Afrocentricity and decoloniality in disciplinarity:
A reflective dialogue on academic literacy development

Oscar Oliver Eybers
University of Pretoria
Corresponding Author: oscar.eybers@up.ac.za

Abstract

This study explores a transformative method to revise an academic literacy study guide in a Humanities faculty in South Africa. The methodology includes a critical literature review, positioning the study within the framework of Gee's discourse theory and Lea and Street's academic literacy model. The researcher functioned as a research instrument, critically evaluating the practical reasons for the guide's revision and challenges prompting changes. The transformed text maintains its previous structure while adopting discourse, Afrocentric, and decolonial paradigms. Revisions aim to align with disciplinary discourses, critical thinking and to prepare students for nuanced literacies required in the Humanities. The inclusion of Afrocentric and decolonial paradigms involves introducing students to the origins of literacies in Africa, incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and utilising a Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) narrative. The discussion reflects on the anticipated effectiveness of the guide and addresses potential challenges during future implementation.

Keywords: Academic literacy, Afrocentricity, Decoloniality, Disciplinarity, Transformation

Introduction

The article highlights concerns about the effectiveness of transfer theory and the use of generic, basic skills academic literacy models in African higher education systems. The researcher, a literacies facilitator in a former Afrikaans-centric university, critically examines the intertwining of coloniality with transfer practices among contemporary academic literacies facilitators in South Africa, emphasising the importance of holistically nurturing students' development within their academic disciplines. Colonial-era literacy methods still haunt our lecture halls, constraining students' academic progress. Examining transfer theories and practices in different disciplines is key to dismantling these hidden barriers and building better literacy models. The article urges educators to construct robust academic literacies, essential tools for scholars to engage with and shape knowledge within their disciplines.

Academic literacies are vital tools that scholars utilise to create, challenge and modify epistemologies in disciplines and academic fields. According to Lea and Street's (2006) model of academic literacies, the core roles of scholarly communication encompass constructing meaning, shaping disciplinary identities, and navigating institutional cultures. Each of the aforementioned roles of academic literacies enable scholars to argue in their disciplines, and generate and modify new knowledge. The limitation of transfer theories, which often focus on sentence-level and textual aspects, is that they neglect the disciplinary and contextualised features of academic literacies, posing a problem in fully developing students' critical skills. Contrary to the narrow focus of transfer theories on sentence-level and textual aspects, this article holds that academic literacies integrate cultural, social, and cognitive practices that enable scholars to engage with subject-specific vocabularies and disciplinary discourses (Yan, et al., 2017).

Academic literacies are crucial for students' integration into different disciplines (Lea & Street, 2006). It is important to recognise that literacies integration and transfer are distinct from each other. Contradicting transfer theory and practices, it is essential for students to develop proficiency in integrating multiple literacies beyond just one type to effectively communicate within disciplinary communities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Multiliteracies encompass various practices, such as the use of genres specific to disciplines, video and audio media, diverse digital platforms and applications, as well as traditional typing. In a multiliteracies theoretical framework, scholars are expected to integrate diverse, yet specific communicative strategies to demonstrate their capabilities as critical members of their disciplines (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

The journey of attaining disciplinary and academic literacies poses challenges for novice scholars within African universities, influenced by historical, economic, political, and linguistic factors rooted in South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. African students, similar to their global counterparts, encounter obstacles in mastering complex reasoning, grasping concepts, employing persuasive writing, and dissecting problems (Suarez-Brito, et al., 2022). Moreover, the acquisition of academic literacies in higher education is further complicated by the persistence of apartheid and colonial knowledge paradigms, which students in certain academic departments must transfer while developing their academic literacies.

Prior to the era of democracy and possibly continuing today, South Africans underwent inadequate pre-university education and were excluded from interacting with disciplinary discourses and literacies during the times of colonialism and apartheid. This is not to imply that pre-colonial, indigenous African cultures and communities lack reasoning literacies. The argument, rather, is that acceptable modes of argumentation and writing, as specified by academic disciplines, were withheld from oppressed, indigenous African communities in the lead-up to South Africa's democratic era.

Bangeni and Kapp (2005) highlight the challenge African scholars face in transferring their home identities, literacies, and epistemologies into various disciplines within South African universities. Similarly, this article examines the difficulties novice Humanities students encounter when they are required to transfer literacies acquired in a generic academic literacy study guide into diverse disciplines within a Humanities Faculty of an African university. This article highlights

concerns regarding generic and disciplinarily sterile literacy courses and suggests an alternative model that incorporates discourse, Afrocentric and decolonial principles. The article's methodology suggests that one way to implement this alternative model is by revising generic literacy study guides to generate disciplinarity. Therefore, revising academic literacy study guides can be a potential method of implementing an academic literacy model that incorporates discourse, Afrocentricity, and decolonial principles.

Methodology

The researcher embarked on a project to transform a study guide for the Academic Literacy and Language module (ALL 110) by incorporating theoretical concerns related to decoloniality and African-centred methods. This study explores challenges encountered when working with a study guide that fails to align with the disciplinary, Afrocentric and decolonial perspectives that the research aims to address. The researcher critically reflects on these challenges and engages in a thoughtful process of revising the study guide to make it more Afrocentric, decolonial, and disciplinary-focused. As such, the researcher is a research instrument.

