Local appropriation of global communication forms:
A micro case study of teacher and learners' uses of mass media genres

FIONA M. JACKSON
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ABSTRACT: Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), a cognitive theory of human processes of innovation, can be productively used alongside critical literacy approaches, for the analysis of how teachers and learners draw selectively, transformatively and purposively from aspects of the mass media. While numerous studies have pointed to the complexity of the relationship between globalised mass media forms and local cultures, highlighting intricate bi-directional flows of influence, there is still much to be learned of the nature of individual take-up of the global within the local, particularly with respect to youth in school settings. CBT offers a set of tools with which to peel open certain pedagogic processes and products, gaining a clearer vision of parts of their components and inner workings. In this paper I analyse qualitative data showing how one South African English teacher and a group of her Grade 10 learners draw from mass media genres of advertising, infomercials, talk shows and popular music, and blend these with elements of local culture and pedagogic genres, in order to meet their specific, localised communicative purposes. In the light of this analysis, I also consider implications for the use of mass media genres and products within English education, for the promotion of critical media literacy amongst learners.

KEYWORDS: Conceptual blending theory, mass media in English education, critical literacies, South African English language education.

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of the educational implications of the impact of globalised mass media forms on local cultures is only beginning to be unraveled. There is still much to be learned of the nature of teachers' and learners' take-up of globalised mass media communications. From this perspective, Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), which highlights human processes of innovation, offers a set of useful tools for the analysis of how individuals draw selectively, transformatively and purposively from aspects of the mass media. Though fundamentally a cognitive theory, CBT can be usefully harnessed alongside a critical literacy approach, offering an apt lens for unravelling layers within new media,m meaning-making modes (mixing, mashing, cutting, pasting) (Janks & Vasquez, 2011, p. 2) and other popular culture forms drawn on by English learners. Tyner and Burn (2010) argue cogently for the need for English educators to acknowledge the power and pervasiveness of new media literacy tools in the lives of contemporary youth, and to embrace the need for a focus on both the production and analysis of new media products. They point to the relative marginalisation of critical production and analysis of new media texts within classrooms, despite their extensive cultural reach within (largely developed, urban) society. They also suggest the need for increased focus by English educators on issues of identity, an area where media scholars have been

highlighting complexities of relationships between consumption of global and local messages for some time (for example, Servaes & Lie, 2003).

In this paper, I analyse qualitative data showing how one teacher and a group of her learners draw from mass media genres of advertising, infomercials, talk shows and popular music, and blend these with elements of local culture and pedagogic genres, in order to meet their specific, localised communicative purposes. In the light of this analysis, I also consider implications for the use of mass media genres and products within English education, for the promotion of critical media literacy amongst learners.

THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

The seductive power of new media offerings can be viewed with concern by English educators, worried that their learners will be rendered increasingly semi-literate and de-cultured, through reduced reading practices and extensive engagement with inferior products of popular global culture. Viewed from transformationalist perspectives of media theory, however, current changes in cultures can be seen as the latest in persistent historical patterns of change, while also collectively amounting to something new. Innovations derive from, amongst other features, the strengths of cultures in both homogeneity and diversity, along with a fresh focus, which locates the arena of globalisation within the local (Servaes & Lie, 2003). Thus, contemporary cultural exchanges form only the latest in a long line of encounters and can be seen as simply effecting further hybridisation of already hybridised cultures (Want, 2002, cited in Servaes & Lie, 2003).

The recognition of such complexities has led to an increased research focus upon community and audience agencies. Such work has explored interactions across cultures and peripheries "talking back" to centres. It has picked up in new ways upon the established idea that culture and identity are "an evolving process, positioning the individual and the community as active participants in the consumption of information and appropriation of communication" (Andersen, 1983, cited in Servaes & Lie, 2003, p. 13). Servaes and Lie have foregrounded the "exchange of meaning" taking place in the local consumption of global messages and a view of identities as fragmented, comprised of multiple mediated pieces drawn from many levels ranging from global to local sources. Strelitz conceptualises these processes occurring through "spaces of interaction", facilitating the building of local identities using concrete and symbolic resources from diverse origins (2004).

A range of conceptual lenses have been deployed in efforts to understand mixing in cultures: contact zones, processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, hybridity, transculturation and creolisation. Within South Africa, scholarly attention on the creolisation of cultures has till recently been largely ignored, with the prior focus fixed upon separation, stratification, difference and distinctiveness (Strelitz, 2004). However, there is increasing recognition of the importance of understanding processes of creolisation and questions of cultural hybridity. These issues are especially pertinent when examining the relationship of youth to mass media products. Besley (2003) points to the need for study of how the market seeps into the textures of social organisation as a means of the consumerist socialisation of the

young. This necessitates us conceptualising youth in relation to their imbibing of identities from the global marketplace and acknowledging the importance of style and taste within youth cultures. She foregrounds the inherently mixed nature of style for youth, detailing it as the "use of bricolage, assembly, pastiche, blending, pick'n mix or hybridisation" (p. 168). However, within this mélange she believes there are usually aspects of innovation created so as to project innovation and some power.

