KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES IN LITERARY RESPONSE WRITING: CRITICAL PRAXIS

IN AN ELA CLASSROOM

by

GLENN A JACKSON III

(Under the Direction of Donna E. Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

In this case study, the author analyzes student writing produced in a junior secondary

English language arts (ELA) classroom in the southeastern United States. The student writing in

the data set was produced in a classroom unit designed to help students critically analyze and

interpret literary texts using concepts from Systemic Functional Linguistics. Students used the

concepts to analyze two excerpts from the *Harry Potter* novel series that represented the issue of

slavery in the fictional society in which the story is set. These literary response essays were

analyzed as a means for evaluating the ways students adopted particular dispositions towards the

texts. As a means for understanding the ways the dispositions realized in the student writing

related to broader sociocultural discourses, this study uses Legitimation Code Theory and

Systemic Functional Linguistics to explore the underlying principles of disciplinary literacy in

literary response writing and the implications of this for critical pedagogy and critical praxis in

subject English. Organized in a manuscript format, the dissertation is comprised of three articles,

along with introduction and conclusion chapters.

In the first manuscript, the author uses a heuristic informed by the Legitimation Code

Theory (LCT) dimension of Autonomy to conduct a review of relevant literature related to the

disciplinary literacy practice of literary response writing in subject English. The review discusses themes in the literature related to underlying principles of disciplinary literacy in literary response writing in subject English including the semiotic and linguistic patterns in the genre of literary response. The study specifically focuses on knowledge bases in subject English, the disciplinary practices of experts, underlying principles of these practices, and the linguistic and semiotic patterns of the literary response genre.

In the second manuscript, the author uses concepts from LCT and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to reveal the value positions constructed by 8th grade English language arts (ELA) students in essays produced in a critical literary analysis unit. After reading excerpts from two *Harry Potter* novels, students compared the main characters' views on elvish enslavement as evidenced by the passages. This study uses axiological constellation analysis to explore the language choices in essays that constructed contrasting stances towards Harry's character and the representation of elvish enslavement in the texts. The study contributes to understanding how values are constructed in classroom writing and how these relate to broader sociopolitical discourses, with implications for critical praxis in subject English education.

In the third manuscript, the author presents an analysis of the content knowledge in the same set of literary response essays. The LCT dimension of Autonomy is used to analyze the degree to which the meanings in the student responses related to the targeted content and purpose of the unit. The analysis reveals the ways student writers brought together information from the passages and from beyond the prompt and source texts to support their interpretations of the characters. The paper concludes with implications for designing instruction that supports students in recognizing and realizing the ways literary texts relate to broader cultural issues and facilitating the development of critical dispositions towards dominant discourses.

INDEX WORDS: Legitimation Code Theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Case study, Disciplinary Literacy, Literary response writing, Critical literacy, English Education; Critical Praxis

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DEDICATION

For all the teachers and learners in my life. May we learn and teach to build a better future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: MORE THAN COMMENTARY ON A TEXT

When I became an 8th grade English teacher, I found that teaching literary analysis to my

students was going to require more knowledge about language than I had picked up in my

experiences as a student. Despite years of university training in literary criticism, I had never

learned an explicit metalanguage other than the basic parts of speech, and I could sense this

interfering with my ability to help students break down and understand texts. As an

undergraduate and graduate student in English Literature, I applied different theories to analyze

texts, but none of these offered conceptual frameworks that could be systematically applied to

written texts. In studying language and literacy education through linguistic and sociological

lenses in my doctoral studies, I realized that all along I had been providing interpretations with

no real means for justification. Halliday (1994) notes that "a discourse analysis that is not based

on grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary on a text" (p. xvi).

Encountering Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) changed the way I viewed text analysis and

finding Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) changed the way I thought about teaching and

learning, knowledge and social struggle.

In the Fall of 2017, when the unit that produced the texts analyzed in this study took

place, I had no idea that learning about and applying SFL and LCT would so profoundly change

the way I think about teaching and learning, language and society, critical literacy and social

change, and my roles as a student, teacher, teacher educator, and researcher. At this time, I was

an instructional coach at a school in which I had worked for several years as an 8th grade English

language arts (ELA) teacher. My day-to-day work with teachers included one-on-one coaching cycles and professional development sessions related to subject-specific and schoolwide teaching practices. This schoolwide perspective challenged me to understand the differences between the disciplinary literacy practices that are highly valued in each subject, and Systemic Functional Linguistics and Legitimation Code Theory allowed me work with students and teachers to analyze the language patterns and underlying principles of different tasks, student products, and their evaluation by teachers.

This study offers a detailed look at the ways values and knowledge were constructed through language in a set of classroom texts that were based around a culturally relevant issue as represented in a popular literary text. These analyses are situated within a review of literature that discusses literary response writing at various levels of sociological and linguistic analysis. The study shows that the concepts and methods used here for analyzing the value positions and forms of knowledge constructed in student writing can yield important insights into how students position themselves in relation to literary texts and the social issues represented therein. These findings, in turn, can inform the design of classroom activities.

Background to the Problem

Literary analysis is a fundamental practice in school subject English, from elementary education (Christie & Derewianka, 2008) to the highest levels of the discipline (Rainey, 2017; Rainey & Moje, 2012). This fundamental writing genre of school English involves responding to literature with personal feelings about the text, evaluations of the characters, and thematic interpretations (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Success in these response genres requires understanding the ways literary narrative texts use everyday language to construct symbolic meanings (Fang, 2012; Martin, 1996). While literary texts are made up of relatively everyday

words and phrases, interpretation requires understanding how this common language relates to broader, culturally significant ideas and value positions. Furthermore, in order to achieve success, students need to interpret these symbolic meanings through moral, political, and aesthetic lenses and in relation to broader cultural discourses (Christie & Dreyfus, 2008).

The problem is that socialization into these discourses is usually implicit and tends to reinforce dominant language practices and cultural understandings and exclude students from non-dominant linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Peim, 2009; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). However, specific discourse choices of the teacher can facilitate critical engagement with culturally relevant and responsive social issues among students (Thomas, 2013), and the goal was that the SFL-informed unit discussed here achieved such a result. This requires an analysis that can describe the ways that the classroom teaching interacts with broader cultural discourses.

Thomas (2013) describes culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as based on collaborative learning, co-constructed knowledge, and teachers and teaching practices that are "deeply interconnected with and within their communities" (p. 329). Culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) can be similarly described as "validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory" (Thomas, 2013, p. 329). Building on these models, Thomas (2013) introduces the term *culturally relevant discourse* to characterize the language choices that effective teachers in hyperdiverse classrooms use to guide students towards consensus interpretations that negotiate social solidarities and promote social justice.

In this case, the goal in teaching the unit was to facilitate relevant and responsive discourse in relation to the culturally significant issue of the historical enslavement of African Americans by European Americans and the discrimination and oppression that is, tragically, the

lasting legacy of that practice. Using concepts from SFL was intended to help students see how the representations of enslavement in the *Harry Potter* novels aligned with dominant views of historical enslavement in our culture, with the goal of cultivating a critical disposition towards both the texts and related dominant cultural discourses.

This unit of study was our first attempt to conduct a critical analysis of a literary text with students using concepts from SFL. Based on the work of Simmons (2012, 2016), Natalie and I guided students through the analysis of two *Harry Potter* passages as a means for scaffolding students' knowledge about language and critical literacy practices. The first passage, from *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2007), depicts Harry enacting the role of 'master' over Kreacher, an enslaved elf Harry inherited. After conducting an analysis of the first passage that revealed how attitudinal language and the language used to identify the characters in the text reinforced Harry's role as enslaver, Natalie led the class through the writing of a jointly-constructed paragraph critically interpreting the significance of Kreacher's name, appearance, and living conditions in light of Harry's role as the elf's enslaver. This teacher-facilitated activity allowed all students to participate collaboratively writing a response paragraph using evidence from the text, preparing them for independent writing.

The second passage, from *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000), depicts Hermione introducing her recently-founded Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (SPEW) to Ron and Harry. When offered an opportunity to support abolition, Harry is apathetic towards Hermione's efforts and amused at Ron's unapologetically supremacist views on the issue. Though many students were reluctant to criticize the protagonist, Natalie and I steered the discussion towards a consensus (Thomas, 2013) that one could not accurately characterize Harry as being on the side of abolition based on the evidence in the passages. The culminating writing

prompt asked students to compare and contrast the three main characters' views on elvish enslavement as depicted in both passages. The SFL-informed text analysis revealed how the literary text normalized the master-slave dynamic between the characters, and the writing prompt provided an opportunity for students to critically respond to this realization by problematizing Harry's character and emphasizing, rather than downplaying, his role as enslaver.

This study set out to analyze the texts produced as a result of this pedagogic intervention to investigate the ways the students' language choices constructed different value positions towards Harry's character and in relation to broader cultural discourses around the legacy of enslavement and discrimination that continues to plague our society. Understanding how students construct knowledge and values around cultural issues through is an essential part of reflective teaching in subject English, particularly if the goal is critical literary analysis. This study demonstrates how LCT and SFL offer concepts and methods for investigating student development of critical literacies and reflecting on critical pedagogic practices.

Problem Statement

In any pedagogic activity, a basic problem is assessing the extent to which students have acquired the knowledge, skills, values, and literacies that were the intended outcome. This study uses discourse analysis methods and concepts from SFL and LCT to investigate the ways knowledge and values were constructed in student texts that were the product of a critical literacy unit that I helped design and implement. The unit under study was an early attempt at using SFL to analyze literary texts with students, and offered a means for considering how the knowledge and values constructed in the student texts related to broader political, economic, and sociological discourses. The findings offer insights into the teaching and learning of critical text analysis as a means for helping students develop critical literacies (Luke, 2018).

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, research in subject English from a disciplinary literacies perspective shows that the central task, literary analysis writing, requires specific linguistic and semantic features, but the subject most fundamentally relies on the ability to demonstrate particular dispositions towards an increasing range of texts (Macken-Horarik, 2011). Subject English is understood by teachers and students to rely on value positions, and these are usually implicitly cultivated through the interpretation of themes and judgment of characters in the text. The problem is that hegemonic value positions remain all but invisible to many students and teachers who, by reproducing normative interpretations of the texts, assist in the reproduction of dominant discourses.

Several qualitative studies in the SFL and Bernsteinian sociology tradition have attempted to understand the basis of success in literary response writing in subject English (Anson, 2017; Christie, 2016; Christie & Dreyfus, 2008; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2011; Macken-Horarik, 2006). Few have investigated the ways particular language choices construct particular value positions in relation to broader cultural discourses in classroom literary response writing (Cranny-Francis, 1996; Simmons, 2018). There have been no studies of student writing that have systematically investigated how particular knowledge and values position student writers in relation to cultural issues as a means for reflecting on the effectiveness of SFL-informed text analysis in helping students develop critical literacies.

Many studies have shown that subject English pedagogy and assessment practices tend to reproduce dominant discourses and reinforce normative value positions (Macken-Horarik, 2003; Peim, 2009; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). Many studies have also discussed how approaches to disciplinary literacy (Rainey & Moje, 2012) and critical literacy (Macken-Horarik, 2008; Simmons, 2018) can be incorporated into subject English teaching and learning and facilitate

culturally relevant discourse that negotiates social solidarities around issues of social justice (Thomas, 2013). Further exploration is needed into the ways that literary response writing in actual classrooms resists, reinforces, and otherwise reproduces or transforms dominant discourses. As a central disciplinary literacy practice in subject English, teachers should understand the ways that patterns of language choices construct particular dispositions in their students' writing. This is an essential aspect of pedagogic content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) that teachers need in order to help students resist oppressive discourses.

Research Questions and Design

This study sets out to reveal the distinguishing characteristics of high achieving texts in a critical literary analysis unit implemented in an 8th grade ELA classroom. The study was carried out in the small-town middle school in the southeastern United States where I have worked for the last ten years. The classroom activities and writing prompt were designed by Dr. Natalie Miller (a pseudonym) and me based on the work of Simmons (2012, 2016). Natalie was a lifelong *Harry Potter* fan, and was excited to try and apply concepts from SFL to short passages from the novels in her two Gifted and Advanced English language arts classes.

The classroom unit involved reading excerpts from two *Harry Potter* novels and comparing the three main characters' views on elvish enslavement as evidenced by the passages. In teaching this unit, Natalie and I explicitly sought to help the students acquire critical awareness of the ways the language choices in the texts constructed the issue of enslavement and the way this related to broader sociopolitical discourses in our society. The overarching question of the study was: How did the knowledge and values constructed and deemed legitimate in the classroom unit relate to the unit's intended learning outcomes?

The first investigation used autonomy analysis (Maton and Howard, 2018) to explore the

pathways between 'target' and 'non-target' knowledge in the student writing to show how

writers incorporated information from beyond the prompt in their responses. This analysis

addressed the following questions:

- To what extent did the student writing relate to the targeted content and purpose

  of the writing prompt?

- To what extent did movements beyond the targeted content and purpose of the

  writing prompt relate to the broader learning objectives of the unit?

Following methods set out in Doran (2020), the second analysis (Jackson, G., under

review), shows the ways value-laden meanings were brought together to construct particular

value positions within the student texts. This analysis addressed the following questions:

- How did student language choices in the essays construct constellations of value-

  laden meanings around the issue of elvish enslavement?

- To what extent did the axiological constellations in the student essays

  demonstrate the critical orientation to text intended by the unit?

Exploring these questions using theoretical concepts offered a means for understanding

the ways different students recognized and realized the critical dispositions valued in the

classroom context, with implications for the design and assessment of critical literary response

tasks in ELA classrooms.

Research Goals

This qualitative case study investigates how knowledge and values come together

through the language choices in a small set of student literary response essays to produce

particular value positions in relation to a culturally relevant social issue represented in a popular

fantasy novel series. These value positions exemplified the degree to which the students took up the critical disposition that was intended to be cultivated in the unit. This reflective analysis is part of my own critical praxis, as it has allowed me to investigate the extent to which my efforts at a critical pedagogy were realized in the student writing.

The analysis takes a close look at the ways different grammatical and semantic features contributed to the construction of particular dispositions towards the issues in the literary fiction, which in turn positioned the writer in relation to broader cultural discourses and material realities. Put simply, the classroom unit was intended to cultivate critical dispositions toward the literary texts and social issues represented within them, and this analysis is intended to shed light on the extent to which the students ultimately participated in ideology critique through critical text analysis, two essential aspects of critical literacy (Luke, 2018).

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is that the student perspectives and backgrounds are not considered in this analysis. Interviews, for example, could have allowed the students to discuss the reasoning behind their responses and the ways they saw the issues in the texts relating to broader cultural discourses. In future research I hope to explore these questions, but the goal of this analysis was simply to describe the linguistic and semantic features of the texts to determine patterns among what teachers view as higher and lower achieving texts and to interpret these findings within the broader goals and learning objectives of the classroom unit.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to research on disciplinary literacies in subject English, critical literacy pedagogy, and as well as the sociology of education and educational linguistics. By showing the ways that particular forms of knowledge and values were constructed in student writing, this case study offers a language-

based approach to critical praxis in subject English. Describing the semantic features of the texts and the ways these related to the broader ideological discourses takes a language-based approach to evaluating the degree to which students adopted critical orientations to the text in their writing. These analyses are situated within a review of the literature on literary response in subject English intended to identify various perspectives on the different criteria for success related to this central disciplinary literacy task.

Complementary Frameworks: SFL and LCT

For more than five decades, SFL has been in dialogue with code theory (Maton & Doran, 2017). The complementary social semiotic view of language and language-focused sociological perspective "enable concepts from one theory to act as translation devices for operationalizing concepts from the other theory" (Maton, Martin, & Matruglio, 2016, p. 111). Studies of language and knowledge structures in subject English have allowed researchers to make claims about social practices by analyzing the ways knowledge is constructed within and between texts. Taken together, these perspectives can provide a fuller description of what is actually taught, evaluated, and learned in classroom practices including the production of written texts. This study uses methods for discourse analysis from SFL and LCT to analyze texts in subject English, borrowing from the research methods set out in studies using SFL (Simmons, 2016), LCT (Maton & Howard, 2018), or both (Christie, 2016; Doran, 2020).

SFL. This study takes SFL as its theory of language in context, with genre as the concept from which the analysis of written student products departs. SFL is a semiotic theory of language, in that language is seen as "a resource for making meaning" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 23). This descriptive theory is 'systemic' in the sense that meaning is constructed through recognizable patterns in the discourse that in various ways and to varying degrees,

achieves a particular social purpose. There are "systemic patterns of choice" (Halliday &

Matthiessen, 2014, p. 23) in a given context which both limit possibilities for making

recognizable meanings and create new opportunities for meaning-making. Halliday's theory

takes a 'functional' view of language as a resource for achieving social outcomes. From this

perspective, each language choice functions in particular ways to accomplish particular goals

both within a given text and in the ways that a text produces effects in the world.

SFL provides a means for analyzing the ways language choices construe experiences and

ideas, create roles and forge relationships, and come together to construct texts and social

contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The power of systemic functional analysis comes from

its ability to analyze meanings at various levels of strata and with regard to different semantic

functions of language choices. In order to study the values constructed through language choices

in the student texts, this analysis draws on the SFL system of APPRAISAL, which "is concerned

with evaluation—the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings

involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned" (Martin & Rose, 2007,

p. 25). This study uses two subsystems of appraisal, Attitude and Engagement, to reveal

positively and negatively evaluated meanings in the student texts and the ways these charged

meanings are related to other entities and ideas in the texts.

Attitude analysis reveals how values are built up over the course of a text through

language choices that construe *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation* (Martin & White, 2005).

Affect concerns meanings related to emotion, judgment to the evaluation of people, and

appreciation to the evaluation of things and ideas. This paper uses attitude analysis to identify

positively and negatively charged ideas and their sources, which form the initial constellations of

value-laden meanings. Engagement concerns the ways that different voices and perspectives are

brought into a text, such as in direct references, quotes, and citations where the writer uses words attributed to others. The present study used engagement to analyze how other information was aligned and disaligned with charged entities and ideas to expand and strengthen the axiological constellations in the texts, a concept taken from LCT (Doran, 2020).