To undertake this transformative journey, the researcher employs qualitative interpretive methods. These methods allow for a comprehensive exploration of transfer theory, indigenous literacies and discourse theory in relation to both the original and revised study guides. By examining these theories, the researcher gains valuable insights into how academic literacies can be framed within Africa's rich indigenous knowledge systems.

Furthermore, this study goes beyond the mere revision of the study guide. It undertakes a conceptual analysis of literacies and discourses rooted in Africa's indigenous knowledge systems through an extensive review of relevant scholarship. Historical documents are examined to provide a contextualisation of indigenous African knowledge systems and literacies within the academic landscape of contemporary African universities. The meta aim of this methodological approach is to integrate Africa's epistemic traditions into the new study guide. By doing so, the researcher seeks to create a framework that aligns academic literacies with Africa's ancient, pre-colonial epistemological heritage. This integration is not only a means of decolonising the study guide but also a method of humanising the facilitation of academic literacies.

Through critical reflection on this transformative process, the researcher proposes innovative teaching methods that promote decolonisation and humanisation in the facilitation of academic literacies. The new study guide becomes a vehicle for embracing and celebrating Africa's diverse knowledge systems, fostering a sense of pride and cultural identity among learners. In conclusion, this study represents an effort to revise and contrast an Afrocentric and Eurocentric study guide. By implementing theoretical concerns related to decoloniality and African-centred methods, the researcher demonstrates how to transform academic literacy study guides into tools that are more aligned with Afrocentric, decolonial, and disciplinary-focused perspectives.

Theoretical framework

The revised study guide has been crafted to integrate key theories. Aligned with the article's theoretical perspectives, which encompass Lea and Street's (2006) academic literacies framework, Gee's (2015) discourse theory, decoloniality, and the Afrocentric paradigm (refer to Figure 1), the study guide aims to offer students a holistic and culturally relevant experience of developing their academic literacies. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the revised ALL 110 study guide strives to address and illuminate potential conflicts between proponents of transfer theory and educators advocating for a discourse-based approach.
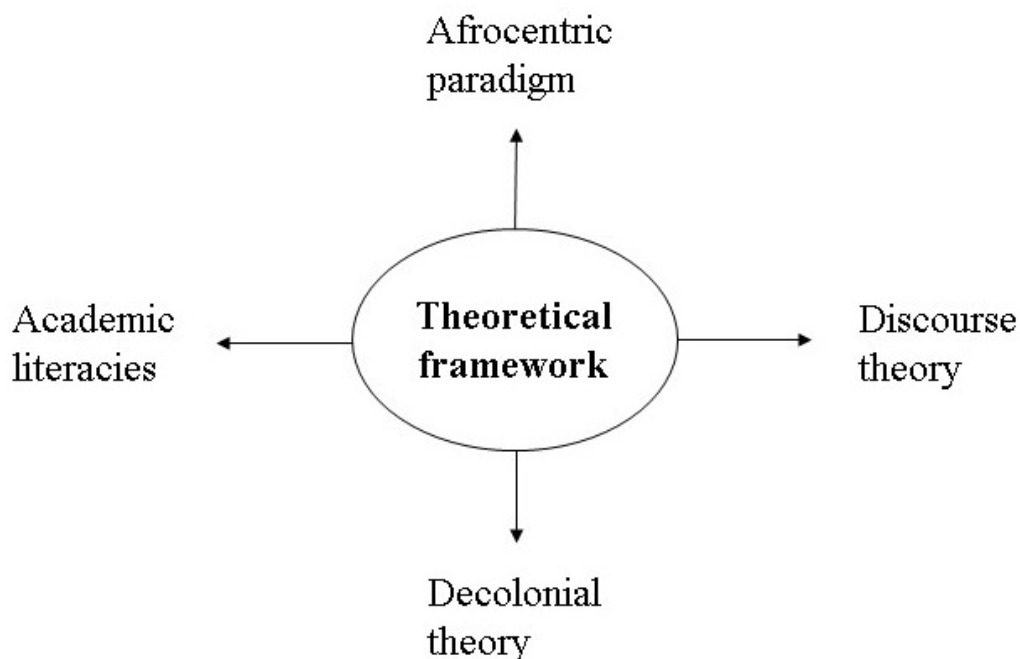
Figure 1: Theoretical framework for analysing literacies in higher education

The updated student guide, designed to enhance the academic literacies of novice African scholars, incorporates Mazama's (2001) Afrocentric principles as a foundational perspective. Acknowledging the crucial role of African intellectuals, including literacies facilitators in advancing the emancipation of global African communities, this article highlights faculties' responsibilities to contribute to the academic development of diverse African populations. In this vein, the Afrocentric paradigm frames the importance of intentionally de-centring European epistemologies and ontologies historically associated with colonialism, capitalism, and the subjugation of millions of Africans.

An Afrocentric and decolonial approach advocates for integrating analytical knowledge systems rooted in African cultural contexts. This pedagogy emphasises aligning discourse methods with Afrocentric and indigenous pedagogic approaches. The researcher navigates tensions between advocates of transfer theory, linked to colonial disintegration of African knowledge systems from actual, disciplinary practices, and educators championing a discourse-based approach. The transition from transfer to discourse pedagogies is subsequently portrayed

as a vital strategy to cultivate a more inclusive and culturally relevant educational experience for learners in South African universities.

