Trauma, Injustice and Identity

An Egalitarian and Autoethnographic Approach to Analyzing Students' Personal Language Narratives

By

Mervyn A. Coetzee and
Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam

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Table of Contents

Foreword

This book publication by Mervyn and his doctoral supervisor, Siva is a huge achievement for us. When I say "us", I refer to *all* (mostly brown-skinned) South African people who have endured similar injustices that this book reveals and deconstructs. More specifically, the injustices in the South African education system addressed by the authors resonate with me both personally and professionally.

I place myself at the *centre* of the research that Mervyn and Siva have conducted. This hard work is long overdue; it has created a platform where we can now *openly* talk about our traumas as English second language speakers. Reading the students' extracts from their personal language narratives in the book has caused me to reflect upon my own learning journey in the South African higher education context. It has brought issues to the surface that I have consciously decided to bury over all these years.

The primary focus of the book was to conduct *"an analysis of the underlying reasons for the students' apparent reticence and demotivation, and to engender a critical awareness of affective issues in the learning and teaching of educators"*. In this respect, the book is very significant for all professionals that are in learning and teaching; whether at primary school, high school, college and/or university levels.

The extensive research conducted by the authors has led to findings, which illustrate that "*most English second language students attribute their reticence in the classroom as a direct result of their progressively diminished self-confidence, low self-esteem, low self-perception which has its roots in their perceived lack of English language proficiency and other attendant socio-economic factors"*. The findings of the authors' research offer us a glimpse into how education has destroyed the heart and souls of many black students in South Africa.

What I found most striking are Mervyn's and the students' real-life-world reflections captured in their respective personal narratives. They clearly articulate the respective writers' affective traumas which are

systemic. The traumas have their roots in the writers' perceived lack of English language proficiency, for example, which surfaces predominantly in learning and teaching spaces in which English is the main medium of instruction. These issues are rarely talked about in education spaces. The classrooms of the past, of which I was part, were devoid of opportunities for students to talk about how the predominantly English curricula had marginalised them.

At this time in our democracy, as South Africans we surely will benefit if the authors' work can be utilised across the higher education spectrum to plan and provision *transformational* approaches to education that value inclusivity and *ubuntu*: interconnectedness and collective responsibility.

In closing, I commend the authors for running the risk of 'losing face' by candidly articulating the injustices of the education system. Their work offers effective recommendations geared towards assisting education professionals through academic support, and to re-engineer the South African education system through more transformed and contextualised approaches: fundamentally, all students and staff should be viewed as equal human beings and equal contributors to learning and teaching; regardless of their respective titles, positions, etc. The authors strike the colonialist barriers to develop an education system that is constructed on pillars of true equality and social justice that recognises and empowers the Black child in particular.

Mr Odwa Mntonintshi
Director Quality Assurance and Information Management
Academic Programmes Review Specialist
University of the Western Cape
South Africa

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Historical Background

At the outset, we wish to discuss the social and educational contexts and concerns that necessitated this book. It is hoped that this discussion will evoke a level of awareness in the reader, and serve as a point of departure for the research conducted for Mervyn's doctoral study. It is important that we mention at this earliest point in the book that it is both Mervyn's personal narrative and an academic document; hence the term '*autoethnographic approach*' assumes particular prominence in the title.

The origin of this study stems mainly from Mervyn's upbringing generally and several specific, critical incidences in his life journey that have shaped his identity, his views on life generally, and his reflections on the impact of prejudices and injustices based upon one's English language competency, place of origin and/or residence, and one's socio-economic status, among other things. It was not until his early teens that he had realized that he was born into a South Africa riddled with gross violations of human rights that were founded upon a ruthless system of meticulously strategized racial domination by one people group over several others under the guise of the euphemism, "separate development" (Wolpe, 1972; Sharp, 1981; Halbach, 1988).

The system of socio-political, cultural and economic engineering was more popularly known as "Apartheid": a governmental system founded upon racial superiority and inferiority that was designed, implemented, supported, maintained and defended by actual individuals and people groups both within South Africa and abroad.

During his high school years, Mervyn had come to realise that there were forces (real individuals and organized groups) that were committed to

opposing the system of Apartheid even at the cost of jeopardizing their own well-being and lives. During his primary school years, he had realized that his family happened to be one of those groups of people (the so-called 'Coloureds') for whom Apartheid was intentionally designed to discriminate against. Mervyn and his family were *not* among those individuals for whom the system was designed to benefit as they were not "white".