LCT. Around the beginning of the current century, Karl Maton developed LCT out of the code theory of Basil Bernstein and field theory of Pierre Bourdieu. For Maton (2014), "to analyze legitimation codes is thus to explore what is possible for whom, when, where, and how, and who is able to define these possibilities when, where, and how" (p. 18). In this study LCT was used to determine structures and patterns in two sets of student writing to show the ways that these patterns create implicit codes that set limits on possibilities for successful performances of knowledge in this pedagogic situation.

Semantics. The Semantics dimension of LCT includes the concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density, which in this study will be analyzed separately. According to Maton (2014), "*semantic gravity* (SG) refers to the degree to which meaning relates to its context" while "*semantic density* (SD) refers to the degree of condensation of meaning" in discourse and practices (p. 129). These concepts are used to analyze the context-dependency and complexity of knowledge and values as constructed through language choices in texts.

This study is concerned with *axiological semantic density* (ASD; Maton, 2014), or the condensation of values around particular ideas and entities. In this study, ASD is explored in the student essays through constellation analysis (Doran, 2020). Axiological constellations refer to the networks of value-laden meanings in texts and contexts that construct particular value positions around moral, ethical, political, and aesthetic issues (Maton, 2014). Revealing the axiological constellations in the student writing provides a clear picture of the value positions

around social issues in literary texts and offers a means for explaining how both dominant discourses and critical disposition are realized in student writing.

Autonomy. Autonomy codes describe the relative strength of boundaries around what is considered valid content, known as *positional autonomy*, and the strength of boundaries around the purposes to which it is applied, known as *relational autonomy* (Maton & Howard, 2018). When analyzing classroom practices, the positional autonomy in classroom discourse may be described as the degree of insulation from other tasks, texts, and fields of knowledge while relational autonomy may be described as the degree of adherence to an intended purpose of the lesson. The patterns of meaning identified through autonomy analysis provide a clear picture of what knowledge counts in a particular task and assists in determining the degree to which this knowledge is aligned with the actual learning objectives intended by the unit. In this study, the autonomy analysis provided a lens for reflecting on the ways that some of the most highly valued discursive moves in the student writing, associated with adopting a critical disposition towards the representation of enslavement in the text, could have been more effectively cultivated in the classroom activities.

Subjectivities

Maxwell (2013) notes that "traditionally, what you bring to the research from your own background and identity has been treated as *bias*, something whose influence needs to be *eliminated* from the design" (p. 44). He goes on to say, however, that this view has largely been supplanted by the notion that investigating your own presuppositions and beliefs about a topic is essential for not only ensuring that your inherent biases are transparently shared with your audience, but also because ignoring or attempting to suppress personal interests in a subject may actually lead to important insights. Therefore, this subjectivities statement explains my interest in

conducting the study and how aspects of my identity have influenced its design. I understand that my role as the designer and co-teacher of the classroom unit, as well as the researcher and data analyst of the study, influence all aspects of my research design and interpretation of the findings. My goal has been to maintain an awareness of this not only throughout the study, but to carry these insights into my teaching practices by being more aware of the ways that classroom talk and writing must be facilitated to negotiate social solidarities that challenge dominant discourses (Thomas, 2013).

My interest in knowledge-building and knower-building in subject English stems from my experiences as a student in ELA classes in secondary school, two degrees in English Literature, and six years of teaching 8th grade ELA, and four years as an instructional coach who visited ELA classes and worked with ELA teachers and students on a daily basis. As a teacher and life-long student of subject English, with post-graduate training in literary criticism, I had a tacit understanding that learning about literature *really* meant learning about life. This study, however, allowed me to take a reflexive look at how my own practices facilitated the types of understandings about literature, and language the types of axiological meanings that are the basis of subject English practices. The goal of the study was to analyze the extent to which students enacted the key aspects of critical literacy pedagogy, including critiquing dominant ideologies through textual analysis (Luke, 2018) and disrupting commonplace understandings by interrogating various viewpoints related to sociopolitical issues in the text and the world beyond (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

My experiences as a student, teacher, and instructional coach in this educational context were that the public education system rarely offered opportunities to critique of status quo views on social issues. The southeastern United States was the site of institutionalized slavery and

state-sanctioned discrimination that continues to leave a lasting legacy on our contemporary society. My intention for this classroom unit was to help students learn to deconstruct texts to see how oppressive discourses like those that perpetuate slavery, discrimination, segregation, and mass incarceration like those in our cultural context are maintained even in literary fiction. The unit at the center of the study was the direct result of learning about the work of Dr. Amber Simmons (2012, 2016), which offered a model of critical literacy through SFL-informed text analysis that I felt I could readily adapt for students in my school. The application of the theory to *Harry Potter* based on the analysis in Simmons (2012), offered an opportunity for critical analysis of the representation of enslavement in the text, one that normalized Harry's role as enslaver and the society's laws enforcing its practice.

The goal of the classroom unit was to disrupt this dominant disposition by problematizing a well-known character from literature and cinema. This study of the classroom unit was intended to determine the degree to which the students produced readings that not only acknowledged the immorality of enslavement as a practice, but also negatively evaluated Harry's character based on his involvement in the enslavement of the elves and apathy towards Hermione's abolitionist organization.

At the outset, I knew that not all students would adopt the critical disposition towards the texts that were the goal of the analysis. As a White man who was born and raised in the area where the study was carried out, I was familiar with the ways dominant discourses portrayed slavery and its legacy in this context. As an insider in this community, I know that these discourses are perpetuated by downplaying the violence perpetrated by enslavers, minimizing the cruelty and trauma caused by enslavement, and refuting the idea that enslavement and its legacy of racial discrimination has ever been enacted by nor benefitted the majority of White people.

Such a perspective depends upon claims of plausible deniability, and the stance taken here is that willful ignorance is not an escape from accountability because "it is the innocence which constitutes the crime" (Baldwin, 1963/1992, p. 6).

This study's exploration of the ways students adopted and resisted the critical disposition towards the representation of enslavement in the text provided insights into challenges with critical literacy that often go unacknowledged. Since SFL-informed pedagogy "does not automatically lead to a critical analysis of language" (Simmons, 2016, p. 184), it is crucial that critical praxis include opportunities for analyzing and reflecting on the value positions constructed in student writing and how assessment and feedback reinforce or disrupt dominant discourses in student writing. My goal is to better understand how to guide students towards consensus interpretations that negotiate social solidarities and promote social justice, a characteristic of effective teaching in diverse classrooms (Thomas, 2013).

Structure of the Dissertation

This non-traditional dissertation is written in manuscript format, with Chapters 2, 3, and 4 written in the form of publishable research articles. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature relating to literary response in subject English. Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive review of the research on English as a school subject (Goodwyn, 2020) or English Education as a discipline (Yagelski, 1994), I draw on Maxwell's (2006) method of literature reviews for educational research to provide a narrow description of relevant literature related to a central practice in ELA disciplinary literacy, literary response writing. This article was written within the guidelines for submission for peer-reviewed publication in *Linguistics and Education*.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss two complementary analyses of selected essays from the data set using concepts from LCT and SFL. Chapter 3 offers a detailed analysis of the most high-achieving essay in the data set, this time using concepts from the LCT dimension of Autonomy, which allows for the description of how the student writing related to the targeted content and purpose of the task. The paper describes how students brought together information from the literary texts and from beyond the writing prompt to support their interpretations of the characters. The findings from this analysis show how the pathways between target and non-target information in higher and lower-achieving texts can reveal the ways students connected their interpretations of the literary texts with analyses of related historical and cultural discourses. This article was submitted for review for a special issue of the *Journal of Education* (South Africa) entitled "Knowledge-building in Educational Practices."

In Chapter 4, I use concepts and methods from SFL and LCT (Doran, 2020) to reveal the axiological constellations (Maton, 2014), or networks of value-laden meanings, in the student texts. This constellation analysis provides a means for systematically analyzing the ways particular value positions were constructed in the texts. Implications for critical praxis in education are discussed, with a particular emphasis on the need for understanding the values constructed in student texts when the goal is ideology critique through critical discourse analysis (Luke, 2018). This article has been submitted for publication in a special issue of *Language and Education* entitled "Systemic Functional Linguistics as Critical Praxis in Teacher Education: Looking Backward and Looking Forward."

In Chapter 5, I conclude by discussing themes in the findings across the three chapters that show how values and knowledge are bound up with disciplinary literacy in subject English, and discuss implications of this underlying basis in attitudes and dispositions towards culturally

significant texts and ideas for the teaching and learning of critical literacies the central disciplinary practice in the subject, literary response writing. I conclude by discussing how SFL- and LCT-informed studies of literary response writing such as this one could further explore the kinds of knowledge and values that are reproduced and validated in particular classroom contexts and push critical praxis in subject English in new directions.

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CHAPTER 2

DISCIPLINARY LITERACY AND LITERARY RESPONSE WRITING IN SUBJECT

ENGLISH: A LITERATURE REVIEW[1]

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[1] To be submitted to *Linguistics and Education*

Abstract

This literature review focuses on literature related in various ways to literary response writing as a central disciplinary practice in subject English. The review was part of a study aimed at analyzing the ways knowledge and values are constructed in literary response writing. The review was carried out to identify studies that have addressed the ways that knowledge, values, and language come together in written literary response to demonstrate successful literary analysis in the subject. The paper begins with a broad look at the two major strands of knowledge in subject English, language and literature, before discussing the practices of disciplinary experts. The paper goes on to discuss these disciplinary practices as based in knowing rather than knowledge, identify the features of different kinds of response genre writing encountered in schools, and describe teaching practices related to critical literary analysis.

Keywords: Literary response, literary interpretation, disciplinary literacy subject English, English language arts

School subject English is dedicated to the study of language and literature and is a compulsory part of formal schooling in Anglophone countries around the world (Christie, 2005). The subject recontextualizes a loose collection of literacy practices from a variety of disciplines including Linguistics, Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, and Creative Writing. These disciplines are recontextualized in schools in classes such as Reading, Writing, Literature, and Composition, depending on whether the course is at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level. The subject is most explicitly concerned with the teaching and learning of language and literature (Goodwyn, 2020). Rather than training students in highly technical knowledge and procedures, the subject involves immersion in literary analysis using a relatively small number of literary and grammatical concepts, repeatedly applied to an increasing range of texts (Christie, 2016; Maton, 2014). Success in the subject requires adopting of moral, aesthetic, and philosophical stances towards issues represented in literature and the expression of these dispositions through particular features of written language (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Macken-Horarik, 2011).

At the center of the subject English curriculum are literary response tasks, which are intended to teach and assess written interpretations of novels both graphic and traditional, poems, short stories, film, video, and animation. Despite the wide range of authors, text types, genres, analytic methods, and pedagogic models, ideal knower positions in subject English tend to fundamentally reproduce normative dispositions towards characters and thematic interpretations (Clark, 2005; Macken-Horarik, 2006). While literary analysis tasks are ostensibly open to multiple interpretations and forms of expression, successful writing in response to literature requires being able to understand and reproduce particular knowledge and values that are encoded through distinctive language practices (Davison, 2005; Peim, 2009). Therefore, a review of the disciplinary practices that involve how values and dispositions are developed in literary

response writing provides a means for understanding the research regarding the fundamental aspects of a central disciplinary literacy practice of subject English.

Purpose

ELA has been underrepresented in the literature on disciplinary literacy (Moje, 2007; Rainey, 2017). In particular, little attention has been paid to the ways that knowledge, values, and language come together in literary responses, a central writing genre in subject English classes and high-stakes assessments in subject English. The larger study of which this literature review was a part used LCT and SFL to analyze the stances taken towards the issue of enslavement in *Harry Potter* in student writing from an 8th grade English language arts (ELA) classroom (Jackson, G., forthcoming, under review). The purpose of this literature review was to situate my study within a broader context of research related to both the theories I was using and the object of my study, literary response writing in subject English.

Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive review of the research on English as a school subject (Goodwyn, 2020), I draw on Maxwell's (2006) method of literature reviews for educational research. The goal is to provide a detailed description of the literature related to a central practice in ELA disciplinary literacy, that of the written literary response and the forms of language and knowledge that are most highly valued within the literary aspect of the school subject. Below, I discuss the methods used to conduct this review of the literature before zooming out to consider how knowledge, disciplinary practices, texts, and pedagogies have been described in relevant research.

Methods

A thorough search of academic and scholarly databases was performed using combinations of the search terms "English," "language arts," "ELA," "subject English", "English

Studies", and "Literary Studies" to locate peer-reviewed articles related directly to the school subject and associated disciplines of interest, although studies related to other subjects and disciplines were also returned in the results. The terms "disciplinary literacy," "discourse," "text," "language," "writing," "composition," "literature," "literary," "genre," "response," "interpret*" and "analysis" were used to locate studies directly related to student writing in response to literature. Additional searches combined the terms above with "knowledge," "values," "gaze," "axiolog*" and "identity." These searches yielded more than one hundred articles that were identified as related to either the theories and methods or the object of study in the larger research project.

In order to find studies that related to the theories used in the broader research project of which this review was a part, additional searches were also carried out in combination with the terms "discourse analysis" to look for studies using this methodology and "Bernstein," "code theory," "Legitimation Code Theory," "LCT," "Systemic Functional Linguistics," and "SFL" to specifically search for studies approaching the study of subject English knowledge, skills, literacies, and pedagogy as related to literary response writing.

These searches were carried out in specifically identified databases that were deemed relevant to the study. These included Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, Educational Administration Abstracts, ERIC, MLA International Bibliography, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and Sociology Collection. Subsequent searches were conducted in the Web of Science (Web of Knowledge) and Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts. University system library catalogue searches located monographs and edited volumes related to the topic at hand, in addition to consulting reference lists of the works cited in this review.

Each study's theoretical framework, methodology, and findings were considered in relation to their strength of focus, the methodologies and theories used, and the purpose, to understand the ways knowledge and values have been considered in disciplinary literacy studies of literary response writing. The heuristic in Figure 2.1, based on the LCT dimension of Autonomy (Maton & Howard, 2018), aided in the analysis of the degree to which the articles related to the core interest of the broader study of which the literature review was a part, providing a justification for its relevance.

Figure 2.1

Heuristic for Literature Review Analysis

Strongly related to social realist sociology
and systemic functional linguistics

Theoretical lens unrelated
to LCT, SFL, and Bernstein

Study not focused on
literary response writing in
subject English

Theoretical lens related to
LCT, SFL, and Bernstein

Study focused on literary
response writing in
subject English

Strongly related to analysis
of literary response writing

Theoretical lens unrelated
to LCT, SFL, and Bernstein

Study not focused on
literary response writing
in subject English

Theoretical lens unrelated
to LCT, SFL, and Bernstein

Study focused on literary
response writing in
subject English

The device served as an analytic tool for relating the articles to the theories and methods that were used in the study, situated on the vertical axis, to the object of study, literary response writing, on the horizontal axis. This analytic tool was designed to identify a wide range of articles that fell into each of the categories, each describing a different relation to the different

theories and their application in the study of literary response writing. The review shed light on several aspects of literary response, selectively represented in this paper to illuminate particular areas of interest related to school subject English. These include strands of knowledge, underlying principles of knowledge and knower-building, disciplinary practices of experts and novices, and genres of literary response writing.

This method allowed me to determine which articles were most relevant to the study, considering the articles in terms of each relation allowed for the description of themes in the literature related to different areas of research on literary response in subject English. These include strands of knowledge, disciplinary literacy, organizing principles of pedagogic discourse, literary response genres, and studies of literary analysis pedagogy.

Knowledge Strands in Subject English

Subject English is a field with a wide-ranging and relatively loosely-related knowledge-base. Christie (2002) notes that "the body of knowledge that is English often remains poorly defined, at least as that is expressed in the curriculum statements, which are at best general, and often rather vague" (p. 176). ELA classrooms are locations where knowledge and texts from nearly every social and academic field can be brought in and turned to the purposes of either ELA or another subject, as Petroshius (1991) demonstrates in a case study that incorporates Civics instruction into the ELA curriculum. Despite its essentially interdisciplinary nature, the discipline has revolved around the two complementary strands of Language and Literature over the course of its 120 year history (Goodwyn, 2020).

Grammatical Knowledge in the English Curriculum

Within the Language domain of the subject English curriculum, grammar has played an important, if contested role throughout the history of subject English in the United States

(Hancock & Kolln, 2010; Myhill & Watson, 2014), the United Kingdom (Clark, 2005; Goodwyn, 2020), and Australia (Christie, 1993). In the United States, debates over what grammar should be taught and how to do it stemmed from the criticism that traditional school grammar did not improve student writing (Hancock & Kolln, 2010).

Reforms to grammar instruction gained their widest acceptance in the introduction of structural grammar in the 1950s and 1960s included shifts toward a "process" approach to teaching writing, the ineffective introduction of generative or transformational grammar into the curriculum, and a tendency to characterize Standard English as "regressive and reactionary," which resulted in a mounting resistance to grammar as a central knowledge base of school subject English (Hancock & Kolln, 2010). Despite these criticisms, traditional methods of teaching grammar persisted in Basic Skills approaches to literacy instruction, which are often disproportionately mandated for students from traditionally marginalized and minoritized groups (Enright, Torres-Torretti, & Carreon, 2012; Goodwyn, 2020).

On the other hand, knowledge about language has been consistently shown to improve student writing in highly valued academic genres (Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2015; Olinghouse & Graham, 2009; Saddler & Graham, 2017; Schleppegrell, 2013), including in character analysis (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Schleppegrell & Moore, 2018; Simmons, 2016), the genre at the center of the broader research project. Although the language encountered in subject English may resemble the everyday language that students bring to school, the language in narratives and literary responses use these familiar grammatical patterns in specialized ways that construct symbolic or metaphorical meanings (Fang, 2012; Martin, 1996). Reynolds & Rush (2017) argue that the goal of disciplinary literacy instruction should help students learn to see the "abnormal" discourse of the discipline as "normal" (p. 201). Making

these language patterns visible can play a supportive role in developing disciplinary literacy in subject English by helping students recognize and exploit these same lexicogrammatical patterns in their own writing (Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Fang, 2012; Macken-Horarik, 2006).

