

Evaluating Students' Final Text Production in Polyphonic Critical Literacy Practices: Combining Appraisal Theory with Qualitative Data Sources

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: December 17, 2020

Accepted: January 18, 2021

Published: January 31, 2021

Volume: 9 Issue: 1

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

Critical literacy practices have moved their interest from Freirean binary analyses (e.g. oppressor versus oppressed) to more complex perspectives, where in a text the author/speaker is (dis) aligned with different discourse communities. Despite the fact that these teaching practices that are based in multiple discourses are gaining attention, little work has been done on the assessment of the teaching practices. During the last decades, the literacy activities researches have focused on the teacher-student interactions and the teacher talks (asking questions, types of questions), neglecting the final text production, which is also a significant factor in the evaluation of literacy practices. In this paper, after the implementation of polyphonic literacy practices in a rural junior high school in Crete, Greece, the teacher-researcher assessed the final student written products using the Appraisal Theory. Further qualitative methodological data gathering sources enhanced the identification of the contextual factors that can explain in depth the discourses the students (re)produced in their texts. These findings suggest that Appraisal Theory combined with such methodological choices, where the context is identified, is more supportive in the evaluation of these complex critical literacy practices and provides the teacher and students fruitful feedback concerning critical literacy awareness.

Key words: Appraisal Theory Critical Literacies, Discourses, Methodology, Polyphony

INTRODUCTION

In recent years critical literacy practices have been influenced by critical discourse analysis and research and teaching approaches that emphasize the several text types and different voices that construct reality (Coupland, 2010; Blommaert, 2005, 2010). These literacy practices are more complex, since the students' sociocultural background is engaged with several text genres that are introduced in each intervention. More specifically, the students sociocultural background not only is taken seriously into account, but is also determines the learning and teaching activities that take place in the classrooms.

Subsequently, since social interaction plays a significant role, scholars have focused their research interests on the teachers' and students' dialogue exchanges following linguistic approaches such as the IRF (Initiation, Response, Follow up) (Lemke, 2008). In these studies, the scholars are limited in the discourse episodes that are constructed in each teaching activity (Sharpe, 2008). Although the research was very productive, they focused on oral production, neglecting the students' final written products that can shed more light on the evaluation of the educational procedure.

The field has gradually broadened as positioning theories, especially Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005),

were implemented by scholars to identify the multiple voices (heteroglossia) in text productions in second language writing (Lindgren & Stevenson, 2013), in history courses in secondary education (Oteiza, Henríquez, & Canelo, 2018) and in higher education (Thomas, Thomas, & Moltow, 2015; Starfield et al., 2015). It seems that this theory is very productive in the identification of the discourses that are being reproduced, silenced or undermined. Nevertheless, none of these studies have combined Appraisal Theory with other qualitative data sources in depth and, hence, do not provide more information about the students' sociocultural background that affects the text production. In particular, to my knowledge no study has applied this theory to polyphonic critical literacy practices.

To illuminate this uncharted area, I examined the combination between Appraisal Theory in students' final text production and qualitative data sources (e.g. teacher/students' journals, field notes) that illustrate the sociocultural framework. The aim is to explore these more sophisticated methods in order to evaluate polyphonic critical literacy practices. The most important advantage of this methodological combination is that it can perform very well in the understanding of the complicated reading and writing activities, which are forged in specific sociocultural contexts.

BACKGROUND

In this subsection, I will briefly provide some background information concerning: a. the contemporary socio-cognitive approaches about the significant role sociocultural theory plays in literacy, b. the polyphonic critical literacy approaches and c. the methodological problem the researchers face in the evaluation of these teaching activities in specific contexts. This information describe the new trends in the critical literacy practices that follow the critique on the oppressed and oppressed binaries Freire has inserted.

Emphasis on Readers: Cognitive Approaches

Cognitive approaches have connected critical reading with students' background schemata (learner's own knowledge) (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). In this concept, literacy is also connected with complex textual and linguistic features and high-order thinking (Halliday & Martin, 1995). In this sense the sociocultural background plays a significant role in the development of literacy and it is widely accepted that each student's background is unique. Consequently, these background schemata "make peace between psychology and social practices" (Gee, 2015, p. 64)

"Emergent literacy" theories have also argued that literacy begins before school, with students' reading abilities being developed by parents and everyday school practices (Adams, 1994). The children are already familiar with certain text types like shopping lists and recipes from early stages (Clark, 2001, pp. 84-85). These practices show not only the differences between readers, but also that children read in specific contexts (Pressley, 2006). Children as readers should be taken into account and these abilities should be connected with their sociocultural background (Mercer, 1998). Therefore, when we evaluate literacy practices, a more systematic and theoretical analysis of the sociocultural background is required.

