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Remixing storytelling across modes

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Authors:
Fatima Vally Essa[1]
Belinda Mendelowitz[1]

Affiliations:
[1]Department of Languages, Literacies and Literatures, School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Fatima Vally Essa,
fatimavallyessa@gmail.com

Background: Using storytelling in a classroom context can be a powerful tool, but how can English language educators use storytelling in ways that are beneficial to their learners?

Objectives: In this paper, we simultaneously engage with the concept of storytelling, multimodality and creativity to show how these three concepts can work in tandem theoretically and in practice. The research is based on a collaborative multimodal storytelling intervention in a Grade 7 English Home Language classroom which entailed transducing the same story from a print-based mode to a performative mode. We work with the concept of storytelling across modes, rather than multimodal composition to highlight the fluid possibilities that our cross-pollination approach offers.

Methodology: The study is qualitative, and we thematically analyse data produced by one group of five learners. The research questions are as follows: (1) What are the different affordances of print-based and performative storytelling? (2) How do these two modes enable students to collaboratively draw on their linguistic, creative and social resources and repertoires?

Results: Collaborative storytelling created multiple access points in the English classroom which enabled the learners to draw on a wide range of modes, realities and resources in accessible and meaningful ways. The intervention created a space for the learners to reflect on past experiences, re-imagine their sense of self and future, and use their stories as a form of social action.

Conclusion: Each mode offered different pathways and distinct affordances to crafting and producing stories.

Keywords: print-based storytelling; performative storytelling; multimodality; transduction; cross-pollination; creativity; imagination; collaboration.

Introduction

Each of us has a story to tell, but how can English language educators engage with storytelling in ways that are beneficial to their learners? Storytelling in schools in South Africa and parts of the world remain predominantly associated with print-based linguistic modes even though learners often engage with storytelling outside school that extends to a range of different modes such as verbal stories, drama performances in theatre and on television. We argue that in the 21st century, language learning needs to include diverse and creative possibilities for storytelling that learners can relate to (Paris & Alim 2014). This includes topics, modes and language practices that learners are familiar with. Expanding on language teaching to include diverse possibilities, offers 'a complex, democratic space, founded on the productive integration of diverse histories, modes, genres, epistemologies, feelings, languages and discourses' (Stein 2008:1). We illustrate our attempt to do so by engaging in a collaborative and multimodal storytelling intervention as a tool that enables learners to access their rich range of social, creative and linguistic resources.

In this article, we build on the work of Stein (2008) and other scholars (Beneke 2018; Enciso 2017; Newfield 2009, 2011) who have engaged with multimodal storytelling by theoretically and practically integrating aspects of storytelling, multimodality and creativity simultaneously through cross-pollinating the same story from print-based to performative modes. We drew on theory and practice from Stein (2008) who dealt with multimodal writing in a similar context, and we were able to build on her findings 14 years later and gain new insights due to some differences in the pedagogy. Stein's study was conducted by implementing a multimodal intervention in which she began with the performative mode, followed by a linguistic/print-based mode in which the learners individually explored personal histories and representations of their lives through storytelling.

In contrast to Stein (2008), our multimodal intervention began with the collaborative construction of a print-based story with a group of Grade 7 learners, followed by transducing the same story into a performance as a way of scaffolding ideas. We offer a fine-grained analysis of this process by analysing the stories produced across both modes and identifying the affordances and limitations of each mode. We work with the concept of storytelling across modes, rather than multimodal composition to signal the fluid possibilities of our approach, and to escape the trap of valorising written stories.

Theoretical framework

There is substantial literature available on storytelling, multimodality and creativity (Chadwick 2017; Enciso 2017; Mendelowitz 2016; Newfield 2009, 2011, 2014; Stein 2008; Vygotsky 2004), but there are few studies that deal with all three of these concepts explicitly and simultaneously. We build on the existing scholarship by explicitly theorising these concepts and exploring the connections between them. Multimodality research often draws on creativity in practice (Newfield 2011), but creativity and imagination are seldom conceptualised explicitly. Therefore, we used storytelling as a tool to facilitate a multimodal pedagogy which enabled learners to access elements of creativity and imagination in their writing.