Literary Knowledge in the English Curriculum

As the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) entered the curriculum landscape in the US, informational genres have become more prominent and remain prominent writing genres alongside opinion writing in the early grades and argumentation in secondary schools (Maune & Kessler, 2014). But despite the range of diverse texts and modalities in the language arts curriculum, the study of literary narratives remains a quintessential feature of subject English at all levels of schooling (Fang, 2012). From a conceptual knowledge perspective, this includes information about the authors, plots, characters, settings, and themes of popular or canonized literature, but disciplinary experts in the field argue that there is a more fundamental basis of English education. Thomas (2013) explains that struggles over what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed are particularly fraught in subject English because the subject is fundamentally concerned with "the acquisition of an acceptable shared ethical position" (p. 330). Literary analysis and written response involve socialization into dispositions and values towards particular ideas and entities, which form the basis of success (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007) and the core of disciplinary literacy in the subject.

Doecke (2017) and Doecke and Mead (2018) argue that subject English was significantly shaped by the Newbolt Report (1921/1938) in a Romanticist tradition that emphatically differentiated literary studies from scientific analysis. From this perspective, the study of literature connected the inner and outer worlds through a form of authentic communication that exerts a "humanizing influence" on its subjects (Doecke, 2017, p. 240). Thus, studying literature

was designed to focus on the analysis of communication between people about their lived experiences. From this perspective, classroom teaching and learning experiences are enactments of this kind of knowledge, which rely on a personal experience with the text (Doecke & Mead, 2018).

Disciplinary Literacy in Subject English

The knowledge, language, and values acquired through reading and responding to literary texts are all part of developing disciplinary literacy in subject English. Disciplinary literacy involves participating in problem-based and text-based learning that is aligned with disciplinary practices (Moje, 2007). Fang (2012) defines disciplinary literacy as "the ability to engage in social, semiotic, and cognitive practices consistent with those of content experts" (p. 19). Disciplinary literacy involves learning discipline-specific ways of interacting with texts, inquiring into and reasoning through problems, and communicating findings (Fang, 2012; Graham, Kirkhoff, & Spires, 2017; Moje, 2007, 2011; Rainey & Moje, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2015). It is through participation in these shared practices "that disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary habits of mind are used, shared, critiqued, refined, and expanded" (Fang, 2012, p. 33).

While disciplinary literacy is often discussed in terms of academic silos where claims to knowledge and methods of inquiry are seen as distinct from other disciplines, Rainey and Moje (2012) note that students must be able to recognize and participate in certain kinds of practices within each discipline, while also being able to move between them. This requires "knowing when and how to interact with various texts; it requires knowing when and how to produce (and challenge) knowledge within various fields of study" (Rainey & Moje, 2012). One way of

identifying disciplinary practices related to various academic fields has been expert-novice studies, which compare the practices of identified experts in the discipline with those of novices.

Recent studies of the disciplinary practices of experts and high-achieving students have shed light on the disciplinary practices of literary scholars, providing insight into the ultimate goals and outcomes of subject English instruction from a disciplinary perspective. Reynolds and Rush (2017) report on a study of the literacy practices of four university-level instructors of Literary Studies and four first-year university students. The study, which included think-aloud protocols and three rounds of semi-structured interviews, found that disciplinary practices of experts included "recursive and constant process of hypothesizing" about the text and "noticing vocabulary" used by the authors that served as the basis for their questions, assumptions, and revisions (p. 206). Furthermore, the expert readers stuck with a question and purposefully read the text closely in order to answer these questions, conducting a dialogue with themselves throughout the reading of the text.

Rainey (2017) reported similar findings concerning the practices of ten university-level Literary Studies scholars. Disciplinary practices of these experts included looking for patterns in texts through an openness to possibilities for multiple meanings, identifying moments of strangeness in literary texts, either with regard to language structure or meaning, conceiving of analyzing literature as reading for patterns and solving interpretive puzzles in relation to the contextual factors of the text in order to contribute an original insight about the text to the scholarly community. The experts interviewed in this study saw literary study as part of a conversation not only between the reader and text but within a larger academic community interested in exploring multiple perspectives and meanings that problematize the texts rather than arriving at singular interpretations. Unfortunately, assessment practices in classrooms and high-

stakes writing situations in secondary school require the reproduction of dominant values and discourses (Collin, 2014; Macken-Horarik, 2006; Peim, 2009)

The READI Project (Goldman, et. al, 2016) conducted an analysis of expert studies related to literary reading and reasoning in order to determine what those who are "highly experienced or expert in the domain know and can do, and the knowledge, skills, strategies, and practices that underlie these behaviors" (Lee and Goldman, 2015, p. 214). Characterizing subject English as a subject in which readers are fundamentally guided to connect literature to their lives, Lee and Goldman (2015) identify needs for discipline-specific training of teachers in making knowledge and skills explicit, understanding how knowledge and skills deepen and progress in the short term and long term, and grasping the complexities of how text selection, sequencing, and assessment affect this development. This includes identifying the targeted knowledge of a particular lesson, unit, or curriculum, and then determining whether this knowledge is actually taught and assessed.

The READI Project (Goldman, et al., 2016) conducted an extensive meta-analysis of the research on what adolescent students need to know and be able to do in science, history, and literature, with regard to disciplinary literacies. One paper from this project is Lee and Goldman's (2015) analysis of expert studies which discusses five dimensions of knowledge, skills, and strategies involved in reading and reasoning about literature that were found in the larger study. These include an epistemology based around human experiences and "dialogue between readers and texts" (p. 215), and inquiry strategies that center around making inferences based on personal connections to the text, as well as a range of moral, philosophical, historical, critical, and intertextual conceptual frameworks. Knowledge about literary genres and character types and "discourse and ways of using language" including imagery, figurative language, and

other rhetorical strategies (Lee & Goldman, 2015, p. 215) are all brought to bear in the service of literary interpretation.

Knowledge and Knowing in Subject English

Scholars using SFL and Bernsteinian sociology, including LCT, have reported on the heterogeneity of approaches to teaching subject English, including the selection of texts, although particular genres have been identified that cut across these distinct models (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Macken-Horarik, 2006). In comparison to other disciplines, subject English exemplifies weak control over the boundaries of what texts and knowledge can be taught, which means it does not build verticality as a knowledge structure. Instead, the subject more forcefully constrains the possibilities of what kinds of values and forms of expression are deemed legitimate, creating a verticality in knower structures (Macken-Horarik, 2011; Maton, 2014). Studying the ways knowers are positioned and position themselves in relation to broader cultural discourses is a crucial perspective on classroom instruction and assessment practices, particularly in lessons designed to help students develop critical literacies (Anson., 2014; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Jackson, G. under review; Macken-Horarik, 2014; Peim, 2009).

In LCT terms, subject English can be characterized as a cultivated knower code (Christie, 2016; Luckett & Hunma, 2014; Maton, 2014). As students move through the years of schooling, their interactions with literature are mediated by teachers who guide students through interpretations of themes and evaluations of characters and issues with literary texts. In this way, the ideal subject position in subject English is "cultivated" over the years of schooling into dispositions towards an ever-increasing range of texts on which to train a specific "gaze" (Christie, 2016). Early childhood education involves developing the ability to recognize particular symbols in texts and interpret their culturally-valued meanings. At advanced levels, the

focus shifts from explaining one's personal interpretation to arguing that interpretation within a space of contestation among other interlocutors in the discipline (Luckett & Hunma, 2014).

Christie (2016) finds cultivated knower code characteristics in high-stakes literary response writing over the years of schooling. In this study, high-achieving writing built up abstract meanings to interpret symbols in narrative texts through semantic waves that connected specific text details to generalizations about literature and life. Anson's (2017) analysis of examiners' comments on high stakes English exam writing shows that successful responses demonstrated similar grammatical and semantic patterns. Anson's characterization of literary response in subject English as an *elite code* contrasts with the findings of Christie (2016), Maton (2014), and Macken-Horarik (2011), who argue that the subject is fundamentally underpinned by social relations between readers and the ideas and entities in the texts.

Macken-Horarik (2008), Maton (2014), Christie (2016), and others have drawn on the notion of *gaze* (Bernstein, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) to describe the combination of social and cognitive practices that are required of disciplinary experts to achieve legitimacy in a given situation. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) wrote that learning to think as a sociologist required the acquisition of a "new gaze" in the sense of becoming "a new person" in the sense of "a mental revolution, a transformation of one's whole vision of the social world" (quoted in Maton, 2014, p. 140). According to Bernstein (1999), a *gaze* is a particular, context-specific set of knowledge, skills, and values that allow one to recognize (identify) and realize (enact) the discourses required to accomplish a particular task in a given social situation: "to know is to gaze" (p. 165).

Macken-Horarik (2008) found in her study of secondary English examinations in Australia that these high stakes tasks involved two types of gazes: the *dispersed gaze* and the

integrated gaze. The dispersed gaze involves the ability to analyze a wide range of individual texts using multiple methods and approaches, and may be assessed through reading short narratives and interpreting their themes through selected response, short answer, or open-ended response. Advanced levels of school English require an integrated gaze, which require students to synthesize information from multiple texts to discuss unified or discordant themes. Under what is often a basic skills model of testing accountability, however, ELA tasks often require multiliteracies that can remain unaccounted for in grading rubrics and feedback and thus remain invisible to students (Macken-Horarik, 2008).

LCT research has used the gaze as found in Bourdieu and Bernstein to identify English as a *cultivated gaze,* a way of viewing, interpreting, and valuing different texts and practices through immersion in disciplinary practices. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) has provided a means for making gazes explicit to facilitate access to knowledge in the Humanities (Christie, 2016; Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2011; Luckett & Hunma, 2014; Macken-Horarik, 2008). To be successful in subject English, students must demonstrate the characteristics of "certain kinds of knowers" who value the text and the world in ways that align with the teacher or other evaluator of the pedagogic discourse (Luckett & Hunma, 2014, p. 190). Making the gaze required by the discipline explicit is intended to help scaffold disciplinary literacies and "with practice, it is hoped that students will acquire the desired cultivated gazes—for example, learn how to think, read and write like historians, literary critics or media practitioners and demonstrate this by producing legitimate written texts" (Luckett & Hunma, 2014, p. 196).

Literary Response Genres in Subject English

With literary studies at the center of the English curriculum, SFL analyses have shown that two families of genres came to be indicative of the subject throughout the years of

schooling, Stories and Responses (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Humphrey, 2017; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012; Rothery, 1994). Response genres are typical throughout the years of schooling but become more sophisticated and symbolic in the development from primary school through secondary school. Starting in primary schools, students learn Personal Responses, with Reviews and Character Analyses appearing in elementary school. Thematic Interpretations become a critical genre from junior secondary school through university literature classes. In each of these genres, the attitudinal qualities of narrative texts position the reader in relation to a particular moral, aesthetic, philosophical, or political issue, whether through the actions of imagined characters in story genres or through interpretations of literature that connect personal experiences and beliefs to the world beyond the text in response genres. These genres clearly relate to the disciplinary practices and their underlying principles described above.

Personal Response. Early writing about texts are typically Personal Responses, which express the writer's feelings about a piece of literature. Personal response has been dominant in the early grades of subject English instruction since the mid-1900s (Christie, 1993) and while primary and elementary students most commonly write in this genre (Christie & Derewianka, 2008), there is evidence that it remains common even at the college level (Rothery & Stenglin, 2000). Lewis (2000) notes that "privileging the personal" (p. 256) can lead to interpretations that are distantly related to the text and students can ignore aspects of texts that are not familiar to their lives, reinforcing prior beliefs rather than engaging with multiple perspectives. Lewis (2000) instead argues for a reader response model in which students "question the discourse that shapes their experiences as well as to resist textual ideology that promotes dominant cultural assumptions" (p. 261). In the later years of schooling, personal response is devalued in relation to reviews and analytic interpretations, which tend to distance the writer from the interpretation.

Review. Reviews articulate a writer's judgement of the text on aesthetic, moral, or philosophical grounds (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). As writers develop in secondary school, they begin to write interpretations of the symbolism in the literature. Interpretations involve demonstrating an understanding of the central message of a narrative text. This requires recognizing the effects of literary devices, particularly the ability to unpack symbolic meanings that relate to life beyond the event in the story or a particular character's circumstances. Boche (2014) uses SFL to analyze a book review from a literature textbook, using genre theory to identify the stages and functional grammar to describe the language features of the genre, ultimately offering a pedagogical model for teaching the genre to secondary students. Especially as students move into early secondary years, reviews potentially offer a more authentic means of engaging with texts and "provide a better model for developing students' evaluative capacities than do personal response texts" (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 65).

Character Analysis. Character Analysis takes a turn toward more symbolic readings of a text, and requires more sophisticated linguistic resources. Character analysis uses less plot summary than a review and involves evaluating a character's actions, sometimes making thematic claims that relate to life more broadly (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014). Moving beyond the normative interpretation of the text involves using grammatical resources that distance the writer from the text through the use of generalization and abstraction to state what the text 'shows' rather than what the writer feels or thinks (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 71). These texts involve introducing a character, describing their qualities and actions, and making a judgment that often leads to a connection with major themes in the text (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 72). Such analyses demonstrate a student's capacity to explain the ways that events,

ideas, and entities within the texts relate to life in general, including showing an awareness of other interpretations while arguing for the validity of one's own.

Thematic Interpretation. Thematic Interpretation is the most sophisticated type of literary response and arises in late elementary or junior secondary school before becoming the dominant form of response in secondary school (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Interpretations involve using resources that achieve abstraction and manage to condense more meanings into particular phrases and clauses. In this type of response, students are asked to generalize about life by extrapolating from the events in a narrative. While personal opinions or feelings about the text become less obvious in effective literary response writing as students progress through the years of schooling, "as the available lexical resources - at least in successful writers - grow richer and more varied, more nuanced value positions emerge, such that appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of texts is often blended with - or, alternatively, leads to - judgments about ethics and principles for living" (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 85).

Critical Literary Response

Critical response in school subject English has been described by Rothery (1994) and Martin and Rose (2008), among others. This type of response "discusses a text with a view to rejecting it, or at least some aspects of it" (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Critical literary response incorporates strategies of "deconstruction, critique and subversion" (Macken-Horarik, 1998, p.75) in order to trouble the ideal reader position established in the narrative (Macken-Horarik, 2003) as well as the connections this makes to discourses in the broader context of culture and pedagogic situation.

Although critical literary analysis is an identifiable model of classroom instruction, there is little evidence of critical literary analysis occurring in classroom writing in primary and

secondary schools in Australia (Christie and Derewianka, 2008; Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007; Macken-Horarik, 2006; Rothery, 1994). In most subject English classes, students are rarely granted the opportunity to move beyond formulaic responses as a way to "construct knowledge or generate new networks of understandings" (Applebee & Langer, 2011, p. 26). Similarly, extensive studies of writing on high stakes exams in subject English in Anglophone countries around the world found "no hint of a resistant or deconstructive reading" in texts that were rated at the highest levels of proficiency (Macken-Horarik, 2006, p. 68).

Perhaps this is why few studies have actually analyzed the degree to which student literary response writing achieves critical interpretation (Cranny-Francis, 1996; Harman & Simmons, 2014; Jackson, G., under review; Macken-Horarik, 2008; Schleppegrell & Moore, 2018; Simmons, 2016, 2018). Macken-Horarik (1998) analyzed student writing from a critical literacy unit in a year 9 ELA classroom. Critical analysis of a popular film was facilitated by teacher's scaffolding of student knowledge about the features of the romance-comedy film genre. Teaching the features of the genre facilitated student engagement with the language used to control and exploit the genre features to construct readings that resisted normative themes.

Successful Literary Response Writing

The genre descriptions above show a trend in the development of literary response writing in ELA from more personal and subjective responses to one based on more acute textual analysis and an authoritative stance towards the interpretation. Each of these different types of responses involves different claims to knowledge, and the subjective basis of the personal growth model becomes less visible in the later years of schooling as students are apprenticed into disciplinary writing that values authoritative interpretations based on relevant textual evidence and the application of analysis based on (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Macken-Horarik, 2006).

Christie and Dreyfus (2007) identify two aspects of successful literary response in ELA, a strong logical organization and a movement between abstract ideas related to the question and relevant details from the text that illustrate the major point of the text. This is accomplished through particular language choices, including a clear Macro-Theme, or what may be called in classroom settings a thesis statement, which establishes the abstract concept to be developed. Successful writers then offer "broad interpretive claims about the texts concerned" without resorting to plot summary (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007). Similar findings are discussed in Macken-Horarik (2006), which elaborates on the ideational and textual patterns exhibited in successful symbolic readings. An analysis of high-stakes secondary exam responses shows that successful symbolic readings tend to use *relational transitivity* (e.g., "the story is about...") to provide synoptic overviews that are then connected with concrete details from the text through *elaboration*, by which concrete meanings are transformed into generalizations or abstract ideas (e.g., "in other words," "this means," or this represents").

Maton (2009, 2014) discusses an analysis of high-achieving and less successful student writing from a secondary school subject English exit exam in which students were asked to interpret multiple texts in light of a provided thematic topic. The study showed that while successful texts moved between abstract ideas and concrete details, lower-achieving essays tended to interpret each text individually, resulting in a segmented analysis and failing to show how each text contributed to a thematic whole (Maton, 2014). Maton (2014) calls this movement between relatively abstract, generalizable meanings to more context-specific information such as descriptions of specific events and examples from the text a *semantic wave*.

Additional studies analyzing high-stakes response writing in Australia (Christie, 2016) have found similar language features in high achieving texts. A study of pedagogic discourse in a

secondary classroom in South Africa investigated the ways that shifts between abstract ideas and concrete details from the text can facilitate the development of language practices that construe particular dispositions towards literary texts (Jackson, F., 2015). Jackson (2016) investigated the ways that different South African context, differences in the enacted curriculum in two subject English classrooms that related to differences in the socioeconomic status of each school.

Macken-Horarik (2006) used SFL and Bernstein's Code Theory to reveal what she calls tactical, mimetic, and symbolic readings of literary texts. Lower-achieving interpretations were termed tactical readings, as they involved speculating on loosely-associated concrete details from the literary text and relating these to personal attitudes and experiences in a string of extended clauses that amounted to an "unstable angle on the interpretive task" that did not demonstrate a global understanding of the source text (Macken-Horarik, 2006). Moderately successful mimetic readings tend to summarize particular events in a text in order to explain their significance through generalized statements about life. Such responses offer a global interpretation of the text, but tend to narrowly interpret the text from the point-of-view of a positively viewed character.