Besley (2003) sees youth as composing their identities in the global arena from within the foundations their local cultures orient them to, such that "many young people may identify themselves as cultural ethnic blends with multiple identities" (p. 169). Thus we need to explore the nature of the "in-between", shifting forces and practices of contemporary youth culture. This resonates with views that all culture is "remix", fruits of perpetual combining of cultural products into innovative blends (Lessing, cited in Knobel & Lankshear, 2008, p. 22-23). Strelitz's 2004 study of university students falls within such a focus, painting a picture of the complexity, diversity and division within this section of South African youth culture. He highlights the intricate ways in which South African youth with very different socialisations and socio-economic positioning relate aspects of global media to their own situations. However, his study shows very little of the how, of the mechanisms that operate within the appropriation of the global into the local.

The concepts of "remix" and "blending" point to the intricacy and multi-layered quality of much popular youth culture and can be productively used to probe popular culture and new media texts within English education. The offerings of the new media and contemporary culture for young people, in terms of both consumption and production, demand increased creative and critical capacities for both educators and learners (Janks & Vasquez, 2011; Hall, 2011; Tyner & Burn, 2010). CBT offers one set of tools that can assist English educators in describing aspects of these processes, and developing greater confidence and expertise in integrating them into pedagogical practices.

CONCEPTUAL BLENDING THEORY

CBT, developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner as a means of explaining the mechanisms of a key component of human thinking, offers us a useful analytic frame for the exploration of aspects of both verbal and visual texts. They argue that much human innovation arises from our capacity to perform complex mental blending operations by drawing from distinct input spaces, or "small conceptual packets" (2002, p. 102), strongly focused and selective, that perform in our working memories but are constructed, partly, through the triggering of our stored knowledge from long-term memory. That is, mental spaces are not simplistically equivalent to the schemata of schema theory, which are typically conceived of as fairly persistent constructs making up long-term memory (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). Rather, they are tools for innovative activity as it happens, that may well recruit information (selectively) from schemata. Input spaces may be built through organising frames that specify the nature of the relevant activity, events and participants (2002, p. 104). We can use established, familiar frames or we may have to construct frames. However, conceptual blending of input spaces can also happen without specific organising frames.

Fauconnier and Turner's model of conceptual blending is centrally concerned with issues of identity, integration and imagination (2002, p. 6). That is, they argue that conceptual blending happens when we identify certain selective correspondences between at least two mental input spaces. Through this identification, we create cross-space mapping links between similar components within each input space. This process invokes a third, generic mental space that connects with each input space and illuminates what they hold in common. Novel integration happens through imaginative processes, which we realise via a fourth, blended space. In this space, certain elements from each of the input spaces are integrated into new unities. These fused elements become an "emergent structure" that is distinct from any of the elements from the original input spaces, and may be developed through processes of composition, completion and elaboration (2002, pp. 40-47).

Through compositional processes, blending arranges constituents from the various input spaces so as to generate connections absent within the input spaces. Completion happens as we unconsciously harness prior knowledge into a blend. This enables us to utilise seen portions of something well known and unconsciously activate "unseen" elements of it as well. In elaborating blends we act as though they are simulations and proceed imaginatively, using principles that we have created for the blend. Elaboration within blending is very powerful, allowing for many possibilities and potentially infinite development (2002, p. 47-49). Fauconnier and Turner continue to expand upon many variations of blends, including double- and multiple-scope blends. The most basic form of a conceptual integration network, according to Fauconnier and Turner's model, can be represented as follows (2002, p. 46):
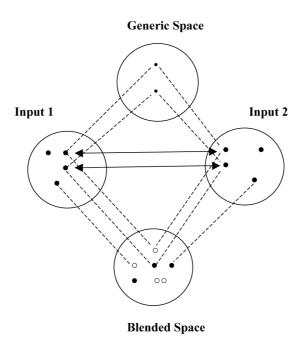

Figure 1. Conceptual blending model

Fauconnier and Turner's model is a useful means of describing and analysing both innovation within media texts and some of what people do in their appropriation of mass media texts.

FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

The data in this paper comes from a Grade 10 English classroom in a formerly white, urban, state high school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The class was racially and linguistically diverse, the teacher white, female, English-speaking. The focus of this paper is on a group oral task assigned for presentation at the end of a unit, where learners had been introduced to purposes of emotive language in advertising, with the aim of developing learners' critical understanding of how language can be manipulated. As a final task, learners had to create a product and an infomercial to market that product. This provided a meaningful oral task offering possibilities for group work with a variety of participating roles for learners.

My focus is on how blending theory can help clarify the component elements of the task that the learners had to draw on and blend. Secondly, I analyse aspects of the blending processes effected by one group of learners in their performance. Lastly, I shall consider implications of this analysis the use of aspects of popular culture and the promotion of critical media literacy within English education.

Prior to getting the learners engaged on the infomercial task, the teacher had presented a framework of principles representing the need for advertisements to do the following:

Attention: getting the attention of the viewer;
Interest: maintaining the interest of the viewer;
Desire: evoking certain desires within the viewer;
Action: provoke the viewer into some kind of action in relation to the advertised product.

