

# KNOWLEDGE AND POST-COLONIAL PEDAGOGY

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**Abstract** – *This paper departs from the premise that knowledge is a source of power, and that we need to come up with pedagogical and academic tools to ensure that disparately positioned individuals/groups within society can voice their experiences and are heard. Academic institutions found in small, intermediately developed countries such as the Maltese Islands tend to be dependent on Western derived epistemologies and enunciative tools to carry out representation and re-definition exercises. Such exercises are necessary for disenfranchised groups/nations to theorise the past from the location of the present in order to map out the future. A number of issues have to be taken into consideration when such an exercise takes place. The primary objective is to provide the subaltern with agency, agency based on transversal dialogue between disparately positioned groups within academia and the public sphere both within and without particular nation states. Such a dialogue would be facilitated if a post-colonial pedagogy is adopted. This pedagogy would help challenge neo-colonial discourses and practices which have infiltrated academia with the hope that these exercises are adopted in other spheres of life, and hence more egalitarian societies created.*

## Introduction

**I**n this paper, the author explores how the location and positionality of the producer/disseminator of knowledge impacts on the valence and credibility of the knowledge produced, and how this in turn is implicated in agency. Academics are not only embodied and classed, their ethnicity/race, generation, sexuality, politics, nationalism, and religion interact and intersect with the knowledge they consume, produce and disseminate. This paper explores the discourses and practices that are negotiated in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and the consequent material and political ramifications implicated in each decision made. The articulation, production, consumption and dissemination of knowledge are affected by the context and audience/s implicated at particular moments in time. The context that is going to be studied in this paper concerns knowledge produced by Maltese academics situated within the University of Malta and knowledge disseminated within this context, although it might be produced by and for others beyond this space.

## **Epistemological indebtedness**

Analytically, the conclusions reached in this paper are very much indebted to feminist theories, especially Black and Third World post-colonial theories. These approaches theorise the particularity of political and scholarly opinion and provide the analytical and pedagogical tools needed to delineate how specific historical, personal, embodied and geographical locations and positions, produce particular knowledge/s discourses, with the consequent material and hence political effects.

Black, Third World and feminist post-colonial theories emerged when exponents within the feminist approach started critiquing the universal claims made by white feminists, claims which did not explain the structural locations of Black, Third World and post-colonial women (Abbott, Wallace & Tyler, 2005). Post-colonial feminist theorists charged white feminism with ethnocentrism, theoretical racism, cultural appropriation and the perpetuation of a victim ideology for non-white and colonised women. Another critique was addressed at male stream renditions of post-colonial theories. Researchers such as McClintock (1995), Grewal (1996) and Brah (1996), among others, delineate in intricate detail the fact that colonial and post-colonial subjectivities are gendered. In male stream post-colonial studies, the feminine stood for the deprived, pre-colonial, emotional, and traditional (e.g., Said, 1978).

The Black and feminist post-colonial critique was seminal, according to Lewis & Mills (2003), in the development of critical studies focusing on colonialism, imperialism, race and power. Once the legitimacy of post-colonial and anti-racist studies was confirmed in established circles, however, the contribution made by feminists was either overlooked, or marginalised. Lewis & Mills (2003) insist that once post-colonial and anti-racist knowledge entered the 'hallowed' circles of academia, the material analysis of class, gender and sexuality, among others, was subsumed under post-colonial rationale in certain disciplines.

Apart from underlining the importance of recognising that gender relations are racialised, Black and feminist post-colonial exponents were critical in the dissemination of certain analytical tools which still prove useful when it comes to conducting research and disseminating knowledge. These include the issue of collaboration between researcher and participants in a study. Hastrup (1992) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (1996) maintain that whether participants are from the same culture or not, they need to be consulted and worked with, so that the political agenda for action stems from the collaboration of all parties concerned. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1996) believes that an ethics of reciprocity might help mitigate a colonialist way of doing research. The insistence among a number of post-colonial feminists is that research should be undertaken with and for the benefit of the participants, whether the change sought consists of raising

consciousness within the participants themselves, and/or the authorities concerned.