Storytelling

We work with print-based and performative storytelling which we define and conceptualise differently due to differences in the characteristics of each mode. We define print-based storytelling as:

> [A] process where the teller uses a narrative structure, vocalization, and/or dramatic and mental imagery to communicate with an audience, who also uses mental imagery to provide the teller with verbal and non-verbal feedback. (Dyson & Genishi 1994 in Lucarevschi 2016:26)

As cited in Lucarevschi (2016), multimodal storytelling is defined as 'the use of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and interaction to connect a tale with listeners' (Hsu 2010:7).

We conceptualise storytelling as:

> 'a fundamental marker of being human that has always been an integral part of human activities across time, space and cultures. We make sense of our lives through stories and construct our identities through the stories we tell ourselves and others, as well as the stories we hear from others'. (Mendelowitz, Ferreira & Dixon in press)

Hence, storytelling is an important aspect of identity construction which enables us to explore both our inner and outer landscapes (Bruner 1986).

In this paper, we argue that storytelling is a means to powerfully capitalise on learners linguistic, creative and social resources and repertoires (Enciso 2017:35). This is because storytelling foregrounds the personal, affective and provisional ways of knowing (Bruner 1986), valuing the resources learners bring to the classrooms. It is regarded as a personal and authentic form of learning (Anderson & Macleroy 2017). A number of scholars have emphasised the importance of locating stories in specific socio-cultural contexts, without which stories can simply become too individualised and narrow (Chadwick 2017; Goodson & Gill 2014; Mendelowitz et al. [forthcoming]). This argument is well articulated by Chadwick (2017:12) who argues that 'stories are constructed in the cracks between multiple and at times contradictory collective voices, and identity/narrative is thus radically dialogical'.

Chadwick (2017) highlights the multiplicity of stories. The writer/teller draws on different voices from past and present experiences across different contexts. This applies even more strongly to the intervention discussed in this paper due to the activities being collaborative and drawing on a socio-cultural context. It was dialogic at various levels and required the learners to draw on multiple identities, multiple voices and multiple experiences in creative and imaginative ways as they remixed across modes.

Creativity

We used a Vygotskian approach to theorise our understanding of creativity in which imagination and creativity are commonly used interchangeably. Imagination is defined as a mental function that synthesises creativity, cognition and affect (Vygotsky 2004). From this perspective, imagination can be conceptualised as the act of mind that generates creativity.

Vygotsky (2004) provided a model for understanding imagination and creative activity. One of the components of this model is called creative reworking, which is taking something that exists, such as a memory, and changing it by combining it with other ideas to create new ideas and experiences, producing something new out of what already exists. By drawing on this idea, we understand that creativity, especially in storytelling, is grounded in reality and involves drawing on lived experiences and resources as a source of inspiration (Greene 1995).

The relationship between imagination and reality is complex. Enciso (2017) builds on Vygotsky's theory and her definition of imagination grounds it as a critical social practice in the material reality of learners' lives. Enciso (2017) is particularly interested in the relationship between past, present and future selves and how storytelling may enable learners to re-imagine their futures by reflecting on their past experiences. Vygotsky (2004) 'banishes the popular image of the lonely genius imagining brilliant new ideas in isolation' (Mendelowitz et al. [in press]). He illustrates how imagination is developed through social interactions and engagement within society. Enciso (2017) argues that a fundamental aspect of this writing process is mobilising learners' resources. In relation to this, Enciso (2017:35) raises the following question: 'With what linguistic, semiotic, and material resources might it be possible to speak and be heard?'

We believe that a multimodal storytelling intervention can help to answer this question because the social and collaborative aspect of the intervention provided learners with opportunities to employ an extended range of shared resources, particularly their 'collaborative imagination' (Mendelowitz 2016:6) to tell their stories.

Multimodality

We draw on the multimodal theory of Kress (2010) and transduction theorised by Newfield (2011) when discussing key concepts in this paper. Kress (2010) states that the affordances of multimodality which are physical, material and social, generate a specific logic by providing different representational and communicative potentials of expressing and understanding information. The shift from a monomodal pedagogy to a multimodal pedagogy moves away from the focus on language as a primary mode of teaching and learning, and includes the role of sensory and bodily practices (Newfield 2011). Language is still present and by no means does multimodality exclude the use of language. However, other modes are foregrounded and are sometimes used in conjunction with language. We conceptualise our understanding of multimodality and multimodal storytelling as something that is fluid and may take many different shapes and forms. By doing so, we decided to term our intervention 'Storytelling across different modes' as this best represents the infinite possibilities of transmodal meaning making.