Using these, learners had analysed numerous advertisements and critiqued a television infomercial. The teacher provided a detailed brief and assessment rubric for the oral task.

CONCEPTUAL BLENDING ANALYSIS

The overall organising frame for this event is "classroom task for assessment". There are two dominant input spaces within this frame and further, embedded "subordinate" input spaces, making it a multiple-scope blend. Initially, we can analyse the event using the key input spaces of "Oral English task demands" and "Infomercial Genre demands". The teacher's provision of the task requirements, and the assessment criteria, provide very clear indications of the "*English oral task*" and "**Infomercial genre**" input spaces invoked by the task:

> You're going to be required to firstly create a **product** that *you're going to be liaising on now* and then produce an **infomercial** on it, bearing in mind that your aim is **to inform** and **persuade** your target audience **to buy your product.** Can I **stress that this is an infomercial** so the emphasis must be on **delivering a lot of information** on your particular product. Your **target audience must be very clear** to *your audience* and I must hear all these ***persuasive tactics*** that we've been *studying* in other adverts…. I would like you to *work in groups of about 4 or 5 each. Each person must speak for at least two minutes*. This is the only way in which we *can fairly assess you. Dressing up*

and the use of audiovisual aids might benefit your presentation, but really it's your *oral presentation* that we're assessing. So I *can't allocate marks for props* and things like that even though they will contribute to the overall effectiveness of what you do and it may be necessary to **demonstrate your product** - I would really like to see that. Now we've seen an infomercial together, we've *looked at the persuasive devices that they've used there, we've critted it, so I think you know what's expected…*

The key elements of the task brief thus highlight the two input space of the specific pedagogic demands and the infomercial genre demands. These were reinforced through the teacher's detailed presentation of the assessment criteria.[1] These elements comprise one key input space the learners have to work with. The other comprises the nature and structure of actual infomercials.

The infomercial is an innately hybridised television genre in itself, as the attainment of its goal, within its specific broadcasting context, "depends upon its ability to blur editorial and advertising content" (Hope & Johnson, 2004, p. 2). The name is clearly a linguistic blend of "information" and "commercial", expressing the goal of embedding the advertising content within "a presentation of information for interest or entertainment" (Hope & Johnson, 2004, p. 7). Infomercials are typically longer than regular advertisements, extending up to 30 minutes. They are conventionally comprised of demonstration segments and user and expert testimonials, divided by internal commercials (Agee & Martin, 2001). Underpinning the infomercial is a communication model aiming at the perpetual strengthening of the persuasive message, presented as accessibly as possible to the viewer, in a non-threatening tone. "The ideal result is a simple, engaging, and informative product that includes a high degree of persuasion" (Hope & Johnson, 2004, p. 6).

The input spaces implicated in the task can thus be set out, and cross-space mapped as per Figure 2. The teacher has planned an oral performative task with strong connections to the real world genre of the infomercial. Her directives suggest that what learners have to create is a blended space, a **pedagogic** genre comprising a staged infomercial marketing an imaginary product. The teacher is thus harnessing the infomercial genre to fulfill a number of her own purposes: completion of an oral assessment task, getting learners to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge of the principles used in the unit and securing the active engagement of her class by drawing on their familiarity with, and enjoyment of aspects of the mass media.

The two input spaces for the setting up of the task connect to two generic spaces of "oral task assessment" and "advertising". Generic components of oral assessment include features such as "assessment criteria". Comparable components of the advertising space comprise typical "constituents of infomercials". The blended space created from the fusion of selected elements of all the contributing input spaces

---

[1] Teacher's presentation of assessment criteria: "…to remind you it's on originality and how effectively you've positioned the product. You will see now what 1 to 4 stands for, there is an explanation for each criterion. The second thing we're looking at is structure and logical development in your presentation. It involves a lot of people, is there a sense of continuity? The third thing is how you present your speech, how clearly you speak and how confident you are. You are promoting a product so confidence is essential and then persuasive techniques, how well you've implemented the principle that we've been discussing in other adverts. If you turn to the back, there's an effort mark which is self-explanatory in terms of how you've actually worked on enhancing your presentation with your visual aids. "

contains the unique infomercials created by the learners. I now consider the specifics of one particular performance.
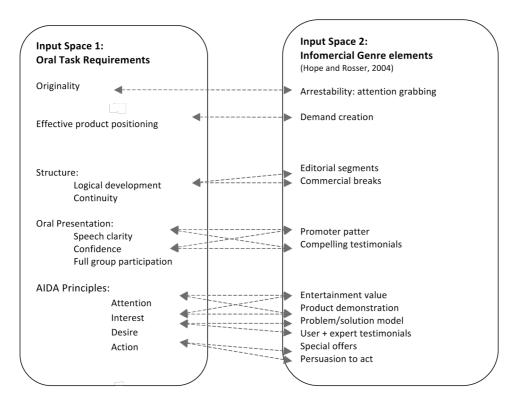

Figure 2. Input spaces for oral infomercial assessment task

The group comprised three male Indian learners who featured a product, Morphodite, which was claimed to solve problems of excess hair and body odour. It was a complex, layered creation, involving four distinct segments following the format of actual infomercials fairly closely, with:

1. a pre-recorded video clip demonstrating the product;
2. a "live studio demonstration";
3. a "break", provided by a promotional jingle;
4. a final component following a "talk show" format, with satisfied product-users testifying to how the product solved their problems.