Aligned with Mazama's (2001) Afrocentric perspectives, the revised study guide acknowledges the crucial role of historical, pre-colonial academic literacies facilitators in Africa. Accordingly, to decolonise methods of developing academic literacies in a former Afrikaans institution of higher learning, the revised study guide emphasises Africa's early contributions to written knowledge, highlighting how the continent is home to humanity's original, systematic writing, as noted by Regulski (2016). Integrating Mazama's (2001) Afrocentric framework and leveraging the role of academic literacies facilitators, the study guide aspires to offer a comprehensive approach, empowering novice African scholars to navigate their academic literacies while embracing their cultural histories.

Applying Mazama's (2001) Afrocentric paradigm to the analysis of transforming academic literacies in Africa, specifically in the context of the researcher's facilitation, unveils a potent lens through which to examine the evolution of reading, writing and communication across the continent. For example, Afrocentricity requires literacies facilitators to consider writing during Africa's pre-colonial dispensation. As such, the Afrocentric paradigm encourages a thorough exploration of reshaping prevalent methods in cultivating scholars as disciplinary members. This shift centres on aligning with ancient analytical practices and indigenous knowledge systems, promoting more inclusive and culturally relevant approaches to literacies education.

Furthermore, the Afrocentric paradigm encourages a critical examination of how colonial legacies have affected the evolution of indigenous African literacies. It underscores the potential for revitalising indigenous epistemic traditions as essential elements in disciplinary discourses. In the context of the previously mentioned study guide revision, the researcher journeys into their encounters while implementing an Afrocentric literacies development paradigm in a university once characterised by the dominance of Afrikaans and Verwoerd's ideology. The researcher candidly discusses both the successes and pedagogical challenges encountered throughout this transformative process.

In the context of the revised study guide, the integration of decolonial theory within academic literacies cultivation involves the incorporation of students' indigenous African epistemologies through diverse multimodal approaches. As Mazama (2001) suggests, this approach is necessary to counteract the remnants of Eurocentric perspectives that have historically suppressed indigenous, ancient epistemes, and African ontologies through coloniality. In the decolonial process, African literacies instructors are called upon to intentionally revive indigenous languages, epistemologies, and ontologies, which are often referred to as world or life views, within literacies cultivation. As Pillow (2019) suggests, African-centred literacies facilitators who embrace the decolonial process have a dual responsibility to advance decoloniality through diverse methods and make visible the indigenous ancestral epistemologies in literacies cultivation. This role implies that literacies facilitators act as epistemic witnesses, bearing witness to the importance of incorporating African knowledge systems in promoting a more inclusive and culturally relevant educational experience for learners.

In the context of the revised study guide, Gee's (2015) discourse theory is a crucial component in enhancing the understanding of critical relationships among literacies, decoloniality, and epistemology within an African-centred framework. discourse theory, as proposed by Gee (2015), encompasses cultural identities, epistemologies, and languages in application, all expressed through multiliteracies. This means that discourses encompass more than just morphological and grammatical aspects regulated by rules; they also encompass disciplinary context, epistemes and culture.

Disciplinary discourses possess the theoretical capacity to both elucidate the challenges faced by literacies students in South Africa due to epistemic and linguistic marginalisation and offer potential solutions to address these issues. Integrating discourse theory with Afrocentric and decolonial paradigms makes it a powerful tool for deconstructing entrenched colonial structures in literacies facilitation. This deconstruction is particularly relevant to the concerns that the researcher aimed to address in revising the academic literacy study guide. By incorporating these theoretical perspectives, the researcher aimed to make the study guide a more effective tool of promoting inclusivity, cultural relevance, and empowerment of African students in a former Afrikaans-centric university.

The integration of discourse, Afrocentric, and decolonial theories within the academic literacy model, as proposed by Lea and Street (2006), is a pivotal aspect of the study guide revision discussed in this article. Aligned with Gee's (2015) discourse theory, the academic literacy model acknowledges that communication within disciplinary boundaries entails constructing meaning, shaping identities, exerting power and authority. Additionally, literacies are influenced by institutional characteristics that contribute to the validation of knowledge. The significance of the academic literacy model lies in its ability to conceptualise the integration of Afrocentric, discourse, and decolonial frameworks. In an African-centered manner, this integration nurtures a transformative approach, enriching the comprehension and application of literacies in academia. The model empowers literacies facilitators to illuminate indigenous African academic literacies.

This article not only explores existing literature that highlights the interactions among discourse, Afrocentric, and decolonial theories within historical and current pedagogical settings but also examines how these theories can inform and shape educational practices. The study guide revision, which incorporates discourse, Afrocentric and decolonial paradigms, is an example of how these theories can be applied in a pedagogic context to promote more inclusive and culturally relevant educational experiences for African learners. By integrating these theoretical constructs within the academic literacy model (Lea & Street, 2006), the revised study guide provides a transformative framework for other literacies developers to evolve their pedagogies. Thus, this article contributes to the ongoing discourse on the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and approaches in promoting meaningful transformation in higher education.

