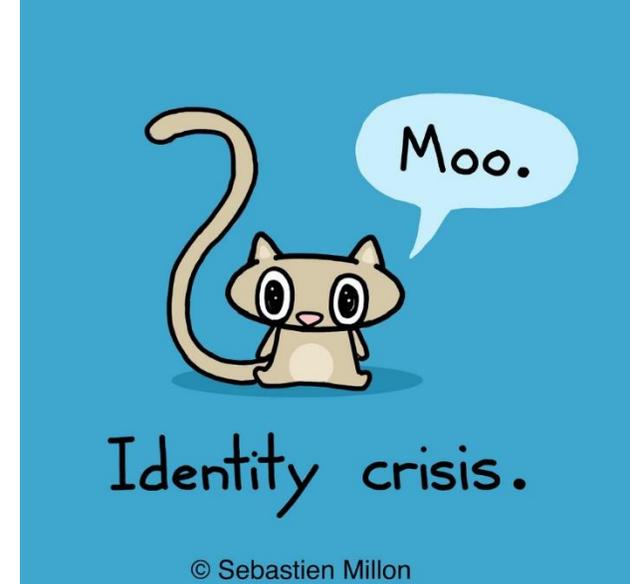


# Critically exploring 'daily routines' texts that may be 'othering' for African learners

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# Inclusion: culture and identity

- ▶ What leads a learner to decide that *this school, this subject, this institution, this field* (etc.) is a domain designed for other people to be successful in?
- ▶ How can we encourage learners not to ‘switch off’ and internalise a ‘not for me’ internal discourse?
- ▶ If we are interested in social justice and equal access for all, don’t we need examine our resources and materials to see how identities and culture are positioned within them?
- ▶ The paper is the story of road testing a tool for develop critical literacy with in service practitioners in the field of English language teaching (ELT)



# Introduction

- ▶ Critical literacy not part of mainstream ELT training (CELTA and DELTA syllabus)
- ▶ Cox & Assis-Peterson (1999) found that: ‘English teachers [in Brazil] saw themselves as agents of good in that they prepared students to be successful in the world,’
- ▶ ELT practitioners mostly not conscious of their role in reproducing unequal power relations in the global sphere, with the English-speaking world’s neoliberal, aspirational cultural reified as the natural way.

Prof: “There are no neutral texts”

Me: “What about ‘present simple for daily routines’ in ELT coursebooks?”

Prof: “They are the worst of all!!”

# Janks' 5 stage model (2014)

‘Teachers need to develop “the dispositions, discursive resources and the repertoires of practice to do critical literacy work in classrooms”’ (Comber as cited in Janks, 2014).

Janks, H. (2014). Critical literacy's ongoing importance for education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(5), 349-356.

1. Finding and naming the issue

2. What do the learners need to know?

3. How is the problematic instantiated in the texts based on design choices?

4. Who benefits and who is disadvantaged by this design?

5. Imagining possibilities for redesign and social action

The 5 stage model can be applied to:  
Teacher education and directly in Primary, secondary and tertiary teaching

The participants... the method...

Let's take the critical literacy project on the road to....



**Language Lab**

International House Johannesburg

Do you ever find material in the course books which may not be appropriate for some African contexts?

Taken from CLICK magazine © Mary Glasgow Magazines  
www.maryglasgowplus.com

Food and drink vocabulary

# MICHAEL PHELPS:

**"I love pizza and pasta!"**

Michael Phelps is a swimmer from Baltimore, USA. Michael is fast - very fast! He has got many gold medals for swimming. How does he swim so fast? "I eat a lot of food!" he says. "I only\* swim, sleep and eat!"

**BEFORE YOU READ**  
Do you like swimming?  
What do you eat in one day?

**Phelps Food**  
This is Michael's food for one day. Read the list. Find the correct picture for each food. Write the number on the list:

**Breakfast**

- One bowl of porridge\*  5
- Three fried eggs  11
- A cheese sandwich
- One omelette made with 5 eggs
- Three slices of bread
- Three chocolate pancakes
- Two cups of coffee

**Lunch**

- A large bowl of pasta with tomato sauce
- Two ham, cheese and mayonnaise sandwiches
- Three glasses of orange juice

**Dinner**

- A large bowl of pasta with cheese sauce
- A big cheese and tomato pizza
- Two cans of energy drink\*

**5 Phelps Facts**

- Michael Phelps is tall! He is 1 metre 93.
- His nickname\* is *The Baltimore Bullet*.
- Michael always wears two swimming caps.
- He loves hip hop music.
- Michael eats 12,000 calories per day. (Most people eat 2,000 calories per day!)