Highly successful texts recognized and realized the metaphorical meanings in the text to construct a symbolic reading that used seemingly superficial details from the text to illuminate the abstract significance of the story (Macken-Horarik, 2006). These responses do not simply retell the sequence of events but stick with an idea and extrapolate the paradigmatic features of the narrative, such as its abstract themes or socially-relevant problem, through elaboration on the ways that specific language choices in the source text can be seen as parts of a unified whole. High achieving texts tend to discuss symbolic meanings in the texts using objectified language that distances the writer from the ideas, while lower-achieving texts tend to discuss themes in more personal, subjective terms. While high achieving responses indicate an awareness of

"interests and agendas" of the author (Macken-Horarik, 2006, p. 65), they crucially remain "authoritative *and* compliant" (p. 68, emphasis in original). As discussed above, critical readings are not typically valued by teachers or evaluators of high stakes assessment essays.

Despite the reproductive nature of normative readings of literary texts, making these readings visible can offer opportunities for critical interpretation because understanding how narratives position readers to align with certain characters, ideas, and values is an essential aspect in critiquing the text (Macken-Horarik, 2008; Martin, 1996). Such readings are not valued in the most consequential educational settings, however. The evaluation of student writing in standardized, high-stakes settings is restricted and exclusive (Macken-Horarik, 2006; Peim, 2009), and literary response has been shown to become a more exclusive genre as the years of schooling progress, with more students unable to produce successful literary responses on standardized assessments in high school than in middle school (van Schooten & de Glopper, 2003). Students do not often find standardized assessment passages enjoyable, and they tend to perform more poorly when asked to respond to texts they do not like (Nightingale, 2011). This is unfortunate considering that adolescent students are generally positive about writing tasks that are more subjective and allow them to express their personal views, which they find more common in ELA than in other subjects (Jefferey & Wilcox, 2014).

Teaching Literary Response Writing

Graham, Kerkhoff, & Spires (2017) studied the literacy demands of different subjects as perceived by middle school teachers and the strategies they used to teach these to students. The two ELA teachers in the study saw the subject as offering a means for developing academic literacy skills necessary in other subjects, and argued that students needed formulas for successful writing that could serve them across content areas. Despite viewing literature and

grammar as the center of the curriculum, the teachers reported using informational texts nearly as often as literary texts in class. While the teachers agreed that they highly valued original interpretation of literature, they said that any interpretation would be considered valid if it was supported by evidence from the source text. They intended to remain open to multiple viewpoints but ultimately sought to reach consensus about the themes in literature through text-based discussion.

Teachers of subject English often emphasize the personal nature of interpretation, arguing that standardization of curriculum, teaching and learning processes, and student products constrains the literacy practices of students. Both students and teachers tend to perceive that English classes are spaces where knowledge claims are more personal and subjective when compared with other subjects (Howard & Maton, 2016). Advocates of a more student-centered conception of achievement in ELA advocate for "strategies and attitudes that help children to achieve in their own way" (Enciso, Katz, Kiefer, Price-Dennis, & Wilson, 2011, p. 335). This can be accomplished through offering students choices of literary selections in the classroom that increase engagement (Ivey & Johnson, 2013), helping students make personal connections to literary texts (Johannessen, 2001), participating in dialogic, formative assessment throughout instruction rather than providing feedback and formally assessing on student work after completion (Brindley and Marshall, 2015).

A recent study of feedback on student writing in a university level English studies program (van Heerden, 2020) found, however, that instructors obscured the degree to which some disciplinary practices were valued over others. Instructors reported that they felt obligated to present the different aspects of English Studies—language proficiency, grasp of textual facts, and interpretive originality—as equally important, despite actually viewing original

interpretation as the most essential practice in the field. The true basis of achievement was obscured by feedback on student writing that was mostly concerned with correcting unconventional grammar and unrelated to helping students develop more sophisticated analyses.

Sevnarayan (2019) reports on a study of classroom discourse and interviews with instructors to explore the underlying basis of knowledge-building in English Education and English Literary Studies practices at a South African University. Despite the stated goal of the university instructors to help students learn to "think, write and speak critically, fluently and with clarity" in response to a variety of texts (p. 182), the instruction ignored diversity in students' cultures and literacies and the assessment practices obscured important criteria that could have been beneficial to students.

English teachers' stated focus on the student voice and personal connections with the text interpretations and values tend to be cultivated in ways that align with the views of the teacher (Fairbanks & Broughton, 2002) or uncritically reproduce status quo values and ideologies (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). An analysis of the official ELA curriculum in California showed that English serves as a means for the reproduction of dominant cultural and linguistic discourses and precluded students of non-dominant English varieties from participating in the very kinds of literacy practices that were required for success in the subject (Sleeter and Stillman, 2005) .

Reeb-Reascos (2016) found that in discussions about literary texts, 8th grade students discussed generational identities in relation to their parents, and personal stories that connected the events, characters, and themes in the texts to their unique experiences as individuals. Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell, and Bynum (2010) provide a description of a secondary literature student's process of literary interpretation in which the student attempted to

approximate the interpretation perceived to be desired by the teacher rather than presenting a personal interpretation of the text.

Many researchers, such as Doecke and Mead (2018), argue that immersion in literature should be student-directed, rather than being explicitly taught like other school subjects, thus broadening conceptions of what texts and practices are appropriate in English classrooms. Such a pedagogy requires "spaces where students can explore the interactions between inner and outer worlds, cultivating a heightened awareness of language from within, as an inescapable condition of life" (Doecke & Mead, 2018, p. 256). Ávila (2012) focuses on the ways teachers can loosen their focus on standard English and formal academic language to allow students to find their own interpretations and voices. West (2008) demonstrates that using online platforms and mediums can broaden the range of acceptable positions from which the student responds to literary texts. In this study the use of weblogs allowed students to position themselves as knowledgeable students of literature as well as effective online communicators as they incorporated language features that would be considered unacceptable in a traditional format. Shand and Konza (2016) note that in their study in a non-academic senior English class that instruction about the literary response genre allowed students to engage with the genre in their own ways while still achieving the purpose of thematic interpretation.

Levine (2014) discusses teaching practices for constructing effective interpretations using affect-based strategies. The study reports on an intervention in which students of literary analysis were taught to first draw on their everyday understandings of how to interpret affect as a means for identifying language in literary texts that is imbued with emotion. Next, students ascribed positive or negative values to that language and then explained or justify their reasoning. Writing produced by students who received this intervention made gains in their interpretive responses

while another group who did not receive the intervention did not. Levine (2019) reports on another study in which the introduction of simple sentence starters into the students' discussions of the text resulted in groups receiving the intervention creating thematic interpretations that involved more nuanced analyses of the texts, and less "happiness bound" responses that took a simplistic and purely positive view of the texts (Levine, 2019, p. 15). The two studies show that everyday interpretive language can support students to develop control over the linguistic and semantic resources necessary for this response genre.

These results align with the comprehensive report on challenges and responses to disciplinary reading in subject English provided by Lee and Spratley (2010). This report also suggests that explicit instruction in affect-related heuristics while modeling disciplinary practices can support novice readers in constructing interpretive readings of literary texts. The authors further describe the ways that classroom instruction and assessment can cultivate shared ethical understandings through the interpretation of literary texts in classroom discussions and writing.

Thomas (2013) provides a detailed analysis of the particular language choices in the teacher's culturally relevant discourse in a hyperdiverse classroom. The study offers a description of culturally relevant and responsive teaching in which the teacher used to negotiate social solidarities within the classroom around a literary text concerning fraught issues around race. Moore and Schleppegrell (2014) reported on the use of knowledge about language as a means for helping students analyze and evaluate literary characters in an elementary school classroom. Simmons (2016, 2018) and Harman and Simmons (2014) report on successful SFL-informed critical literary analysis. These studies showed how SFL metalanguage assisted Advanced Placement high school students in critically analyzing popular fiction, canonical literature, and a significant foreign policy speech by a US president. Students were able to

analyze the ways that the authors evaluated entities in the texts through Identification and Appraisal analyses (Martin & Rose, 2007), helping them to see how writers position readers in relation to texts in various genres.

Sosa and Bhathena (2019) show how personal knowledge and literacies can be leveraged for critical literacy against status quo value reproduction in ELA. Supporting students to engage with literature by drawing on their own experiences allowed students in a 9th grade ELA class to deeply engage with the character and explore the "moral and social values and commitments one brings to making sense of stories and characters" (Sosa & Bhathena, p. 224). For similar purposes, Fitts (2005) calls for expanding the curriculum by blurring the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' art and showing students that the characteristics of 'elite' texts are in a state of continual contestation and transformation.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has provided a broad review of research related to literary response writing in subject English. The purpose was to discuss different aspects of literary response writing as a means for describing the ways success in this core disciplinary practice can be made visible to teachers and students. The broad themes presented in this paper connected literary knowledge with disciplinary literacy practices, the underlying principles of successful participation in these practices, the genres of literary response and the semantic features of successful written responses, and finally, studies that discussed the teaching of literary interpretation.

While originality and personal connections with the text are advocated by educators and experts in the field, the assessment of response writing on standardized assessments shows that a normative disposition and mainstream interpretation of the text are required if the interpretation is to be deemed legitimate. Disciplinary experts argue that what is important are original

interpretations of the text (Rainey & Moje, 2012; Reynolds & Rush, 2017). Teachers are encouraged to broaden the range of language features and interpretations deemed legitimate by allowing students to connect with the literature in their own ways (Enciso, et al., 2011). But whether in classroom settings (Fairbanks & Broughton, 2002) or standardized assessment situations (Macken-Horarik, 2006), successful responses tend to use particular linguistic resources used to construct interpretations aligned with the discourses of the dominant culture. In this way, the curriculum and assessment practices in subject English effectively exclude students without familiarity with and control over the linguistic and semantic features used to construct symbolic meanings from everyday language (Anson, 2017; Collin, 2014; Fang, 2012; Macken-Horarik, 2006; Peim, 2009; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005).

The implications for teachers and teacher educators are significant. As students progress through the years of schooling, they develop literacies specifically related to reading and writing about literary texts, through which they are socialized into the dominant discourses in society (Christie, 1999/2005). Attention to these broad themes in the literature can help teachers and teacher educators reflexively consider the way their teaching of disciplinary literacies in subject English relate to the various dimensions of the subject discussed above. As a teacher of subject English and as a teacher educator, I have found that many of these aspects of the subject are only intuitively known to most subject English teachers. Understanding these key aspects of the subject can allow for an informed approach to designing pedagogic practices.

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CHAPTER 3

AUTONOMY PATHWAYS IN LITERARY RESPONSE WRITING: GETTING OFF TOPIC

IN AN ELA CLASSROOM[2]

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Abstract

This study investigates knowledge-building in student writing from a critical literary response unit in an 8th grade English language arts (ELA) classroom in the southeastern United States. This paper offers a detailed analysis of an exemplary essay in the data set (*N*=5), which is compared to other student responses deemed less successful by the teacher. Concepts from the Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) dimension of Autonomy are used to explore the extent to which meanings in the student texts related to the targeted content and purpose of the task, a critical analysis of passages from the *Harry Potter* novel series. The analysis reveals the ways student writers brought together information from the passages and from beyond the prompt and source texts to support their interpretations of the characters. The paper concludes with implications for designing instruction that better supports students in recognizing and realizing the ways literary texts relate to broader cultural issues and facilitating the development of critical dispositions towards dominant discourses.

(162 words)

Keywords: *English education, English language arts, Writing instruction; Literary analysis; Critical literacy, Legitimation Code Theory*

The study of literature remains a quintessential feature of subject English at all levels of schooling (Fang, 2012), and although the language encountered in narratives and literary responses may resemble the everyday language that students bring to school, these disciplinary texts use familiar grammatical patterns and meanings in specialized ways that construct symbolic or metaphorical meanings (Fang, 2012; Martin, 1996). Valid interpretations not only require specific patterns of linguistic choices for achieving the purposes of response genres, but also depend on adopting the right value position in relation to the characters and themes (Macken-Horarik, 2006). Studies analyzing student writing in ELA have shown various semantic features in high-achieving literary texts that contribute to success as students progress towards more sophisticated genres of literary response (Christie, 2016; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Macken-Horarik, 2006).

This study contributes to research on literary response writing in subject English by using concepts from the Legitimation Code Theory (Maton, 2014), in particular the dimension of Autonomy (Maton and Howard, 2018). The analysis explores the pathways between 'on-topic' and 'off-topic' knowledge in a small set of students essays produced in a classroom unit involving passages from the *Harry Potter* novel series that focus on the characters' views on elfish enslavement. This paper narrowly focuses on one highly-valued essay, which stood out for its critical analysis of Harry's character in relation to this issue. The analysis explores the ways this student essay brought together information and ideas from the texts with information from beyond the prompt to support their interpretation by addressing the following questions:

1. To what extent did the student writing relate to the targeted content and purpose of the writing prompt?

2. To what extent did movements beyond the targeted content and purpose of the writing prompt relate to the broader learning objectives of the unit?

Exploring these questions offers a means for understanding the ways students recognized and realized the critical disposition intended by the unit, with implications for the design, instruction, and assessment of critical literary analysis in ELA.

Conceptual Framework

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) is a sociological conceptual framework that allows for the analysis of the underlying principles of knowledge-building and knower-building in education and beyond (Martin, Maton, & Doran, 2020; Maton, Hood, and Shay, 2016;. LCT offers conceptual tools for making visible the underlying principles of knowledge and knowing valued in particular situations and cultural contexts (Maton, 2014). LCT offers many concepts for empirically studying the knowledge and values produced and rewarded in the student essays and how these relate to the critical disposition intended to be developed through the unit. This paper uses the dimension of Autonomy (Maton & Howard, 2014) as a means for better understanding the ways different semantic moves contributed to the goals of the writing task and demonstrated the learning outcomes intended in the unit.

Autonomy. An obvious question with regard to classroom activities is the question of what knowledge is being taught and for what purpose, but conceptual tools are needed to analyze these underlying principles in classroom discourse. The degree to which classroom discourse draws together different content for different purposes can be analyzed using the LCT dimension of Autonomy (Maton & Howard, 2018). Autonomy conceptualizes the strength of relations around what knowledge is in play in a particular context and the purposes to which this knowledge is turned. For the purposes of this study, autonomy analysis is used to describe the

degree to which the meanings in the student writing actually relate to the prompt and stated learning objectives of the writing task.

Table 3.1.

Positional and Relational Autonomy in Educational Discourse

PA+/–	Positional autonomy descriptors	Relational autonomy descriptors	RA+/–
+	Strongly related to target content	Strongly related to target purpose	+
↕			↕
–	Weakly related to target content	Weakly related to target purpose	–

Like other LCT dimensions, Autonomy is made up of two complementary concepts, positional autonomy and relational autonomy, which can be understood as working in conjunction with one another to establish the degree to which instances in a text are aligned with the task's content and purpose (see Table 3.1). *Positional autonomy* (PA) refers to the strengths of relations around the content considered acceptable in a particular text or context (Maton & Howard, 2018). In this study, PA describes the degree to which meanings in the texts related to the content identified in the writing prompt (Maton & Howard, 2018). *Relational autonomy* (RA) refers to the strengths of relations around what purposes are considered acceptable in a particular text or context (Maton, & Howard, 2018). In this study, RA describes the degree to which meanings in the text related to intended learning objectives.

When operationalized in LCT research, PA and RA are independently applied in an analysis of each text. Taking different strengths of each relation into account creates four coding orientations. These *autonomy codes* can be represented on a topological plane (Maton & Howard, 2018; see Figure 3.1). Discourse that is strongly related to the targeted content and purpose of the practice is called the *sovereign code*, considered clearly on-topic with regard to

both content and purpose (PA+, RA+). The *projected code* involves meanings that turn the

content of the task to a non-targeted purpose (PA+, RA−). This may occur when information that

is actually related to the intended content fails to contribute to the overall goal of the task or

achieves a different purpose. The *exotic code* refers to discourse that is aligned with neither the

stated content nor the intended purpose of the lesson (PA−, RA−), unrelated to the topic. This

occurs when information from outside the targeted content fails to contribute to the text's

specific purpose. Finally, the *introjected code* (PA−, RA+) refers to information from beyond the

targeted content but turned to the intended purpose.

Figure 3.1

The Autonomy Plane (Maton & Howard, 2018, p. 6)
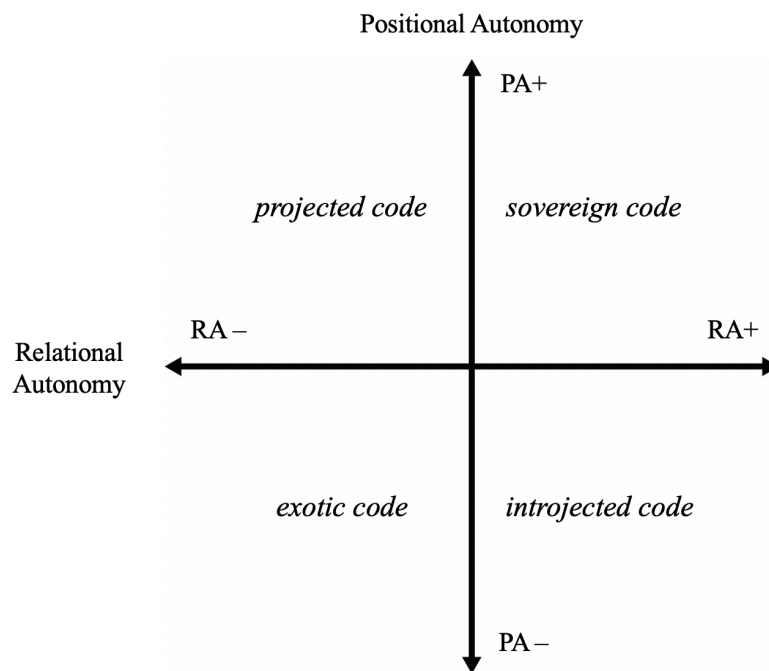
Moving around the plane, or taking an "autonomy tour" (Maton & Howard, 2018), means that

discourse moves further from or closer to the stated targets of the lesson, and in this writing task,

non-target pathways proved the distinguishing factor of the most high-achieving response.