The intervention required transduction from a print-based story to the performance mode. Transduction is a process of translation in which meaning is translated from one mode to another (Kress 2010). It can also be called 'the transmodal moment' or 'transmodal semiosis' (Newfield 2009, 2014), which involves designing texts to convey meanings and ideas across different modes that are linked in some way, either in theme or topic. Transduction involves internal semiosis which is based on meanings conceived in the brain, and external semiosis which deals with meaning conveyed through signs and texts (Kress 2010; Newfield 2014). Newfield (2011) and Stein (2008) imply that even if the same story is represented using different modes, no two modes of storytelling are the same and, therefore, they produce different meanings and distinctive outcomes. Multimodal storytelling, particularly the performance mode, invites the body and full range of senses into the classroom which in turn facilitates different kinds of learning in comparison to monomodal storytelling.

Engaging in print-based and performative storytelling in a classroom context draws on home literacy practices and mimics modes and language practices that the learners encounter outside the classroom space (Bomer 2017). According to Newfield (2011:14), multimodal storytelling improves 'cognitive, social and affective engagement in learning activities' by expanding the semiotic space of the classroom. This means that multimodal language teaching has the potential to extend the learning process to capitalise on the use of space, bodies and signs to develop understanding, knowledge and meaning making. This makes language learning exciting and offers new access points as it integrates school knowledge with real life, making use of linguistic resources such as multilingualism and a social collaborative approach. These resources are often ignored in language classrooms due to Anglonormative ideologies (McKinney 2016) and the dominance of print-based modes.

We have framed the relationship between storytelling, creativity and multimodality and linked these concepts by engaging in multimodal storytelling to generate creativity.

Methodology

The main focus of this paper is on the different modes of storytelling, namely print-based and performative and the affordances that each of these modes offers. Hence, our research questions are:

- What are the different affordances of print-based and performative storytelling?
- How do these two modes enable students to collaboratively draw on their linguistic, creative and social resources and repertoires?

We used a qualitative case study to conduct this research and Fatima took on the role of being a teacher-researcher. The study was conducted with 20 Grade 7 learners who were 12–13 years old. The learners were instructed to form groups, and for the purpose of this paper we will focus on data produced by one of the groups that consists of five participants. The participants attended a co-educational, independent/private school that offers boarding facilities. The racial demographic of the school consisted of predominantly black learners. It is located in the city of Johannesburg and is classified as a quintile 3 institution which indicates that it is a low-income school. During the data collection period, the school was in an unstable state due to the Grade 7 class not having an English educator. The school was under-resourced in terms of equipment and teaching tools, having only furniture, a chalkboard and a limited number of textbooks to use as learning resources. Due to a lower middle-income background, many learners had limited access to technology and basic stationery which restricted their choice when selecting modes for the transduction of their print-based stories.

None of the participants was from the suburb that the school is situated in, but rather from nearby townships. The participants attended an English-medium school and an English Home Language class, but they did not speak English as a home language. The learners spoke a range of languages and language varieties at home and in social contexts which include isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Tsotsitaal, but they were encouraged to only speak English in the English classroom. This indicated a mismatch between the school language of learning and teaching (LOLT) and the languages spoken in their home/social contexts. Unlike isiZulu and isiXhosa, Tsotsitaal is not an official South African language. Tsotsitaal is a township variety of street speech that draws on urban vernaculars from African languages

and Afrikaans. It is associated with the expression of youth identities, particularly among young males.

Intervention programme

Part 1: Print-based storytelling – The intervention began by reading to the class two stories from the FunDza website. These stories were used to model local short stories for a young audience, as they align with the type of stories that the learners were expected to produce. FunDza stories have meaningful content that draws on the lives and experiences of the South African youths and include topics such as love, money, crime, abuse, school and success/goals. The stories make use of writing elements that focus on plot, developing identifiable characters and character voices, diverse language repertoires, consisting of chapters each ending on a cliff-hanger which encourages the reader to continue reading. Using the FunDza stories as a model prepared the learners to write in ways that defy the boundaries of traditional language practices of school writing and imagine and establish their peers as audience.

Thereafter, in a group of five, the learners were instructed to write a collaborative short story of approximately 500 words. The brief included writing about any event or issue that they experienced in their lives or communities. They were encouraged to make use of code-switching, colloquial language or write parts of the story in any language of their choosing with translations to incorporate language practices that occur outside the classroom or school context.