The main objectivity of conducting research with, for, by and from is also helpful when it comes to demonstrate that 'native' women or members of oppressed groups are not just victims of discrimination or oppression. Such studies will help uncover the fact that the so called 'subaltern' has agency, albeit within limited parameters at times. The objective of feminist theory nowadays is to give voice to oppressed groups/individuals by conducting research for, by and with members of subjugated groups. As Spivak (1993) however maintains, not all oppressed groups question or oppose imperial and colonising discourses of power. Some, as in the case of Maltese political, bureaucratic and business elites in pre-colonial and post-colonial eras, might collaborate with colonial elites, internalise and promote dominant discourses to serve both their and the 'master's' purposes (see Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994).

Other Black, Third World and post-colonial feminists voice their concerns about projects concerned with the recuperation of 'alternative' experiences and hence knowledges. Chow (2003) is afraid that such projects might help relegate 'native' as the Other. In this case, epistemic violence is carried out when the native comes to be perceived outside the normative subject of Western modernity. This issue crops up during so called 'international' conferences when researchers from developing or non-Western countries are chosen as token representatives of Other women (Min-ha, 1989), or collectively relegated to sessions held at awkward times, which are then poorly attended.

These issues are related to the 'politics of location', an analytical concept Adrienne Rich (2003) explores in her own work. Rich, in her critique of the Marxist universalisation of the masculine experience as disembodied/androgynous, maintains that women's experiences and their knowledge are perceived as subjective. Rich insists that all knowledge is situated, and therefore partial. Although male researchers and 'white' feminists tended to adopt the stance where the claims they made were perceived as universal, hence relegating knowledge deriving from other sources as secondary since it was deemed to be 'situated'. Rich however recognises that due to the relationality of identity formation, all knowledge is situated, whatever claims made otherwise. Another issue explored by Rich concerns the difficulties dealing with enunciation, issues which will be explored in more detail in the rest of the paper.

Black feminists, such as Patricia Hill Collins (1991), have come up with other useful analytical tools. Hill Collins, for example, was very influential when it came to delineate how gender is implicated in a matrix of power, resistance and exploitation. In her book *Black Feminist Thought* she demonstrates how one can study the interlocking oppressions of gender, race and class among others at the

individual, group and structural levels. Hill Collins, due to her own locatedness, neglects to explore the effect of the global on the local. This issue is in turn taken up among others by Brah (1996) and Pettman (1996) who delineate how late capitalism's global reach impacts on gender. In their work on immigrant women, they explore how sexual subjects are positioned by global capital.

Feminist post-colonial theories derive from the recognition that the generic term 'women' does not exist. Women derive from different cultures and social backgrounds, and hence tend to have different interests and concerns. This concern for equality and respect for diversity has inspired feminist educators to devise a pedagogical approach which strives for egalitarian relationships within the educational institution. As Briskin & Coulter (1992) sustain, feminism 'recognizes education both as a site for struggle and as a tool for change making' (p. 249). This project is based on the need to make all students and their experiences feel valued. These principles are crucial in a pedagogical stance where the experience of students is going to be used as a learning resource (Weiler, 1991). Curtis (1998, p. 138) believes that the 'inclusion of our historical and social locations as they relate to power, oppression and privilege has the potential to be a compelling component in the construction of curriculum' as well as knowledge. Feminist education for hooks (1989)

'is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgement of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university.' (p. 51)

The following section will explore the implications surrounding recuperative projects undertaken by subaltern subjects. This project incorporates the need to historicise and theorise the position of the present in order to map action for the future. The epistemological and pedagogical tools produced by feminist post-colonial exponents are still useful, even when gender is not always the most salient rallying point to bring about change.

## **The production of knowledge and post-colonialism**

Due to the Maltese Islands' liminal location within the global economic world order, Maltese sociologists are still dependent on the West for the production and dissemination of knowledge. Since the Maltese Islands are, according to Briguglio (1988; cited in Tabone, 1994, p. 171), an 'intermediately developed country', this positions Malta within the liminal zone between First and Third World, East and

West. This factor is becoming more evident in the research that is being conducted on a European level, research that is being used to locate the socio-economically differentiated social groups within the different member states within the ever expanding entity of the European Union (see Government of Malta & European Commission for Employment and Social Affairs, 2001; Government of Malta & European Commission, Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs, 2003).

A country's socio-economic stand in the global state of affairs has an effect on the creation and production of knowledge. As Burgelman & Pauwels (1992) point out, small European countries have limited media production capacity. This might derive from the limited domestic market and/or technology available. Demographic constraints, together with a limited linguistic reach, limit the profit making potential. When the language is not shared by others, it is more difficult to export national media products and find an alternative market.