Review of the Literature

Studies of student writing in classroom settings (Cranny-Francis, 1996) and on high-stakes examinations (Anson, 2017; Christie, 2016; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Macken-Horarik, 2006) have shown that success in subject English requires demonstrating particular attitudes and dispositions toward a variety of texts, phenomena, and ideas using particular forms of expression. From the earliest years of schooling, students are taught to support their feelings about a character with evidence from texts and to interpret stories from particular characters' viewpoints (Rothery & Stenglin, 2000). As they advance through levels of the ELA curriculum, students develop more sophisticated linguistic resources for sharing "culturally-valued understandings about life and human behavior" in the form of written responses to literature (Christie, 2016, p. 158). Narratives position readers to adopt particular value positions in relation to characters and events that are understood to have symbolic meanings (Macken-Horarik, 2003), and literary response requires students to interpret and explicate these meanings.

From an LCT perspective, the implicit, value-oriented nature of subject English is understood as a "cultivated knower code" (Christie, 2016, p. 158), meaning that the basis of success in subject English is not the student's control over particular kinds of knowledge and procedures, but rather "personal attitudes and the expression of appropriate values" (Christie, 2016, p. 159). The gradually-developed ability to recognize and realize accepted ways of interpreting and valuing literary texts in ELA can be understood as "cultivated gaze" (Maton, 2014, p. 99), in which dispositions and forms of expression are shaped by long-term immersion within a community of practice (Christie, 2016; Martin, J. L., 2016; Maton, 2014).

Classroom activities and high-stakes assessments blur the boundaries between socially-sanctioned values and official curriculum knowledge, reproducing normative language practices

and excluding students whose language practices do not already match those used in the pedagogic context (Peim, 2009). Despite many models of English purporting to focus on the student, interpretations and values tend to be cultivated in ways that align with the views of the teacher (Fairbanks & Broughton, 2002) or uncritically reproduce the values and ideologies of the status quo (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). Through culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, however, teachers can use particular forms of discourse to guide students towards consensus interpretations that promote social justice (Thomas, 2013).

This cultivated gaze in subject English is inherently based on moral positioning towards characters and events in literary texts that are in turn related to both the context of situation in the pedagogic setting and within the broader context of culture. When these are aligned, mainstream discourses are reproduced, but when the pedagogic situation contradicts or disrupts dominant discourses this can be understood as a form of critical pedagogy. In the unit under study here, the goal was for students to make connections between the characters' attitudes towards slavery in the wizarding world and the dominant attitudes towards slavery in our society. This analysis set out to reveal the pathways students took beyond the stated content and purpose of the prompt to support their interpretations of the characters while simultaneously positioning themselves in relation to the issue. The analysis below discusses the ways that 'off-topic' information in one highly-valued response contributed to the writer's critical evaluation of the representation of enslavement in the texts and demonstrated the intended critical disposition towards similar issues in the world beyond.

Methods

The LCT dimension of Autonomy allows for the empirical analysis of the strength of boundaries around what knowledge counts and for what purposes in particular pedagogic

situations (Maton & Howard, 2018). This study uses the concepts of positional and relational autonomy to describe the ways non-target information in the essays related to each writer's interpretation of the characters.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study analyzed a small set of typed, single-draft, literary response essays (*N*=5), ranging between 400 and 1,000 words. The essays were completed in class over the course of multiple days. After the individual student products were written and scored, the teacher selected five student essays that she felt represented various levels of success on the task, which were provided to me without identification. An hour-long, semi-structured interview provided insight into the teacher's selection of these exemplars, as we were able to discuss the particular features that influenced her evaluation of each product. The interview also allowed the teacher to explain how she saw the immediate goals of the unit and writing task as contributing to longer-term learning objectives. The student essays were passed on for analysis without identifying information, although this is a clear limitation of the study, which could have benefited from the students' perspectives on the unit and their written interpretations of the characters.

Research Context

This study took place in a rural, predominantly White, working class community in the southeastern United States. The middle school serves students in grades 6-8 (aged 10-14) and is located near the center of a town of 17,000 people. Of the approximately 900 students in the school, the demographics consisted of 62% White, 15% Latinx, 14% Black, 5% Asian, and 4% multiracial students, with 10% of students identified as English Learners (EL). More than half of enrolled students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, an indicator of socioeconomic status.

At the time of the study, I (the author) was the instructional coach at the school, whose primary role was to work with individual teachers to develop practices for improving disciplinary literacy instruction. I intended to conduct a study of knowledge-building in ELA classroom discourse, and after responding to a flyer, Dr. Natalie Miller (a pseudonym), a highly-skilled veteran with whom I had worked as a teacher for several years, agreed to participate. Natalie was teaching two advanced ELA classes at the time, in which approximately half the students were labeled "Gifted" under state guidelines. The demographics in these classes closely matched those of the school. Twelve students in the two classes assented to participation in the study and parent consent was obtained via a letter sent home with the students, in accordance with IRB approval.

Pedagogic Context

This unit of study was our first attempt to use concepts from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) with students to conduct a critical analysis of a literary text. The unit centered around two *Harry Potter* passages, which we analyzed was based on the examples of Identification analysis and Attitude analysis (Martin & Rose, 2007) in the work of Simmons (2012, 2016). Simmons used these SFL concepts and methods with her Advanced Placement high school students as a means for scaffolding their knowledge about language and critical literacy practices (Simmons, 2016). Borrowing from Simmons' (2016) scaffolded model of SFL-informed critical literacy, Natalie and I intended to use the *Harry Potter* analysis to introduce students to methods of discourse analysis and dispositions towards issues of oppression and injustice that would be cultivated throughout the year.

We began the unit with small group discussions of *Harry Potter* book covers and movie posters to help activate prior knowledge and introduce unfamiliar students to the characters, plot,

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and issue of elvish enslavement in the novels. We then read a two-page passage from *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2007), which depicts Harry confronting Kreacher, an enslaved elf Harry has inherited. The scene conveys the characters' mutual loathing as Harry treats Kreacher, as one student wrote, "without the least bit of compassion." After reading, analyzing, and discussing the passage, Natalie facilitated the collaborative construction of a paragraph interpreting the significance of Kreacher's name, appearance, and living conditions in light of Harry's role as 'master' of the enslaved elf. This teacher-facilitated activity allowed all students to participate collaboratively writing a response paragraph using evidence from the text, preparing them for independent writing. Because the SFL-informed analysis focused on key instances in the text that reinforce the master-slave dynamic between the characters, this writing activity provided an opportunity to help students construct a critical interpretation of the text, one that problematized Harry's role as hero of the story by focusing on his role as enslaver.

The second passage, from *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000), depicts Hermione introducing her recently-founded Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (SPEW) to Ron and Harry. The characters' conversation demonstrates Hermione and Ron's opposing stances on the issue, with Ron not only ridiculing the club, but the premise of its goals, as he disturbingly argues that the elves "enjoy being enslaved" (Rowling, 2000, p. 224). When presented with an opportunity to support abolition, Harry remains relatively ambivalent. Despite being depicted as apathetic towards Hermione's organization and amused with Ron's unapologetically supremacist view on the issue, many students were reluctant to criticize the protagonist. In line with our goals for the unit, however, Natalie and I steered the discussion towards a consensus (Thomas, 2013) that one could not place Harry entirely on the side of abolition based on the evidence in the passages.

After reading and analyzing this passage, Natalie introduced the culminating writing prompt, which asked students to compare and contrast the three main characters' views on elvish enslavement. The writing prompt was intended to assess the degree to which students could cite relevant textual evidence to support their interpretations of the texts. But a valid interpretation also required a particular disposition, as the design of the unit, including the text selection and SFL-informed classroom analysis, illuminated aspects of Harry's character that directly implicated him in the perpetuation of elvish enslavement.

Natalie and I viewed the resistant reading of Harry's character in light of the issue of slavery as a critical interpretation not only because it challenged Harry's positioning as a 'good guy' in the story, but because facilitating this kind of analysis also cultivated a disposition critical of analogous viewpoints in related texts and contexts. In particular, the lesson related to value-positions that perpetuated the institution of slavery and legal discrimination in the United States from before the founding of the country to the present day. Throughout the unit, Natalie and I consistently drew in examples from history and our contemporary society to show how the characters and events in the texts could be symbolically related to actual people and events. An autonomy analysis of the student writing allows for an assessment of the degree to which students executed similar moves in their writing, despite not being required or explicitly told to do so.

Data Analysis

Studying the degrees to which the student essays moved between target and non-target knowledge requires a "language of description" or "translation device" (Bernstein, 2000, p.132) for translating between the theoretical concepts and empirical data. In LCT research, "each object of study requires its own translation device" for exploring the ways different concepts are

realized in the particular texts and contexts (Maton, 2014, p. 113). The translation device for this study (Table 3.2) was based on the generic Autonomy translation device in Maton and Howard (2018), which provided a heuristic for creating a specific external language of description to translate between positional and relational autonomy as theoretical concepts and their realization in the texts in this data set.

Table 3.2

Specific Autonomy Translation Device for This Paper

PA/RA	1st Level Descriptions	2nd Level Descriptions
+ ↑	*Target:* Information about character views on elvish enslavement in *Harry Potter* for purpose of evaluating characters	*Core:* Information directly related to character views on issue for purpose of evaluating characters in relation to issue
		Ancillary: Information indirectly related to character views on issue for purpose of evaluating characters in relation to issue
↓ —	*Non-target:* Information not directly related to characters' views on elvish enslavement in *Harry Potter* for purpose of evaluating characters	*Associated*: Information not related to character views on issue not for purpose of evaluating characters in relation to issue
		Unassociated: Information unrelated to character views on issue not for purpose of evaluating characters in relation to issue

This analytic tool allowed for the detailed description and analysis of each sentence of each essay in terms of its strength of relations to the targeted content and purpose of the task. This analysis uses the writing prompt as a means for identifying the targeted content and purpose of the unit. While the broader unit was focused on helping students cultivate an expansive gaze, the prompt itself did not ask students to incorporate information from beyond the texts into their responses. Therefore, in this study, target and non-target content and purposes were distinguished by their strength of relations to the character's views on elvish enslavement and the

degree to which the writer evaluatively compared these viewpoints, such judgments being the overall purpose of the character analysis genre (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). At a more detailed level of analysis, instances of stronger and weaker positional and relational autonomy can be viewed as Core, Ancillary, Associated, and Unassociated meanings (Maton & Howard, 2018), offering a means for describing the ways different kinds of information are brought together in the texts.

Findings

This section discusses the ways combinations of positional and relational autonomy were realized in the student essays, showing the non-target pathways that one highly successful writer took to support their interpretations of the characters with regard to the issue of elvish enslavement. While on-topic statements that directly addressed the prompt made up the vast majority of all the student essays, a distinguishing characteristic of the most high-achieving essay (Text 1) was the frequency and effectiveness with which it brought in knowledge from elsewhere to support the analysis of each character. The following analysis describes these moves in terms of *autonomy pathways* (Maton & Howard, 2018), or movements around the autonomy plane.

Translating Autonomy

Translating between theory and data requires systematically unpacking what a concept means for the particular study and how the concept is realized in the data. Below, I discuss the ways that core, ancillary, associated, and unassociated meanings were realized in the data set. Subsequently, I describe each of the non-target pathways in Text 1, showing the more and less effective ways that the writer got 'off-topic' to support their analysis of the characters.

Core. Statements with direct quotes and paraphrases of text that directly address character views on the issue were identified as the *core* (PA++, RA++) of the writing task. These

statements were deep in the sovereign code of the task. It is through such statements that students

directly addressed the prompt's stated content and purpose to compare and contrast the

characters' views on elvish enslavement:

> *Hermione is passionate for the equality of all magical beings.*
>
> *On the other hand, Ron Weasley has an opposing opinion on the house elves,*
>
> > *emphasizing the claim "they like being enslaved."*
>
> *Since Harry has experience with this master slave dynamic with house elves, he has a*
>
> > *sense of supremacy over the creatures.*

Core information, directly related to the prompt, is highly valued in this genre of writing, and

students spent much of their time directly answering the question and citing relevant evidence

from the texts. But other instances in the texts were in some way less related to the content

and/or purpose of the task.

Ancillary. Some statements brought in information that was clearly on target, but less

directly related with the core content and purpose of the task. Such meanings were identified as

ancillary. While these statements remained in the sovereign code, they less directly addressed

the character's views on the issue (PA+, RA+). These remained within the target but could be

distinguished from the core learning target. Ancillary statements concerned indirectly the

characters' views on the issue, and could be paired with a quote or paraphrase of the text.

> *Claiming he has "never heard of it," Ron thinks the Society for the Promotion of Elfish*
>
> > *Welfare is a waste of time and doomed to fail.*

In this example, the writer focuses on Ron's negative evaluation of Hermione's club, which

indirectly aligns him with elvish enslavement, remaining within the targeted content and purpose

of the task. Other realizations of ancillary information in the data set established the character's

status in the society based on their 'blood status,' on which the social hierarchy in the wizarding world rests. Such information positioned the characters on different sides of the issue while remaining focused on content from the texts, indirectly but clearly addressing the target of the prompt and remaining in the sovereign code.

Associated. As the translation device in Table 3.2 indicates, statements that included any non-target realization were considered neither core or ancillary, but either associated or unassociated. Statements that were rather closely related to the target, but were clearly not 'on-topic,' were identified as *associated* meanings. Associated information about entities and ideas beyond the prompt, (PA–) or information that did not contribute to the purpose of the text (RA–) were described as *associated* with the target. The analysis revealed three orientations of associated meanings: weakly related to the content and strongly related to the purpose (PA–, RA+), strongly related to the content and weakly related to the purpose (PA+, RA–), or weakly related to both (PA–, RA–). These three types of associated meanings related to different codes in the essays, as is explained below.

Most of the associated meanings in Text 1 took the form of non-targeted content turned to the purpose of the task (PA–, RA+), these meanings realized the introjected code:

Hermione resembles abolitionists in American history, who started a movement to

extinguish enslavement of African Americans.

This instance uses a comparison with people clearly seen as on the 'right' side of the enslavement issue in US history to illuminate and validate Hermione's viewpoint. This reference indirectly establishes that Hermione's position is strongly against elvish enslavement. In such examples, non-target content was used to strongly contribute to the purpose of the task, demonstrating an introjected code (PA–, RA+).

Another type of associated meaning, found in other essays in the data set, though not in Text 1, could be described as related to the targeted content but not directly related to the targeted purpose of the task (PA+, RA−), resulting in projected code meanings. Text 4, another relatively high-achieving essay, includes an example of this associated realization in an analysis of Hermione's character that attempts to connect her gender with the ability to sympathize with the elves:

> Hermione could also argue that she knows what it's like to be downgraded because in reality she's a female.

In this statement, the student begins by implicitly suggesting that Hermione could empathize with the elves based on her own mistreatment, but this information is not actually turned to purpose as the writer moves away from Hermione's views on elvish enslavement and towards Hermione's experiences of gender discrimination. While this statement is weakly related to the target content, it remains unrelated to the target purpose, a projected code (PA+, RA−).

A third type of associated non-target knowledge included statements that addressed neither the content nor the purpose of the prompt (PA−, RA−), examples of statements in the exotic code:

> The exploitation of the house elves makes several connections to the enslavement of African Americans.

This statement vaguely addresses the issue at the center of the novel, but it remains a step removed from connecting the historical enslavement of African Americans in the US to the characters' views of elvish enslavement. While the writer clearly demonstrated the capacity to turn this information to purpose, in this instance they did not, and the statement remained in the exotic code (PA−, RA−), disconnected from the sovereign code information around it.

Unassociated. There were also statements in the data set that were clearly deeper in the exotic code than the associated meanings discussed above. These non-target statements were *unassociated* with both the content and purpose (PA– –, RA– –) of the task. One of these instances occurs in the opening sentences of Text 1.

> *One of the most dependable things in our lives is our morals. We make most of our choices based around these ideas that we, as individuals, have determined to be right or wrong.*

These statements can be seen as two steps removed from the targeted content and targeted purpose. The discussion of morals and individual choices creates a tone of serious reflection at the start of an analysis regarding an important issue, but the statements never clearly connect back to either the stated content or purpose of the task.

Autonomy Pathways

Coding the entire data set in terms of the relative strength of PA and RA at the level of core, ancillary, associated, and unassociated meanings allowed for a detailed description of each essay in terms of their relation to the targeted content and purpose. Turning back to the autonomy plane, these coded statements can now be described in more general terms as realizing sovereign, introjected, projected, and exotic codes. Broadening the perspective from the translation device to the plane allows for more general descriptions of how the students moved between the codes.

The plane in Figure 3.2 shows that in this analysis, the *sovereign code* (PA+, RA+) involved attending to the stated topic of the prompt, the characters' views on elfish enslavement, in order to evaluate their contrasting perspectives. Writing that moved into the *projected code* (PA+, RA–) involved information about *Harry Potter* that was not turned toward characterizing

views on elfish enslavement. *Exotic code* (PA–, RA–) information included outside references that also did not clearly contribute to the overall purposes of the prompt. The *introjected code* (PA–, RA+) referred to information that was not about *Harry Potter*, but was explicitly tied to the issues, characters, and themes in the text.

Figure 3.2

Autonomy Plane with Descriptions of Coded Data

PA+
Strong relation to topic

Projected Code:

Discourse about characters' views of enslavement but not for purpose of evaluating characters

Sovereign Code:

Discourse about characters' views of enslavement and for purpose of evaluating characters

RA–
Weak relation to purpose

RA+
Strong relation to purpose

Exotic Code:

Discourse unrelated to characters' views of enslavement and not for purpose of evaluating characters

Introjected Code:

Discourse unrelated to characters views of enslavement and for purpose of evaluating characters

PA–
Weak relation to topic

Since most of each text was spent in the sovereign code, 'off-topic' information stood out. These moves were identified by Natalie as attempts by the writer to demonstrate an awareness of the ways cultural and historical issues related to the representations of enslavement and oppression in the novels. While all students attempted such moves at least once, the most highly-rated response included considerably more non-target references than any other text in the data set, although some of these proved more effective than others. The analysis below discusses 'instances' of non-target information, identified by lower-case letters in the pathways. In this

analysis, each point on the plane indicates a coded sentence, with the pathways represented by connected line segments.

Text 1 is the only essay in the data set to begin outside the sovereign code. This pathway involves a single non-target instance (a) made up of two sentences, which are both concerned with general issues of morality and individual choice (Figure 3.3). These statements are never connected with the targeted content or purpose, as the next sentence abruptly jumps to the sovereign code in order to introduce the topic that the essay will discuss, the "ongoing debate concerning the injustice and exploitation against the house elves" (Text 1, para. 1). This initial on-target move is an example of a 'one-way trip' into the exotic code (Maton & Howard, 2018), which does not directly contribute to the overall goals of the writing task.