The learners thus showed a strong understanding of typical infomercial structuring, having clearly internalised the compartmentalised structure of professional infomercials, including:

•   the prolonged length relative to regular advertisements, and
•   the idea of "entertainment" as a hook to engage viewers and keep them focused so as to receive commercial messages through demonstrations and testimonials.

In terms of blending, the learners had worked strongly with the given blends of oral task and infomercial. Within that, they had drawn on further blending, such as popular song ↔ promotional jingle, infomercial ↔ talk show, and stock "joke character" ↔

user testimonial. An analysis of an extract from the video shows how aspects of the two input spaces can be identified within the blend of the performance.

Video Extract From Infomercial Performance

Street scene. Moving graphic circle in centre of screen. Young Indian guy walking down street. Approached, unsolicited, by product promoter. Can only see promoter's hands and sliver of his body.

Promoter:	Sir, I think you definitely need [*holding out can of Morphodite*]
Man:	Scuse me – who are you calling "Sir"?
	[*right arm cocked at elbow, hand up at shoulder level, bent forward at wrist, index finger pointing. Hand waved side to side, in stylised fashion, in time to words*]
Promoter:	[*inaudible*] but I think, the thing is…[*inaudible*] Morphodite [*inaudible*] a hair remover
Man:	I *am* a queen and queens not need this
Promoter:	I'm *sorry* but I definitely think you need this [*inaudible*] …and all your hair will grow after you shave it
Young man:	Ok, is *this* for free?
Promoter:	*Well*, *this* is a free sample. Try it.
Young man:	How do I put it on?
Promoter:	*Just* all you do is spray it on and [*inaudible*] that's it
Young man:	Are you sure this thing works?
Promoter:	I am *sure*.
	[*Writing sliding over lower screen, in white letters: Free pink toothbrush and genuine Colgate imitation toothpaste.*]
Young man:	[*takes can in hand and looks at it*] So I just spray it?
Promoter:	Just spray *it*.
Young man:	Straight? [*Scrutinises can. Sprays it under his arms, a little later sprays it under his chin, on his neck*]
Promoter:	Just *straight*. [*pause*] I think it's [*inaudible*] you can just use it to remove hair on the legs.
Young man:	[*Hands can back to promoter. Bends forward. Lifts foot onto toe. Very delicately starts lifting jeans up leg*]
Promoter:	This is one day later. Let's go see how our subject is doing. [*Walks to young man*]
Promoter:	how, how [*inaudible*]
Young man:	[*inaudible*] I really recommend [*takes can, holds up next to shoulder*] Morphodite. [*smiles*]

In terms of the input spaces drawn on to produce the blended space of the students' unique creation, we can identify the following elements:

- performance components – for example, Students A and B are specific Values in relation to Roles such as Product Promoter and Prospective Product User, a local street serves as a film location for their infomercial clip;
- originality in relation to advertising genre strategies – they are working with grabbing attention through having the prospective product user reject being hailed as "Sir" and displaying stereotypically "effeminate" gestures and self-identifying as a "queen";

- effective product positioning is invoked through demand creation by rebutting the prospective user's assertion that "queens not need this" with "all your hair will grow after you shave it";
- maintaining interest through product demonstrations (the prospective user is persuaded to try the product) and special offers (the overlayed text promising "free pink toothbrush and genuine Colgate imitation toothpaste");
- the last point above can also be seen as providing entertainment value through the deployment of recognisable stereotypes that their audience is likely to find humorous, through the relative absurdity of enticement through a **pink** toothbrush, evoking again the "queen" frame of reference, and toothpaste that is an *authentic* imitation of a well-known brand.

Fauconnier and Turner explain that we build input spaces, the links between them, and blended spaces, in order to generate purposeful meaning and useful, novel insights. They argue a major means of doing this is through compression effected through blending. Particular conceptual linkages recur repeatedly through compression by blending. They label these critical connections "vital relations" (2002, p. 92). The chief vital relation enacted here is that of representation (2002, p. 93). That is, the students from the classroom/oral task input represent the fictive characters of the product promoter and prospective product user in the blend. The identity of the real students is compressed with the identity of the fictive characters of their infomercial script. This results in the unique presentation of the characters in their performance. The performance is, in other words, a unique, complex, dynamic image within the world of representations. Inside the blend of the performance, the learners are working within projections of the characters that they have created. So, at that moment, they are altering their real-world selves through these projected, fictive personalities. Thus,

> dramatic performances are deliberate blends of a living person with an identity. They give us a living person in one input and a different living person, an actor, in another. The person on stage is a blend of these two. (Fauconnier & Turner 2002, p. 266)

For Fauconnier and Turner, the power of dramatic performances lies precisely in the "integration in the blend" (p. 267). Performers literally "live in the blend" (albeit temporarily), while for audiences, the satisfaction we derive from engaging with such performances is through knowing we are being transported out of existing real-world spaces and identities into new ones.