Siva, in his own right is acutely aware and practically informed of these kinds of injustices experienced by the indigenous people of the so-called, "third world" or "periphery". He hails from Southern India, and has been embedded in the real-life-worlds of the people of Ethiopia (in the 1980's), in Armenia in the earlier part of this millennium, and he has also been living in South Africa since 2011. He came to South Africa out of choice to serve the South African academia. Handing down his experiential wisdom has been at the forefront of his tutelage of his doctoral and master's students and academic staff at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa.

It was not long into Mervyn's first year at Bonteheuwel High School that he had become an active protester against Apartheid. These were very tumultuous times marred by political violence by the State against its enemy: the activists of the so-called "liberation struggle" (Alexander, 1990). During these times, as a young teenager, he had undergone many intense internal struggles. He had been trying to comprehend the rationale/s for racism; he questioned if there was a 'God', where 'he/it' was, and how come 'he/it' would allow these injustices to happen. He had also begun to question his own worth as a human being because he was raised to believe that everyone is born equal, and that there was a God who was fair and just, and who was no discriminator of persons.

After escaping several instances of being attacked and/or caught and jailed by the security forces at the time, Mervyn had begun to feel helpless. It is impossible for him to erase from his memory the many cases of first-hand experiences of falling victim to politically induced police brutality some of which are alluded to in this study.

Mervyn grew up in an Afrikaans-speaking home with sporadic code switching between Afrikaans, English and a mixture of the two languages known as "Afrikaaps". English was primarily reserved for school and occasionally when his family would visit with their 'posh' aunts and uncles who resided in the suburbs of Lansdowne and Woodstock in Cape Town, for example. But these visits were few and far between. At that time, Mervyn had not comprehended what lay beneath the 'posh-ness' of his English-speaking relatives but he had begun to assume that it was just the way it was: posh people speak "proper" English and lived in better suburbs and bigger houses than his.

It was not until he had entered the tertiary academic domain at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) that he had started to apprehend the essence of what a liberation struggle entailed. Although he had felt intimidated by the University setting because he had heard that it was for 'clever' people, for thinkers and people who viewed things very differently to the 'outside' world; he had felt a sense of belonging. This was mainly because he had entered a domain which, in his experience, was at the forefront of the "anti-Apartheid" liberation struggle both intellectually and practically. It was at this juncture, that his socio-political views and his academic endeavours had converged, and had begun to develop into what would eventually become this study: a fusion of his personal narrative, his academic work, the interactions with his doctoral supervisor (Siva) and the personal language narratives of the students in Mervyn's care.

At University during the late 1980's through the 1990's, Mervyn had found himself in a time and space where he had felt a sense of socio-political and intellectual freedom and empowerment. This was also a period in which the racism of Apartheid had met its most formidable opponent: the goodwill of the majority of the people who stood in *solidarity* against Apartheid; this would eventually signal its demise.

This era was arguably the most exciting, invigorating and in some ways the most volatile times in South Africa's recent history: the unbanning of many previously outlawed political organizations, the release of all

political prisoners, several instances of violent inter- and intra-racial conflict, and eventually the first democratic elections (Badat, & Sayed, 2014). But after the proverbial dust had settled, Mervyn had come to realize that there was more to freedom than the inauguration for new presidents, a new national flag, a new anthem, and a return to the international socio-economic and cultural arenas.

It was during his first year at university that he had encountered different types of discrimination compared to racism and sexism, for example. The first type of discrimination he had noticed was that some students for whom English was their second language (L2) had felt intimidated and belittled by those students for whom English was their first language (L1). This he had noticed and begun to observe in the tutorials and to some extent in the lectures of most of the classes he had attended: English, Geography and History for example. He was immediately reminded of the times when he and his family had visited their English-speaking relatives from the posh suburbs.

He had realized that some students (including himself) were not participating in the class discussions as frequently and spontaneously compared to some of the other students. In the English lectures and tutorials, for example, he had realized that many students like himself were struggling with English because, for many, this was not their home language, and their respective high school education had not adequately prepared them for tertiary learning and teaching.

Mervyn had concluded that the main reason for the L2 students' intimidation was because they had felt that they may be embarrassed if they made mistakes, could or did not pronounce certain words 'correctly' and/or they would be ridiculed for their respective accents; he observed this as some students had giggled at students with "African" or "typical, township Coloured" accents. These occurrences immediately resonated with him as he had also felt a sense of intimidation towards some students who were more fluent and eloquent than he was; he also felt a sense of low self-esteem when he had heard how some fellow students were uttering prejudicial remarks about students who from the town-

ships like Bonteheuwel where he grew up. He came to realise that those L1 students who had made those judgemental remarks probably lived in the posh "coloured" areas of the Cape.