At the same time, the fact that the Maltese Islands were a British colony for almost two centuries prior to 1964, might perhaps explain why we still look to Western countries, especially English speaking ones, to help us in our political and cultural self-definition. Frendo (1988, p. 210) maintains that with the departure of the British in 1964, the Maltese politicians and bureaucrats did not try to break their links with the past, but adopted and appropriated the political, social, cultural and economic structures and discourses reinstated in the Maltese Islands by the British (see also Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994). The Maltese academics did the same. We have now transferred allegiance to the European Union, and this entity is now having a concomitant effect on the practices and objects we appropriate and use.

Such a dependence on forms of knowledge and/or texts produced in other contexts will of course have an impact on self-identity, at the individual, local or national level. Malta's location within the political economic context together with its relatively small size might explain why Malta cannot afford to produce and reproduce its own forms of knowledge/s. Philip Altbach (1971) maintains that this dependence on First World publishing and critical facilities derives from the hold these have on the production and dissemination of knowledge on a global basis.

At the same time, the Maltese Islands' location within the world order affects the cultural currency Maltese forms of knowledge have within this global market. Ghosh (1998) points out that authors deriving from economic and political contexts other than the First World are consumed as subalterns by reading publics within both the First and Third Worlds. The irony is that knowledge produced and/or disseminated by First World academic and publishing institutions is perceived as being universally applicable. In reality all knowledge is the product of a

differentially positioned individual/s trying to make sense of a phenomenon in a particular time and space. When First World knowledge production and dissemination market imparts 'literary' value, knowledge produced/disseminated in other sites runs the danger of being seen as reflections of other, localised worlds (Ghosh, 1998).

Ali Mazrui (1995) points out that this history of dependency is also tied with colonial systems of education. In his study of colonial education in Africa, Mazrui concluded that this dependency on Western knowledge derives from a number of factors, including the language of instruction utilised, the source and extent of library holdings, the cultural background of faculty members, the curricula structure, as well as pedagogic requirements. These issues also concern the Maltese university, which like the African universities studied by Mazrui, perceives itself as an extension of major European universities. At the University of Malta, English and the Maltese language are purportedly given equivalent valence as pedagogical languages. In reality English is the main pedagogical language since economic necessity and political links have led to a growing influx of non-Maltese students. Faculty members and students have no option but to converse in English since this *lingua franca* enables individuals from different nationalities to bridge cultural differences. With regard to library holdings, the majority of texts derive from First World, English speaking countries. Knowledge deriving from less economically developed countries is harder to come by, and might be linked with particular courses such as post-colonial literature and/or anthropology. This might be due to the fact that a considerable number of faculty members studied in First World countries due to historical ties with England or North America, and retain this link through the knowledge they consume, produce and disseminate. Exposure to First World academic practices and knowledge is also manifest in the curriculum content and structures adopted. With regard to pedagogic requirements, students are required to prove their competence in English rather than the subject/s in which they might be specialising when test papers are set in English.

Mazrui (1995) retains that in such a system, the cultural self is at stake. The Maltese Islands, like a number of other ex-colonies have adopted the West as their 'primary referent point' (Mohanty, 1997, p. 258). As Said (1994) would put it, the Maltese as a nation are still dependent on 'an authority based elsewhere' (p. 223). But while we might be looking to the North to see which goals we still need to attain, we are simultaneously comparing ourselves with the South and East to measure our progress. This comparison of the self with the First World and the rest takes place on a daily basis in our classrooms since a growing portion of our students derive from countries other than Malta. Interestingly enough, the presence of students from European, African, and Asian countries facilitate

constant interaction within and outside the classroom which leads to the discussion of the same issue from the different socio-political and cultural locations. The presence of students from North American countries though sometimes tends to stifle this healthy sharing of ideas. This of course depends on the individuals involved. People positioned in less powerful national locations might look up to nationals deriving from a country perceived as a cultural and political paragon. Marginalised individuals and nations tend to be conversant with the cultures of both the dominant and subordinate social groups, and their voice might be silenced when confronted with the judgmental gaze of the dominant social group. Chinese students at the University of Malta are silenced in the presence of the majority group – the Maltese.