Polyphonic Critical Literacy Activities

Following Freire (1970), critical literacy is considered to be part of the struggle for independence and political emancipation, as well as a promotion of human rights through economic and political empowerment. Empowerment is considered an outcome through the awareness of the historical forms of control and exploitation (Rassool, 1999, p. 86). In a school environment, even in early stages, critical literacies give the opportunity to students and teachers to challenge authority and investigate social issues (Comber, 2013; Vasquez, 2005, 2014). Through critical literacies, the students realize that each person's experiences are historically formed by specific power relations (Anderson & Irvine, 1993).

In more recent origins, critical literacy is conceived in a more complicated way through different texts (oral, written, multimodal) (Luke, 2012). In this critical literacy practice, a theme is often investigated from contrastive texts or from multiple text genres (see Freire (1970) about the importance of thematic universe. Therefore, it demands more complex reading and writing activities, where the students become

familiar with different texts and attempt to identify how texts and discourses can be manipulated to represent and alter the world (Luke, 2012, p. 9).

These approaches in critical literacies rely on Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia and polyvocality, since in each linguistic code two or more viewpoints can be present. Subsequently, the notion of voice is very important in contemporary literacy studies, especially concerning critical literacies, as the notion of voice has been moved from the individual voice and includes social dimensions. Contemporary research focuses on the discursive positioning of voice and tries to identify the world the writer constructs (Bowden, 1999; Hyland, 2008). Through the use of specific textual resources and particular textual features the writer constructs a specific world (Gee, 2014).

It is obvious that these complex polyphonic critical literacies lead to analogous complex reading and writing activities. The students read their text intertextually by comparing the textual and the grammatical features each text promotes or silences (Kostouli & Stylianou, 2012). In the text reading, the students are not coming to the discussion as "tabula rasa", but rather negotiate these meanings through "their words" (Freire, 1970). After the reading phase the students produce and design multiple texts based on the negotiation between their word and the texts they were familiar with.

These kinds of teaching activities take into account the complexity of contemporary text genres and hybridity, since new texts types are produced in this changing world (Coupland, 2010). Furthermore, the context also affects the discourse communities the students choose to promote, silence or undermine.

A challenging problem which arises in this domain is the analyses of these teaching activities and, subsequently, the understanding of the specific discourse and texts the students promote or silence. Several text types have been inserted in different phases from the participants in the teaching intervention and after the reading phase, the students produce different text types in which they develop their choices, which are selected not only from the text they have processed, but also from their own sociocultural context and communities outside the school walls, such as their families and their friends. This is a more complex teaching instruction, whereas the teaching activities take place in specific contexts that regulate the student's text production. It is crucial for polyphonic teaching approaches to take seriously into account the frame problem (the school and out of school context) and to try to solve it through the understanding of it (Gee, 2014, pp. 85-86). One way to overcome this problem is to combine Appraisal Theory with other qualitative data sources that provide more information about the context and the dominant discourses in the students' discourse communities that survive.

Methodological Issues on Polyphonic Critical Literacies: Towards Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Positioning Theories

The polyphonic critical literacy approaches mentioned above need an analytic tool with which the researcher can locate

the different discourses the students choose to promote. Considering that the context where the teaching intervention took place plays an important role in every teaching intervention, it is more complicated to identify exactly which voices the students promote, silence or undermine.

To overcome this problem there is a need for an analytic tool which can identify the relational and sociocultural phenomena that are forged in specific local contexts, away from individualistic approaches and specific social factors, where indexicality (specific linguistic choices) constructs identity positions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Regarding Critical Literacies, a Critical Discourse Analysis approach unveils the social inequalities that are naturalised in discourses (see among others: Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 2014). CDA is also associated with positioning (Blommaert, 2005), as it connects the macro level (policies, institutions e.t.c) with the discursive strategies and the individuals (Van Dijk, 2008).

A solution to this problem is Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005), which is based on systemic functional linguistics. It can be productive in the assessment of these critical literacy activities, because they can identify exactly with which communities the student is (dis)aligned. Appraisal Theory according to Martin and White (2005), which is based on Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar (Halliday, 2014), connects the linguistic resources a writer/speaker chooses to express, negotiate and naturalise particular inter-subjective and ideological positions, and could be a productive analytic tool. It provides the means to locate the multiple discourse by taking into account the language of evaluation, attitude and emotion.

The strong connection with polyphonic critical approaches lies in the identification of the engagement (see next section) with other voices, texts and discourses, in which the production is connected with the discourse communities the writer/speaker is aligned or disaligned with. This theory can help us answer questions such as: How do the students position themselves in the adoption of or resistance to dominant discourses? Which discourses are dominant in their context? How does the student position themselves towards the readers/speakers? Which are the emerging stances and which identities are shaped?