The purpose of the above background setting is that our readership would understand that, in essence, this book *is* Mervyn's personal language narrative; a study that to some extent will unfold in a narrative genre and one which incorporates a subjective discourse. It essentially intends to challenge the conventional prescriptions of what qualifies as "scholarly" or "academic worthy" through the mediums of affect and subjectivity in learning and teaching. In this sense it is supportive of holistic, humanistic, participatory and egalitarian education.

1.2 Aims and Scope of the Study

The most important aim of this study is to investigate the discourses of affective trauma, injustice and identity in the personal language narratives of academic literacy (AL) students, and via the related data instruments. The personal language narrative will be used as an entry point into investigating these discourses in the learning and teaching environment of the AL modules selected for the study. Through the analysis of their narratives, the study will examine in particular the relationship between what is expected of the affected students academically and the *life-worlds* that preceded their entry to the university.

The study also investigates and seeks to better understand the dynamics between students for whom English is their second language (L2) and those for whom English is their first language (L1) in the AL classroom context. In this regard, the study also aims to illustrate how the discourses of affective trauma, injustice and identity are interrelated and how an understanding and appreciation for this can inform the continued development and improvements in the curricula of AL modules.

The research design and methodology will be informed by a qualitative and contextual approach. Generally, the research design will incul-

cate autoethnographic-type studies: methods of data collection that comprise personal document analyses (Chang, 2007), individual interviews, focus group interviews, a survey and classroom observations. One of the potential benefits of the personal narrative is that reading, studying and/or analyzing an autoethnography may enable one to view how others live their lives, which may also contribute to a deeper understanding of life in general. Therefore, autoethnography has solid academic merit and potential as this study will argue and intends to investigate (Hamdan, 2012).

Notwithstanding the preceding points, the study will argue that an egalitarian approach is highly suited to this type of academic research: investigating the impact of the demands of the "dominant" language (the medium of instruction) and its subsequent demands academically on the development of students' identities and self-perceptions, among other things. The vast majority of students come from linguistic backgrounds in which English is *not* their mother tongue; nor have they received adequate, quality training in the language. This injustice which renders the learning and teaching space unequal and therefore unethical, is no trivial matter. The various academic literacy interventions offered at universities may not suffice to address these issues. In this regard, the book attempts to articulate the intersectionality of the discourses of egalitarian thinking and autoethnography as a means to address the core issues that underlie the inequities and their impact on the affected students.

Furthermore, we propose to investigate how students' personal language narratives, or autoethnographies, can act as sources of information and insights into different *means* of knowledge creation. We will argue that personal experience methods can be used on a variety of issues relevant to learning and teaching in order to further develop knowledge (Hamdan, 2012). The study will maintain that an autoethnographic approach to research via instruments like the personal narratives, can serve both as a credible research genre *and* as methodology. It may offer opportunities to highlight the construction of identity as it covers various aspects of the writer's/narrator's life. We will thereby

argue for the value of an autoethnographic lens through which we aspire to read and interpret the students' language narratives. In the process of developing his own biography for the purposes of this study, Mervyn argues that one can develop a deeper understanding of one's own life and a sincere appreciation for the lives of others, and in particular those who, through no fault of their own, are disadvantaged long before they enter university.

The study will also examine whether the students' personal language narratives reveal elements of academic "under-preparedness" in terms of the various and respective AL levels of the students. In this regard, the study will analyze and use the students' narratives as a diagnostic instrument through which to glean their English language proficiency and AL competency levels. This analysis will be carried out both on a superficial level which will seek to understand the most common language issues that may emerge: grammar, syntax, tenses, etc. and the issues of presentation and coherence in writing. However, on a deeper level, we will investigate the languages of affective trauma, injustice and identity, among others, from the students' writings.