Literature review

The researcher aimed to redesign an academic literacy study guide to address the teaching and learning constraints of transfer. Transfer theory, elucidated by seminal scholars like Thorndike and Woodworth (1901) and Thorndike (1924), posits the existence of shared characteristics and components across diverse epistemic domains. According to transfer theory, literacy cultivation within distinct disciplines should be separated from students' academic development in generic literacy programmes. In the South African context, it is common for transfer-oriented approaches to literacies facilitation to include modules that have limited engagement with mainstream degree courses. Unfortunately, these approaches often prioritise the ideologies of literacies facilitators rather than disciplinary expertise. As a result, this article critically examines the limitations of transfer, basic skills, and generic models of literacies cultivation that assume students will automatically apply the knowledge gained from literacies modules to their disciplinary subjects.

Contextualising historical transfer practices in the present

Based on the argumentation outlined in this article, comprehending the limitations of transfer theory, along with modules based on generic and skills approaches, necessitates an exploration of their historical origins. The revision of the academic literacy study guide can be seen as an attempt to address these limitations and move towards a more effective, post-colonial approach to cultivating literacies within distinct disciplines. To illustrate, the main argument of this article is that just as transfer theories and methodologies were intertwined with the origination of social hierarchies and economic disparities in ancient African societies and during colonial times, they continuously contribute to academic inequalities within university faculties. By revising the study guide, the aim was to overcome, even partially, these inequalities and provide a more equitable approach to literacy cultivation. It is therefore critical to contextualise transfer theories in pre-colonial and colonial African regions to gain a clearer understanding of their effects in the present age and inform the revision of academic literacy study guides.

The revision of the study guide takes into account socioeconomic inequalities and injustices that existed in pre-colonial Africa, as well as during the colonial era. This study acknowledges that Africa experienced a substantial transition from communal discourses centered around hunting, gathering, and pastoralism to adopting agriculturally sedentary practices. Concurrently, there was a shift towards adopting the ideologies generated by written literacies of elite priests and scribes. This transition marked a shift from orality and egalitarianism to a more structured and hierarchical society. Nonetheless, in pre-colonial African societies, orality played a crucial role in the expression and preservation of communal principles and practices. Wiredu (2009) describes oral epistemologies as the passing down of ideas through spoken language and other non-written forms of communication. These oral epistemologies encompassed various literacies such as poems, lyrics, proverbs, and maxims, which fulfilled physical, social, and metaphysical needs.

The revised ALL 110 study guide recognises the significance of grasping and contextualising oral epistemologies in pre-colonial African societies. It strives for a more inclusive academic literacy approach, acknowledging diverse multiliteracies used in these societies. Furthermore, it encourages students to use their mother tongues in in-class discussions, reflecting the multimodality of pre-colonial African societies in the curriculum. The guide aims to bridge the historical origins of literacy practices in Africa with the present, fostering a more African-centred and culturally sensitive approach to literacy development.

In the revision of the ALL 110 study guide, the researcher aimed to acknowledge and integrate the diverse range of multiliteracies that were active in pre-colonial African societies. This recognition is crucial because the importance of oral communication is evident throughout African history and in various African cultures. For instance, the biblical figure Mūsā (Moses) is believed to have written some of humanity's earliest and most valued texts, which highlights the significance of orality and literacy in African history (See Figure 2). Mūsā's followers received his teachings through spoken and written tests produced in Northeastern Africa. However, contemporary forms of literacy tend to undervalue the power of indigenous spoken literacies. Courses in South African universities that prioritise written forms of communication may hinder students' abilities to express disciplinary insights through spoken discourse. This approach limits the potential for African orality to facilitate the growth of novice disciplinary members.

By contrast, a decolonial approach to facilitating literacies acknowledges the pedagogic potential of orality in Africa's higher education systems. To illustrate, oral pedagogies empower scholars to safeguard their indigenous epistemological systems and cultural identities while navigating disciplinary instruction that may deviate from indigenous norms. However, it is important to note that Africa's pre-colonial literacies were not solely oral but encompassed comprehensive and structured scripts that utilised alphabets (Regulski, 2016). The origins of writing can be traced back to Africa, challenging the colonial narrative that portrayed Africans as lacking written epistemes. Mūsā, who cultivated his writing abilities within the cultural and epistemic frameworks of ancient Kemet (Egypt), serves as an example of how writing skills were acquired and utilised within elite circles in ancient, pre-colonial African societies.

By discussing the revision of the ALL 110 study guide, the researcher aims to illuminate methods literacies facilitators can use to Africanise and decolonise their development of students' communicative practices. In summary, the revision of the study guide aims to recognise and incorporate the diverse range of multiliteracies activated within pre-colonial African societies, including the value of orality and written literacies. The article aims to challenge dominant narratives that obscure Africa's pre-colonial discourses by decolonising misconstructions of indigenous literacies. Additionally, it acknowledges the historical significance of African figures like Mūsā in shaping written traditions.

Figure 2: AI generated image by the author of his interpretation of Mūsā

Discussion

The discussion is structured as follows: Firstly, the revised study guide will be explored, including the practical reasons for its revision and the challenges that prompted the changes. Secondly, the practical modifications made to align the guide with a discourse-oriented, Afrocentric, and decolonial approach will be highlighted. Thirdly, the integration of African epistemes into the guide and the steps taken to dismantle colonial legacies will be examined. Fourthly, the application of theoretical underpinnings in practice using Lea and Street's (2006) academic literacy module will be illustrated. Lastly, we will reflect on the guide's anticipated effectiveness in real-world situations, and any potential practical challenges encountered during future implementation will be addressed.