If Appraisal Theory is combined with other research methods that identify the context in which the intervention took place, the learning community is greatly assisted. They can clearly understand which discourses they produced or silenced without restricting themselves to the school texts they have introduced in the intervention. As members of our communities, our text production is affected not only by dominant school genres, but also dominant text genres and narratives that are raised in communities we participate in. Data resources such as field notes, students' and teachers' journals, questionnaires, interviews, and other researches based on the context in which the intervention was applied could also provide useful information. This information can shed light and help the teacher-researcher "read" the context and confront the "frame problem" (Gee, 2014, pp. 85-85).

RESEARCH

Research Questions

By doing teaching and research activities which are based on the concept of voice by Bakhtin (1981), polyphonic critical literacies were promoted. In these activities, the community (students and teacher) identified the themes they wanted to investigate and were engaged in various kinds of interactions between texts and classroom talks, and between teacher-students and student-student conversations. The research questions I posed as the teacher-researcher were: In these activities, how can Appraisal Theory trace the ways in which the local communities construct and re-construct various kinds of texts? With which discourse communities are the students (dis)aligned in a specific rural area in Crete? Is the teaching intervention affected by outside school communities such as family and religion?

Context and Participants

The two-year research took place in a Junior High School in a rural area in central Crete, Greece, from 2016 to 2018 in the L1 Language Course. The Greek education system is highly centralized. For instance, all students, even in private schools, should follow the official curriculum and have the same books for each course. The students (N=23) were 11-13 years old, 7 boys and 16 girls. They were mostly Greek (both parents), second generation immigrants from Albania (2%) and first generation immigrants from Romania and India (1%). The students have an Internet connection at home. There is no newspaper store and only two very small bookshops. The researcher was also the teacher in the specific classroom. I used to work for six years in the rural area and spent four years in this specific school. The Church plays a significant role in the community. The locals are Christian Orthodox, which is the dominant religion and is taught in schools. For instance, in the morning all students take part in the Greek orthodox prayer, no matter what their religion is. Apart from Christmas and Easter, there are also other Orthodox celebrations in which the school participates, such as the Three Holy Hierarchs (30 January). The Council of State ruled in September 2019 that religion education lesson in schools follow only the Greek-Orthodox teaching.

Teaching Choices and Data Collection – Implementing Polyphonic Critical Literacy Practices

The teaching procedure followed that of Kostouli and Stylianou (2012), which is mentioned above. In the first school year, 2016-2017, the students chose the theme "Nutrition" and in the second year "Cell Phone Use in School". They posed the questions (e.g. What are the best nutrition habits? Why do you punish us for the use of cell phones?). The students brought the texts to the classroom (see Table 1). The texts were checked for balance in order to promote all text genres and all voices, not only dominant ones such as famous shows from national TV channels, but also low social status voices such as narratives from students' parents). The texts were not only in written and formal

form like articles and blogs. Interviews with local people and parents were collected, as well as YouTubers, well-known TV advertisements, leaflets and memes.

In Tables 1 and 2, there are the texts types that were analyzed in the classroom in years one and two respectively. These texts were named the Reading Texts (RT). The students read the texts by comparing the linguistic and textual features each text promoted (intertextual reading) and then the writing phase began. In this phase the students produced different text types, oral speeches, traditional songs, lyrics of famous songs, posters and articles. For the analysis, students in the following writing form: “What does a student in the first/second grade of the Junior High School believe about nutrition/cell phones?” These final written texts (FWT) were the texts that were analyzed with Appraisal Theory.

Data were also collected from the teacher-researcher’s and students’ journals. In their journals the teacher and the students were free to write their thoughts and feelings. Guiding questions were also given to help them (e.g. What did I learn? How valuable was it? What am I going to do?)

(Lacey, 1996). Data were also collected from final questionnaires and ethnographic field notes by an external observer. The analysis began from these data in order to identify the context and it proceeded to the text analysis with Appraisal Theory, hence the main goal was to match the student’s text production with the discourses they have chosen to (dis) align.

In the teaching procedure, emphasis was given to the social procedures where the different text types were developed. The participants as agents chose and participated in the literacy communities. In the beginning, I analyzed with Appraisal Theory the RT the students had chosen, and then the FWT, in order to identify the dialogic chains from the texts the students had chosen and consumed in the classroom, to the texts they produced after the intertextual reading activity. Student and teacher-researcher logs, ethnographic notes and final questionnaires helped in the connection between the FWT production and the identification of the local context where the teaching intervention took place. Following discourse analysis where new discourses