A further purpose of this study is to examine how the students' narratives reveal clues of the socio-economic (and all other resultant) inequalities that still prevail for the majority of black and 'coloured' South African students. Academically, it appears that many students enter the institution already traumatized socially, and this is compounded by the under-preparedness of their respective schooling backgrounds. They soon realize that there are academic (mainly linguistic) demands or requirements associated with AL which further compounds their traumatic experiences; and this is only the beginning of their journey into adult life at university. In this respect, Mervyn draws these abiding sentiments from his own personal experience as a 'coloured' student from the townships who had received a "gutter" –type of education which had done very little to prepare him for the journey through tertiary education. The term "gutter education" refers to systems of education that involved the segregation of black, coloured, Indian and white learners under Apartheid in South Africa. With the exception of

the white learners (and small groups of coloured and Indian learners from the more affluent areas), the education systems for all other ethnic groups were inferior. These systems involved efforts to control and manipulate the learning and teaching of learners. These measures often encompassed extreme use of mental conditioning and rote learning methods. The government at the time had a totalitarian posture in its prescription of the curricula which inevitably translated into the subjugation of the masses through these forms of second-rate education (Bigelow, 1987). In this regard, Mervyn will again draw from his own experience as a recipient of gutter education during his primary (elementary) and high school years.

In light of the above-stated issues, this study will argue that the personal written responses to seemingly benign assignments may be used by the students as vehicles of identity revelation, or a voice for their respective plights, and perhaps a means for reaching out for the holistic support they need to succeed in higher education. This *reaching out* is in a sense their respective vocal agencies: their means to have their plight recognized *and* also to be counted as equals regardless of their fluency in English and/or the AL competencies.

This study examines the inevitable interface between the discourses of AL, affective trauma, injustice and identity and their respective bearings on the students emotionally and eventually the performance of the relevant students. It would be a grave injustice to the affected students to ignore this and/or give the AL issues precedence over it. We wish to examine this point in light of the "affective" aspects of academia generally and specifically in the light of the affected students and their backgrounds as may be revealed in their respective language narratives, and the other data collection instruments.

In addition to the personal narrative, the study will draw from interviews with students and teaching staff, observations of tutorials and from Mervyn's experience in a teaching role, and from a survey. A very significant methodological instrument which the study deploys as a reflective tool, is a succinct and adaptive version of Mervyn's autobi-

ography. It is hoped that this multi-pronged methodological approach will serve to bolster the investigation as alluded to earlier.

One of the key practical observations that the study problematizes are the reasons for student reticence in the classroom. The observations of student reticence had been a personal interest of Mervyn since his days as an undergraduate student. The reason for this is that, as an undergraduate, he was a student who had been withdrawn, inhibited and who had refrained from participating actively in class for a number of reasons which the study explores in particular autobiographically. This aspect of the study hopes to uncover some deeply entrenched personal reasons for students' refusal and/or inability to actively participate in the AL classrooms.

In the bigger scheme of things, it is hoped that the study will evoke a renewed awakening of the discourse of affect in learning and teaching generally, and that this awakening will translate into teaching theory and practice that place greater emphases on the discourses of dignity and the holistic and inclusive developing of the student *and* teaching staff. It is hoped that teaching staff would view the study as a vehicle for articulating their own respective narratives in the public domain in order to promote authenticity, transparency and subjectivity in research, and become a means by which the students in their care view teachers/lecturers as real and caring people whom they need not fear or feel intimidated by.

Broadly speaking, our study aims to probe the larger question: "How can Academic Literacy (AL) programmes address the question of the *affect* in scholarship?". By addressing the issues of affect in academic literacy teaching and learning (and by implication English language learning), the study will evaluate the incorporation of affective aspects into curricula and classroom pedagogy as a means of promoting more holistic approaches and student-centred learning and teaching (Block, 2007; Peirce, 1995).

Another perspective which the study adopts is that while students may not be prepared for the literacy demands expected of them in the academy, it questions whether the *institutions* are adequately prepared

for the students in view of their (the students') backgrounds. In other words, in the development of AL curricula are the theoretical and developmental approaches perhaps not overly generic and simplistic? Are they taking cognisance of the student as a whole person, including their distinct language and cultural origins, and the life-words that precede their entry into university? Insights into the personal aspects of the student lives will be gleaned from their respective short, language narratives or auto-ethnographies and the other data instruments.

The phenomenon to be investigated necessitates our proposing the following research questions:

The research questions that this study wishes to address are:

1. Can an autoethnographic approach to students' language narratives help them in understanding and addressing the inequalities they suffer?

2. Does the Education Faculty's AL programme encourage learner identity and egalitarian thinking in its students?

3. How can the Education Faculty's AL programme be redesigned to foster an affective learning environment?

4. What role does competency in English language play in the Education Faculty's AL programme?

It is hoped that these questions will supplement our understanding of holistic and participatory approaches to learning and teaching both theoretically and in practice. The research questions that this study proposes warrant a research design that will accommodate triangulation through the collection of data from multiple sources which we had alluded to earlier. Since the core of the study is centred around affect and by intimation, human dignity, the methods deployed (including the *kinds* of questions posed in, for example, the interviews and the survey), are themselves entrenched in the discourse of holistic learning and teaching. In light of this, the data collection procedures used in this investigation, can provide a comprehensive means by which to address

the research questions as both the means of collection and the questions are integral to the study and its outcomes.