This is evident, even in a non-professional, short, classroom performance such as the Morphodite infomercial, with its moments of dragging timing and lack of professional slickness. These learners have deliberately taken on and played with a range of identities, some that they are proscribed from being (for example, Indian youths cannot ever "be" White Afrikaners, though they could adopt similar beliefs and values). In this performance, a number of the adopted identities could be seen as carrying some element of social risk or taboo (being gay, being conservatively racist, being economically and socially marginal). The nature of the task thus allows the learners to select the character "input spaces" that they wish to, and to adapt them according to some of their own agendas, within the parameters established by the teacher. This performance represents an opportunity for the "trying on" and blending of their "real" identities with other identities and generating humour from the tension

between what learners in the audience know of the actual characters of the actors, and the personalities of their assumed roles. From a critical literacies perspective, it offers the learners some levels of agency within the classroom. The fact that through their input spaces they are often drawing on stock stereotypes (the effeminate queen, the hairy, not very intelligent or cool, "Boer" farmer [interviewed in the talk show segment]), albeit creatively, points to the increased pedagogic potential if critical literacy strategies had been recruited into the overall teaching unit, to enable exploration of these stereotypes, their origins and potential effects.

To return to the performance itself, the second segment of the infomercial comprised "live demonstration" in front of the class. The promoter introduced himself as "Mr Morphodite" and presented to the class two "testimonialists". The segment proceeds as follows:

Morphodite:	Good morning. Welcome to the most amazing TV show that you have ever seen in your life. Today we have two, two people here. These people have been through a lot and I think that they should start expressing themselves so people in the public can acknowledge what people are going through today. Here we have Pravesh, the hobo and here Mr van der Merwe. Now gentlemen would you like to introduce yourselves?
P:	Well as you know my name is Pravesh, the very hairy hobo, but as you can see.
Others:	Hi Pravesh. The hairy hobo [*said in AA meeting type tone*]
²P:	After using this product I have no more hair. And my chest is clean and you know I can walk within three meters of someone and they won't run away.
M::	That's a miracle. And Mr van der Merwe do you have anything to say?
V:	Goeienaand, my naam is Mr Johannes van der Merwe. Ek is 'n baie hairy boer. Ek het dis problem vir 'n baie lang time. Ek het dis problem vir 'n baie lang time. Dis 'n baie sad story. I was teased as a child [*pretending to almost cry*] for my hairiness [*crying, but then recovers and jumps up*]. But then, I was watching the TV one day and I saw this product called Morphodite and it's really helped me. Now I can go with all my chommies and have a braai and they will not laugh at my legs anymore. So I really do recommend this product, Morphodite.
M:	See guys it really works. So thank you very much. Tune in next week at 7.30 on Monday.

From the input spaces of the oral task and the infomercial genre, selective projections are made into the blended space and fused with other elements to become the unique performed advertisement, a created, fictional world wherein the Morphodite product exists and is promoted by "Mr Morphodite". The second input space contains roles typically found in the genre of infomercials, such as the product promoter and product users. These roles can be cross-space mapped to particular values in the first input space, which are filled by the students. Further cross-space mappings can be identified. For example, a role in the infomercial genre space such as "Problem" can be mapped to particular values in the oral performance task space such as "Painted

---

² Good evening, my name is Mr Johannes van der Merwe. I am a very hairy farmer. I've had this problem for a very long time (2x). It's a very sad story. I was teased as a child for my hairiness. But then, I was watching the TV one day and I saw this product called Morphodite and it's really helped me. Now I can go with all my mates and have a barbecue and they will not laugh at my legs anymore.

hair" and "Stink". The role of "Product" in the infomercial genre space can be mapped to the "Metal Can" in the oral performance task space.
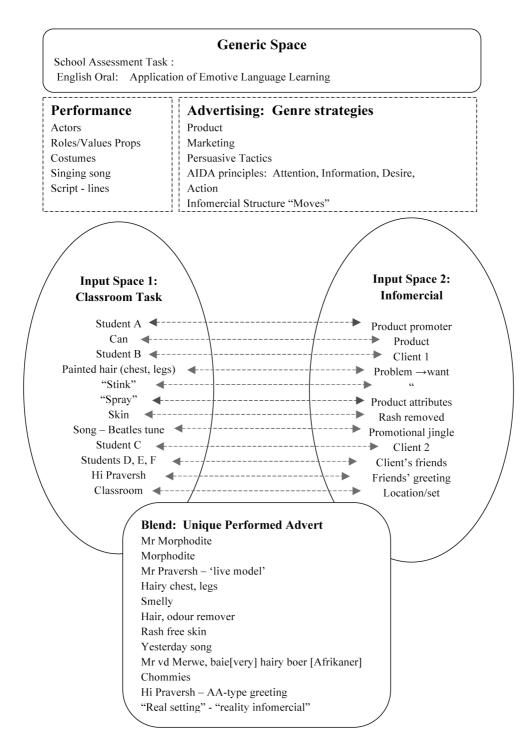
Generic Space

School Assessment Task :
  English Oral: Application of Emotive Language Learning