Table 1. the First school year’s (2017-2018) texts

Text/Speech Producer	Text type	Examples from linguistic features and thematic
Doctor from local health center	Interview	Deontic modality
Trainer-owner from local gym	Interview	Same thematic as the doctor without deontic modality
Nutritionist	TV show	Expert’s vocabulary
Food technology expert	TV show	
Famous chef	TV show	Connects healthy nutrition
Religious	Text	Vocabulary from other time period (Byzantine). Cannot understand.
Ecologist	Website	Expert vocabulary, not accessible by students
Family	Narrative	Similarities with the doctor
Advertisement	TV and Internet	Dialectical elements (e.g. consonant alternations) – Highly connected with nutrition
YouTuber	YouTube	Multimodal elements like color and gestures construct healthy nutrition. Specific products are promoted.
Memes	Available on the Internet	Multimodal elements, fonts, and specific figures are connected with nutrition,

Table 2. The second school year’s (2017-2018) texts

Text voice	Text producer	Text type	Examples from linguistic features and thematic
Specialists	Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Police	Site	Combination between specialist vocabulary with multimodal material
	Psychologists	Blog	Common language
Schools	School Principal	Interview	Commonalities with Ministry of Education
Literature		Book	Similes, story- telling structure, present tense
Journalist		Newspaper	No – expert vocabulary, references to specific event
Adolescents		Written account	Refer to the dangers
Facebook	Video that disseminates the photo uploading	Site navigation	Multimodal elements, happy sound, gestures
Shop owner		Poster	Mixed languages English and Greek, gestures
Parents		Interview	Similarities with Ministry of Education, Police and Principals.

were constructed from old discourses or voices (Foucault, 1972), the terms homogeneity, hybridity and textual variety became important. A text is monoglossic when it is aligned with specific discourse communities. These communities are commonly the dominant ones. Linguistic and textual variety refers to the strategy where different voices are connected and hybridity refers to the strategy where a new discourse (a combination of other discourses) arises in the community (Benwell & Strokoe, 2006).

The research was developed during two school years which were actually the two different phases. The sociolinguistic profiles are described briefly in Table 3. In the Appendix a detailed table is given that connects the sociolinguistic profiles with the textual and linguistic units which composed the sociolinguistic profiles (see Table 3). Further explanations are given in the analysis phase.

Appraisal Theory as a Methodological Tool

Following Martin and White (2005), Appraisal Theory is based on Halliday's Systemic and Functional Grammar (SFG). SFG is separated into three metafunctions: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. Appraisal Theory expands the interpersonal metafunction, but the other metafunctions should also be taken into account in the analysis. The interpersonal metafunction concerns the social distance and the relative social status, and in this polyphonic intervention where the student is positioned among multiple voices the interpersonal metafunction gives the researchers the opportunity to identify with which social groups each writer is (dis)aligned. The interpersonal metafunction is realized through the mood. Mood includes lexicogrammatical features that identify the relations, such as the speech actions (Searle, 1969), modality (e.g. epistemic, appreciative) and personal deixis (Halliday, 2014). Regarding the ending of an argumentative text like the ones the students wrote for this teaching activity, evaluation is often constructed there (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). Appraisal Theory explores in depth the social distance and the relations, and identifies with which communities the writer/speaker is aligned/disaligned, and which values are promoted, silenced or undermined. Therefore, three sectors were identified: attitude, engagement and graduation. These three sectors are connected with specific grammatical categories (see Figure 1).

Attitude is connected mainly with the grammatical category of adjectives and is separated into affect (e.g. fearless), judgement (e.g. irresponsible) and appreciation (e.g. tasteful). For all the sectors, the researcher takes into consideration the grammatical metaphor from one grammatical category to another (e.g. from verb to noun phrase). Graduation is based on adverbs and the comparative and superlative forms. This sector works with the other two very closely and actually

evaluates by upscaling (e.g. very good) or downscaling (a few students) a value unit (e.g. an adjective).

Engagement is strongly connected with the polyphonic critical literacy practices. The researcher can start from whichever category assists with answering the research questions. In these practices the engagement sector is very useful. It is based on epistemic modality and evidentiality, where the speaker/writer clarifies their stance towards the information source (e.g. She is rich/I read that she is rich/Chomsky says she is rich) (Saeed, 1997). In this sector the researcher can recognize the values that are being promoted, simply referred to, denied, or affirmed by the producers.

In this analysis I used the graduation and attitude sectors supportively. Engagement was the primary sector analysis. Engagement is separated into heteroglossia and monoglossia. Monoglossia is a proportion which provides no dialogic alternatives. It is a dialogically inert production and there is no correspondence to other voices or options, not even through denying them (Martin & White, 2005, p. 99). In this case the writer takes something as granted, rather than as topical, and not even as under discussion (Martin & White, 2005, p. 101).