The study adopts an auto-ethnographic approach to analysing the data, and in this respect, we aim to embed ourselves in the study by drawing on particular relevant experiences; the majority of which will be integrated in the autobiographical chapter. This *approach* itself will serve as a fortification for the methodological strategy in addressing the research questions. It can also serve to bolster our ideological views on learning and teaching in the course of underlying the response to the research questions. This is to suggest that the autoethnographic approach can become a vehicle that challenges the valorisation of objective, rationalist approaches which by implication, can diminish subjective and affective approaches to research in learning and teaching.

We strongly believe that the strategy of incorporating an autoethnographic approach in the *analysis* of the data will serve to critique/challenge the promotion of objectivity over subjectivity in academia generally. The personal language narratives of the students will also serve as key *initial* sources of data through which it could help integrate responses to the research questions. The other data instruments are intended to facilitate the deconstruction and reinforcement of the data conveyed by the personal narratives.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned points, it is hoped that an egalitarian approach to analysing the data will serve to reveal elements of affect that can serve to inform the reviewing and re-development of academic literacy modules, for example, with the aim of revitalising and fortifying egalitarian thinking in learning and teaching. Moreover, it is hoped that an approach that incorporates egalitarian thinking in the analysis of the data can spawn further research in equality studies that can be used in other disciplines (Baker, et. al. 2004). On a practical level, it is hoped that this approach will inculcate an ideology of egalitarian thinking that will translate into the empowering and ennoblement of students, especially those who have suffered or are suffering affective trauma and injustices.

1.3 Context of the Study

This study is set in the context of two academic literacy (AL) modules offered by the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. Siva has been the Head of the Language Education Department with oversight of these modules, among others; it is our fervent belief that the two modules in question constitute the centrality, immediacy and primacy of the context in the study that we have set out to report in this book.

The one module, Academic Literacy (FAL101) serves those students who have been enrolled for the of Bachelors in Education Foundation (elementary school) Phase degree. The other module, Language and Numeracy (EDC111) caters for those students who had enrolled for the Bachelor in Education Senior Phase (high school) degree. These degree programmes differ in that they are designed to equip the students as educators for the particular grade levels they will eventually service as educators after graduating.

What the two AL modules have in common, is that the students from both the degree programmes are required to enroll for an academic literacies course. While the two modules differ slightly in content and strategy, they are both academic literacy/numeracy courses with more-or-less the same intended outcomes. Essentially, the two modules were directed at developing students' understanding of the discourse of academia: introduction to literacies at tertiary level, developing understanding of writing skills, argument and substantiation techniques, and referencing skills, among other things.

The modules have additional aims which encompass nurturing students' knowledge of reading and writing as all-inclusive instruments of epistemology, for example. The modules also aim to improve the writing skills of the students by using a variety of genres. An additional goal of the modules is to enhance the students' computer literacy skills through developing their numeracy skills with the use of calculators and basic database programmes.

The academic literacies or academic development modules apparently had been founded upon the premise that many students, especially L2 students, enter the University under-prepared for the many academic demands that they will encounter in their quest for success (Badsha and Harper, 2000). While the skills offered and taught through these AL modules are essential for the development of the students' academic literacies, it does not appear that the modules take cognizance of the *student* holistically. We had experienced and observed four significant gaps in the modules that may be interconnected as our study will investigate.

Firstly, Mervyn as a student and tutor of AL modules had experienced that the modules were not adequately equipped to close the gap that exists in the student's general lack of English language proficiency. Secondly, because many students were L2 category students in an academic environment in which English is the main medium of instruction, the modules were not adequately prepared in addressing this gap (Thesen & van Pletzen, 2006). Thirdly, according to a study done in the mid-1990s, most of the students at the University are from disadvantaged socio-economic and underprepared educational backgrounds (Leibowitz, 1994).