Figure 3.3

Non-target Pathway in Paragraph 1 of High Achieving Essay (Text 1)

Coded data	Pathway
a. One of the most dependable things in our lives is our morals (PA– –, RA– –). We make most of our choices based around these ideas that we, as individuals, have determined to be right or wrong (PA– –, RA– –).	
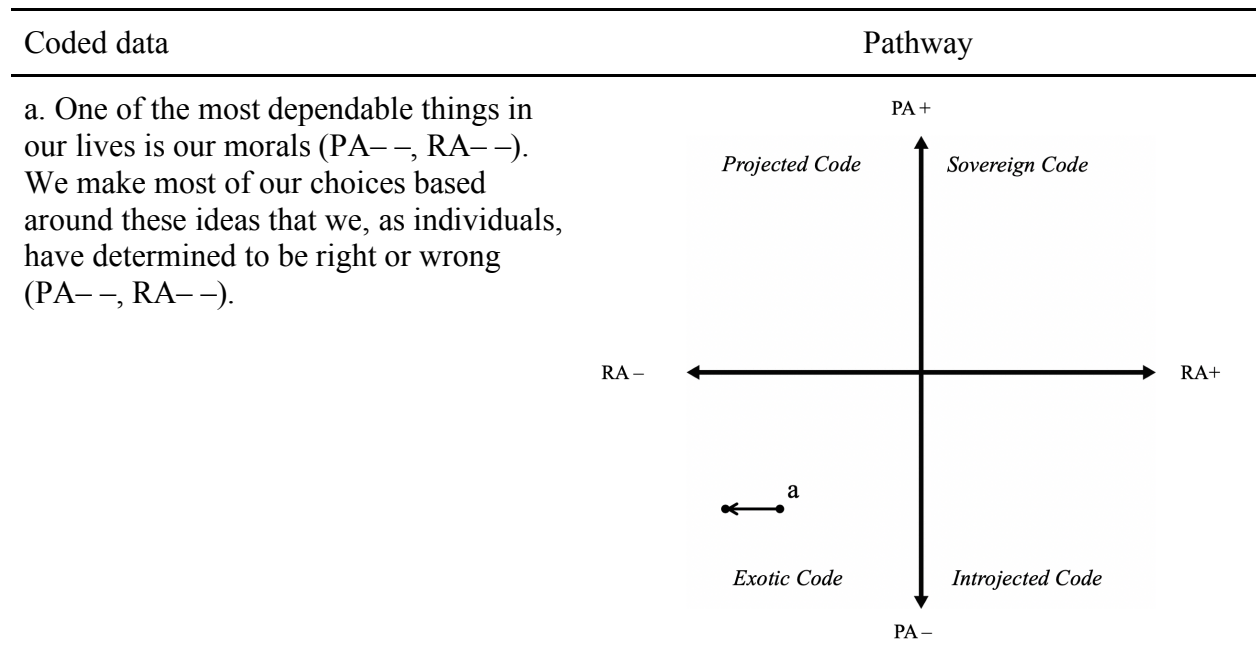
The next instances of non-target information occur in the second paragraph, as the student discusses Hermione's views on elvish enslavement. This autonomy pathway involves

two different 'moves' (identified as *b* and *c* in Figure 3.4), which relate the character to distinct

constituents of non-target knowledge, 'J.K. Rowling' and 'abolitionists in American history'.

The statements in the first non-target move (b) establish Hermione's female gender as a factor in

Rowling's decision to cast Hermione as helping the elves "overcome these prejudicial

judgments" related to elvish enslavement. The writer supports this idea using additional non-

target information, claiming that Rowling "is known for conquering stereotypes in her male

dominated career field," and moving farther away from the targeted content and purpose of the

prompt. This information is then connected back to the purpose of the prompt as the mention of

"righteousness and tolerance" reinforces Hermione's position on the side of abolition.

Figure 3.4

Non-target Pathways in Paragraph 2 of High Achieving Essay (Text 1)

Coded data	Pathway
b. The author could have just as easily chosen one of the male characters to overcome these prejudicial judgments, however J.K. Rowling selected Hermione in particular (PA–, RA+). The author is known for conquering stereotypes in her male dominated career field (PA– –, RA–), so it is logical she appointed the female protagonist to take a stand for righteousness and tolerance (PA–, RA+). c. Hermione resembles abolitionists in American history who started a movement to extinguish enslavement of African Americans (PA–, RA++). She is willing to sacrifice everything she has worked diligently to achieve, to ensure a fair treatment for the "shockingly unrepresented" house elves (PA++, RA++)	

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The next sentence introduces more non-target information (c) through a comparison between Hermione and abolitionists from history. This statement remains in the introjected code and strongly contributes to the purpose of evaluating Hermione's character while remaining relatively closely associated with the targeted content. While not entirely cohesive in their organization, taken together, the references favorably compare Hermione with figures associated with overcoming gender discrimination and fighting to end the enslavement of African Americans. This relatively effective non-target pathway was boosted by the connections with sovereign code information before and after the references to information from beyond the prompt, indicated by the small arrows at the beginning and end of the pathway.

Figure 3.5

Non-target Pathway in Paragraph 3 of High Achieving Essay (Text 1)

Coded data	Pathway
d. In comparison to American history, Ron is similar to privileged white men during the civil rights era in the southeastern United States (PA–, RA+). If the issue of enslavement and bigotry does not negatively affect him, Ron is not going to do anything to stop it (PA++, RA++).	
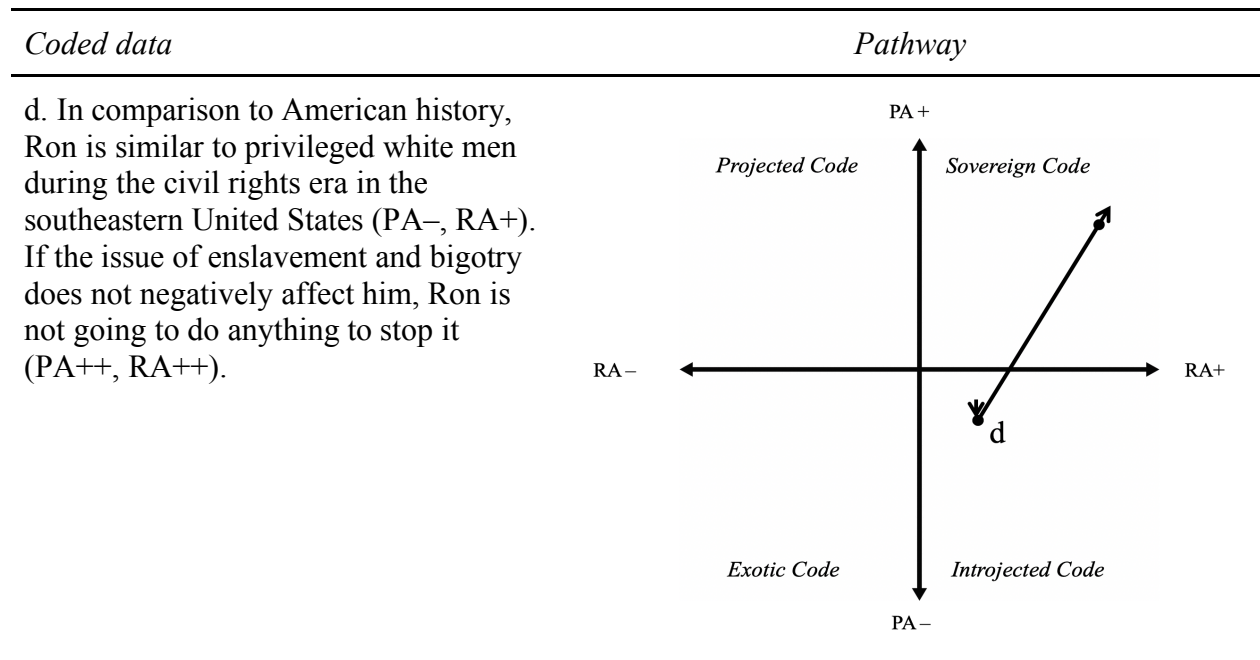
The student's analysis of Ron also includes a non-target pathway involving a comparison between the character's views and associated information related to the history of slavery and its legacy in the United States (Figure 3.5). This instance arises from sovereign code information

about Ron's views, which is reinforced by this comparison to a culturally significant non-target entity. In this non-target move (d), the student compares Ron to "privileged white men during the civil rights era," (Text 1, para. 3), a comparison that positions both Ron and the dominant culture, represented in this symbolic image, in a negative light. This return trip was another example of the student turning non-target information to purpose in a way that demonstrated an awareness of connections to the broader cultural issue while aligning a character with negatively-evaluated dominant discourses. Such a move demonstrated the disposition valued in the classroom context.

Figure 3.6

Non-target Pathways in Paragraph 4 of High Achieving Essay (Text 1)

Coded data	*Pathway*
e. In American history, slave owners have freed African Americans, without being an abolitionist completely against the idea of slavery (PA– –, RA–). This directly relates with Harry's point of view on emancipating Dobby, but tyrannizing other house elves to an extent (PA++, RA++).	
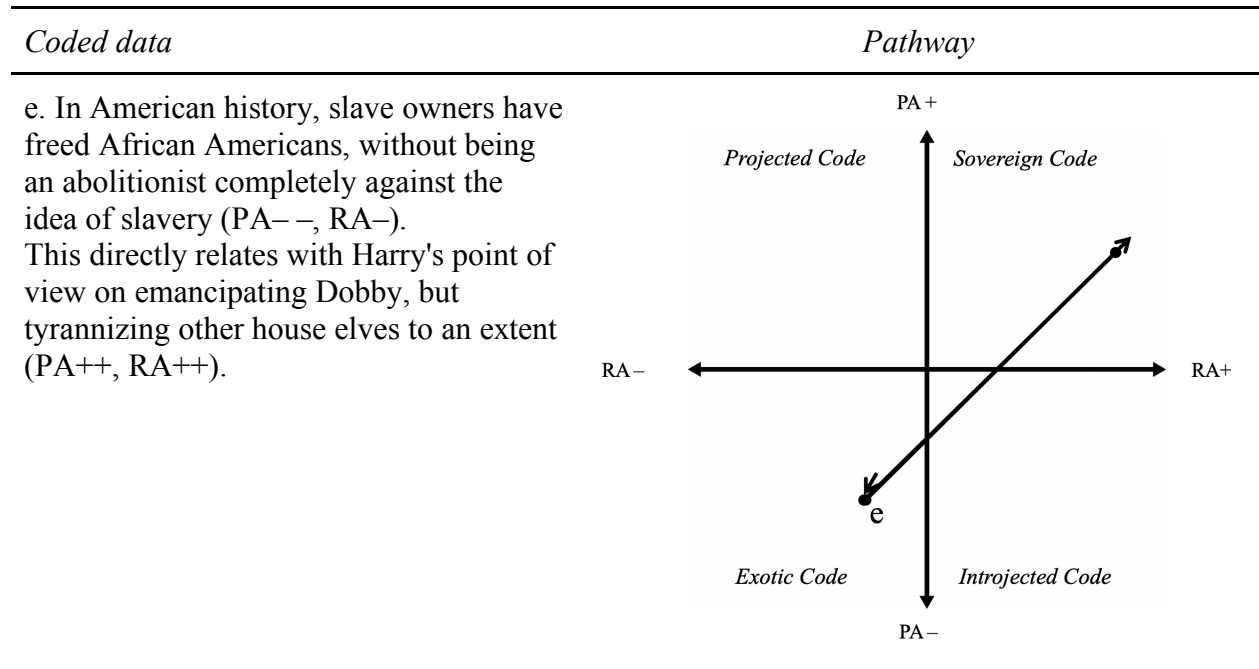
The writer of Text 1 offers a nuanced interpretation of Harry's character, accounting for both positive (e.g., freeing Dobby) and negative (e.g., loathing Kreacher) actions and ideas. Elsewhere in the paragraph, the writer explicitly aligns Harry with Ron's perspective on the issue

and against Hermione's abolitionist position. Later, in the single non-target move in the paragraph (e), the writer directly addresses Harry's inconsistent treatment of and attitude towards the two elves, comparing Harry to "slave owners" from American history. Just before this reference, the writer acknowledges Harry's freeing of Dobby, but argues that this experience reinforces his "sense of supremacy over the creatures" (Text 1, para. 4). It is here that the writer chooses to compare Harry to "slave owners" as a means for refuting the argument that freeing Dobby makes Harry on the side of abolition. In the next sentence, the author "directly relates" this idea back to Harry's treatment of the elves. This pathway is represented in Figure 3.6, and indicates ways the non-target reference is situated within the introjected code, but was strongly connected back to the sovereign code. Natalie and I had not expected students to make such direct connections between the cultural discourses and literary representations in their writing, despite the classroom discussions of the texts consistently coming back to such topics.

Figure 3.7

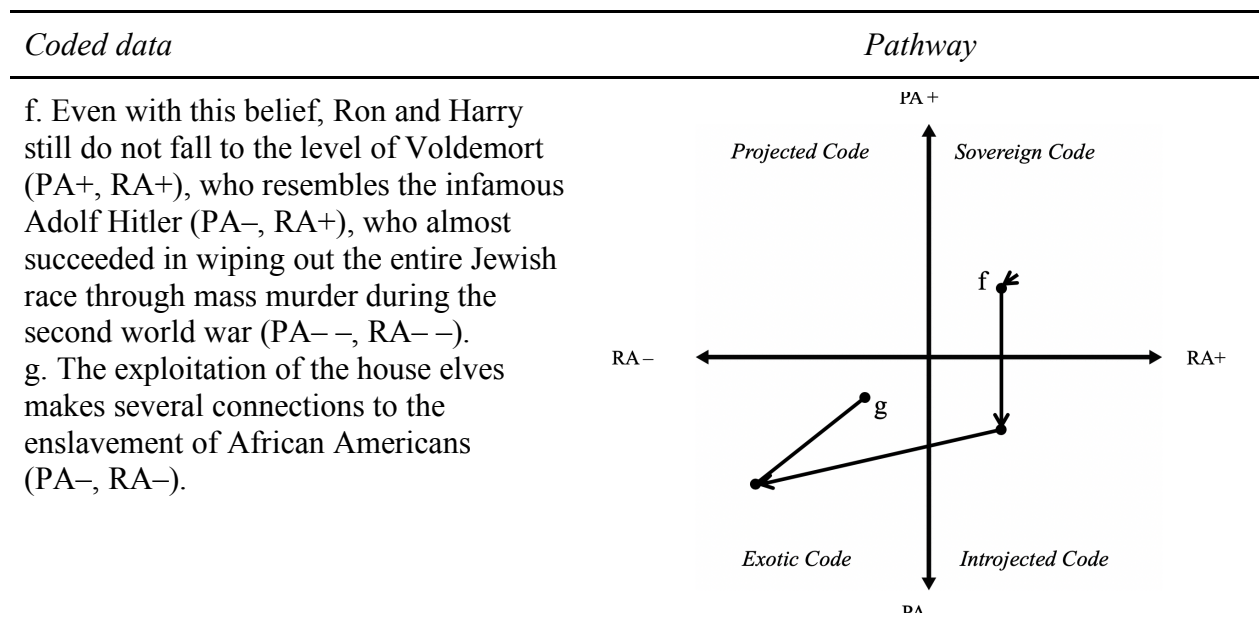*Non-target Pathways in Paragraph 5 of High Achieving Essay (Text 1)*

Coded data	Pathway
f. Even with this belief, Ron and Harry still do not fall to the level of Voldemort (PA+, RA+), who resembles the infamous Adolf Hitler (PA–, RA+), who almost succeeded in wiping out the entire Jewish race through mass murder during the second world war (PA– –, RA– –). g. The exploitation of the house elves makes several connections to the enslavement of African Americans (PA–, RA–).	

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The concluding paragraph included one somewhat disconnected venture beyond the sovereign code, including stops in three codes (Figure 3.7). After summarizing each character's position on the issue, the writer qualifies the critique of Harry and Ron, which has been extremely sharp to this point in the essay. In a smooth, cohesive move that invokes the positions described in the previous sentences, the writer clarifies that Harry and Ron's views should not be judged as harshly as Voldemort's, who is then compared to Hitler (f). The next statement remains in the exotic code, and a step nearer the target, and is not clearly related to the sentence before or after (g). The writer again invokes the connection between the enslavement of elves in the novels and the enslavement of African Americans in history, but reference is never connected back to the targeted content or purpose of the prompt and is not cohesively linked with the next sentence.

The pathways described above demonstrate the writer's emerging ability to effectively integrate non-target information into their writing. While the introduction and conclusion included less successful trips into the exotic code, the essay contained several examples of effectively using information from beyond the prompt to support their analyses of the characters. These pathways beyond the sovereign code were highly valued by the teacher as they demonstrated an awareness of the connections between the issues and value positions in the literary texts and historical viewpoints that either contributed to or perpetuated the institution of slavery in the United States.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper explored the ways that a highly-valued literary response text brought together information that was revealed as more strongly or weakly related to the content and purpose of the writing task. The autonomy analysis (Maton & Howard, 2018) offered here revealed the non-

target pathways in a highly-successful text. While not always effectively turned to purpose, the analysis showed how non-target references were used to support the writer's interpretation of each character's views on elvish enslavement, using non-target knowledge for targeted purposes. In sum, getting 'off-topic' in this situation typically allowed the writer to more effectively demonstrate the intended critical literary gaze.

While all student texts in the data set moved between target and non-target knowledge at least once, the frequency and relative effectiveness with which Text 1 ventured beyond the sovereign code was a distinguishing factor of this highly valued essay. Natalie felt that the effective comparisons to culturally-relevant ideas and entities strengthened the writer's evaluation of the characters' viewpoints and indicated the kind of gaze intended to be cultivated in the unit. From Natalie's perspective, even the one-way trips away from the target showed promise as examples of emerging capacities to connect issues in the text with broader cultural and historical issues, themes, and value positions. While several essays did not adopt a critical orientation to Harry, the instances of non-target information elsewhere in the essays demonstrated the writer's awareness of the ways the issues and viewpoints in the text related to those in society.