Practical Rationale for Revision

It is important to note that in an article of this length, it is not feasible to fully explore all discourse, Afrocentric, and Decolonial methods. Nonetheless, before discussing the revisions made to the ALL 110 study guide, it is important to mention that the new version retains the previous structure. The guide still consists of four main components: an introduction to the academy, academic literacy, the academic register and reading academic texts. Yet, the previous study guide for ALL 110 needed revisions for different reasons. According to Gee's (2015) discourse theory, the previous study guide failed to make explicit to students the specialised literacies that they would need to master in Humanities' academic departments and disciplines. Instead, it presented academic literacy as a generic skill applicable to any discipline, which aligns with Street's (2006) concept of an autonomous model of academic literacy.

The previous ALL 110 study guide's use of the generic and autonomous model of academic literacies caused concern as it did not prepare students for the conceptual, genre and

theoretical nuances evident in disciplines To address this issue and align with Street's (2006) ideological model that holds that literacies are context-dependent, the new study guide emphasised the importance of disciplines to students throughout the text. This transformation aimed to move away from a generic, autonomous and basic-skills approach to a more contextualised pedagogy that highlights disciplinary discourses for novice scholars.

The teaching methods employed to enhance disciplinarity in ALL 110 encompassed two distinct approaches. It is crucial to re-emphasise that disciplinarity, as addressed in this article, pertains to the manner in which academic communities construct and convey knowledge within specific fields, integrating their practices and conventions that shape literacies (Shumway & Messer-Davidow, 1991; Matsler et al., 2021).

Firstly, the revised ALL 110 study guide explicitly informs students in numerous junctures that they are disciplinary members. This conceptual induction of students into disciplines was previously implicit, if not absent. For instance, the revised text highlights that academic literacies cannot be acquired instantly, but require consistent practice of distinct skills that must be developed and applied in reading, writing and assessments, as expected of students in Humanities discipline (Unit for Academic Literacy, 2023). Further, the ALL 110 scroll consistently stresses to students that they belong to various disciplines within the Faculty of Humanities. This teaching method aligns with Gee's (2015) concept of discourses, as it raises students' awareness of their identities and connections between disciplines and specialised ways of reading, writing, and communicating within specific academic contexts.

Given the module's strong focus on academic reading, which includes literacies such as critical reading, reading for understanding, skimming, scanning, and evaluating arguments (Unit for Academic Literacy, 2023), the study guide attempts to reinforce students' consciousness of their status as novice, yet essential disciplinary members. Before the start of each unit in the study guide, ALL 110 enrolees are introduced to teaching and learning outcomes that align and conjoin with disciplinarity (see Table 1). Allowing students to discuss their disciplinarity in class and via multiple languages aimed to foster a critical understanding of disciplinary norms and expectations. This method aimed to support students in realising the relevance of academic literacies within their respective disciplines. In this vein, the researcher revised the ALL 110 teaching and learning outcomes to ensure that students acquired the academic literacies and knowledge they needed to be successful in their chosen discipline by aligning them with disciplinarity.

The method of aligning learning outcomes with essential literacies for success in disciplines in the revised study guide is in line with Gee's (2015) discourse theory. By emphasising the importance of effective communication in a university discipline environment, both in person and online, students are encouraged to recognise and engage with the distinct discourses present within their disciplines. Similarly, the study guide's exploration of different disciplines within the Humanities, along with the development of reading skills, digital literacy, and the identification of disciplinary genres, further reinforces students' understanding of the unique communication practices and expectations within each discipline.

Table 1: Extract of learning outcomes from the ALL 110 study guide.

Unit	Learning outcome
1	Understand the importance of effective communication in a university discipline environment, both in person and online.
2	Explore the range of disciplines within the Humanities and develop your ability to read for understanding, work with digital technology, and identify disciplinary genres.
3	Interpret the importance of enhancing your academic literacies, including the critical roles they play in acquiring disciplinary knowledge.
4	Apply digital tools for better reading and summarising in your disciplines.
5	List some of the key features of disciplinary texts.
6	Emphasise the significance of broadening your specialised disciplinary vocabularies to enhance your literacies in disciplines.
7	Effectively apply disciplinary discourses to address challenges encountered while engaging with academic texts, both in reading and writing.
8	Engage in critical self-reflection regarding your reading within specific disciplines.
9	Select and use appropriate reading strategies for the purpose identified in different disciplines.
10	Define the concept of 'inferencing' and execute inferences essential for understanding a discipline's text.
11	Engage in critical reading and reflective analysis of provided readings within your disciplines.
12	Proficiently identify and discern the distinct components of a research article, considering their structural arrangement in the context of your disciplines and disciplinary knowledge.

The discourse model of literacies recognises that students learn best when they are able to see themselves as members of a particular disciplinary community. The study guide attempts to do this by providing students with opportunities to engage in disciplinary activities, such as speaking through, reading about and writing according to disciplines' specific vocabularies and genres. Additionally, the ALL 110 workbook encourages students to reflect on their own learning and to identify the literacies and knowledge that they need to be successful in their chosen disciplines. This teaching and learning approach aims to cultivate the critical understanding of ALL 110 students across various disciplines, despite the module's generic structure. By utilising literacy tools, employment of the discourse method aimed to help them become conscious and communicatively effective members of disciplines.