**\*WORDWISE**  
only - only  
nickname - nickname  
porridge - porridge  
energy drink - extra energy

www.michaelphelps.com

The material shows

The critical issue

## Abundance vs scarcity

The words and pictures of the texts display a massive amount of food which the swimmer eats on a daily basis.

The **quantity of food** shown that supports an athlete's physical development is constructed as legitimate even in the face of widespread **malnutrition** in Africa and elsewhere in the world. He is afforded this **privilege as a Westerner**.

## Americans as naturalised celebrities within the star system

Michael Phelps' name acts as the title of the text. He holds up an Olympic gold medal. We read that he has several gold medals. We see from his swimming cap and from the written text that he is American.

The presence of **Phelps's name** as the title indicates that we ought to know who he is, or at least remember who he is having read about him. In this way, **the celebrity system** is reproduced and maintained with Americans occupying the most privileged positions within it.

Gender / body / physical / sexuality

We see a large amount of uncovered body area of Phelps both in and out of the pool.

He is constructed as a **physically powerful male** who, as such, is permitted to be **undressed down the waist** without sexual connotations. This **affordance is for males** of this type only whose **peak condition** is rendered both as an achievement and something to aspire to. **Clothing rules for women are stricter** and more constraining. These clothing and display rules may be radically different in **some African cultures** of a more conservative disposition, and especially for **Muslims**.

A selection of materials from ELT coursebooks:

UK and USA publishers

Exemplifying present simple for daily routines

**ENGINEER**  
**Andrew Johnson**  
Andrew is an engineer. He comes from New Zealand, but now he lives in Scotland. He works on an oil rig 440km from the coast of Aberdeen. He works 12 hours a day for two weeks, and then he has two weeks' holiday. He earns £200 a day. In his free time he goes to the gym and plays snooker. He isn't married.

**ZOOLOGIST**  
**Claudia Luke**  
Claudia's job is to ...

**Sir Anthony Hopkins**  
The actor Sir Anthony Hopkins was born in Wales on December 31st, 1937. He won an Oscar in 1985 for *The Silence of the Lambs*. He lives in Chelsea, London, with his wife Jenni. They don't have any children.  
Part 1

**An Englishwoman in California...**  
Twenty-four-year-old Emma comes from Manchester, in the north of England, but now she doesn't live in England; she lives in the United States. Her apartment is near the beach in Santa Rosa, California. 'It's fantastic,' she says 'I go swimming every morning. Emma is an actress; she lives in Los Angeles because it's near Hollywood, the home of the American film industry. 'I love the way of life here,' she says 'It's a beautiful and exciting place ... the weather's really good - it doesn't rain very much, like at home! - the people are open and everyone looks so good! The only problem is that people think my accent is strange ... when I speak to taxi drivers, sometimes they don't understand me!'

**Music Professor**  
**István Kis**  
István is a music professor. He comes from Budapest in Hungary, but now he lives in the USA. He works four days a week at the University of Texas, Austin. He speaks three languages: Hungarian, English, and German. He's married to an American and has a daughter. He likes playing tennis in his free time.

**Rihanna's Routine**  
Rihanna is a singer who she comes from Barbados, but now she lives in America.

**Rihanna's Facts**

# Looking at the texts critically

- ▶ 1) Please look at the texts in terms of who is 'missing' or 'invisible'. E.g. are there any old people represented? Which social classes (e.g. working class) are not represented?
- ▶ 2) What kinds of work or study are normalized in the texts?
- ▶ 3) Comment on the images used to accompany each text. How do the words and images work together to reinforce a particular way of seeing the world. Is this a particularly Western view? What discontinuities may there be for your students?
- ▶ 4) Can you identify which underlying values are being foregrounded in the text e.g. 'Dressing as a Westerner is normal'. 'It is important to be at least quite good-looking'. 'Unemployment is not an option'. 'It is not normal to be struggling materially'. What else?
- ▶ 5) One of the texts is intended for a specific national market. Which one is it and which market is it intended for? How appropriate do you judge for such a group?