Maton and Howard (2018) suggest that students may "possess different capacities to recognize and generate autonomy pathways required for success" (p. 31), and this analysis shows an adolescent writer's emerging ability to control this semantic resource. This paper suggests that making the autonomy pathways visible in critical literary analysis units like the one described above may help scaffold student abilities to critically analyze literary texts in relation to culturally-relevant ideas.

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CHAPTER 4

AXIOLOGICAL CONSTELLATIONS IN LITERARY RESPONSE WRITING: CRITICAL

SFL PRAXIS IN AN ELA CLASSROOM[3]

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Abstract

To engage in critical praxis, teachers of literary response writing need concepts and methods for understanding the efficacy of teaching practices in helping students develop particular dispositions towards texts and the social issues they represent. In this article, the author uses concepts from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to reveal the value positions constructed by 8th grade English language arts (ELA) students in essays produced in a critical literary analysis unit. After reading excerpts from two *Harry Potter* novels, students compared the main characters' views on elvish enslavement as evidenced by the passages. This study uses axiological constellation analysis to explore the language choices in essays that constructed contrasting stances towards Harry's character and the representation of elvish enslavement in the texts. The study contributes to understanding how values are constructed in literary response writing and how these relate to broader sociopolitical discourses, with implications for critical praxis in subject English education.

Key words: *Subject English, English language arts, literary response, student writing, discourse analysis, Legitimation Code Theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics*

Dominant discourses in the southeastern United States tend to rationalize the historical enslavement of African Americans and downplay the lasting injustices that are its legacy. These discourses are visible in local monuments that memorialize enslavers and segregationists from history. For example, the name of the school in which this study takes place is a tribute to a Senator who obstructed national civil rights legislation for decades. As a response to this endemic rationalization of slavery in this context, this case study describes student writing from a curricular unit that introduced students in an 8th grade English Language Arts classroom to concepts from systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as a means for critically analyzing two passages from the *Harry Potter* novel series. The classroom analysis of the texts was based on Simmons' (2012, 2016) model of critical literary analysis, which highlighted the problematic ways that the text normalizes Harry's role in and attitude towards elvish enslavement. The unit sought to help students critique the representation of enslavement in the two *Harry Potter* passages as a means for disrupting dominant discourses around related issues in our social and historical context.

To investigate ways that students negotiated this critical stance towards the representation of enslavement in the literary texts, Doran's (2020) method of axiological constellation analysis was used to analyze the value positions constructed in the student writing. Analyzing the axiological constellations, or networks of value-laden meanings, in the student responses offers insights into the ways students negotiated the critical stance intended by the curricular unit. This analysis functioned as a reflective activity as we engaged in our critical SFL praxis (Harman, 2018; Troyan, Harman, & Zhang, 2020), informing our dialogue with students about how their interpretations of the literary texts situate them within broader sociopolitical discourses around the legacy of slavery and racial discrimination in our society.

Review of the Literature

Scholars using combinations of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Bernsteinian sociology, and Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) have shown how values, attitudes, and moral evaluations (i.e., axiology) underpin what are seen as legitimate literary response practices in standardized assessment practices at the secondary level of school subject English (Christie, 2016; Christie & Dreyfus, 2008; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Macken-Horarik, 2011). Disciplinary knowledge in subject English relies on "a shared set of culturally-valued understandings about life and human behavior" (Christie, 2016, p. 158), which are developed through the guided interpretation of literary texts throughout the years of schooling. From this perspective, success in writing in response to literature requires the development of a "cultivated gaze" (Maton, 2014, p. 99), an implicitly shaped, rather than explicitly trained, means for recognizing and realizing valued dispositions towards an ever-increasing range of texts and ideas. The cultivated gaze in subject English involves enculturation into particular forms of expression and systems of values through the analysis and interpretation of literature that reinforce one's status as a legitimate knower (Christie, 2016; Macken-Horarik, 2006, 2011; Maton, 2014).

Students of subject English learn to recognize and adopt particular dispositions towards literary texts by participating in genres such as character evaluations and thematic interpretations (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). These genres require an understanding of how narrative texts position readers to identify with particular characters and value positions (Macken-Horarik, 2003; Martin, 1996; Rothery & Stenglin, 2000). Successful students recognize and realize these ideal subject positions when interpreting narrative texts, reproducing dominant cultural knowledge and values through normative interpretations of texts (Anson, 2017; Macken-Horarik,

2006; Martin, 1996; Peim, 2009). Christie and Humphrey's (2008) study of writing from high-stakes assessments in Australia, for example, showed that students must not only develop control over language resources that construe symbolic meaning, but their interpretations must also align with dominant cultural values. Likewise, in an examination of response writing on high-stakes assessments in secondary school, Macken-Horarik (2006) found no that evaluators viewed critical analysis as a legitimate form of interpretation, requiring that students adhere to mainstream readings of the texts. While critical analysis is not a valued form of literary response in standardized testing situations, critical literacy pedagogy remains a prominent model of instruction in subject English classrooms (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007).

SFL has a long history in the design of teaching practices intended to cultivate a critical orientation to texts encountered in schools (see Rose & Martin, 2012; Troyan, Harman, & Zhang, 2020). As a form of *praxis*, or "embedding theory within practice" (Maton, 2016, p. 72), SFL has been applied in an many different contexts through teacher education, professional development, and design-based action research projects in a wide variety of subject English contexts (Achugar & Carpenter, 2018; Harman, 2013; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Rothery, 1994; Schleppegrell, 2020). This work has emphasized the important role of teachers in "providing students with an SFL-informed meta language that fosters their understanding of how to read, write and create semiotic texts in normative and resistant ways" (Harman, 2018, p. 11). This means going beyond helping students access privileged discourses to develop their "capacity to critically examine how practices and texts replicate, reinforce and/or redistribute power" (Potts, 2018, p. 203).

From this perspective, this study set out to assess the degree to which the unit was effective in helping students develop a critical disposition towards the issue of enslavement in the texts, and by extension, the issues of historical enslavement and its legacy in this cultural

context. A study of the axiological constellations in the student writing provided a means for understanding the kinds of gazes acquired by the student writers. To this end, the study investigated the following research questions:

1. How did student language choices in the essays construct constellations of value-laden meanings around the issue of elvish enslavement?

2. To what extent did the axiological constellations in the student essays demonstrate the critical orientation toward the text intended by the unit?

Exploring these questions offers a means for understanding how different students recognized and realized the dispositions valued in this classroom situation as a means for reflecting on our teaching and assessment of the unit. Such reflection is important for considering how to address students' value positions in classroom discussions and collaborative writing activities leading up to the independent essay and through verbal and written feedback on student responses. This article specifically focuses on the axiological constellations constructed in two distinct independent essays from the data set that demonstrate the gaze each student adopted in response to the SFL-informed literary analysis unit.

Conceptual Framework

Axiological constellations refer to the ways that positive and negative evaluations in a text are associated with other ideas and entities to build up contrasting value positions around a particular issue (Maton, 2014). The analysis of axiological constellations involves using concepts from LCT and SFL together to reveal the values constructed in classroom discourse (Doran, 2020). Whereas SFL enables descriptions of how the language choices function to achieve particular meanings in classroom texts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), LCT enables descriptions of the underlying principles of highly valued knowledge and knowing in academic

contexts (Maton, 2014). Concepts from each theory are applied in this study to reveal the different constellations of axiological meanings in the student essays and consider the ways these networks of value-laden meanings positioned students in relation to broader cultural issues around historical enslavement and its legacy of injustice in our society.

Legitimation Code Theory

LCT has been used extensively to examine the hidden criteria for success in a range of disciplines and pedagogical situations and using the theory to inform teacher education and professional development (Macnaught, Maton, Martin & Matruglio, 2013; Walton & Rusznyak, 2019; Winberg, Mckenna, & Wilmot, 2020). LCT, often in conjunction with SFL, provides insights into the ways that epistemic meanings underpin 'knowledge-building' and social relations underpin 'knower-building' through instantiations of different underlying socio-semantic principles in a wide range of disciplinary practices (Martin, Maton, & Doran, 2020; Maton, Hood, & Shay, 2016). Becoming the right kind of knower in subject English involves writing successful literary responses (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). This complex disciplinary task requires drawing together various entities and ideas into networks of value-laden meanings, or *axiological constellations* (Maton, 2014) to demonstrate a particular disposition towards the text.

Axiological constellation analysis reveals how value positions are constructed as texts build up charged meanings that are recognizable and valued in particular discourse communities (Doran, 2020; Maton, 2014; Tilakaratna & Szenes, 2020;). This study used axiological constellation analysis to determine the degree to which the students in the text demonstrated a critical stance towards the issue of elvish enslavement in the student writing. Analyzing the axiological constellations in the student texts makes clear how the writers align and disalign

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ideas and entities in their texts in wats that construct value positions in relation to broader sociocultural discourses. The constellations constructed in each essay provide evidence of the degree to which adopted or resisted the cultivated gaze that was the broader goal of the unit.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

SFL offers tools for systematically describing how particular language choices evaluated and connected different ideas and entities in the texts, the linguistic basis for showing how these meanings were built up into more abstract axiological constellations. In order to study the values constructed through language choices in the student texts, this analysis draws on the SFL system of APPRAISAL, which "is concerned with evaluation—the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned" (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 25). This study uses two subsystems of appraisal, Attitude and Engagement, to reveal positively and negatively evaluated meanings in the student texts and the ways these charged meanings are related to other entities and ideas.

Attitude analysis reveals how values are built up over the course of a text through language choices that construe *affect*, *judgment,* and *appreciation* (Martin & White, 2005). Affect concerns meanings related to emotion, judgment to the evaluation of people, and appreciation to the evaluation of things and ideas. Attitude analysis identifies positively and negatively charged ideas and their sources, which form the initial constellations of value-laden meanings. Engagement concerns the ways that different voices and perspectives are brought into a text, such as in direct references, quotes, and citations where the writer uses words attributed to others. Engagement analysis revealed how charged ideas and entities were aligned and disaligned with other, non-evaluated meanings in the texts to form the axiological constellations that construct the value positions in the student writing.

Methods

This qualitative case study (Creswell, 2012) investigated the ways axiological constellations (Doran, 2020) were constructed in five (*N*=5) typed, single-draft essays, ranging between 400 and 1,000 words. The study explored the degree to which students adopted critical dispositions towards ideas and entities associated with enslavement in the literary texts and in the world beyond.

Research Context

The school was located in a working-class town of 17,000 people, in a rural, predominantly White, area of the southeastern United States. The classroom activities took place in a middle school serving approximately 900 students aged 10-14, in grades 6-8. School demographics were reported as 62% White, 15% Latinx, 14% Black, 5% Asian, and 4% multiracial, with 10% of students identified as English Learners (EL). More than half of enrolled students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

Pedagogic Context

At the time of the study, I (the author) was the instructional coach at the school, and I developed and implemented the lessons with Dr. Natalie Miller (a pseudonym), a highly-skilled educator with whom I had worked closely for several years as an 8th grade ELA teacher. The unit was based on Simmons' (2012, 2016) model of SFL-informed critical literacy instruction in subject English. Following the examples in Simmons (2012), our goal was to help students critically analyze the representation of elvish enslavement in the *Harry Potter* novels. These lessons provided an opportunity to see how SFL could facilitate critical literary analysis for students who already demonstrated control over the linguistic resources of the genre. Reflection

on this early iteration of the unit yielded insights that allowed us to be more responsive when implementing the lessons with future classes, a crucial step in our own critical praxis.

The unit began with students viewing *Harry Potter* book covers and movie posters in small groups to build shared knowledge about the characters and plot. Next, we introduced the first passage, from *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2007), depicting a scene in which Harry confronts Kreacher, the enslaved elf Harry inherited, about a locket Harry believes Kreacher has stolen. Working through an identification analysis of this passage based on the example in Simmons (2012), Natalie and I focused the students' attention on the names and other identifiers in the text, which dehumanize Kreacher and position him as inferior to Harry.

Using the examples of attitude analysis in Simmons (2012), we also guided students to identify language that created animalistic descriptions of Kreacher and his living space, which are aligned by the author with Harry's perspective. Natalie then led the class through a jointly-constructed response designed to model the linguistic resources of the genre and cultivate a critical disposition towards the representation of enslavement in the passage.

The second passage, from *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000), depicts Hermione introducing the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, and portrays each characters' attitudes towards abolishing elvish enslavement. In contrast to Hermione's abolitionist stance, Ron sees no problem with slavery, insisting that the elves "like being enslaved," while Harry is ambivalent, "torn between exasperation at Hermione, and amusement at the look on Ron's face" (Rowling, 2002, p. 224-5). Discussion of this passage centered around interpreting Harry's actions as apathetic towards abolition, further aligning him with the practice of enslavement.

Following the whole-class analysis and discussion of the second passage, students were assigned the task of writing a character analysis essay, a genre whose purpose is to evaluate characters based on their words or actions (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014). The prompt read: "Discuss the characters' views on elvish enslavement. Support your ideas with evidence from the text." This prompt led students to compare the characters based on their association with or opposition to elvish enslavement, and provided students an opportunity to critique Harry for his participation in elvish enslavement.

Data Collection and Analysis

I took the lead for the classroom text analysis, while Natalie facilitated the student writing and scored the responses. After the individual student products were written and scored, Natalie selected five student essays that she felt represented various levels of success on the task, which she anonymized and provided to me. Natalie further identified one essay as particularly effective in its demonstration of the critical interpretation of the text intended by the unit (Text 1) and another (Text 2), which not only failed to criticize Harry, but positioned him on the side of abolition. These two texts, shown in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, are used in this paper to illustrate the ways values were constructed in this small set of literary response essays and how these values aligned and disaligned with the critical orientation to the text intended by the unit.

Below, I step through an axiological constellation analysis (Doran, 2020) of a single paragraph from Text 1 (Figure 4.1), a significant excerpt that includes the writer's critical interpretation of Harry's character. The findings from this analysis are then compared with the constellations from the interpretation of Harry's character in Text 2 (Figure 4.2) to illustrate the differences in the value positions constructed by each text.

Figure 4.1

'Harry Paragraph' from Text 1

Finally, the protagonist of The Goblet of Fire, none other than Harry Potter, is torn between the two extreme positions in regards to house elves. He does not want to pick a side because his loyalty to Hermione and Ron. Much like his best friend Ron, he is a pure blood wizard, who cannot sympathize with the discriminated house elves. Reasoning more with Ron than Hermione, Harry does not want slavery to be abolished, as long as they have proper treatment. This is a very problematic point of view because slavery is not in the least bit okay, even with the absence of brutality. Harry seems to be more concerned with saving the wizarding world from Voldemort's revolution, than helping the house elves. There's a lot of weight on Harry's shoulders and house elves aren't a priority. He believes Hermione has unrealistic and impactful expectations for her club, questioning "how do we do all this?" He doesn't think it's possible to liberate all house elves. Throughout the book series, he has had a very complicated and complex opinion on house elves. Harry loathes his house elf, Kreacher, a despicable and repulsive slave, who abandoned Sirius to join Voldemort's evil monstrosity. He doesn't hate all house elves however. After Dobby saved his life, Harry went out of his way to free Dobby from the maltreatment of his owner. Regarding the liberation of house elves, he draws the line at Dobby. Since Harry has experience with this master slave dynamic with house elves, he has a sense of supremacy over the creatures. In American history, slave owners have freed African Americans, without being an abolitionist completely against the idea of slavery. This directly relates with Harry's point of view on emancipating Dobby, but tyrannizing other house elves to an extent. Harry respects and accepts Hermione's passion to protect the welfare of house elves, but he is not willing to contribute to the cause and values friendship more than society.

Figure 4.2

'Harry Paragraph' from Text 2

Harry is a whole different story. Throughout the passage the only thing Harry asks Hermione is how they would fight for the house elves rights with S.P.E.W. We do know however, that Harry freed Dobby (house elf) in earlier books, but also treated Kreacher (house elf) poorly in latter books. Ultimately the textual evidence shows that Harry doesn't care at the moment, because he is getting closer and closer to fighting Voldemort. However after Harry defeats Voldemort, he would most likely free or fight for the rights of house elves just as he did with Dobby.

Doran (2020) summarized his method of axiological constellation analysis in five steps, reproduced below:

1. Analyze all instances of evaluation, for the source, target and charging (positive or negative). [In SFL terms, analyze for attitude. Focus on the appraiser, appraised and polarity (positive or negative).]

2. Group according to the source/appraiser.

3. Analyze the alignment or disalignment of information associated with the sources identified in Steps 1 and 2. [In SFL terms, analyze for engagement, focusing on heteroglossia from sources identified in Steps 1 and 2.]

4. Add to the constellation built in Step 2

5. Repeat across multiple texts, progressively building the constellation as necessary. (pp. 170-171)

The findings from this analysis, which are described in the following section, show how two student writers built up particular value positions in relation to the representation of elvish enslavement in the text, revealing language choices that aligned and disaligned with the intended critical orientation to the text.

Findings

By asking students to discuss each character's views on elvish enslavement, the writing prompt implicitly established two viewpoints on the issue, one *associated with elvish enslavement* and another *opposed to elvish enslavement*. Below, I provide examples of the ways charged words and phrases in the text built up networks of meanings to form axiological constellations. A detailed description of the constellations in the 'Harry paragraph' from a

critical interpretation of the text (Text 1) is contrasted with those in a non-critical essay (Text 2).

Attitude Analysis

Revealing axiological constellations involves first identifying instances in the that convey attitude (Martin & White, 2005). The different types of attitude (affect, judgment, appreciation) are not of concern in this analysis, other than to identify the *source* of the evaluation (appraiser), the *target* of the evaluation (appraised item), and its negative or positive *charge* (polarity), which form the meanings that make up the axiological constellations in the text.