Part 2: Performative storytelling – In the second part of the intervention, the learners were instructed to transduce their print-based story into any mode of their choosing. The group selected the kinaesthetic mode, specifically a drama performance, and they performed their story to the class. This could have been due to their interest in television soap operas which they expressed, as it is a major part of youth culture and multimodal home literacy practices (Anderson & Macleroy 2017; Paris & Alim 2014). Fatima engaged in a focus group discussion which gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on their participation as a group and their writing/performative process and choices.

The study consisted of a multimodal writing intervention in which the group of learners had to transduce the same story across two different modes – print-based and performative. The stories that they produced in both modes, were closely analysed using thematic content analysis, and the most striking themes and issues that emerged were utilised as categories for the discussion of our findings. We then did a second close reading, focusing on the emerging themes in relation to our key theoretical frames. The issues that the group explored and the ways in which they used language to tell the stories were of interest to us. Key ideas that emerged from the focus group discussion were linked to the analysis of the stories.

Ethical clearance was obtained to conduct this study from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical). This study was voluntary, and the participants and their parents were provided with information and consent forms. In accordance with ethical protocols, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and the research site is guaranteed as no names and identifying information were revealed in this paper.

Data analysis and findings
Creative affordances of print-based storytelling

The print-based storytelling component of this intervention challenged some of the commonly held assumptions about school writing due to the unconventional brief such as allowing multilingualism in academic writing and the collaborative nature of the intervention. This section (Box 1) contains the original print-based story crafted by the group which is titled Bullying and love. The spelling and grammar have not been changed to capture the authenticity of the writers and illustrate development of the story and language usage as it shifts across modes. This is followed by a fine-grained analysis of the story in relation to three categories that emerged:

> Category 1 – Collaborative creative reworking and linguistic play
> Category 2 – Collaborative re-imagining
> Category 3 – Collaborative versatility

BOX 1: The print-based story.

Bullying and love

Chapter 1

Once upon a time there was a girl called Palesa, she was in in Grade 7. Her family was not poor, not rich, just normal. She had a mother who was a domestic worker and she had diabetes. Her mother always give her R5 when she goes to school. One day Palesa asked her mother what kind of work are you doing? Her mother said, 'No I can't tell you because you will be disappointed in me.'

Palesa went to school on Monday. When she got there she found a girl called Gontse. Gontse always bullies her. she always takes her money or sometimes her lunch box. Palesa was afraid to tell a teacher or her mother because she knows that she will get beaten after school. When Palesa's ma'am says write the noise makers, Gontse says if you dare write me, i will kill you with my bare hands. Gontse was a tall girl in class, she always wanted to fight with boys especially Palesa. Palesa hates fighting and everyone in class was afraid of Gontse. Gontse took advantage of her classmates. And she was so disrespectful and she was so cheecky and jeolouse. When time goes on there was a parents' meeting at school. Palesa wanted to tell her mother but she was afraid of Gontse. But she wondered if she didn't tell her mother she will be bullied for the rest of her [life]. Palesa told her mother that there is someone who is bullying her. Her mother didn't believe her. And she cried for so long.

Chapter 2

There was a boy who went to a new school, he was 13 years old. He lived with his mother, father and his sisters. They were not poor, not rich, just normal people. They lived a wonderful life but the boy named Jackie was so sad that he left his old friend and his old place.

On Monday Jackie and his family moved in with a lot of bags, and Jackie was not in the mood. He tried to control it. So the next day Jackie went to school and he was so afraid that if some learners embarasse [embarrass] him what will he do? He told his mother, his mother said don't worry about the other kids says about you. His mother said just be yourself and get some new friends and be cool. His mother remember choose your friends carefully don't smoke, don't drink and don't be disrespectful in class.

As the time goes he started to get new friend and it was Palesa. Then they got very close. On the same day they ask each other their names and where so they live and what is their age. Then Jackie asked Palesa what is the name of the school. Palesa said its King William private School. Wow what a nice name said Jackie.

Chapter 3

On the next day Jackie asked Palesa what grade are you in. I'm in Grade 7 said Palesa. Then when it was lunch time Palesa never went to capertirar [cafeteria] with Jackie. Then Gontse and her crew came and told Palesa to give them her lunch. And they pushed Palesa and took her lunch box but on that moment Jackie saw Palesa and he went to save Palesa. And they fell in-love for each other. And Palesa leand on Jackie and they started kissing each other. No bullies bullied Jackie and Palesa. And they lived happy ever after.