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings will be presented under the broader categories that arise from the analysis. The first category is "Monoglossia – Alignment with dominant discourse communities and resistance", where the students reproduced dominant discourses. The second category is "Heteroglossia:

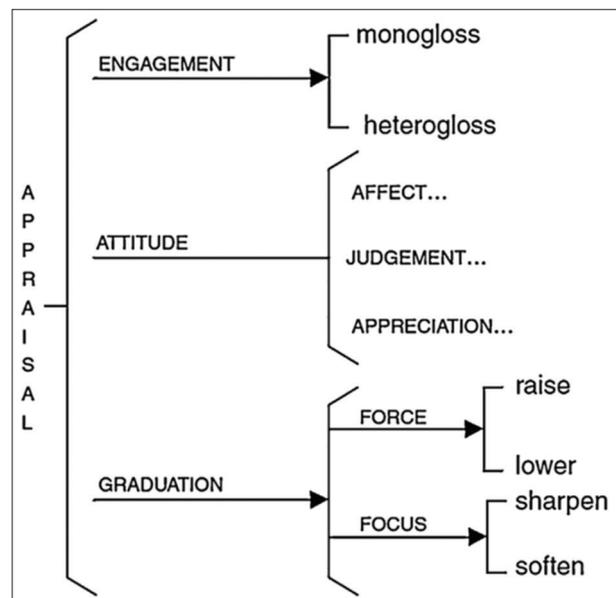


Figure 1. Appraisal theory an overview of appraisal resources (from Martin & White, 2005, p. 38)

Table 3. The Sociolinguistic profiles that emerge from the analysis with Appraisal Theory

Strategies	Monoglossia	Heteroglossia
Main strategies	Alignment with dominant discourses	Linguistic and Textual Variety
Secondary strategies (second school year)	Hybrid identity - Alignment with dominant discourses and breaking away from them	Promise of dialogicality – alignment with certain discourse communities

Linguistic and Textual Variety” and the last category is the “Promise of heteroglossia – alignment with affinity discourse communities”, in which although the students were expected to use heteroglossia, the deeper analysis revealed that the students complied with certain communities. In this subsection the students actually followed the teaching practice and produced polyphonic texts.

Monoglossia – Alignment with Dominant Discourse Communities and Resistance

In the teaching activity, emphasis was given to the social procedures that construct the fluid language performances, in the students’ participation as active members. The students had the opportunity to construct and reconstruct the communication events. Nevertheless, the students continued to reproduce dominant discourses.

[1].

[...] a student had better avoided precooked food and fast food and should eat homemade food and fruit during school breaks, instead of chips etc. The student can choose brown bread, which is healthier, eat fish, and avoid candies, because they have a lot of sugar, which is unhealthy [...]. If proper nutrition is combined with physical exercise, the student will have better stamina and performance. (Maria, 7th grade)

Even though the student is the writer, he/she prefers the third person and the neutral entity a student. The verbs are assertive and actually monoglossic and the students does not even deny other voices. The perspective is taken for granted (Martin & White, 2005, p. 100), except for the verb can (/mpo’ri/ in Greek). In the attitude, the writer evaluated as important values the proper nutrition, better durability and performance. These values are important for the discourse communities of the nutritionist, doctors and gym owners. There is no discussion about the use of these linguistic structures in the advertisements or the TV shows.

In the second school year, the dominant discourses continued to be reproduced. Deontic modality in [2] was repeated as it is repeated in power texts (must), where someone in a dominant position imposes their perspectives and determines the oppressive actions, for example the priest to the followers, the teacher to the students, the doctor to patients and so on.

[2].

[...] When we communicate with others we must know the other, he/she must not be unknown because there is the possibility to get hurt. That’s why we must be very careful. We must also be very careful with our posts. Generally we must be very careful, because they can harm us! (George, 8th grade, italics by the researcher).

Engagement with the first person (we) combined with the propriety expressions with must and other lexicogrammatical features (careful, harm) shows that the textual voice is being suffocated (Iedema, Feez, & White, 1994). The writer tries to express his voice but the dominant discourses are so strong that this voice is not identified; therefore, the text is a monoglossic production.

Beyond the texts that reproduced dominant discourse communities they were cases that the writer was aligned

with them, but in the ending, which is a text unit combined with evaluation, the writer is disaligned with this discourses. This new hybrid identity can be identified with specific lexicogrammatical features. For instance in [3], which is the ending of a students’ text, the textual voice uses the language of the youngsters’ (Ok, dudes).

[3].

Ok dudes, it’s fine to surf all day, but there must be a limit, because there will be consequences, something I believe nobody wants, but overall, it is the Internet’s fault, because it has all these apps. (Sifis, 8th grade, italics by the researcher)

‘Ok dudes’ is a conversational unit, which combined with the dominant discourses which were realized with the deontic modality ‘must’ created a new hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994). Even though the writer reproduces the dominant discourses, at the end he inserts a voice which promotes discontinuity with the reproduction of the domination. The youngster’s language is a linguistic resource, which gives the opportunity to the students to raise their voices. Even though the voice can be identified, the writer to the same extent is also aligned again with the dominant discourses.