### **Access to knowledge**

One should also add that there is a gender, class, sexuality, disability as well as an ethnic disparity when it comes to accessing the limited means of knowledge production and reproduction available within the Maltese nation. With regard to the formal and informal means of cultural production and dissemination (television, radio, print, organisations), the majority of these entities are found in Malta, the larger island. These organisations are financed mainly by the state, the two main Maltese political parties, the Roman Catholic Church and/or private capital (see Cutajar, 2004). These organisations tend to promote the experiences and world views of the majority group, namely middle class, middle aged, Maltese, heterosexual and mainly Roman Catholic men. Marx & Engels (1976; cited by Stabile, 1997, p. 399) sustain that the class as well as the country with the means of material and mental production at its disposal, has the power to subordinate those who lack the means of mental and material production.

When certain social groups within the Maltese Islands are negated access to these organisations, their views and/or experiences are rarely incorporated within texts produced locally (Cutajar, 1998, p. 9) or abroad. The symbolic annihilation of certain social groups within texts is often blamed on their subordinate location within the political and socio-economic context. At the same time, their symbolic annihilation within the means of knowledge production is used to legitimise their unequal access to the material and political resources found within the same context (Jakubowicz, 1994).

As marginalised subjects within the national and/or the global context, both Maltese and the myriad Maltese social groups tend to depend heavily on epistemologies, discourses and research methods deriving from the West to make sense of who they are within the local, national and global contexts. There

is always the fear that these acts of self-explanation, might lead to the essentialisation and homogenisation of social differences. Luckily, knowledge and skills acquired can be argued, contested and understood differently in a context where the student population derives from varied imagined communities. Ghosh (1998) maintains that these transversal exchanges of cultural experiences need to be accompanied by theoretical discourses that are self-reflexive about their own cultural and epistemological dependencies.

### **Is there a Maltese sociology?**

Western theories, epistemologies and methodologies provide Maltese researchers with the tools that enable them to study and analyse their location within Maltese and global society. Our colonial inheritance makes us dependent on analytical tools and concepts fashioned elsewhere. Maltese academics on the whole perceive their own experiences/knowledge as being situated, and hence partial. They are therefore hesitant about coming up with theories and methods to explain certain issues whether they are pertinent to Maltese context or not. Some of these issues cannot always be analysed through the use of appropriated tools.

As a nation subordinate to authorities based without the nation, Maltese researchers attempt to justify claims they make by referring to a number of sociologists who have achieved prestige in the First World. Maltese students and/or students taught at this site, become conversant with theories of the sociological masters, learn how to emulate them and sometimes stop there. Examiners criticise sociology students for not critically discussing social issues or evaluating theories sociologically (Chairperson, Board of Examiners, 2002, p. 1). A number of Maltese sociologists can be accused of adopting this stand as well. As Maltese academics we might not realise that some of the theories we use in our work – like, for example, those that explain and explicate social class in Britain – do not describe what is really happening within the local context. As Baldacchino (1993) points out, the Maltese social stratification system is so different from that of Western countries, that the appropriation of ‘ready-made’ stratification models would be like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole.

### **Changes in the Maltese sociological perspective**

Early Maltese sociologists tended to assume that the Maltese population was quite homogenous and rarely bothered about studying the effect intersecting forms of marginality can have on perception and action. In the past, the focus tended to



be mainly on the effect social class had on life chances and subjective location. The majority of research projects used to take 'man' as the basic unit of social analysis, and generalised their findings to the rest of the population to emulate their 'masters' abroad. Research on women, especially women from socially excluded areas of Malta, was rare apart from Sybil Mizzi O'Reilly's (1981) seminal work on women in Senglea.

This picture is changing nowadays. Gender, social class, disability, sexuality, regional derivation and age are social factors which are being studied on their own or in conjunction with other forms of marginality. Researchers such as Abela (2002), Vassallo, Sciriha & Miljanic Brinkworth (2002), Cutajar (2000) together with Arrigo & Formosa (2007) are focusing on the interaction and intersectionality of social factors on people's experiences, actions and life chances.

There is also a growing realisation that the country's location within the global economy impacts differently on groups and individuals at the local level. As inhabitants of a small country, we have always felt our precarious, tenacious hold within the global state of affairs. Researchers within the Maltese sociological context are realising that individuals/institutions are dealing with supra-national and state structures, discourses and personnel at the micro-level, with factors in their identity implicated in the day to day interactions and transactions with these entities. These discourses and practices position individuals differently at different moments in time, and these have an effect on the agency of those concerned. The country's, group's and individual's positionality and location within the world order impact on the subjectivity and hence the agency of the entities/individuals concerned.