THE END

In the discussion that follows we use the print-based story produced by the group and their experience of this activity to identify affordances and limitations of collaborative print-based storytelling.

Category 1 – Collaborative creative reworking and linguistic play

Bullying is the central theme of this story. During the focus group discussion, Lungile, a female learner from the group said:

'We wrote about bullying because it's not right. They beat up other children and they end up with bruises on their face so that's why we wrote about it. We have seen it in [our] class.' (Participant 2, female, Grade 7 learner)

This is evidence that the learners drew on their personal lives and experience of bullying as inspiration for this story. We identified that this story was a creative reworking of their lived experience (Vygotsky 2004) as bullying is an issue that they experienced in their class. They wrote about the topic in a very authentic, yet creative way as they captured the reality of their experience of the bullying dynamic that exists in their class without directly approaching the bully.

Despite being encouraged to make use of multilingualism, colloquial language and slang which was modelled in the FunDza stories, the learners did not make use of a range of language repertoires when writing their story. Evidence of limited linguistic repertoires is based on working with multilingual learners who possess diverse African language repertoires, yet they chose to write the entire story in Standard English. This limited the richness of their writing voices and meant there was minimal remixing of diverse out-of-school resources with the school resources and language practices (Beneke 2018). Given the dominance of Anglonormative ideologies (McKinney 2016) in South African schools, it is not surprising that they associate print-based writing with Standard English. This does not mean that multilingualism is not an affordance of print-based stories, but rather that much work would need to be done in classrooms to cultivate a valuing of multilingual repertoires in order for learners to feel comfortable to play with languages.

Language has the potential to create vivid, imagined worlds, particularly in their use of dialogue. Palesa asks her mother what work she does and her mother refuses to tell her because she is ashamed. 'No I can't tell you because you will be disappointed in me.' This dialogue gives the reader a sense of the mother's shame without explicitly describing it. The learners use dialogue here simply but powerfully to capture the mother's voice and her sense of vulnerability. Despite this successful example of using language to capture emotion, linguistic play in the story is constrained by a reliance on literal language and a tendency to use narration to tell the reader what is happening, rather than 'showing' through creative linguistic expression. However, despite these limitations, the learners do successfully capture the perspective, voice, emotions and 'inner landscape' (Bruner 1986) of the main character, Palesa, and the secondary character, Jackie – to a lesser extent.

Category 2 – Collaborative re-imagining

The theme of bullying is developed in realistic and powerful ways which was aided by a collaborative reflection and re-imagination of their experience of being or witnessing bullying when writing the story. Palesa is depicted as a stereotypical victim. The writers capture her overriding emotion of fear through dialogue, small details, and the repetition of certain adjectives/ word choices – the word *afraid* is used three times in chapter one, paragraph two. In keeping with the typical bullying scenario, Palesa is afraid to tell her teachers or her mother (adult authority figure) 'because she knows she will get beaten after school'. We also learn about Gontse's typical bullying tactics – 'she always takes her money or sometimes her lunch box'.

The writers describe Gontse's physical appearance and use dialogue to create a convincingly threatening character, almost like a stereotypical definition of a bully which could have been intentional to draw attention away from the bully in their class. Gontse is tall and uses threatening language to intimidate her classmates – 'If you dare write me I will kill you with my bare hands'. Hence, what is most powerful in chapter one is the development of the theme of victimhood and silencing of Palesa. However, towards the end of the paragraph there are signs of the transition from a creative reworking towards a more critical approach as Palesa realises that 'if she didn't tell her mother she will be bullied for the rest of her [*life*]'. The transition is an important step in challenging the power dynamics of the bullying narrative and an assertion of Palesa's voice while simultaneously enabling the writers to envisage new possibilities (Greene 1995).

Chapter two introduces the reader to a new character, Jackie. This chapter is not as rich and developed as the first as it consists of 'telling' rather than 'showing' through writing elements. However, what is interesting thematically is the open dialogue he has with his mother about his fears and how she is able to engage with his fears and provide soothing advice. 'His mother said just be yourself and get some new friends and be cool.' This contrasts with Palesa's relationship with her mother who perpetuates silence and doesn't provide Palesa with strategies to deal with the bullying.

Category 3 – Collaborative versatility

Beneke (2018) defines versatility as a crafting process that entails risk taking, adaptability/ flexibility and experimentation. The learners displayed versatility in this regard (Beneke 2018), while crafting their stories as they are inspired by having a bully in their class which they expressed during the focus group discussion as mentioned in category 1. This means that the group did not just write this story as an academic requirement, but also as a form of risk and social action against the bullying dynamic. They chose to

express the events that took place by creatively reworking (Vygotsky 2004) it to suit the context of the story and write for their peers as the audience.