Heteroglossia: Linguistic and Textual Variety

The main strategy (more than 50% from the 41 texts that were selected) is the Linguistic and Textual Variety. In this strategy, the students followed the main goal of the polyphonic critical literacy practices, which is the discussion of different voices and the creation of heteroglossic texts, where the different voices are taken into account. At the end of the text, it was very common for the students to express their final conclusion and very often they were aligned explicitly with specific discourse communities.

[4].

The right nutrition has many different meanings and there are a lot of opinions. For instance, the specialists (doctors, chefs, nutritionists) say to us that [...] Family, on the other hand, prefers homemade food. The elders agree with what the family says. In contrast, the church says to us [...] the gym owner says to us that [...]. The pharmacy owner says to us that [...] (Rosalia, 7th grade, italics by the researcher).

The textual voice in [4] acknowledges the source of information (specialists, family, church etc.). Dialogicality is constructed through the different genres with which the students created a dialogic chain between their local society, the classroom and the powerful global multimodal genres such as those that the YouTubers promote. The student has also implicitly understood that all these communities (doctors, nutritionists, families) try to convince them. The personal deictic us realizes that the students are the readers/audience of these texts. Discourse markers such as on the other hand and in contrast show that the writer positions herself towards the different discourse communities and constructs her own voice in the dense semiotic reading environment she was exposed to.

In [5] the writer is aligned with the students’ voices, where the use of cell phones is promoted. In contrast, the students are also aligned with those discourse communities who exaggerate and promote only the hazards. In the

gradation system (adjectives in the comparative form: easier, faster, cheaper) the students are also aligned with the discourses that support the use of the cell phones, such as advertisements. The same text voice is realized through the first person plural deixis (we...ourselves). In the previous proposition in the attitude and gradation system (the most important) the student announces the following closing proposition, where it concludes by mentioning the burden from social media.

[5]

The Internet helps in the easier, cheaper and faster communication with friends, family and others. On the other hand, there are negative consequences; there is no free time to do athletic activities. What is more, you're not communicating with people and the contact happens through screens, it is not real. The most important point is addiction to social media. For instance, in some cases we might compare ourselves with others and that's a psychological burden. (Maria, 8th grade, italics by the researcher).

Another important element is that this small story (the comparison with others through the social media) was not mentioned in the RT we read in the classroom. The students choose to bring in the final text a story from their personal life or something that was discussed during the reading activities in the small groups between the students. Even though it seems that in the closing sentence the student is aligned with the youngsters' discourse communities, many contrastive discourses have been discussed in which the student positions herself towards different discourse communities.

Another interesting strategy the students used was the change in registers. For instance, in the first school year the text by the ecologist was characterized in the students' logs as complicated with a very demanding vocabulary. The discourse was not excluded, but rather was changed from the complicated lexicogrammatical choices (e.g. from the RT: chemical composition, pollutant, carbon dioxide). The student replaced these complicated linguistic choices with their own (e.g. smog). More specifically, the writer brought a small story from their family environment (a stewed fruit which is homemade...), confirming that the students followed a variety of different methods to construct their text, bringing knowledge, values and attitudes from the outside communities.

[6]

The ecologists talked about food chemical substances. For example, a stewed fruit is more healthy when it is homemade, rather than in a factory. The homemade food lasts for a few days, but the factory food lasts many days due to the added chemical substances. Furthermore, the smog from the factory pollutes the environment. (Marian, 7th grade, italics by the researcher)

Promise of Heteroglossia – Alignment with Affinity Discourse Communities

The last sociolinguistic profile is the one that although it promises dialogicality and heteroglossia, in the end it is aligned with specific affinity discourse communities (Gee, 2000, p. 99).

[7]

I believe that an 8th grade student believes that cell phones are essential. With the cell phone you can watch videos, listen to songs and, most importantly, talk with your "friends". I put it in speech marks because many times "friends" are some adolescents who you have never met in real life. This doesn't always happen. Cell phones don't only have negative points, but also positive. With the cell phones you can find information and it is very useful when you get lost. You can also surf the Internet, and talk with your real friends. This is what an 8th year old student believes about cell phones. (Panagiotis, 8th grade, italics by the researcher).