## **Writing the text**

Maltese researchers have internalised a colonial mentality. In our mind we write a text with the premise that we are addressing a First World audience even when speaking about and to a Maltese audience. As sociologists we have internalised the colonial scope: we write in English, use First World concepts, methodologies and epistemologies and are constantly aware of how our work might be received outside Maltese shores. Some subalterns fail to engage seriously with urgent issues pertinent to the societies in which they are located since their primary objective might be to gain entry into Western academe. Their fear is that by focusing on local issues, the knowledge produced might be ghettoised at the international level.

In fact we seem to be attempting to please two academic canons concurrently – the informal/formal tenets imposed at the local and international level. With too

many audiences in mind, we might be losing sight of the fact that we are also responsible toward those we chose to work with and speak about. It is high time that we start adopting ‘an ethic or reciprocity’ when conducting research with human participants. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1996, p. 109) promotes an ethic of reciprocity because this helps to mitigate a colonialist way of doing research. This ethic of reciprocity is based on the need for researchers to compensate the participants involved in their research project for the time, effort and energy expiated during fieldwork. Reciprocity does not occur when the researcher appropriates the knowledge garnered during the fieldwork to promote her/his own career on the backs of others, but uses this knowledge to bring about change. The objective is to ensure that the knowledge created and the process through which it was created serves to act as sites of resistance.

As can be seen, Maltese researchers/students are placed at an ‘intersection of a system of differences’ (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 140). Abu-Lughod maintains that this dialectical space emanates from the inherent contradictions within enunciative positionalities – namely our liminal position within the global order and how they interact and intersect with our positions within the local social milieu. This position however can be utilised to explore the interplay between repression and resistance (Kaplan, 1994, p. 143). By exploring the interaction and impact of interlocking oppressions, we are eventually helping in creating new research methods and theories based on situated experiences. This happened in the case of Patricia Hill Collins (1991) who through her exploration of her location as a Black woman in American academia, came up with an Afrocentric Feminist epistemology.

Resistance, according to Pratt (1992, p. 7), can also take place when idioms appropriated from the coloniser are utilised to make sense of the colonised. The appropriated icons, objects and symbols used to make sense of another context, according to Hueng (1995, p. 86), are transformed in the process of analysing another context and consequently infused with different meanings resulting in semantic reversals.

Greenman (1996, p. 50) adds that when the researcher uses Western textualised norms and concepts to explore issues pertinent to a particular context, this also helps to deconstruct Eurocentric perceptions of the Otherised nation, group or individual. Such texts help disrupt the still prevalent images that individuals in developing nations are passive, subservient or lacking in creativity (Behar, 1993, p. 272). As a consequence, these sociological tracts help to challenge Western interpretations of resistance and agency.

As a nation we need to conduct more research to understand ourselves, what our needs are and how we go about addressing them. To understand ourselves we need to explain ‘us’ to ourselves first, perhaps in our own language, through the

use of home-grown or adapted theories, methods and other analytical tools. This does not mean that English and European texts written or translated into English cannot be used, and some knowledge appropriated to facilitate this process. Ghosh (1998) maintains that post-colonial resistance occurs when equal importance is given to vernacular and supplemental knowledges as well as academic canon.

Ghosh (1998) insists that grass roots knowledge will be lost unless the post-colonial critic takes on the task of research and translation as everyday pedagogic practice. This act of translation has political and economic ramifications since it will help determine the 'literary' worth and 'marketability' of particular, situated knowledges. Such research is more likely to be conducted by scholars/students who have had been exposed to critical and/or post-colonial pedagogy.

What we might not be doing is relaying the results back to the population that assisted the researcher. This happens when the results are published in First World journals and/or in a language that is not comprehensible to those who participated in the research. The dissemination of such knowledge within their context in a language comprehensible to marginalised groups helps empower them. Non-First World researchers tend to promulgate the power and privilege of the English language when they opt to write in this medium, and hence restrict access to knowledge produced collaboratively in the field, knowledge garnered through a language and/or terminology with which the participants are conversant. Ghosh (1998) retains that this tends to happen since academic discourse has a tendency to be inward looking, with the potential of adopting a neo-colonial stance.

## **Advocacy or appropriation?**

Maynard (1996, p. 20) differentiates between advocacy and appropriation. Advocacy occurs when the author puts forward and publicises the experiences of others and hence provides the silenced with the means to speak. Appropriation occurs when the information given by common individuals is reworked and redefined by the author, which results in the elision of the providers of this knowledge.

