**Title: Finding a place for critical literacy in Scotland**

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**Reading between the lines: What's critical about literacy in the CfE?**

Jennifer Farrar – School of Education, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK, and

Kelly Stone – School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Critical literacy foregrounds the relationship between language and power by focusing on how texts work and in whose interests (Luke 2012: 5). It is singled out as an “important skill” within the CfE, yet what the concept means is far from clear (Scottish Government 2009e). Using a lens that draws from critical discourse analysis, critical content analysis (Luke 2001; Beach et al 2009; Fairclough 2010), and Ball’s method of policy analysis (2015), we find that the term ‘critical literacy’ has been applied incoherently within key CfE documentation, resulting in the frequent conflation of critical literacy with critical reading and critical thinking. We argue that the version of 'critical literacy' presented in the CfE is in fact an amalgamation of literacy-related competences that draw largely from psychological rather than socio-political perspectives of literacy. We suggest this is a missed opportunity, given the Scottish Government’s stated commitment to social justice in policy terms (Scottish Executive 2000; Scottish Government 2016), not forgetting the powerful benefits that a critically literate stance could bring to Scotland’s learners at this time of communicative change and challenge.

*Keywords*: Scotland, Critical literacy, Curriculum English, Constructions of English, Literacy teaching, Critical reading

**Between Criticality & (De)Colonialism: Unsettling Perspectives on Language & Literacy Education in Scotland**

Navan Govender – University of Strathclyde

Language and literacy education in the decolonial project seeks to centralise indigenous knowledge systems in order to transform established colonial relations of power (Maldonado-Torres, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012), while critical pedagogies enable a ‘speaking-back’ to power (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Each perspective comes with its own vision of transformation, educational practice, and assumptions, especially where English still holds a position of cultural and linguistic power. Scotland, both as an instrument and beneficiary of colonialism as part of the British empire, as well as a victim of colonisation, represents the tenuous negotiations of identity with history, politics and power. While moves have been made in education to regain a Scottish identity through the inclusion of Scots language and the positioning of Scottish literature in the secondary English curriculum (McCall, 2002; Unger, 2010), questions about criticality and (de)colonisation still need further exploration (Millar, 2006; Akdag & Swanson, 2018).This has implications for the interpretation and implementation of the policy (Costa, 2015). Through a thematic content analysis, I explore how Scottish English language and literacy educational policy constructs criticality and notions of (de)coloniality, if at all. I then consider the potential for critical literacies to serve as a means for transformative social-semiotic action and interaction in the decolonisation of English language and literacy education.

*Keywords*: critical literacy, decoloniality, language and literacy education

**Biographies:**

**Dr Jennifer Farrar** is a Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. She leads the MSc Education (online), is deputy leader of the PDGE programme, and teaches literacy and children’s literature to undergraduate and postgraduate students on initial teacher education courses. She also supervises doctoral students working in the field of literacy and children’s literature. Her current research is related to student teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature and the status of critical literacy in Scotland’s education system.

**Dr Kelly Stone** is a lecturer in early literacies at the Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, where she teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Initial Teacher Education. Her research is primarily concerned with issues of equity and social justice, and specifically with critical literacies and the use of children's literature as a platform for social justice. She has been involved in a number of research studies which have focused on educational, health and social inequalities.

**Dr Navan Govender** is a Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom. Navan holds Bachelor of Education (specialising in secondary English teaching), and Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Applied English Language Studies, and a PhD in Applied Language & Literacy Education in the field of critical literacy and the teaching of controversial topics including issues related to sex, gender and sexual diversity. This research interest is informed by the need to raise critical questions about power and privilege in education, the role of critical literacies in developing learners' and teachers' agency in and out of the classroom, as well as the potential for critical approaches to (literacy) education to transform identity construction, meaning making and society.