Afrocentric and decolonial integration

The revised ALL 110 study guide integrates Gee's discourse theory, Afrocentric, and decolonial paradigms. These frameworks are equally crucial, emphasising the deliberate objective of the ALL 110 course to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge Systems and decolonise academic literacies based on ancient, pre-colonial African epistemologies. To promote Afrocentricity, ancestral epistemes, and decoloniality in the first-year academic literacy module, two pedagogic methods are employed. Firstly, students are introduced to the origins of academic literacies in the African

continent. Secondly, students have the opportunity to integrate their Indigenous Knowledge Systems, often marginalised in mainstream disciplines, into academic literacies through the use of a Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) personal literacy narrative. These pedagogical strategies will now be elaborated upon in detail. There is a section in the ALL 110 student guide when students are introduced to the origins of reading as follows:

> For centuries, the myth that reading and writing were brought to Africa by Europeans has been perpetuated. However, recent research has shown that this is not the case. In fact, the earliest evidence of writing in Africa dates back to before 3000 BC, over a thousand years before writing was developed in Europe (Unit for Academic Literacy, 2023; Regulski, 2016).

The ALL 110 course focuses on achieving Afrocentricity and decoloniality in the curriculum by instructing students on the origins of writing in ancient Africa, including ancient Ethiopia and Kemet (Egypt). This epistemic pedagogy emphasises the importance of Afrocentric and decolonial theories in the course. For instance, Eurocentric and colonial frameworks propagated the idea that Africans were uncivilised barbarians. This ideology resulted in epistemicide, where members of the Global North and Africans themselves were deprived of insights into African ancestral contributions to the origins of reading and writing, which continue to be excluded from some Humanities disciplines. Hence, the updated study guide seeks to attain Afrocentricity and decoloniality by introducing ALL 110 scholars to pre-colonial, indigenous, ancestral literacies. It urges students to critically reflect on the relevance of ancestral literacies in contemporary knowledge generation within their respective Humanities disciplines.

The updated ALL 110 study guide includes two additional Afrocentric and decolonial teaching and learning methods. Firstly, it explicitly introduces first-year scholars to decolonial theory. Secondly, it incorporates students' pre-university African discourses and epistemologies into the curriculum through the use of a GenAI personal literacy narrative. These strategies aim to further promote Afrocentricity and decoloniality in the course. By incorporating principles from the article "Decolonising the humanities" by Suren Pillay (2013), the revised study guide strives to foster critical thinking among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Engaging with Pillay's (2013) text is implemented to encourage critical reading for understanding, argumentation, and the development of skimming and scanning literacies around a decolonial topic. The goal is to motivate ALL 110 scholars to explore alternative approaches to historical Eurocentric paradigms within a former-Afrikaans centric Humanities Faculty.

The updated ALL 110 study guide includes an extra Afrocentric and decolonial method intentionally incorporating students' indigenous discourses, identities, and knowledge systems into the curriculum. This counters what Asante (2002: 97) describes as African scholars' experiences of epistemic "dislocation" and disorientation due to alienation resulting from coloniality. To counteract the effects of Eurocentrism in a generic first-year academic literacy module, the revised ALL 110 study guide introduces students to prompt and text-to-image generative AI literacies (Gattupalli, et al., 2023).

Students were given the opportunity to articulate their backgrounds, cultures, and disciplinary goals both in class and in the computer lab while designing prompts for corresponding visual images. Utilising Prompt and GenAI text-to-image literacies, pivotal 21st-century skills, became effective tools to facilitate teaching methods. These methods aimed to help students visualise how their pre-university discourses either manifest or become invisible within academic disciplines. Additionally, multilingual dialogues were encouraged. In 2023, for instance, the lecturer observed students using tools like Canva, NightCafe, and Dall-E to depict practices, concerns, concepts, and theories relevant to Humanities disciplines. This approach fostered a sense of belonging and cultural pride within disciplinary spaces.