We have as yet not tried to find a way that will enable sociologists to speak without infringing on the Other's right to speak in their own terms. We are sometimes more concerned with demonstrating our competence in sociological lore than in paying attention to the participants' personal, private voices and knowledge/s. There are instances, though, where researchers such as Gatt & Mula together with other contributors in *Inside/Outside Schools* (Sultana, 1997) experimented with ways of giving voice to the participants and not only providing the translated and re-worked rendition of what they say.

## **Replication and/or resistance**

Women of Colour and Third World Feminist scholars have different attitudes toward the appropriation of Western/First World epistemologies and enunciative codes used to speak about 'ourselves'. Some, like John (1989, p. 72), believe that by using Western epistemologies and enunciative codes, non-First World scholars are helping in the replication and consolidation of the language of power and privilege. For John, enunciation bound with the hegemony of English just helps to add to the depth of intellectual development within this location and not challenge it.

Others (see Wolf, 1996) believe that by adopting and adapting these enunciative tools, scholars deriving from developing countries can learn about their communities of derivation while simultaneously teaching First World audiences about themselves. While using these appropriated tools, scholars deriving from developing countries can help simultaneously to deconstruct Eurocentric and androcentric sociological concepts of themselves (Greenman, 1996). This happens when the idioms appropriated from the coloniser are transformed in the process of depiction, according to Pratt (1992). Semantic reversals take place when concepts utilised to describe First World entities are endowed with a different meaning when they are used to describe other contexts.

## **Language**

The linguistic medium used by the groups and/or individual Maltese researchers interact with in their field of research and teaching is not always English. English is however used to relay the ideas and concerns expressed by the 'subjects'. This is also the working language our students have to utilise when it comes to reading, discussing and writing about sociological issues.

The fact that the language used within the research field is different from the language used in the text creates a number of problems for researchers/students. The immediacy of the narratives, as well as the idiosyncrasies of speech, is lost in the process of translation. At the same time, translating one phrase in Maltese often involves a lengthy explanation in English since the cultural connotations also have to be elucidated upon. This explanation never really captures the multiple interpretations of the phrase in question. McBeth & Horne (1996, p. 74) argue that in the act of making these experiences public outside the culture in which the respondents are steeped, means that the nuances of a word, phrase or cultural symbol are lost in the process of translation.

English is also the main pedagogical medium used at the University of Malta, in spite of the fact that teachers can use English in conjunction with Maltese to teach. When teaching sociology, we are not only expounding sociological concepts, we also have to explain to our students the socio-cultural and political milieu in which a particular sociologist was implicated, and the factors within his/her life or society that facilitated a particular line of thought. So as teachers we are translating on three levels – on a linguistic, cultural and/or sociological level. This entails time, a scarce resource when a number of issues have to be covered. Students however need to be taught how to be self-reflexive where sociological discourse is concerned, or we might be running the risk of promoting global hegemonies.

At the same time one must take into consideration the fact that sociological tracts and examination questions are set and have to be answered in English. This means that students who are not well versed in this language are affected negatively. One needs to point out that students who do badly in these examinations might be quite fluent in verbalising their own understanding of sociological concepts in their own language. Expressing their ideas in written English is however another matter. Those who are not so conversant with the written form of English end up being examined on their level of competency of this medium and not on their grasp of the sociological content. In the end, those who are competent in English tend to pass, those who are not fail or barely pass. In this way, we are helping to replicate the Maltese social stratification system since, according to Sciriha (1994), English is often used to demarcate between Maltese social classes.

## **Neo-colonialism**

Certain researchers such as Abu-Lughod (1991) believe that ‘halfies’ – in this case neo-colonial scholars whose cultural identity has been shaped by their exposure to knowledge produced, published and disseminated ‘overseas’ – are caught at the ‘intersection of a system of differences’ (p. 140). Du Cille (1994) maintains that the subaltern is often the product of a ‘white’ Eurocentric educational system that trains them as ‘white’ scholars. Malta’s dependence on imported texts and concepts means that the Maltese are the product of an overseas education conducted at ‘home’.