Even though the student leaves space for other voices (Cell phones don't only have negative points, but also positive) there is a solidarity with the young voices, who find only positives in cell phones. It seems that the student reacts to all the hazard discourses and provides examples or advice in the second person (you can) to enhance his position. The text voice writes in the second person and actually addresses those, especially young students, who do not discuss the risks. This text excludes the discourse communities that show the risks of using cell phones. The positioning that is constructed in the text is very dynamic, as shown in the closing sentence by the discourse marker *this* and the assertive *is*. The solidarity with the young discourse communities rejects all other communities.

It is unclear with which communities the writer is aligned and what exactly the impact of the polyphonic literacy practices is. It is a discourse opposed to the hazard discourse that parents, principals and psychologists express. Nevertheless, the linguistic resources like find information, surf the Internet, are much closer to advertisements, a dominant commercial discourse. These discourses were analyzed during the RT activities. Nevertheless, in [7] this discourse is silenced and not taken into account.

DISCUSSION

Evaluating the use of Appraisal Theory

The present study confirmed that Appraisal Theory is a very productive analytic tool in the identification of polyphony and heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), especially with regard to the engagement sector. It can reveal the contradictions and the contrasts in the different discourses (Foucault, 1972). By comparing the RT with the FWT, the voices and the discourses can be identified and discussed.

This analysis found evidence of the strategies the students use, such as the register change in more familiar text types and the insertion of small stories (Geogakopoulou, 2007). Furthermore, different sociolinguistic profiles can be identified, in order to connect the reading and writing activities.

From the results it is clear that writing became a social act and the students expressed their own attitudes. This result ties in well with previous studies because with the aid of Appraisal Theory it is possible to identify exactly which voices and discourses are expressed and which are not. It can also determine the subtle shades between the hybrid identities and the dominant discourses that are being reproduced. The combination of

lexicogrammatical features with certain text types thoroughly explains the connection with different discourse communities through the comparison between the language resources that were inserted during the reading text phase.

However, when comparing these results with results from other studies, it must be pointed out that the identification with the context succeeded through the combination with other qualitative sources. Taking into account the Frame Problem (Gee, 2014, p. 85), the researcher should always analyze the findings based on the context itself. The reproduction in a rural area is different from the reproduction in an urban environment. Family and religious discourses in Crete, especially regarding nutrition, seemed to determine the whole teaching activities (e.g. the texts that the students brought) and the interpretations of the findings showed that critical literacies are connected not only globally, but also locally (Blommaert, 2010). Furthermore, educational research cannot be interpreted context-free in a value-neutral environment (Fenwick, Richard, & Sawchuk, 2012). The context combined with the dominant discourse communities provides a complex environment. The students' voice is disappearing, whereas Appraisal Theory gives the opportunity to identify in the written texts elements from the students' environments not discussed in the RT.

A further novel finding is the complexity of the issues in polyphonic critical literacies based on the themes the community investigates, which can be seen in the case of the solidarity with the affinity discourse communities. (Gee, 2000, p. 99). Even though the students have been engaged in a rich heteroglossic teaching environment, and even though the advertisements discourse they reproduce were analyzed during the intertextual reading, the affinity discourse communities are dominant. Following Foucault (2004), teachers can realize the difficulties that emerge in the discursive critical literacy practices where the complexities are identified. The students cannot always realize the limits of their actions, inasmuch as subjects we are all born in the existing western power system (Lemm & Vatter, 2014). No matter how promising the polyphonic critical literacies are, the findings suggest that the affinity discourses are shaped in a strong commercial discourse and leave only a small space for action.

However, we cannot acknowledge that Appraisal Theory, especially in combination with other data sources, is a demanding theory and presupposes high linguistic knowledge. It is difficult to implement this analytic tool in everyday literacy school practices. Therefore, curriculum designers should consider further how they can evaluate these polyphonic critical literacy practices in the school environment.

Polyphonic Literacy Practices

Polyphonic critical literacy practices are connected with Constructivism and Activity Theory. With regard to Constructivism, these practices contribute to the dynamics of this theory, beyond perspectives which claim that human can learn and understand only what the each individual can believe (Von Glaserfeld, 1995). From the findings it is clear that the dynamic dialogical chains that were constructed

showed that a lot of knowledge and voices - even contradictory ones - were inserted in the classroom and that voices are very complex. The social reality can create and present new ways of existence that are not finite, but open (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 356). Voices are not pure expressions of individuals, but complicated productions of past meanings and emotional stories that took place in a dialogical context. The genre network that was constructed shaped the critical ways and individual writing (Uhrig, 2012). The students identified the voices, and the linguistic and textual sources in the reading phase; this dialogic chain with the texts deepened the critical reading through the comparison between the sources text genre used to realize and the purpose of each text genre. Writing was a new positioning between the semiotic resources the students identified.