Performance	**Advertising: Genre strategies**
Actors	Product
Roles/Values Props	Marketing
Costumes	Persuasive Tactics
Singing song	AIDA principles: Attention, Information, Desire,
Script - lines	Action
	Infomercial Structure "Moves"

Input Space 1:
Classroom Task

Input Space 2:
Infomercial

Student A ← - - - - - - - - → Product promoter
Can ← - - - - - - - - → Product
Student B ← - - - - - - - - → Client 1
Painted hair (chest, legs) ← - - - - - - - - → Problem →want
"Stink" ← - - - - - - - - → "
"Spray" ← - - - - - - - - → Product attributes
Skin ← - - - - - - - - → Rash removed
Song – Beatles tune ← - - - - - - - - → Promotional jingle
Student C ← - - - - - - - - → Client 2
Students D, E, F ← - - - - - - - - → Client's friends
Hi Praversh ← - - - - - - - - → Friends' greeting
Classroom ← - - - - - - - - → Location/set

Blend: Unique Performed Advert
Mr Morphodite
Morphodite
Mr Praversh – 'live model'
Hairy chest, legs
Smelly
Hair, odour remover
Rash free skin
Yesterday song
Mr vd Merwe, baie[very] hairy boer [Afrikaner]
Chommies
Hi Praversh – AA-type greeting
"Real setting" - "reality infomercial"

Figure 3. Conceptual blending spaces for Morphodite infomercial

There is presentation of demand creation, by means of implied vital relations of analogy and disanalogy. Analogous relations rest upon Role-Value compression (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 98). For example, the learners' infomercial suggests the existence of numerous (hypothetical) people in the Role of "happy, desirable, hairless, odourless Morphodite-users". The Values are taken up by implied

individuals, in the Morphodite scenario, who are linked by an identity connector between the Role input in one space and the Role input in another space. Analogy is then foundational for Disanalogy. That is, we can more easily identify and articulate how things are different where there is some element of similarity. In the context of the Morphodite infomercial, the product-user is shown to have a problem – too much hair and body odour – which invokes a potential world where acceptable and desirable young men exist happily without excess body hair and odour. In the infomercial blend, the world of "Mr Pravesh" is disanalogous with such an ideal, and needs the solution of "Morphodite" to remove the disjuncture. Through this process, a manufactured want is represented. In the Classroom Task input space we find painted hair on a learner's chest and legs, which map onto the problem of excess hairiness in the informercial space. Similar cross-space-mapping relations are set up between the metal can and the spray, the product and product attributes, the song and a promotional jingle. These sets of relationships can, following Fauconnier and Turner's model, be graphically represented as in Figure 3 (above).

However, the above model does not capture all the input spaces and relations between them. The Morphodite performance is a multiple-scope blend, drawing on multiple input spaces. A clear example of this is the song that is sung as a promotional jingle. This song comprises new input spaces nested inside the oral assessment task and infomercial genre input spaces already identified. The song is an adaptation of the Beatles' famous "Yesterday". The spaces specific to this song can be represented as follows:
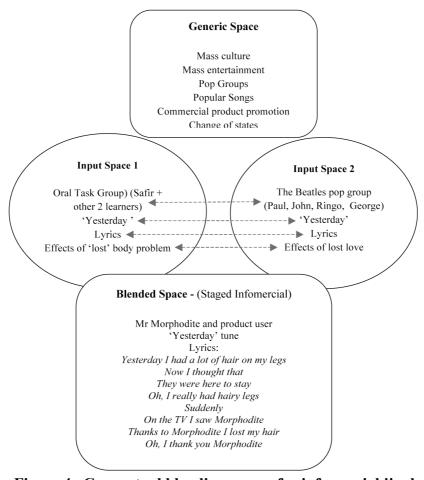

Generic Space

Mass culture
Mass entertainment
Pop Groups
Popular Songs
Commercial product promotion
Change of states

Input Space 1

Oral Task Group) (Safir +
other 2 learners)
'Yesterday '
Lyrics
Effects of 'lost' body problem

Input Space 2

The Beatles pop group
(Paul, John, Ringo, George)
'Yesterday'
Lyrics
Effects of lost love

Blended Space - (Staged Infomercial)

Mr Morphodite and product user
'Yesterday' tune
Lyrics:
Yesterday I had a lot of hair on my legs
Now I thought that
They were here to stay
Oh, I really had hairy legs
Suddenly
On the TV I saw Morphodite
Thanks to Morphodite I lost my hair
Oh, I thank you Morphodite

Figure 4. Conceptual blending spaces for infomercial jingle

This mapping helps clarify that although the learners have directly harnessed the Beatles tune, they have performed a clever inversion of the overall emotional tone of the song with their lyrics. The original is a plaintive lament to lost love, while the infomercial version is a paean to the wonders of Morphodite. However, they have framed this praise within selected highly identifiable words occurring at the start of sentences in the original song. This could be read as quite sophisticated (albeit probably subconscious) deployment of Analogy/Disanalogy vital relations again. That is, they perhaps imply that if you use Morphodite, you are less likely to land up inexplicably ditched by your girlfriend. The input spaces presented above are also connected to the input space of infomercial genre elements. These would include some of the previously identified elements, such as entertainment as an attention grabbing hook, a vehicle of product information, and client persuasion.