For Abu-Lughod and others such as bell hooks, it is this split in the Self that helps to generate an awareness of one’s positionality within the structures in which one is implicated. ‘Otherised’ scholars are conscious that their dependence on Western enunciative codes and epistemologies is a form of neo-colonialism. hooks

(1991; cited in Kaplan, 1994, p. 143) believes that ‘halfies’ should utilise this dialectical space emanating from the inherent contradictions within enunciative positionalities to explore the interplay between repression and resistance. But as John (1989, p. 68) points out, competency in the colonising class’s cultural code does not endow the subaltern with the same power to speak about themselves or their own community as the power which is inveigled in the dominant group.

## **Location of the researcher and the text**

Said (1994, p. 245) is afraid that when intellectuals from colonial countries set themselves the revisionist task of explaining themselves to themselves, they are helping in the colonisation of the people they think they are speaking from and for. This happens when the colonised subjects undertake to represent themselves through the cultural frameworks they share with their coloniser, and thus they end up by representing themselves in ways that engage with the coloniser’s own terms, according to Pratt (1992, p. 7). When this act of self-definition is performed within this otherising context, it only helps to titillate the curiosity of a ‘white’ audience according to Fusco (1994, p. 143). This fear limits the efficacy of this act of resistance.

The location of the speaker also has an impact on the status of the text. As Carr (1994, p. 158) points out, the location of the author, more than the quality of scholarship is often assessed within academic circles. Thus as Pesquera (in Scott & Shah, 1996; cited in Wolf, 1996, p. 27) underlines, ‘Otherised’ researchers are caught between the dilemma of finding empowering methodologies with which to study the Other (themselves), while at the same time struggling to empower themselves in a global academic network that renders them powerless and invisible.

## **Interventionist pedagogy**

Ghosh (1998) regards post-colonial pedagogy as the means of interrupting these ‘circuits of control’ at the level of the classroom, with the hope that these transitory, contingent and fragmented tactical interventions help undermine the historical distributions of economic and cultural power.

For Ghosh, the objective of post-colonial pedagogy is to problematise the politics of the academy, pedagogy, and the publishing industry, as well as the relationship of academia to international public spheres. Other issues that need to be questioned concern the choice of texts made at academic level. One needs to

ask who makes these choices, on which criteria, for which objective. Ghosh insists that such a pedagogical stance needs to be taken in order to situate texts, courses, requirements, as well as university policies within a larger understanding of transnational exchanges.

The demystification of texts, courses, requirements, and university policies will help to show them for what they are – a form of political praxis that helps promote certain forms of knowledge while suppressing others. This knowledge is made to appear as having universalising claims, when in reality it is as situated as other forms of knowledge. These claims however enable certain social groups to retain/attain power through cultural exchanges, while reifying the process in so doing.

Ghosh (1998) suggests that an interventionist post-colonial pedagogy is a praxis that helps position classroom knowledge and skills within the demands and constraints of transnational cultural economies. Such pedagogy stimulates students and academics to question on a continuous basis the conditions that enable them to study particular knowledge and not others, the practices they acquire and use. The objective of education, especially sociology, is to analyse structures, practices and content that we take for granted. By taking them apart and analysing them, and then constructively building them up collaboratively, we would be involving ourselves in a participatory exercise where decisions are made on a collective basis, taking the needs of the myriad individuals/groups into consideration. This needs to be an ongoing exercise if decisions and practices on what is taught, how, by whom and for which purposes is to mirror the interests of all those involved. Such exchanges facilitate participatory democracy, a much bandied around concept which few have put into practice, with the hope that this exercise might be adopted by those involved in other spheres in their lives.

As it is though, a neo-colonial stance has been adopted at the University of Malta. Influential agents within and without this institution dictate what needs to be learnt, through which mediums, by whom and with whose help. This coupled with the dependence on ideas and concepts created elsewhere to define and explain other social contexts, has rendered education an alienating experience to those involved. Knowledge is not being presented as something which explains and elucidates on one's experiences. It is seen by the majority of students, and perhaps by some academics, as a commodity which can be consumed, regurgitated without being analysed reflectively, and discarded when it does not accrue material or political benefits.

Ghosh maintains that an interventionist post-colonial pedagogy will enable students/researchers to understand the objects and practices of the classroom in terms of transnational epistemologies as well as transnational systems of production, consumption and distribution. When this happens, they might be able

to envision a transnational public sphere within which one can speak, write and act, with the purpose of bringing about awareness and agency, not the fear of ridicule or condescension. The primary allegiance of such self-reflexive agents should be toward their national public sphere Ghosh insists, because it is from this location that they came to perceive and explicate circuits that determine and are determined by their actions.

