

THROUGH OTHER EYES

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Theoretical metaphors

In this section, the six metaphors employed in the language of TOE are presented to illustrate the connections between the theory and the design of the pedagogical process 'in practice' as they address an audience of student teachers and teacher educators in England.

The first metaphor applied in this project refers to the 'writing' of identities. TOE's approach to identity construction goes beyond culturalism by challenging essentialism and emphasising hybridity. Identity is conceptualised as the juxtaposition of one's perceptions and relationships in relation to the self, to others and to the world. In line with Bhabha's argument, TOE has adopted the notion that identities are constantly constructed and reconstructed in interactions that take place in the different social groups to which people belong. In other words, our identities are 'written' in our social contexts; what we know is marked by where we come fromⁱ. Concomitantly, we can also participate in this construction and reconstruction by re-writing things ourselves. We can 'rebel' and choose to be something different, and create perceptions and relationships that are different from our social groupsⁱⁱ. In addition, we participate in the construction and reconstruction of the identities of others when we relate to and communicate with them, as illustrated in figure 1.



As it is often difficult to notice or examine the 'hands' that are 'writing' us, TOE was designed so that learners can develop tools to enable them to examine these 'hands' more easilyⁱⁱⁱ and 'write' their own perceptions and relationships confidently; to think more independently, and examine the effects their 'writing' has on other people and in the world. This enables learners to decide for themselves whether or not they should change their 'writing'^{iv}.

The second metaphor used in the project refers to the construction of difference. The colonial notion that difference is defined as deficiency is based on assumptions of individuality grounded in a notion of a self-sufficient individual who is 'the same' as other individuals in his/her community and therefore dispensable. In TOE, we use the metaphor of a hand^v to re-deploy a notion of difference based on the idea of different, interdependent individuals who, like fingers of a hand, are insufficient in themselves but indispensable in their communities where they offer a unique contribution. This metaphor aims to open the possibility for learners to look at difference as a source of learning and not as a threat, and to appreciate people for their distinctiveness.



The third metaphor refers to positionality and the impossibility of putting ourselves in the shoes of others while we still have our own shoes on. This metaphor suggests that we cannot really take our shoes off, as we cannot simply forget all of our own experience, language and concepts, and we lack other people's experience, language and concepts to see 'exactly' what they see. It is really important that we understand that different people will have different shoes and will be coming from different experiences, languages and concepts^{vi}. Looking at different people's shoes (even though we cannot walk in them barefoot) reminds us that cultures are context-bound as all shoes are 'coming from' somewhere. By engaging with different shoes, despite the difficulties of putting them on, we might understand better where *our own* shoes might be coming from and where they might be leading to in order to check if we are happy with the ways and paths we walk.



The fourth metaphor refers to four possible lenses to frame otherness that reinforce unequal relations of power: of the missionary, the teacher, the tourist and the anthropologist. These are related to Spivak's ideas of the colonial heritage to frame

otherness in ways that 'subalternise' difference. The lens of the missionary frames engagement with otherness or difference around the motif of 'salvation' and increased privilege for the 'saviour'. The teacher frames engagement with otherness around the motif of 'enlightenment' and increased privilege for the holder of knowledge. The tourist, frames engagement with difference around the motif of 'consumption' or 'entertainment'. And, finally, the lens of the anthropologist' frames engagement with difference around the motif of 'preservation'. The first two lenses favour intervention for 'positive' change defined by those who are intervening. The third and fourth lenses favour 'preservation' defined by those who observe. These lenses tend to block possibilities for equal grounds for meaningful dialogue where the self is open to challenge and be challenged by difference.



The fifth metaphor is that of a scale of worth. It refers to past and present imbalances in power relations in the distribution of resources and in the worth attributed to knowledges, cultures and individuals. It invites learners to think about the epistemic violences^{vii} inherited from colonialism and its implications in modern competitive societies. It also highlights the complex negotiation of power on the part of indigenous groups and raises the question of what can be learned from different ways of knowing.



The sixth metaphor refers to the partiality of perspectives, the importance of situatedness and the context dependency of language. It draws from poststructuralist theory that informs some of the postcolonial theoretical strands described in the first part of this article, and the Incan trilogy of perspectives of the condor, the serpent and the jaguar. This metaphor invites learners to see a village through the eyes of each of these three animal 'seers', to explore the limitations and partiality of each way of seeing and to imagine a conversation where these perspectives are brought together. What would happen if one or more of these players decided to claim they could see the whole picture? What languages would be used to communicate each perspective? Would they be able to understand each other? Would they be able to arrive at a consensus? Would their own perspectives change after this conversation? Would they have a better idea of the 'whole picture' through this conversation? This questioning process reflects the pedagogical process that TOE aims to facilitate.



ⁱ Bhabha develops this notion in the concept of ‘locus of enunciation’, which is also an important concept in Mignolo’s work.

ⁱⁱ The notion of hybridity and the idea of the ‘third space’ in Bhabha’s work were the basis of this metaphor

ⁱⁱⁱ Spivak’s notion of ‘deconstruction’ is the basis of this process.

^{iv} This resonates with Spivak’s idea that the ‘rearrangement of desires’ should be ‘uncoersive’.

^v This metaphor draws from an interview with Wera Mirim in Santa Catarina in Brazil carried out in December 2006. Wera is from the Guarani-Pain indigenous community.

^{vi} This metaphor is also grounded on Mignolo’s and Bhabha’s concept of locus of enunciation. The idea of the shoes came from Lisa Taylor’s work in Canada.

^{vii} Spivak’s idea of ‘epistemic violence’ and Bhabha’s notions of ambivalence and mimicry were the basis of this metaphor.