Upon returning to UWC after being away for almost 20 years, Mervyn had realized that the socio-economic lives of the majority of students had not changed significantly, and many were still living below the breadline (Maringira, & Gukurume, 2016). In light of this, the study will probe the aspect of the *current* AL students' socio-economic life-worlds and their bearing on the students' identity/self-perception and their academic literacy preparedness. These are very significant issues which the study proposes to investigate in light of the discourse of affect in the learning and teaching of AL. It will specifically explore the relationship between the students' English language competency levels and how they are perceived and treated by other students who may be L1 and/or more fluent in English than the under-prepared ones. This constitutes the fourth gap in the AL modules which the study will explore: to ascertain whether the modules are cognizant of these issues of affect and whether they serve to address these issues *empathetically*, holistically and collaboratively.

We hasten to state at this juncture that the contexts so far, are not intended to be a detached or dispassionate rendition of the realities that many students face. They should be perceived as self-motivated and intuitive interpretations and representations that have been drawn from deeply entrenched, first-hand personal experiences in similar circumstances, conditions and surroundings as this study hopes to demonstrate.

In addition to the role of a researcher, Mervyn simultaneously wears three other hats: student, tutor and lecturer. In his role as a student, he will draw from his experiences as an L2 periphery-based learner familiar with life in the poverty-stricken townships of the Western Cape, South Africa. In his role as tutor (and postgraduate student), he will discuss his observations as an incumbent 'insider' into the realm of academic discourse. In his position as lecturer, he positions himself in a reflective role by drawing on his trajectory through life from the township to his current role as a learning and teaching specialist. In this sense, it is reasonable to say that he has gained a substantial amount of cognitive, emotional and compassionate empathy for the students in his care. He then contends that the abbreviated autobiography chapter in this book can offer insights into these experiences and their bearing on the study. It is hoped that this would serve to bolster the choice of methodology and framing of the study.

Epistemologically, it is hoped that the autoethnographic approach to research of this nature would usher in a renewed interest in the real-life-worlds of students and *staff* that can serve to improve the academic project from an affective learning and teaching perspective. By the same token, the study hopes that the egalitarian approach to this genre of research would serve to challenge and hopefully transform the power relations in the various roles and relationships in academic contexts between students and educators, for example (Zembylas, 2004). It also aims to uncover the social stratification in academia which has been founded upon constructed relations of power and which is endemic to South African society (Seekings and Nattrass, 2003).

The underlying convictions of the study are meant to resonate with the

ideals of egalitarianism. In light of this, the AL classroom environment can be used as a microcosm to emulate dignity, equality and justice. In practice, we strongly believe that no person (staff or student) should *ever* feel or be made to feel intimidated by any one regardless of their age, rank, roles, responsibilities, designation, title, position, status, achievements, accolades, gender or any other created social capital or other forms of capital. This is not to say that one should not be recognized and/or acknowledged for one's accomplishments. The point is that we should not allow or assume that these give one license to *laud* over others as a consequence of the achievements or status, etc.

Notwithstanding the issues presented earlier, we intend to examine the discourse of linguistic capital as a subset of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; McKinney, 2007). On a practical level, this makes it necessary to analyse the relationship between the English language competencies as power, and the lack thereof as disempowering and apparently inferior (Bangeni and Kapp, 2007). More specifically, we are committed to probing the real-life-worlds of students in the learning and teaching of the AL classroom with the aim of focusing on the emotional aspects of L2 and/or less fluent learners. In this regard, our study intends to question whether L2 students, for example, may be vulnerable if not victim to ridicule as a direct result of their lack of fluency, their respective accents and/or their various forms of pronunciations of certain words and/or phrases.

In keeping with our examination of the aspects of affective trauma experienced through the students' fluency levels in English, this study will examine the relationship between the students' levels of English language competencies and their respective places of residence or origin; a type of "*location* capital" of sorts. Expressed differently, it aims to explore the inter-connectedness between linguistic capital and "*geospatial"* capital through an affective lens in the AL classroom. Linguistic capital refers to one's level of English language proficiency and eloquence which can be an indicator of one's position on the social ladder generally, and the academic ladder (or food-chain) specifically: the general perception is that the more articulate and coherent

in English, the greater the benefits; these are usually associated with a higher IQ, and can signify that the student may be the recipient of a middle-class education, etc. (Kapp, 2004).