Collaboration played a huge role in enabling social action, because telling the story as a group provided a united stance against the bully. The storytelling intervention shielded them by offering a space to explore themes and issues that are important to the learners as they previously were not able to take action or address the issue in a social context. The unity and courage that collaboration offers is also highlighted in the story as Palesa is not able to address the issue and stand up to Gontse until Jackie is introduced. Telling a realistic story but masking it as a fairy tale was an interesting approach to explore events within the confines of this genre. It served as a safe environment to unpack and retell events which can be regarded as taking action or confronting the bully in a safe way through elements of storytelling without being explicit in their approach. Collective risk taken to challenge the class bully led to re-imagining a counter-narrative (Morrell 2008). Storytelling created a space in which learners could challenge power relations and social inequalities within their classroom. It produced a collective and symbolic notion of resilience through storytelling and generated a story of multiple voices in which learners felt heard, which was empowering for this group of writers.

The group had the emotional and creative freedom to explore this experience and creatively rework the story so that it has an intended effect on the audience and the bully. The final chapter of the story reverts fully to the language and ideology of fairy tales. Not only does Jackie save Palesa, but she also leans on him literally and symbolically, a stereotypically gendered resolution of the problem, portraying Palesa as having little agency. This is an interesting shift to the fairy tale genre despite the authentic nature of events within this story. It is believable and realistic until the final four lines of the story as it creates a shift from storytelling of real life experiences to a typically fictitious ending. The move to the fairy tale frame restricts the writers' collective imaginations (Mendelowitz 2016) and prevents them from engaging with more challenging and substantial solutions to the problem. It indicates their perception and understanding of the storytelling genre. It is almost as if they perceive it to not be a story if it does not consist of the typical fairy tale phrases like 'Once upon a time' and 'they lived happily ever after'. They demonstrated creative versatility by 'remixing' realistic storytelling with a fairy tale genre. Although this remix ultimately lessens the power and impact of the story, it does indicate a willingness to experiment and play with genre conventions.

Creative affordances of performative storytelling

Transducing the same story into another mode was a requirement of the intervention, but the choice of transducing it into the performative mode was made by the group of learners. The extracts in Box 2 is a recollection of scenes from

BOX 2: Extracts from the performance.

Bullying and love
Scene 1
Palesa's mother is dressed very shabbily and untidily (she is draped in pieces of unmatching cloth).
'Here is R5 for you my dear. Buy you some lunch to eat at school'. With a beaming smile, Palesa thanks her mother and puts the money in her pocket. She tilts her head to one side and makes eye contact with her mother – 'What work do you do ma?' she asks. Her mother's facial expression turns sombre and gives a sense of shame and uneasiness. She fidgets nervously with her clothing and looks down. She responds by saying 'Indodakazi (daughter), I cannot tell you now. Get yourself ready to go to school'.
Scene 2
Palesa arrives at school looking happy and cheerful. A tall, big built girl named Gontse is waiting for her at the classroom door with her hand open. Palesa's pace slows down when she sees Gontse and the smile on her face disappears. Without saying a word, Palesa reaches into her pocket and hands over the R5 coin to Gontse, her hand slightly shaking. Gontse says: 'If you tell anyone about this, I will beat you up after school. Understand?' and she walks away with a grin on her face.
The scene skips ahead to the learners being in the classroom and they are engaged in work. Palesa's teacher gets called to the office and asks her to write down the names of the learners who are disruptive while she is gone. As Palesa stands up, Gontse aggressively pulls her by her blazer, yanking her back down onto the chair. In a stern voice she says, 'If you write my name, I will kill you with my own hands'. She looks Palesa in the eyes and makes an action of her slitting her throat with her hand. Scared and shaking, Palesa looks down at her book and tears begin to roll from her eyes.