Mayo (2001) adds that learning situations created to enable participants to problematise Eurocentric knowledge should be accompanied by parallel learning situations where these same participants learn to valorise the different cultures of groups differentially placed within a given society. The valorisation of both difference and identity needs to take place concurrently. Mayo insists that the valorisation of subaltern cultures within a particular nation can only occur when marginalised groups are involved in curriculum shaping, the choosing of texts as well as pedagogical processes. For Mayo, democratic citizenship takes place when different cultures become part of the educational process. Unfortunately though, some Maltese researchers have not yet realised that difference – whether it derives from differences in sexuality, religion, political opinion, region, body shape, mental health or others – does result in a different culture, and not enough research has yet been carried out in the Maltese Islands on why some groups within the nation regard themselves and are regarded as different, and how this difference affects their life chances and hence their political agency.

It is high time that in the Maltese Islands we create ‘safe’ spaces where differentially placed groups or individuals can speak about their difference without the fear of their experience being censored, or ignored. Academia can set an example and provide students and academics alike with a space where people feel comfortable about expressing their divergent views and experiences, and while being willing to listen to others. Unless this happens, we cannot say that we have reached a post-colonial phase, but have denounced the imperialism of others, to fashion one of our own. Yuval-Davis (1997) calls democratic exchanges based on difference ‘transversal politics’.

Coalition building among those who perceive themselves as different needs to occur if this political forum needs to move on to the next phase – action. Transversal politics can occur because all of us have plural subjectivities maintains Grewal (1996). Individuals with multiple subjectivities have the capacity to form coalitions and links with other individuals/groups who are undergoing other forms of oppression since the experience of oppression on one/multiple levels, can enable the subject to understand the oppression of others on another level. Such identities, according to Grewal (1996), are enabling because they provide a mobility of solidarity across gender, class, race, nation, etc. and hence enable opposition in multiple locations.



Both Grewal (1996) and Yuval-Davis (1997) are however aware of the limitations of coalition politics. Grewal (1996), for example, points out that in coalition politics there is the fear that certain agendas might not be attended to. Kaplan (1994) delineates how this might take place. Her argument is that within the process of revision, particularistic difference is not equalised. This means that the position from where the individual speaks, will affect whether the voice is sanctioned, which affects whether in the end it is attended to. This means that the location from where you speak is crucial for effective political activism. Differential location entails differential political clout. The fact that every once in a while the agendas of those individuals/groups from the so defined margins get to be taken up, does not mean that pluralistic differences have been equalised. So the next step is to equalise difference.

Ghosh (1998) however holds high hope for the transformative prospects of post-colonial pedagogy. She believes that post-colonial pedagogy helps resist global circuits of control at the local level since it enables students/scholars to demystify texts and cultural spheres that shape political praxis. When this practice is adopted by a number of people in different countries, it might help reconceptualise the concept 'public sphere', and in the process help bring into fruition a form of global citizenship where a discursive consensus might be reached.

## **Conclusion**

Knowledge is a site of contestation between different discursive regimes, a contradiction between anti-colonial and neo-colonial ideologies (Huggan, 1997; cited in Ghosh, 1998). The interventionist practices mentioned above are aimed at bringing about change at the individual, national and international level. Whether the debates which ensue in class and in certain academic circuits can bring about changes in mentality within the macro political, economic and cultural level is another matter.

Ghosh (1998) believes that the debates within these levels, while fragmentary, might eventually help reconceptualise transnational public spheres within which global citizenship is envisaged. The objective of this critical movement within academia aims at bringing about change in the world of expert knowledge, where method and pedagogy come to be envisaged as a form of public culture.

Coalition building between academics and people/groups outside academia, as well as among academics themselves, facilitates the sharing of knowledge among people who are differentially positioned. This sharing of knowledge between people differently positioned within the world order is beneficial on two counts.

Knowledge produced by different groups can be used to interrogate the power of privileged groups, an interrogation that might lead to the empowerment of another social group (Grewal, 1996). At the same time, coalition building among disempowered groups, whether they are academics or not, would provide the group in question with more political clout to bring about change on a national and international level.

Such an exchange can bear fruit if it departs from the premise that cultures are complementary, not different (Faulks, 1999). Faulks however adds that true participatory democracy can only work once inequality on a local and global level is eradicated. The dilemma is that this is what post-colonial pedagogy or transversal politics is trying to achieve.

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