Geospatial capital can be defined as the status associated with the socially and culturally perceived value of one's domicile, place of residence, location and/or origin. In other words, someone from a more affluent area will be regarded in higher esteem than someone from the townships or impoverished rural areas, like the shanty or squatter townships, for example. We hasten to add that any location which is not considered to be a privileged location either due to its remoteness or backwardness, very often becomes a pretext for the privileged class to refer to it pejoratively or denigratingly. In light of this, both Siva and Mervyn have first-hand experiences of how stultified and alien those students who come from disadvantaged location such as Mervyn's are forced to feel emotionally and intellectually handicapped. For this very reason we know that many of the students who come from such referentially denigrated locations, do not want to open up in the language classes (this includes the two AL modules that we have alluded to). Taking into consideration the problematic issues that we have so far signposted, we believe that the mellowing, moderating and mitigating power and potential of a *humanizing* discourse can help eradicate the affective trauma endured by students from the periphery.

1.4 Attitude and Beliefs Fundamental to our Epistemological Position

Our study involves issues of affect in learning and teaching within a unique and complex context: the interrelatedness of the discourses of affective trauma, identity and justice in an AL environment. In this regard, it is imperative that we articulate our justification for the choice of epistemology.

The study intends to challenge and critique the valorisation of objectivity in academic research and the resultant diminishing of subjectivity as a 'less credible' research approach to an equally acceptable

philosophical foundation for academic inquiry. As a result, our study will not conform strictly to a rationalistic and/or scientific method of research that fulfils specific dogmatic, technical guidelines that are aligned to sets of austere protocols of inquiry. However, this should not be interpreted as having any less value or credibility than those studies that adhere to such routine prescriptions.

Through the various research instruments, the study will draw from the experiences of its participants in a very raw, unfiltered way. It is very cognizant of the fact that since it involves human beings, it can be fluid by nature; with varying emotions and temperaments, different personalities, motives, different beliefs, values, cultures, languages, etc. In this sense, the scientific method may not be fully equipped or be the *only* method or approach to grasping and/or articulating these variables of humanity in a coherent way (Olojede, 2013).

We are fully cognizant that objectivity should and cannot be ignored; our epistemological position is that subjectivity in research of this nature may be unavoidable. In light of this, we then embrace the stance that critical reflexivity combined with autobiography in some way can constitute a degree of objectivity through "theorizing the subject" (Letherby, Scott, & Williams, 2012). While we are choicelessly aware and watchful of the academic requirements of objectivity in research, as insiders-outsiders, it is intellectually sacrilegious to divorce ourselves from the participants of this study. This is because we are deeply engrained in the discourse as participants familiar with the contexts of the study. In addition, the inclusion of Mervyn's autobiography can imminently supplement our epistemic position, and triangulation methodology employed for the affective discourses that this study proposes to cover: *trauma, injustice* and *identity*. The study does not pretend to ignore the realities of the human condition as having tendencies for being partial, politically motivated and with many prejudices, for example. These propensities have implications for how we view life and our fellow human beings as part of the human condition.

We have a moral responsibility to the research participants and the

communities we represent to conduct the research with integrity and respect. In light of this, our epistemic position is that scientific research or any other disciplines should not assume pre-eminence over other fields and/or methods of research. This is at the very heart of our epistemic foundation and stance: it will strive to adopt a more human-centred (student-centred specifically) approach towards research. In this sense, for the sake of academic honesty and integrity, it adopts a *balanced* approach to academic inquiry (Standish, 2016).

Notwithstanding all that we have stated so far regarding our epistemic stance, we shall explore the arguments against and drawbacks of research of this nature which invariably has the potential to be controversial and which can be perceived as being politically motivated research; research which questions the meaning of 'objectivity' and 'elimination of bias' (Harding, 1991 and 2006). Within the South African context specifically, this research should be viewed as having an explicit concern with addressing the ubiquitous inequalities that pervade the landscape, and with taking the side of the oppressed and the marginalized.

1.5 Organization of the Chapters in the Study

The study consists of eight chapters.

Chapter one serves as the introduction to the study. It offers a broad overview of the study by outlining the various sections that the study comprises. It also discusses the aims, scope, rationale, context and our own position that serves as the principal epistemology of the study. In addition, this chapter introduces the four principal research questions that our study raises and proposes to answer.

Chapter two critically evaluates the three core issues related to the study: affective trauma, injustice and identity as these may manifest themselves in and through the personal language narratives (and the other data methods) of undergraduate AL students; many of whom are those for whom English is not their home language (L2).

Chapter Three presents a review of relevant literature focusing on the interconnectedness between the discourses of identity and language, and language, identity and class. The chapter deconstructs and expounds the concept of "*identity*" in terms of its bearing on language and class, and the interplay between these discourses. It also investigates the overarching influences of cultural capital and linguistic imperialism on identity formation within the context of our study.