The Greek education system is a very strict, centralized and narrow system, especially the literacy courses (Katsarou, 2009). It has been shown in the findings that it is very difficult in this strict system, where exams are of primary importance, to escape from the dominant discourses. It was expected that the students would reproduce the official knowledge the school teaches them through official curricula, the policy of the same textbook for all students and final exams. Polyphonic critical literacies promote heteroglossia and therefore a more open curriculum is needed. These open curricula should be context-oriented in order to promote critical literacy, which is strongly connected not only with the global policies like the ones Freire (1970) has noted, but also with the local and temporal factors Foucault (1972) and Lyotard (1984) have underlined. Connecting global and local context (Blommaert, 2010) showed that the rural austere environments confront not only the powerful media discourses, but also the strict environments with premodernity features that control everyday life, such as the church and family (Giddens, 1991).

Hybridity and resistance to dominant discourses should not be a surprise. Connecting school with the work environment, Apple (1995, p. 80) discussed that whereas in the latter there are cases of resistance, conflict and worker autonomy, the same behaviors can be found in schools too. He concludes that oversimplified models of social reproduction cannot describe the complexities in each school and workplace. In this case the hybrid identities that break away from the dominant discourses cannot simply be identified as resistance. Through the complex linguistic choices, Appraisal Theory showed that the voice is suffocated in the asymmetrical dominant power relations.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper draws evidence from complex teaching practices which took place in a rural Junior High School in the centralized education system in Greece and featured activities that promoted polyphonic critical literacy approaches. Classroom discourse is investigated mostly through certain teacher-centered practices (e.g. repetition, recasting) (Sharpe, 2008, p. 136). More work needs to be done to understand dialogically-oriented classroom practices based on the thematic unit (Kostouli & Stylianou, 2012, p. 15).

This paper illustrates the methodology that helped to understand the complicated reading and writing activities which were developed in the classroom. These activities viewed writing as a social act where the students are engaged with texts and speeches in various dialogical chains.

It is difficult to assess and improve these practices, since the student's background shaped and reshaped the school activities. Even so, these practices are essential in contemporary postindustrial societies, where meaning making is fluid and is characterized by meaning flows and transitions (Coupland, 2010). The sociocultural context is important in the identification of the teaching activities that promote critical reading, thinking and writing. Nevertheless, the whole activity should be examined thoroughly in order to promote social change and should not be restricted by the complexity of discourse communities. As was shown, behind the complex voices dominant powers and affinity communities are hidden and actually hinder the social acting, which is main purpose of the critical literacies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Eleni Katsarou from University of Crete for the reading and supporting of my research project. I would like to thank also Professor Anastasia Stamou for her helpful comments on the use of Appraisal Theory and David Harding for the language editing.

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APPENDIX

Appendix. The sociolinguistic profiles connected with the students' grammatical and lexical choices

Alignment with dominant discourses	Hybrid Identity – cracking with the dominant discourses	Linguistic and Textual Variety	Linguistic and Textual Variety – (Dis) alignment with specific communities	
			Linguistic and Textual Variety – alignment with the youngsters' discourse community – disalignment with the adults' discourses	Promise of dialogicality – subtle alignment with affinity discourse communities
Monoglossia	Heteroglossia – expanding dialogicality and alignment with dominant discourses	Heteroglossia -: Acknowledgement – expanding dialogicality with entertain - Complex linguistic choices	Heteroglossia Ετερογλωσσικότητα: Acknowledgment and entertain	Ετερογλωσσικότητα: διαστολή διαλογικότητας
3 rd person indicative	Assertive speech acts	Entertain: might	contracts through disclaim	Entertain (I think)
Experts' Vocabulary (doctors, psychologists)	Voice are not acknowledged to the text voices, but to the students' themselves	2 nd person – giving advices	The text voice is present and discusses the perspectives	1 st person
Heteroglossia with entertain and specifically deontic modality		Personal deixis it seems (In greek: mu 'fenete)	constructs collective identities, where the student belongs	Promise of dialogicality – deteriorates the discourse communities
Engagement with the attitude sector (Judgment - social sanction) – voice that oppresses its own voice (Iedema κ.α., 1994)	In the ending disalignment: -Youngsters' voice	In attitude sector negative perspectives are promoted:	Contracts the dominant' discourses (parents, Principals) and expands specific perspective	
1 st person plural shows week textual voice		In the graduation system: positive perspectives for the cell phones are promoted	2 nd person – giving advice	
<i>Solidarity with discourse communities, which promote hazard unequal relations – someone forces you to accept certain perspectives no space for other communities not even reject other perspectives</i>	<i>Solidarity with the discourse communities that support the negative support of the cell phones</i>	<i>Alignment with multiple discourse communities e.g. parents, school principals, advertisements, and young's voices</i>	<i>Disalignment with the school principals' discourse community, explicit alignment with the psychologist discourse community</i>	