The name of the product, Morphodite, could also be seen as strengthening a reading of the product promoting successful romantic relationships, through the linguistic blend of "morph" (changing forms) and Aphrodite, the Greek Goddess of Love, implying positively transformed love possibilities through a desirably altered body. Further blending includes the fusion between the infomercial and the confessional TV talk show genre, in which guests often bare their problems and agonies and receive counsel from "experts" and/or the show host (Egan & Papson, 2005; Parkins, 2001). The learners infuse a uniquely South African "spin" in this arena, with their insertion of Van Der Merwe, the stock, stereotyped Afrikaner bumpkin, butt of Anglicised prejudice, and having him codeswitch to Afrikaans. They satirise both infomercial and talk-show genres, along with conventional South African patriarchal notions of masculinity, in their presentation of his emotional, tearful confession of hirsute social isolation and Morphodite triggered redemption. Perhaps they are also subtly blending less obvious input spaces (Anderson, 2008) of metrosexuality and the cult of smooth skinnedness promoted by celebrity soccer players, such as David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo.

The Morphodite performance draws complexly and deftly from a number of diverse sources. Despite its awkward delivery it reveals the learners as acutely aware and insightful about a range of mass media genres and able to appropriate and manipulate them for both pedagogic and personal purposes. Conceptual blending analysis has highlighted how both the teacher and learners drew creatively from mass media genres and productively fused these with pedagogic input spaces. The learners' manipulations imply an awareness of both the intentions and strategies used within these genres, a playful capacity for "testing out" perhaps edgy, slightly taboo ideas and identity roles (for example, as in the "queen" and metrosexual motifs) and some ongoing linguistic and racial faultlines in their community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION AND CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of this task raises numerous issues about the role of popular culture within youth culture and education. The snippet of an English lesson explored here is located in an educational context where the study of "emotive language" has a long-established presence, particularly with a view to infusing learners with some critical protection against the presumed predatory consequences of consumerist advertising

culture. There are strong arguments over the need to acknowledge the power of popular culture in the lives of contemporary youth within education (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000), alongside arguments for the need to develop critical media literacy amongst school learners – "the more complex and multi-modal texts become, the more important it is for 'readers' to understand the politics of semiosis and textual instantiations of power" (Janks & Vasquez, 2011, p. 2; Pascerella, 2008; Doering, Beach, & O'Brien, 2007; Morrell, 2005).

However, it is equally important to attend carefully to voices highlighting the need for adults to move beyond reflex reactions assuming total passivity, ignorance and vulnerability amongst youth in relation to the effects of the mass media (Maness, 2004). As my data illustrates, many young people are astute and canny in their responses to the mass media. However, much of their insight sits within tacitly embodied knowledge. Deployment of analytic processes derived from CBT could provide opportunities to transform their often significant but implicit knowledge into more explicit, systematised, abstracted and consciously critical forms. For example, the teacher could guide the learners into active consideration of what the range of their contributing input spaces were, how the learners have innovated through their blending, and critical evaluation of their choices. A fusion of insights from CBT and critical literacy approaches could be richly productive, since CBT does not directly address issues of power relations, but offers some additional tools, at a more fine-grained level, in relation to questions of genre and innovation. So while CBT helps us unpack the intricate, multi-sourced nature of these students' Morphodite production, it does not automatically help us, or the students, to engage with potentially significant "silences" within their selections (such as the absence of any overt inclusion of South African Indian, or African, cultural features within their performance). A critical lens can open up issues of why the learners use the stereotypes they have (for example, in relation to "queens" and "Mr Van Der Merwe"), and how global and local media products contribute towards the creation and maintenance of these. An extension with a CBT lens could lead to critical, playful searching for alternative input spaces in these areas, and efforts to generate alternative blends.

Over time, such awareness could contribute to ongoing discussions around the learners' experiences of global and local cultures, and their complex relationships in navigating global media products in juxtaposition to local cultural products and experiences, and their own shifting identities. Increased learner ability to analyse and understand the effects of blending processes within popular culture texts could be transferred to their literature studies, promoting understanding of some of the mechanisms of literary inventiveness, at both micro-textual levels (the study of blending within literary metaphors (Landau, Meier & Keefer, 2010) and macro-levels (the generation of new genres through blending) (Sinding, 2005).

For teachers, insights from the application of CBT can sharpen their sense of their goals in drawing on real-world media genres in the English classroom, and of the issues they need to clarify in their design of pedagogic tasks around these. Their increased understanding of aspects of the creation and structuring of popular culture texts, through application of CBT analysis, can be a first step towards increased teacher confidence in utilising media texts for language education purposes, and facilitating learners in becoming more adept and critically creative producers and critics of popular culture artifacts.

The meta-language provided by CBT is thus one further set of tools that offers both educators and learners a means to work far more consciously, in both receptive and productive modes, with human ingenuity and innovation in relation to the globalised mass media. This would need continued combination with explicit critical literacy lenses, to sharpen teachers' and learners' sense of the roots and effects of their own power play, as well as of the social forces of power upon them.