Chapter Four addresses the design and methodology of our research. It revisits the context and describes the setting of the study. It explains and expands the research questions of the study with reference to our epistemic stance and preferred approach to knowledge construction as educational practitioners. It makes a strong case for using an inter-subjective methodology, and discusses the procedures for data collection. It focuses on the scope that the procedures provide for triangulation, that is, recourse to multiple perspectives of evaluation and interpretation. In sum and spirit, the chapter should be seen as an informed justification for the methods and modes used in our investigation.

Chapter Five is the abbreviated version of Mervyn's autobiography which has been tailored for the study. It covers specific experiences that have shaped his identity and his philosophies on life with particular focus on the trajectory from poverty-stricken, strife-torn township life: from a swimming pool cleaner, to his first career as a Law Enforcement officer before qualifying for university, and the many challenges he had overcome in order to progress. In one sense, it is a personal narrative of his journey with seemingly subjective and anecdotal material glimpses into his life. But the sense that we hope to convey is how the incidences have been influential in Mervyn's identity formation and his quest for social justice and equality in learning and teaching. Critically important is to argue for the value of autoethnography as both research instrument and methodology. This point is bolstered by the fact the one of the key data collection instruments of our study comprised a few hundred personal language narratives.

Chapter Six presents a rationale for analysing the data, and attempts

a description and analysis of the data gathered with reference to the research questions raised by the study.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the findings. It interprets the findings with reference to the research questions along with the underlying epistemology of the study.

Chapter Eight states the conclusions of the study with reference to the research questions and the findings. It also discusses the limitations of the study. It briefly reconsiders some of the ideas presented in the literature review, and proposes implications of the findings for future research. Additionally, it offers recommendations and possible interventions for challenges and problems identified by our study.

Chapter 2

Signposting the Discourses of Affective Trauma, Injustice and Identity

2.1 Introduction

We conducted our investigation at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), a "historically disadvantaged" (Cross & Atinde, 2015) South African university context with particular focus on the experiences of mainly English as a second language (L2) students, and teaching staff in an Academic Literacy (AL) learning and teaching ecosphere. In this regard, it is important that we sketch a historical synopsis of South African education in order to gain insights into the systemic inequalities that pervade the education landscape, and to locate our investigation contextually.

A key question that underpins the interaction with the participants in this investigation is, how can AL programmes, like the one predicated on this study, for example, address the question of *affect* in learning and teaching? In this regard, AL is perceived as incorporating English language learning and teaching which is critical in determining a student's success at a university like UWC, where English is the main and *mandatory* medium of instruction.

This chapter will critically evaluate the three core issues related to the study: *affective trauma*, *injustice* and *identity* as these may manifest themselves in and through the personal language narratives (and the other data methods) of undergraduate AL students; many of whom are those for whom English is not their home language (L2). The theoretical issues and insights relevant to the study will explore the phenomenon of "affective trauma" associated with the learning and teaching environment generally, and specifically in the context of learning programmes like Academic Literacy in English by L2 and English as first language (L1) students.

As the study is located within a broader context of social justice, our theoretical coverage will incorporate research on egalitarian theory or equality studies. It will also take into consideration literature on egalitarianism within the South African context as this is an imperative part of "redress" in post-Apartheid South African education. Furthermore, since the study focuses on personal language narratives, among others, it will draw on research in the area of autoethnography, its bearing on identity discourse and its value and contribution to 'mainstream' scholarship. We are then morally and epistemologically bound to critically review questions of identity as these emerge through the narratives which will serve as an entry point to the other data instruments deployed in the study: interviews, observations and a survey. Subsequently, an aim in this respect is to investigate what the data reveals, and what the researched literature indicates about patterns or trends of this genre in relation to our choice of epistemology.

2.2 Historical Overview

It is fair to assert that the quality of one's education and the access to educational opportunities are directly dependent on one's financial status (Becker 1993). This is no truer and more blatant than in the South African context. A further caveat is that *race* may become the overriding determinant to economic capital and therefore cultural capital in South Africa in particular.

According to Kapp (2006), during the Apartheid era, "language was conflated with ethnicity and used as a tool to separate and divide people physically and socially" (through geographic separation) and mentally, by instilling constructions of inferiority and superiority. (p.30). In this regard, we aimed to investigate the link between language/linguistic capital in the form of English language proficiency and academic literacy levels. A further aspect that the study examines is the link between linguistic capital and what we refer to as 'geospatial' capital: the value placed upon or assumed by the various locations people reside in relation to their perceived value socio-economically and by