Application of Lea and Street's Module in Practice

The final theoretical framework, which the researcher endeavoured to incorporate into the revised ALL 110 study guide to foster a more Afrocentric and decolonised pedagogy, is based on Lea and Street's (2006) academic literacy model. The academic literacy framework (see Figure 1) encapsulates critical principles, guiding facilitators in creating Afrocentric and decolonised learning experiences.
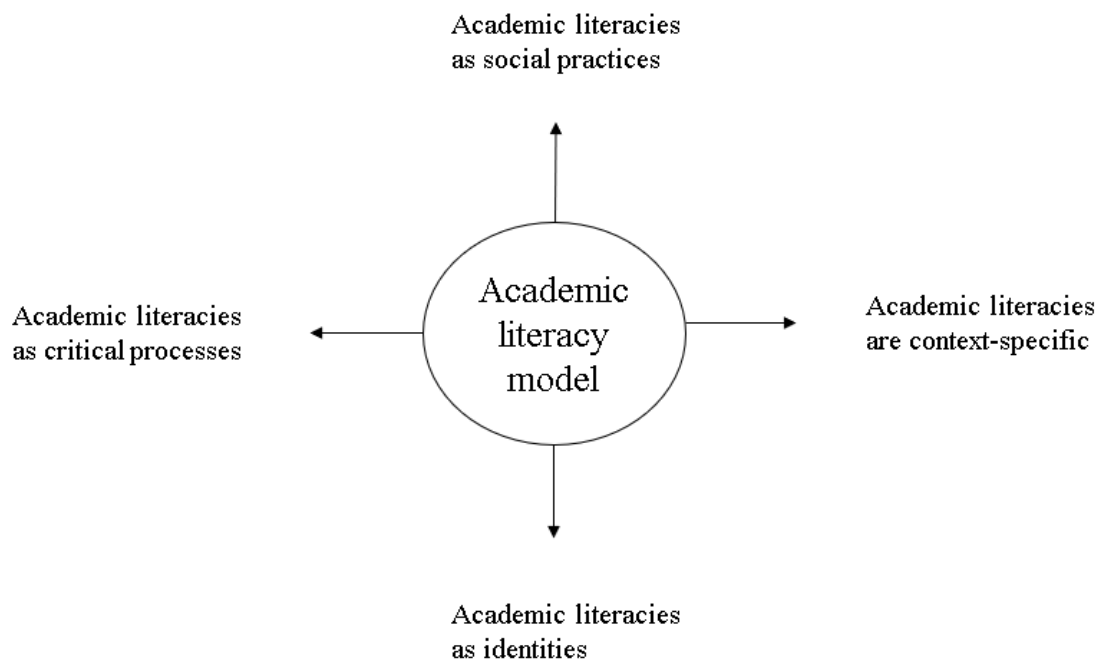
Figure 3: The academic literacies model (Lea & Street, 2006)

By emphasising the social nature of literacies, facilitators can utilise the academic literacy module to increase students' awareness and recognition of how cultures shapes disciplinary discourses. The contextualised nature of literacies, as highlighted in the model, allows facilitators to promote an awareness of indigenous and disciplinary argumentation conventions that are applicable in Afrocentric and decolonised paradigms. Cultivating students' critical engagement

with literacies through Afrocentric and decolonial frameworks not only aligns with principles of questioning assumptions and perspectives around transfer theory but also underscores tensions between generic and disciplinary literacies methodologies. Therefore, when students are introduced to the ways power and culture shape disciplinary literacies, as attempted in the revised ALL 110 study guide, they may contribute to critical knowledge development in their faculties.

Introducing students to the concept of decoloniality in the ALL 110 study guide and centring their identities in the curriculum aligns with the principles of Lea and Street's (2006) academic literacy model, prompting an interrogation of the notion of transferring literacies. The outlined approach also offers a way to promote Afrocentricity and decoloniality, especially when combined with the idea of literacies as contextualised social practices. This combination prompts inquiries into how students attempt to integrate their pre-university knowledge systems with the epistemologies of distinct disciplinary contexts. The academic literacy model's emphasis on identity and specific learning contexts enables facilitators to recognise and celebrate students' diverse social identities through literacies facilitation, thereby challenging faculties to critically question whether discipline-specific principles actually transfer across varying academic departments.

By integrating African students' pre-university epistemologies into the learning process—whether through fostering multilingual in-class dialogues or leveraging Generative Artificial Intelligence to draw on their homes and communities—the academic literacy model proposes a teaching method capable of fostering respect for and integration of African scholars' cultural backgrounds into disciplines. Yet, faculties will need to address the question of whether Eurocentrism in disciplines coerces students to abandon their pre-university knowledge systems. Due to the scope of this article, it is not possible to answer this question fully now. However, the academic literacy model's acknowledgment of power dynamics in literacy practices empowers facilitators to guide students in navigating and challenging disciplinary knowledge structures that may perpetuate colonial biases. This methodology, as attempted in the ALL 110 study guide, aims to contribute to creating a more relevant, inclusive, and decolonised disciplinary environment where students are encouraged to critically engage with academic content through activating their African identities and discourses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher aimed to inspire literacies facilitators to adopt a transformative discourse, Afrocentric, and decolonial methodology. This study highlights the researcher's own attempt to achieve this goal through implementing significant revisions to the ALL 110 academic literacy study guide. The integration of Gee's discourse theory and Lea and Street's academic literacy model provided a crucial framework for addressing challenges posed by transfer models, particularly in developing students' disciplinary literacies. Additionally, the inclusion of Afrocentric principles (Mazama, 2001), decolonial approaches, and the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) personal narratives show potential in fostering critical thinking and situating students' identities within context-specific literacies, essential in Humanities disciplines.

Even so, when implementing a discourse, Afrocentric, and decolonial methodology to cultivate students as competent disciplinary members within the academic literacy domain, challenges arise, especially when scrutinising the concept of transferring literacies. Overcoming hurdles in developing students' competence in generic, transfer course models presents additional complexities within this pedagogical framework. To overcome the constraints of generic literacy models, staff members with divergent ideologies and academic literacy constructs must collaborate. Recognizing the diverse cultural backgrounds and epistemologies of literacies and disciplinary staff necessitates continuous efforts to create inclusive learning environments. This raises questions about the automatic transfer of literacies across different contexts.