Source: Vally Essa, F., 2019, 'Exploring the impact of multimodal composition on the learning and composing of creative writing', unpublished Masters' dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand.

the performed story which are based on Fatima's field notes. The multilingual aspects and details of the performance could not be captured precisely, as we did not apply for ethics permission to video record the data. In this section, we critically explore the affordances and limitations of using a performative and collaborative approach to storytelling in relation to the following categories:

Category 1 – The language of performance
Category 2 – Storytelling as an embodied practice
Category 3 – Collaborative performance and audience

Category 1 – The language of performance

One of the most striking aspects of the performance was the learners' use of isiZulu, isiXhosa, Tsotsitaal and only the minimal use of English. Woodard, Vaughan and Machado (2017) states that educators and learners should acknowledge that language is not neutral. We need to critique and explore the power dynamics and language ideals that exist; for example, the print-based mode was associated with Standard English and the learners did not deviate from this despite having the freedom to do so, whereas the performance genre created a space for the learners to showcase their rich range of linguistic repertoires due to the affordance of using verbal language. It could also be due to a shift in audience to include the class, indicating the need to make their story accessible to their audience and provide real life contexts for their story to be relatable.

Using a fluid mode such as performance and their home languages provided the learners with a space to develop their story differently. For example, the characters in the story spoke in isiZulu on the playground but spoke in English in the classroom scenes to depict the realistic nature of social communication and language usage in different settings and amongst different groups of people. The use of familiar languages assisted them to develop not only their characters, but also the plot of their story which progressed

with a faster pace than the written story and 'showed' development of the story in a way that was not reliant on standard forms of language, but rather on body language and verbal expression. Encouraging familiar language practices and multilingualism created a hospitable space for identity and voice to be explored and negotiated as the participants were able to produce and express characters convincingly by using languages and language varieties to capture the essence of characters with strong voices in their story (Canagarajah 2015).

Encouraging multilingual storytelling was a way of drawing on cultural and social communicative practices that occur outside the classroom and in real life contexts. This created awareness of the limitations of what is considered as 'correct' or 'acceptable' writing in institutional contexts which is almost always print-based English texts (Stein 2008). Nolwazi, a female learner who is confident in speaking English said: 'It's actually good and I enjoyed it because we don't speak our languages in class, only when its break time but during class we only speak English' (Participant 1, female, Grade 7 learner). This indicates that the resource of language that learners bring into the classroom is often ignored, rendering their linguistic identities and repertoires invisible in the English classroom due to the power that the English language holds in academic contexts within South African schools (McKinney 2016; Vally Essa 2019).

Category 2 – Storytelling as an embodied practice

> Performance 'involves the blending of gesture and word, of dance (body movements) and song, so that they become so closely interwoven that it is impossible to speak of one without treating the other'. (Scheub 1975:15)

A body in action, during performance is aided by language, but not completely reliant on it as the body is foregrounded (Mallozzi 2011). In performative storytelling, it is impossible to speak about language without embodiment as multimodal storytelling is a full-body experience that includes the body, voice, facial expression, movement/space, gesture and language. The performative mode enabled them to move beyond the boundaries of language and to draw on modes, genres and languages that they were familiar with in real life contexts such as soap operas. This resulted in linking in-school and out-of-school knowledge and literacy practices.

Multimodal pedagogy can express creativity in unexpected ways (Stein 2008). By moving from what Stein (2008) regards as a disembodied mode (print-based) to an embodied mode (performance) of storytelling, the performance genre allowed the story to unfold in a way that was not evident in the written story. The written story served as a source for preliminary ideas that were 'remixed' (Beneke 2018) and 'brought to life' through expressive voice, body action and dramatisation which captivated the audience as the characters and plot were actualised. 'Writing produces compactness and permanence. But what writing gains in permanence, it

loses in comprehensiveness' (Stein 2008:62). In this instance, a shift from written mode to performance mode resulted in the story being told more comprehensively. It encouraged the learners to take control of their available resources and tell the story in a way that is accessible. Resources that were capitalised on during this performance were inclusive of the learner's personal experience, languages, body, voice and classroom space.

A shift in mode from print-based to performative enabled learners to capture the bully's aggression more convincingly. One of the most impactful gestures was when Gontse pulled Palesa down by her blazer and threatened her. The pull metaphorically symbolised strength and the ability to overpower Palesa as she was pulled down forcefully with just one hand. Threats that Gontse made in the written story remained verbal, whereas in the performance mode the threats progressed to acts that were more physical, such as a gesture of Gontse slitting her throat to symbolise that she would kill Palesa. Tears ran down Palesa's face to show her fear and a feeling of defeat. Their use of body language was powerful in the performance because meaning in this scene was conveyed without relying on the use of words or language.