What did the teachers  
make of the texts from a  
critical point of view?

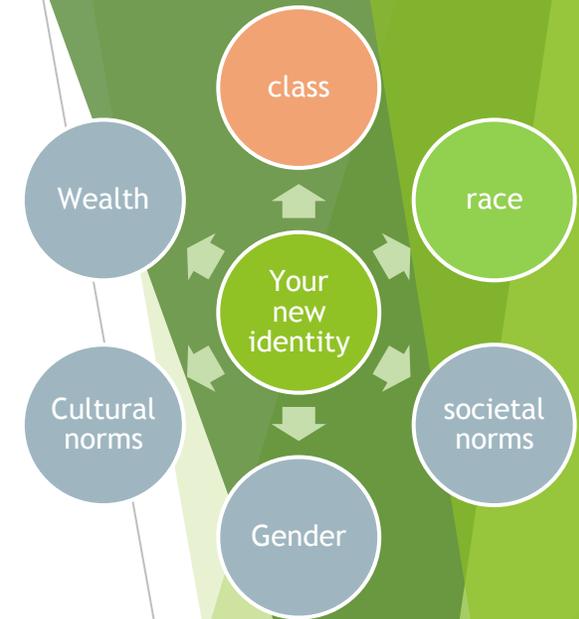
## Reading from the another point of view

Work with a partner. Put yourself in the position of one of the following:

- 1) A black female domestic worker in her mid-twenties on a low income living in Hillbro in a small apartment with many family members
- 2) A homeless black male from Lesotho; he is an illegal immigrant who washes windcreens at robots. At night he sleeps on the municipal rubbish dump
- 3) A black African female teenager who wants to go to school but is under pressure from family to help with the farm; her brother goes to school every day

Look at the texts again and *put them in order* to determine the degree to which the dominant or naturalised way of life depicted there puts you in the position of being inferior, alien or outside of the way of life shown..

Behrman, E. H. (2006). Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom practices that support critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(6), 490-498.



Behrman states:  
'Acquiring a resistant perspective is sometimes stimulated by asking students to assume new or unfamiliar identities.'

# Redesigning the text

Imagine you are going to use one of the published text in class. You have decided to write another example of a daily routine and to present both side-by-side.

*Here is an example of a daily routine 'written' by a man who washes windscreens at robots with present simple verbs highlighted.*

“My name **is** Paul. I came from Lesotho in 2013. I **live** outside on the municipal dump. I **wake up** when the sun **rises**. I **look for** something to eat. I **walk** to the robot. I **ask** people if I can wash their cars. Sometimes they **agree** and sometimes they **get** angry. Sometimes they **give** me money. In the afternoon I **go** to the supermarket to **get** something to eat. I **use** the toilet in the supermarket and **wash** my face there too. In the evening we **tell** stories about our days. Sometimes, someone **has** cigarettes. If it **is** cold, we **light** a fire. If it **rains**, we **get** wet.”

Chose one of the following:

- 1) a black female domestic worker in her mid-twenties on a low income living in Hillbrow in a small apartment with many family members
- 2) a black African female teenager who wants to go to school but is under pressure from family to help with the farm; her brother goes to school every day

# Redesigned text by the IH teachers

Redesigned daily routine:

**From the point of view of a teenager in a rural setting who can't go to school like her siblings**

I wake up at 4am. I walk to the communal tap to fill my two buckets of water for the family. Then I go home and light the fire and boil the water for breakfast. I wake up my brothers and sisters and I clean them. I then make porridge for all of us and I send my siblings to school. I come back home and I start working in the fields.

## Findings:

- ▶ Even short teacher training sessions can serve to raise awareness of critical literacy issues
- ▶ ‘Privileged’ teachers are able to imaginatively enter into less privileged identities in order to ‘feel’ the effect the text may have upon their learners.
- ▶ Alternative texts, maintaining the same level of effective exemplification of the target language can be written quickly and potentially used alongside published ‘Western’ texts.
- ▶ Janks’ 5 stage model is a potentially powerful tool to uncover power and positioning in texts. This may ultimately allow deeper identification with language learning activities and develop agency in learners as redesign implies agency and power.

# Thanks!

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