From one perspective, all culture can be seen as the product of forms of conceptual blending. Lessing argues that all culture is "remix", the utilisation of cultural products to change and combine them into innovative blends (cited in Knobel & Lankshear, 2008, p. 22-23). The concept of "remix", originally used mostly for audio-editing for the creation of remixed songs, has been expanded to include digital remixing, such as putting music to remixed movie and video clips. It can also be applied to "low tech" possibilities, where learners relocate, transform and fuse community oral, visual and performative genres (Stein & Newfield, 2002). Knobel and Lankshear are at pains to point out the extent to which "young people are embracing remix en masse" and the increasing centrality of remix to their processes of meaning-making and communication of ideas (2008, p. 23).

This view resonates strongly with Fauconnier and Turner's claim that our capacity for conceptual blending is a defining characteristic of our humanity. This raises numerous questions in relation to English education. How much could/should we productively, consciously frame what we generally do in English classes as cultural remixing? What "new" forms of cultural remix should be embraced and how should these be linked to more canonical and traditional forms of English education? How can conceptual blending theory be utilised to explore questions of genre, imagination, innovation and identity within English language education? In what ways does admitting new technologies into such creative blending practices in English classrooms reinforce and possibly widen gaps between poorer and richer learners? In what ways does it fundamentally alter our sense of what it means to "language" and to develop learners' critical literacy competencies? And what are the implications of increasingly multi-modal creations in English classrooms for assessment of learners? These are all complex issues, but not inherently insurmountable. The work of Newfield, Andrew, Stein and Maungedzo (2003) provides a useful starting point for grappling with some of these questions. Building conscious connections between their unraveling of the intricacies of multi-modality in language, literacy and media work, along with the application of conceptual blending analysis to such tasks, may generate further useful means of refining our understanding of, and resolving, these issues.

REFERENCES

Agee, T., & Martin, B. (2001). Planned or impulse purchases? How to create effective infomercials. *Journal of Advertising Research, 41*(6), 35-42.

Alvermann, D., & Hagood, M. (2000). Critical media literacy: Research, theory and practice in "new times". *The Journal of Educational Research, 93*(3), 193-205.

Andersen, K. N. (2008). From metrosexual to retrosexual: The importance of shifting male gender roles to feminism. *Thinking Gender Papers.* UCLA Center for the Study of Women. Retrieved January 11, 2009, from http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1119&content=csw.

Besley, A. C. (2003). Hybridised and globalised: Youth cultures in the postmodern era. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 25*, 153-177.

Doering, A., Beach, R., & O'Brien, D. (2007). Infusing multimodal tools and digital literacies into an English education program. *English Education, 40*(1), 41-60.

Egan, R., & Papson, S. (2005). "You either get it or you don't": Conversion experiences and *The Dr. Phil Show*. *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture, 10*, Summer. Retrieved September 23, 2010 from http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art10-drphil-print.html.

Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The way we think. Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Hall, T. (2011). Designing their own social worlds: The digital story of three African American young women. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 10*(1), 7-20.

Hope, W., & Johnson, R. (2004). What is an infomercial? *Advertising & Society Review, 5*(2). Retrieved January 7, 2009, from http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/asr/v005/5.2hope_johnson.html.

Janks, H., & Vasquez, V. (2011). Editorial: Critical literacy revisited: Writing as critique. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 10*(1), 1-6.

Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2008). Remix: The art and craft of endless hybridisation. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(1), 22-33.

Landau, M., Meier, B., & Keefer, L. (2010). A metaphor-enriched social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin,136*(6),1045-1067.

Maness, K. (2004). Teaching media-savvy students about the popular media. *English Journal, 93*(3), 46-51.

McVee, M., Dunsmore, K., & Gavalek, J. R. (2005). Schema theory revisited. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(4), 531-566.

Morrell, E. (2005). Critical English education. *English Education, 37*(4), 312-321.

Newfield, D., Andrew, D., Stein, P., & Maungedzo, R. (2003). "No number can describe how good it was": Assessment issues in the multimodal classroom. *Assessment in Education, 10*(1), 61-81.

Parkins, W. (2001). Oprah Winfrey's Change Your Life TV and the spiritual everyday. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies, 15*(2), 145-157.

Pascarella, J. (2008). Confronting the challenges of digital literacy: An essay review critical constructivism: A primer. *Educational Studies, 43*(3), 246-255.

Servaes, J., & Lie, R. (2003). Media, globalisation and culture: Issues and trends. *Communication, 29*(1&2), 7-23.

Sinding, M. (2005). *Genera mixta:* Conceptual blending and mixed genres in *Ulysses*. *New Literary History, 36*(4), 589-619.

Stein, P., & Newfield, D. (2002). Agency, creativity, access and activism: Literacy education in post-apartheid South Africa. In M. Kalantzis, G. Varnava-Skoura

& B. Cope. (Eds.), *Learning for the future* (pp. 156-165). Sydney, NSW: Commonground.

Strelitz, L. (2004). Against cultural essentialism: Media reception among South African youth. *Media, Culture and Society, 26*(5), 625-641.

Tyner, K., & Burn, A. (2010). Editorial: English as mediated literacy: Revisiting mode and medium. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 9*(1), 1-7.