1089) or, less formally, in the words of one of Davis’s grade 11 learners, “[B]etter to get criteria after as then you can create a design which is based on your own opinion and not on what others like or dislike” (Davis & Reed, 2003, p. 110).

While the assignment that I designed did enable the teachers to devise their own assessment criteria after making their artifact or preparing their performance, I argue that by making the design of a rubric a compulsory part of the assessed assignment and by foregrounding this rubric and technical aspects of its construction in my feedback to the teachers rather than focusing on the artifact or performance, I devalued both their designs and their learning from the designing process. The “magic” to which Siphon refers was lost! Perhaps even more seriously, I did not offer a guide to “best practice” for assessing the multimodal representations which I hope these teachers will encourage the learners in their English classes to design.

In their initial request for a discussion of what “the multimodal assignment” entailed, the teachers’ concerns focused on choosing a text, identifying a theme or concept and designing a representation. They had very few questions about designing a rubric. However, for all eight teachers, there was greater evidence of “resourcefulness” (Newfield *et al.*, 2003) in their designs than could be assessed by the rubrics they constructed. Each teacher’s rubric diminished or “flattened” what he or she had achieved in the representation. I suggest that in these rubrics there is evidence of two possible reasons for this shift from the “magical” to the “mundane”. Firstly, in order to conform to the conventions of a rubric, the teachers devised categories and assigned marks to discrete elements of their artifacts or performances which then diminished the linkages (for example, between gesture, costume and tone of voice). Reflection on my feedback on their rubrics suggests that some of my comments reinforced rather than challenged this atomistic approach to the assessment of a multimodal design. Secondly, finding the “language” to describe their representations proved difficult and no less so for the one teacher in the group for whom English is home language than for the others. Much of the language in their rubrics is drawn from assessment guidelines in current curriculum documents. This was particularly evident in Lerato’s rubric, with its focus on what Jewitt, Jones and Kress (2005) term a “curriculum of facticity”.

The quality of the artifacts and performances and the teachers’ pleasure in their own and their classmates’ achievements, together with their enthusiasm for trying something similar in their classrooms, suggest that the first part of the assignment should be retained in the *Language and assessment* course. Versions of this assignment may also be of value in other teacher professional development programmes which take up the challenge of re-evaluating how literacy is conceptualised, taught and assessed (Johnson & Kress, 2003, p. 5) in order to be responsive to the knowledges, skills and dispositions required of successful participants in the knowledge economy (Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey, 2003, p. 15) and

in order to validate “the many different ways in which people make shared meaning” (Johnson & Kress, 2003, p. 5) in multilingual, multicultural contexts.

However, instead of requiring an accompanying assessment rubric from each teacher, in future courses I plan to invite the teachers, as a group, to devise assessment criteria that are responsive to the designs that group members have presented to one another and to offer them support for this assessment designing process. For example, we could explore the particular “potentials and limitations” (Kress, 2000) of the elements of linguistic, visual, gestural and sonic design and their relationships. As suggested by Whitehead (personal communication), I could offer teachers some guidelines for “success criteria” in regard to the use of elements. We could also try out the idea of resourcefulness “as an overarching category for the development of assessment criteria for multimodal classrooms” (Newfield *et al.*, 2003, p. 79). Newfield *et al.* suggest that resourcefulness includes the following:

- Recruiting “apt” resources for making meaning;
- Using these “apt” resources generatively and productively with evidence of linkages across modes and genres;
- Understanding and use of multimodality, including both the ability to travel across modes and to work with multimodal forms of representation;
- Taking risks, innovating, and transforming existing designs;
- Reflecting on her or his processes of making in different representational forms as well as engaging critically with the final product;
- Engaging with “messiness”, ambiguity, contradiction, difference;
- Being sensitive to and giving voice to the broader context of meaning-making including community/self/family/culture/nation and beyond (2003, p. 79).

In Belinda’s, Siphon’s and Lerato’s designs there is evidence that they were resourceful in relation to the first four bullets and to the final one in this list, though Lerato appeared to find it more difficult than the others to perform a role other than that of teacher. The assignment did not open up a space for reflection and critical engagement with process or product, though some teachers included some reflection on their designing experiences in a subsequent assignment. Re-designing the second task as a group process for arriving at assessment “principles” and then using these together to assess the teachers’ designs could contribute to deeper understanding of meaning-making as located within “the social world of other makers, other texts and contexts, histories and identities, in situated messy locations” (Newfield *et al.*, 2003, p. 79). In future I plan to conclude this section of the course with post-assessment activities which focus on the “design of environments of learning” (Kress, 2008) in order to address the complex issue of multimodal assignment and assessment designs that are responsive to teachers’ diverse classroom contexts. When teachers’ and learners’ assessment experiences have been limited to standardized written tests, the challenge for teachers of developing pedagogies that offer learners opportunities to represent their meanings and understandings through a range of modes of communication is one which they are likely to need support in addressing. How best to offer such support is a matter for further research so this narrative is incomplete.