To enhance disciplinarity, collaboration between academic literacies and disciplinary instructors becomes crucial. Furthermore, ensuring the efficient and ethical utilisation of GenAI, along with the integration of Afrocentric and decolonial perspectives in study guides, requires meticulous and continual evaluation. This evaluation prompts an additional interrogation of the transferability of disciplinary literacies across distinct academic fields.

The transformative shift in academic literacies proposed in this article, from Eurocentric to Afrocentric constructs, unveils tensions that, while uncomfortable, provide an opportunity to explore the long-term impact of the methodology shared in this study on students' academic development and disciplinary engagement. It is valuable, for example, to assess the perspectives of students on decoloniality and their personal knowledge systems as they embark on their academic journey as novice, disciplinary members. Following, interrogating the notion of transferring literacies becomes essential in understanding how a Eurocentric to Afrocentric shift may impact students' engagement with disciplinary content and their ability to navigate expectations of senior disciplinary instructors.

A more comprehensive grasp of the applicability and effectiveness of a discourse, Afrocentric and decolonised academic literacy teaching and learning strategy can be achieved by conducting comparative studies across and within various disciplines and institutions. Still, it is crucial to stress that academic literacies facilitators may possess methodological differences that, if not overcome, could potentially impede the transformation of literacies curricula. In doing so, researchers can examine the effectiveness of discourse and transfer literacy methods in creating cohesive or fragmented relationships with disciplinary members.

Moving forward, it is advisable for faculties, literacies facilitators and students to persist in prioritising the integration of Afrocentric and decolonial perspectives in the academic development of novice scholars. This integration entails continuous professional development for faculty and the inclusion of diverse voices in curriculum development in ways that centre Africa's development. Lastly, by recognising the value of Africa's ancestral knowledge and literacies, and by addressing challenges, capitalising on opportunities, and refining transformative practices, higher learning institutions, including those with a former-Afrikaans centric focus, can actively contribute to generating more relevant and culturally educational environments that realise the aspirations of Africa's ancestors.

Author Biography

Oscar has a long journey with literacies. It extends from teaching pre-schoolers to read and how to write their names to undergraduates and PhDs on discourses. His passion is fostering links between academic texts and disciplinary knowledge. Oscar is fascinated with integrating knowledge, digital tools, and Africa's ancestral ontological systems. ⓘD

References

Asante, M. 2002. Intellectual dislocation: applying analytic Afrocentricity to narratives of identity. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 13: 977-110.

Barrett, J. 2007. The researcher as instrument: learning to conduct qualitative research through analyzing and interpreting a choral rehearsal. *Music Education Research*, 9(3): 417-433,

Bangeni, B. & Kapp, R.L. 2005. Identities in transition: shifting conceptions of home among "Black" South African university students. *African Studies Review*, 48(3): 1-19.

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. 2006. Multiliteracies: new literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3): 164-195.

Gattupalli, S., Maloy, R.W. & Edwards, S.A. 2023. Prompt literacy: A pivotal educational skill in the age of AI. College of Education Working Papers and Reports Series, 6.

Gee, J.P. 2015. Discourse, Small d, Big D. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi016 (Accessed: 12 August 2023).

Lea, M. & Street, B. 2006. The 'academic literacies' model: Theory and applications. *Theory into Practice*, 45(4): 368-377.

Matsler, A.M., Meerow, S., Mell, I.C. & Pavao-Zuckerman, M.A. 2021. A 'green' chameleon: exploring the many disciplinary definitions, goals, and forms of "green infrastructure". *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 214: 104145.

Mazama, A. 2001. The Afrocentric paradigm: contours and definitions. *Journal of Black Studies*, 31(4): 387-405.

Pillay, S. 2013. Decolonising the humanities. *Mail and Guardian*, 5 April. Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-05-decolonising-the-humanities/ (Accessed: 12 August 2023).

Pillow, W.S. 2019. Epistemic witnessing: theoretical responsibilities, decolonial attitude and lenticular futures. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 32(2): 118-135.

Regulski, I. 2015. *The Origins and Early Development of Writing in Egypt*. Oxford Handbooks Online. Oxford University Press.

Shumway, D.R. & Messer-Davidow, E. 1991. Disciplinarity: an Introduction. *Poetics Today*, 12(2): 201-225.

Street, B. 2006. Autonomous and ideological models of literacy: approaches from new literacy studies. *Media Anthropological Network*, 17-24 January. Available at: http://www.philbu.net/mediaanthropology/street_newliteracy.pdf (Accessed: 28 October 2022).

Suarez-Brito, P., Baena-Rojas, J.J., López-Caudana, E.O. & Glasserman-Morales, L.D. 2022. Academic literacy as a component of complex thinking in higher education: A scoping review. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 11(3): 931-945.

Thorndike, E.L. 1924. Mental discipline in high school studies. *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, 15(1): 1-22.

Wiredu, K. 2009. An oral philosophy of personhood: comments on philosophy and orality. *Research in African Literatures*, 40(1): 8-18.

Woodworth, R.S. & Thorndike, E.L. 1901. The influence of improvement in one mental function upon the efficiency of other functions (I). *Psychological Review*, 8(3): 247.

Yan, E., Williams, J. & Chen, Z. 2017. Understanding disciplinary vocabularies using a full-text enabled domain-independent term extraction approach. *PLoS ONE*, 12(11): 1-16.