Category 3 – Collaborative performance and audience

The learners responded significantly differently to the performance task brief, compared to the print-based story briefing. As soon as Fatima gave the brief, many learners stood up and began moving around, shouting out ideas and dialogue. Some began to argue about which character they wanted to be, and the classroom was instantly filled with vibrant chatter and movement which was limited in the first part of the intervention. Each learner was eager to contribute in some way and they drew on aspects of their home lives during discussion that took place in various languages. This could be because the performance story genre allowed a sense of 'control' in which they could tell this meaningful story in a way that they wanted to and in the languages that they could best express themselves in (Stein 2008). The learners' used their bodies and minds to plan and produce their stories, which foregrounds the affordance of embodiment that is generated by multimodal storytelling (Stein 2008).

Due to the observations made and the development of stories produced, we concluded that the learners worked better collaboratively and creatively in the construction of their performative stories. For the written stories, we cannot confidently confirm if each learner took on an equal role and responsibility in writing the story, but for the performed story, each learner took on the role of a character. This means that each learner needed to take responsibility and their collaboration as a group was vital for the success of the story. For example, the relationship between Gontse and Palesa was crucial because they needed to produce distinctive character voices and work together to express the experiences

of these characters in a convincing way to illustrate tension between the characters. Thus, we created a space for learners to engage with practical storytelling skills, creativity and collaboration throughout this intervention.

During the performance, there were whispers among the audience, giggles, gasps of shock, raised eyebrows and glares of disbelief shared across the classroom, and sounds of disapproval towards violent characters. The story became a shared experience between the performers and the audience, making the audience feel part of the story. The exploration of realities and identification of their role in this story drew the audience into this world of Palesa and Gontse which was an epitome of the reality that they encountered in their daily lives of having a bully in their class. This indicates the power of the pen, and in this case, the power of multimodal storytelling.

Conclusion and recommendations

> Modes materialise, realise and externalise meaning in different ways, enabling the expression of meanings in some modes which are inexpressible in others. (Newfield 2011:5)

Overall, this study looks at the affordances and limitations of collaborative print-based and performative storytelling in an English Home Language classroom. It does so through a multimodal storytelling intervention during which learners were expected to work in groups to produce a print-based story about their lives and experiences and transduce the same story into the performative mode. Working with the same group and same story across different modes illustrated that each mode offered distinct affordances and limitations, and different pathways to construct and tell their story. We call this cross-pollination as it is an approach that extracts the benefits of both modes and diversifies the concept of transmodal meaning making (Newfield 2009) by remixing the same story and developing ideas from one mode to another as an ongoing process of semiosis (Newfield 2011).

What stood out for us was the way in which language was used differently across the two modes to tell the same story. The print-based story was associated with Standard English. However, the performative mode enabled the learners to draw on a wider range of multilingual repertoires. This does not mean that print-based stories cannot offer multilingual potential, but rather that learners associate print-based storytelling with Standard English in an Anglonormative context as these ideologies are so ingrained, and that is what needs to change. This has implications for the possibilities of multilingual stories as we need to create classroom environments that value learners' multilingual repertoires and encourage it as a creative storytelling tool.

The performative story offered scope to draw on out of school resources and practices that are commonly used in home and social contexts and link them to curricular content. Drawing on multiple resources created a space to tell the stories in ways that best represented the learners and their experiences so that they could claim the stories as their own. Both activities drew on linguistic, social and creative resources when crafting the stories, but the performative task drew on a broader range of resources and linguistic repertoires. Increased engagement with existing resources facilitated creativity development which is the reason that the performative story came across as being more vivid and nuanced (Vally Essa 2019). Therefore, we recommend further study with collaborative print-based storytelling in ways that enable learners to engage with their existing resources and repertoires in non-restrictive ways.

Across both modes, collaboration played a significant role in enabling creative reworking (Vygotsky 2004), re-imagining and counter-storytelling of the bullying dynamic. A multimodal approach to storytelling resulted in making the classroom a more 'participatory' and 'agentive' space (Newfield 2011:16). In doing so, the learners were able to draw on their personal experience of being bullied and rework it into a new creative story. We identified that there was power in using collaboration as a social resource as the stories were used as a form of social action. The group took a collective risk to address the issue which may not have been possible as individuals. This paper encapsulates the possibilities and potential of using collaborative storytelling as a tool in the English classroom for enabling learners and educators to draw on a wide range of modes, realities, resources and repertoires in ways that make learning accessible.

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Disclaimer

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