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### **Appendix One: The script devised and performed by Sipho**

A monologue based on a story in Phaswane Mpe's posthumously published collection, *Brooding Clouds*

An old woman, Makgolo, walks into the performance area sadly singing a song Bayakala Emakaya, (They cry at home. Give us strength to work for our children.)  
At the end of the song she stands still and begins to address the audience:

It is not they who cry. It is I. Yes I cry. Tonight I am alone in my hut and my heart bleeds. Tonight I have no children to tell my stories to. Tonight I have no audience. The children shall not come to me any more. Their parents, the whole village, forbade them.

If you care to listen, I will tell you my tragic story - which may be my last.

My name is Makgolo. I have not always been an outcast. I was once a respected member of society. Things changed quite late in my life with the death of my husband. This husband of mine, after years and years of deserting me suddenly returned home.

All the years he had been away I had fended for myself without assistance. I fared quite well. I did not simply sit on these hands. I tilled the land and produced enough food for myself. Even the children who came to listen to my stories always got something to eat. I have no one to share my food with now. Please accept this offer of peanuts as you listen to my story.

During the time my husband was gone, in fending for myself I secured a caring man. Kereng was his name. In addition to his own large family he did whatever manly deeds were required in this compound. And people did not see this as bad or begrudge me his help.

The problem really was the return of my husband. He looked healthy on arrival. But within a few days of his return from the mines in the south where it was rumoured he had worked, he developed an illness. I had no money to take him to the herbalist or to do much. So he died within two weeks of his return.

Then the gossip began. They say I bewitched him. They say I did not want to lose Kereng, so I bewitched my husband. When Kereng himself mysteriously died from a similar disease my new title of witch was fully confirmed. The parents forbade their children to come and listen to my stories.

Then a few days ago with the death of young Tshepo things turned for the worse. The blame was naturally put on me. They say I bewitched him because I am jealous, because I am childless and because Tshepo had studied at the big university like you and was going to look after his mother.

Yesterday I heard the youth of the village had a meeting. In that meeting they decided that the village must be cleaned. They will necklace me tonight. One of the children, Thuso, has warned me to run away. But I am weak and old. Besides, where can I run to? I don't have any home except this old hut. The thatch on my roof is dry. It has turned white like my hoary hair. Thatch burns easily. If those comrades should come ... Oh! Their song is audible already.

Is it a freedom song or a song about witchcraft? Can you hear them? They are toyi toying. What do they sing? (Sings Hemnyama Hemzeni – Umfolozi)

I don't understand what they sing. They say I am a witch. They say I am a witch. They will necklace me. They will burn me in my hut. There is nowhere to run. I will sit here and breathe my last. Lord please forgive me and forgive them for they know not what they do. (Makgolo moves slowly off stage, singing sadly)

## Appendix Two: The poem “City Johannesburg” to which Lerato responded

This way I salute you:  
 My hand pulses to my back trousers pocket  
 Or into my inner jacket pocket  
 For my pass, my life,  
 Jo'burg City

My hand like a starved snake rears my pockets  
 For my thin, ever lean wallet,  
 While my stomach groans a friendly smile to hunger,  
 Jo'Burg City  
 My stomach also devours coppers and papers.  
 Don't you know?  
 Jo'Burg City, I salute you;  
 When I run out, or roar in a bus to you, I leave behind me, my love,  
 My comic houses and people, my dongas and my ever-whirling dust,  
 My death,  
 That's so related to me as a wink to the eye.  
 Jo'burg City.  
 I travel on your black and white roboted roads,  
 Through your thick iron breath that you inhale  
 At six in the morning and exhale from five noon.  
 Jo'burg City  
 That is the time when I come to you,  
 When your neon flowers flaunt from your electrical wind,  
 That is the time when I leave you,  
 When your neon flowers flaunt their way through the falling darkness  
 On your cement trees.  
 And as I go back, to my love,  
 My dongas, my dust, my people, my death,  
 Where death lurks in the dark like a blade in the flesh,  
 I can feel your roots, anchoring your might, my feebleness  
 In my flesh, in my mind, in my blood,  
 And everything about you says it.  
 That, that is all you need of me.  
 Jo'burg City, Johannesburg,  
 Listen when I tell you,  
 There is no fun, nothing, in it,  
 When you leave the women and men with such frozen expressions,  
 Expressions that have tears like furrows of soil erosion,  
 Jo'burg City, you are dry like death,  
 Jo'burg City, Johannesburg, Jo'burg City.

*Mongane Wally Serote*