Figure 4.3

Attitudinal Language in 'Harry Paragraph' from High-Achieving Essay (Text 1)

Finally, the protagonist of The Goblet of Fire, none other than Harry Potter, is *torn* between the two extreme positions in regards to house elves. He does not want to pick a side because his loyalty to Hermione and Ron. Much like his best friend Ron, he is a pure blood wizard, who cannot sympathize with the <u>discriminated</u> house elves. Reasoning more with Ron than Hermione, Harry does not want slavery to be abolished, **as long as** they have <u>proper</u> treatment. This is a **very** <u>problematic</u> point of view because slavery is <u>not</u> **in the least bit** <u>okay</u>, **even with** the **absence of** <u>brutality</u>. Harry seems to be more concerned with saving the wizarding world from Voldemort's revolution, than helping the house elves. There's **a lot of** *weight on* Harry's *shoulders* and house elves aren't a priority. He believes Hermione has <u>unrealistic</u> and impactful expectations for her club, questioning "how do we do all this?" He doesn't think it's possible to liberate all house elves. Throughout the book series, he has had a very complicated and complex opinion on house elves. Harry <u>loathes</u> his house elf, Kreacher, a <u>despicable</u> and <u>repulsive</u> slave, who abandoned Sirius to join Voldemort's <u>evil</u> <u>monstrosity</u>. He doesn't <u>hate</u> all house elves however. After Dobby saved his life, Harry went out of his way to free Dobby from the <u>maltreatment</u> of his owner. Regarding the <u>liberation</u> of house elves, he draws the line at Dobby. Since Harry has experience with this master slave dynamic with house elves, he has a sense of supremacy over the creatures. In American history, slave owners have freed African Americans, without being an abolitionist completely against the idea of slavery. This directly relates with Harry's point of view on <u>emancipating</u> Dobby, but <u>tyrannizing</u> other house elves **to an extent**. Harry <u>respects</u> and accepts Hermione's passion to protect the welfare of house elves, but he is not willing to contribute to the cause and <u>values</u> friendship more than society.

Note. Inscribed attitude is shown in <u>underline</u>, flagged in **bold**, and provoked in *italics*.

Identifying the sources of evaluation and their targets involves coding the text for language construing explicit and implicit evaluations through language resources that *inscribe*,

provoke, and *flag* attitude (Doran, 2020; Martin & White, 2005). Inscribed attitudes are based on positive and negative denotative meanings of words and phrases, provoked attitudes are implicitly evoked through imagery or metaphor, and flagged attitudes involve language choices that signal stronger or weaker evaluations. Figure 4.3 reproduces the 'Harry paragraph' from Text 1, but here it is coded to indicate inscribed, provoked, and flagged attitudes.

The student writer inscribes, provokes, and flags attitudes toward Harry in this paragraph to build up negatively and positively charged constellations of meaning. The inscribed attitudes involve language with positively or negatively polarized denotative meanings:

> *Much like his best friend Ron, he is a pure blood wizard, who cannot sympathize with the* <u>*discriminated*</u> *house elves.* (negative)

In this example, the word 'discriminated' describes the house elves as unjustly treated, a patently negative state. Similarly, the word 'proper' in the following statement, signifies something genuine, true, or appropriate, and therefore positively evaluated:

> *Reasoning more with Ron than Hermione, Harry does not want slavery to be abolished,* *as long as they have* <u>*proper*</u> *treatment.* (positive)

Sometimes the student included words or phrases that intensified or sharpened the evaluation. These resources are known as flagged attitudes. The writer uses words and phrases such as 'very' or 'in the least bit' to intensify the negative evaluations in 'problematic' and 'not okay' in the following example:

> *This is a* <u>*very*</u> *problematic point of view because slavery is not* <u>*in the least bit*</u> *okay,* <u>*even*</u> <u>*with*</u> *the* <u>*absence of*</u> *brutality.*

In this instance, the inscribed attitudes are understood as inherently positive or negative, but are flagged to intensify the attitude and strengthen the evaluation. Flagging is used extensively in

Text 1 to intensify negative evaluations of slavery, Harry's character, and to convey the strong negative attitudes Harry demonstrates towards Kreacher.

Provoked attitude is not directly inscribed, but instead requires interpretation of the metaphor or image to recognize its polarity. In the following example, the writer of Text 1 uses a figure of speech to describe Harry's responsibilities for saving the wizarding world from Voldemort:

There's a lot of <u>weight on</u> Harry's <u>shoulders</u> and house elves aren't a priority. (negative)

This statement conveys the negatively-charged feeling of being 'weighed down' with responsibilities. This instance can be seen as aligning Harry with a feeling of responsibility that the writer also views as negative. In effect, this language choice allows the writer to offer a sympathetic view of Harry by acknowledging that Harry also suffers from negative experiences.

The attitude analysis of this paragraph from Text 1 shows the consistent use of negative evaluations to disalign with slavery in general and Harry's point of view in particular. These charged elements, presented in Table 4.1, create an initial network of value-laden ideas and entities in each constellation. While the writer offers evaluations that positively associate Harry with the freeing of Dobby and with friendship, these admirable qualities are clearly overshadowed by the writer's depiction of Harry's antipathy towards Kreacher and apathy towards Hermione's abolitionism. The attitude analysis revealed not only the explicitly charged language in the paragraph, but provided a means for identifying the sources (appraisers) of these attitudes, their targets (appraised items), and their charges (polarity), a step towards building constellations.

Table 4.1

Evaluative Attitude in High-achieving Essay (Text 1)

Appraiser (Source)	Appraised (Target)	Polarity (Charge)
(Student writer)	Harry	−
	(discrimination against) house elves	−
	(Harry's) point of view	−
	slavery	−
	(Harry's responsibilities)	−
	(Voldemort's vision for society)	−
	(Dobby's owner's actions)	−
	Harry's actions towards other house elves	−
	freeing house elves	+
Harry	his house elf	−
	slave	−
	two extreme positions	−
	Hermione's expectations	−
	Harry's freeing of Dobby	+
	Hermione's passion	+
	friendship	+

This attitude analysis provides an initial glimpse into the ways entities and ideas are aligned and disaligned in the texts. The next stage of the constellation analysis concerns the ways these charged meanings are associated with other information in the text to expand these axiological constellations.

Engagement Analysis

The engagement analysis reveals the ways the charged meanings in Table 1.1 aligned and disaligned with other ideas and entities in the paragraph. The engagement analysis draws on Martin and White's (2005) model of heteroglossia, which describes the language choices writers use to attribute ideas and information to particular sources in a text. Doran (2020) discusses six linguistic resources for analyzing the ways that different texts align and disalign different sources

of information, including positive and negative attitudes (discussed above), projection, disclaim, distance, and proclaim.

Projections refer to instances in the text where a voice other than the student writer's was directly cited as the source of information. This resource aligns the source with the projected information, or proposition, and gives it a positive charge within that constellation. One key feature of Text 1 and other more highly rated essays, was the choice of mental processes (e.g., *thinks*, *assumes*, *believes*) as a means for attributing particular ideas to Harry:

> *He <u>believes</u> Hermione has unrealistic and impactful expectations for her club,*
>
> *<u>questioning</u> "how do we do all this?"*

In this first instance, the student writer attributes a belief to Harry, directly aligning him with an idea that demonstrates his lack of faith in Hermione's expectations. The projection of this idea onto Harry's mindset indicates that from Harry's perspective this idea is positively charged. The choice of 'questioning' is an example of the writer attributing a particular question to the character, although this verb also indicates distance between the speaker and statement.

Distance (Doran, 2020), allows the writer to "disalign from the proposition and its source" (Doran, 2020, p. 164). For example, the example discussed above indicates Harry as the source of the quoted statement, but the choice of the verb 'questioning' also distances him from the literal meaning of his statement. Here, the writer uses the ambiguous quote as evidence of Harry's belief that the club's aims are 'unrealistic.' This can be contrasted with the analysis of the same line in the text from another student essay (Text 2), which states:

> Throughout the passage the <u>only</u> thing Harry asks Hermione is how they would fight for
>
> the house elves rights with S.P.E.W."

This statement creates distance between the writer and Harry when conceding that this is the

'only' thing Harry asks. The wording of this statement does not distance Harry from the literal meaning of the statement, however, and actually aligns him with the positively charged idea of asking how to fight for house elves' rights.

Heteroglossic proclaim refers to statements that align a source with a particular idea through statements that justify or elaborate on these relations. In Text 1, this appeared through conjunctions that established causal connections between different ideas and their sources (e.g., *because, therefore, so*):

> *He does not want to pick a side <u>because</u> his loyalty to Hermione and Ron.*

> *This is a very problematic point of view <u>because</u> slavery is not in the least bit okay, even with the absence of brutality.*

> *<u>Since</u> Harry has experience with this master slave dynamic with house elves, he has a sense of supremacy over the creatures.*

Such statements reinforced the relationship between the source and the idea, creating a positively charged bond between the two, while transferring this charge through alignment with additional information. Such instances were common throughout the data set, as all students established a sense of causality to justify their interpretations of each character.

Heteroglossic disclaim refers to instances that signal opposition between a source and an idea through negation (e.g. does *not*, are *not*) and counter-expectancy conjunctions (e.g., *however, but, on the other hand)*. In the following statement, the writer uses negation to disalign Harry with the idea that it is possible to liberate all house elves:

> *He does<u>n't</u> think it's possible to liberate all house elves.*

Because ideas associated with abolition were understood as positively charged in this pedagogic context and those associated with enslavement were negatively charged, this statement disaligns

Harry with what is understood as a positive idea, situating him in the negatively-charged

constellation associated with, rather than opposed to, elvish enslavement.

In another instance the writer first presents a negative picture of Kreacher from Harry's

perspective but uses a counter-expectancy conjunction to qualify and weaken the evaluation:

> *Harry loathes his house elf, Kreacher, a despicable and repulsive slave, who abandoned*
>
> *Sirius to join Voldemort's evil monstrosity. He doesn't hate all house elves however.*

In this example, the writer uses the word 'however' to add nuance to Harry's depiction, building

up a complex network of values around his character while taking a firm stance against anything

associated with enslavement.

Table 4.2

List of Charged Elements in 'Harry paragraph' (Text 1)

Source	Target	Charge
(Student writer)	slavery	−
Harry	picking a side	−
	loyalty to Hermione and Ron	+
	Ron	+
	sympathizing with the elves	−
	abolishing slavery	−
	helping the house elves	−
	house elves being a priority	−
	Hermione's expectations for her club	−
	"How do we do all this?"	+
	thinking it's possible to liberate all house elves	−
	hating all house elves	−
	having a sense of supremacy over the creatures	+
	tyrannizing other house elves	+
	Hermione's passion	+
	being willing to contribute to the cause	−
	friendship	+
	society	−
Slave owners	being an abolitionist completely against slavery	−

Identifying instances of heteroglossic engagement reveals the ideas and entities that are

aligned and disaligned with the charged items in the text. Table 4.2 presents the results of the

engagement analysis, providing additional sources and charged information that can now be combined with the information in Table 4.1 to reveal the complete axiological constellations in the paragraph.

Building Constellations

For a complete picture of the axiological constellations in the text, the methods described above were applied to the other paragraphs in each essay, which added information related to Hermione, Ron, and a range of other entities and ideas that made for more elaborate constellations. But the 'Harry paragraph' from Text 1 exemplifies the critical orientation towards elvish enslavement and Harry that was valued in this writing task. Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 present the axiological constellations in the 'Harry paragraph' from Text 1. The constellations represent opposing value positions, built up through charged information. Within these constellations, information was either aligned or disaligned with the value position, as represented by the columns of charged sources, ideas, and entities within each table.

Text 1 demonstrated the cultivated gaze through the sophisticated analysis of Harry's character that acknowledged his positive attributes while clearly offering an overall negative evaluation of his views on elvish enslavement. In the small set of texts analyzed here, the student writers all situated themselves within the constellation *opposed to* elvish enslavement, but a distinguishing feature of Text 1 was that it built up information related to Harry within the constellation *associated with* elvish enslavement (Table 4.4), which thoroughly addressed the character's "very problematic point of view" (Text 1) on elvish enslavement and demonstrates the gaze intended to be cultivated in the unit.

Table 4.3

Constellation Opposed to Elvish Enslavement in 'Harry Paragraph' (Text 1)

Aligning with (positively charged)		Disaligning with (negatively charged)	
Sources	*Ideas/Entities*	*Sources*	*Ideas/Entities*
(Student writer) American history	house elves (the fact that) slave owners freed African Americans without being on the side of abolition	Harry Ron Slave owners	Harry discrimination against house elves Harry's point of view Harry's responsibilities Voldemort's revolution Dobby's owner's actions Harry's actions towards Kreacher slavery Harry's actions towards other elves

Table 4.4

Constellation Associated with Elvish Enslavement in 'Harry Paragraph' (Text 1)

Aligning with (positively charged)		Disaligning with (negatively charged)	
Sources	*Ideas/Entities*	*Sources*	*Ideas/Entities*
Harry Slave owners purebloods	Hermione's passion friendship Ron loyalty to friends being ranked higher in society having experience with a master slave dynamic having a sense of supremacy over the creatures questioning "How do we do all this?" emancipating Dobby tyrannizing other house elves drawing the line at Dobby	Hermione	Hermione's expectations his house elf Kreacher sympathizing with the elves thinking it is possible to liberate all house elves hating all house elves Hermione's expectations picking a side being willing to contribute to the cause Voldemort's revolution society

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The constellations in Text 1 clearly contrast with those in Text 2, which are presented in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6. These constellations construct a relatively positive evaluation of Harry's character. In the majority of Text 2, the writer builds up positively charged information associated with Hermione and abolition and negatively charged information related to Ron and slavery, creating constellations that are similar to those in Text 1. When it came to Harry, however, Text 2 offers a view that rationalizes his role in elvish enslavement.

The interpretation in Text 2 does not constitute a critical reading because it positions Harry within the constellation opposed to elvish enslavement and not within the constellation aligned with elvish enslavement. This positioning was evident in the three essays in the data set that offered weak negative evaluations of Harry's character or none at all, which included downplaying or simply not mentioning Harry's negative associations with the issue while focusing on his freeing Dobby and opposing Voldemort. The constellations in the 'Harry paragraph' from Text 2, therefore demonstrate an overall alignment with and positive evaluation of Harry's character, despite disaligning with Harry's treatment of Kreacher.

While Text 1 aligns Harry with some positively evaluated information, this is situated within a much stronger network of negatively charged meanings, positioning Harry on the side of elvish enslavement, which is clearly distinguished as the wrong side of the issue. Text 2 takes an inverse position. Although the writer concedes that Harry treated Kreacher "poorly," and "ultimately, the textual evidence shows that Harry doesn't care at the moment," the text ultimately casts a sweeping positive judgment over Harry's character by proclaiming that after defeating Voldemort, Harry "would most likely free or fight for the house elves just as he did with Dobby." Such a statement reinforces the dominant perspective around historical issues of

enslavement by subsuming Harry's identity as an enslaver into an uncritical portrayal of an embattled, but unassailable hero.

Table 4.5

Constellation Opposed to Elvish Enslavement in 'Harry Paragraph' (Text 2)

Aligning with (positively charged)		Disaligning with (negatively charged)	
Sources	*Ideas/Entities*	*Sources*	*Ideas/Entities*
(Student writer) Harry	freeing or fighting for the rights of house elves after defeating Voldemort asking how they would fight for the rights of house elves getting closer and closer to fighting Voldemort	-	Harry's treatment of Kreacher

Table 4.6

Constellation Associated with Elvish Enslavement in 'Harry Paragraph' (Text 2)

Aligning with (positively charged)		Disaligning with (negatively charged)	
Sources	*Terms/Ideas*	*Sources*	*Terms/Ideas*
the textual evidence	Harry	-	caring at the moment

The writer of Text 1 aligned with the house elves, Hermione, and abolition while opposing Ron, Harry, and elvish enslavement. Text 2 acknowledged the problems with Ron's views but still aligned with Harry, whom the writer situated alongside Hermione on the positively charged side of the constellation. In their extended essays, the writers of Text 1 and

Text 2 reinforced these stances towards the characters and issues as they built up more elaborate constellations.

Discussion and Conclusions

SFL-informed praxis in teacher education involves gaining experience with SFL, applying the theory in disciplinary literacy lessons, and reflecting on and investigating student learning (Achugar & Carpenter, 2018). Because a distinguishing disciplinary practice in ELA classrooms is literary response writing, and this requires demonstrating particular dispositions towards entities and ideas represented in literary texts, investigating student learning requires concepts and methods for analyzing the value positions constructed in written responses to literature. While much SFL-informed research has described the linguistic and semantic features of literary response writing, which are underpinned by particular culturally-valued dispositions (Anson, 2017; Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Christie & Humphrey; Macken-Horarik, 2006; Rothery, 1994; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Simmons, 2018), this is the first study to use axiological constellation analysis of student texts as a means for investigating student learning in an SFL-informed critical literary analysis unit.

Studying the axiological constellations in these literary response essays offered a way to see how students adopted and resisted critical orientations to the literary texts as a result of our SFL-informed pedagogy. The analysis showed how the language choices in two distinct essays constructed contrasting value positions related to Harry Potter and his role in elvish enslavement. One essay took a critical stance towards ideas and entities associated with enslavement as depicted in the literary texts while the other did not, showing that not all students acquired the cultivated gaze that was the goal of the unit. The fact that students may fail to achieve or actively resist the dispositions cultivated through critical literary analysis presents teachers with the

problem of responding to oppositional value positions in the student writing. In the case of this classroom unit, for example, Natalie assigned an A or B to all the essays in the data set. This feedback in response to non-critical analyses of Harry's character, such as that in Text 2, validated the normative gaze demonstrated by the student and the reinforced the dominant discourses that the unit was designed to disrupt.

This underscores the problem for teacher education programs concerning how to develop "culturally competent and socio-politically aware pre-service and in-service practitioners" (Thomas, 2013, p. 329). Teachers need to effectively negotiate social solidarities through the mediation of diverse perspectives in classroom settings, even though doing so does not mean always validating all perspectives (Thomas, 2013). Being able to recognize axiological constellations in their students' work can help teachers be responsive to the value positions constructed in the students' interpretations while offering a way to understand and explain how these relate to broader cultural discourses around social issues, a crucial step towards a dialogical critical literary analysis pedagogy.

Literary response writing fundamentally involves staking out value positions in relation to representations of entities, ideas, and social issues in literary texts, and axiological constellation analysis reveals the ways charged meanings are aligned and disaligned to construct value positions within student responses. Such a perspective is essential for teachers who intend to help students develop critical literacies as it enables systematic reflection on the ways that the design, implementation, and assessment of the writing task reinforces and challenges dominant discourses in the particular pedagogic situation and broader cultural context. Incorporating axiological constellation analysis into SFL-informed teacher education could help more teachers develop greater awareness of the ways that classroom talk around texts in their classes, including

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their feedback and evaluation of student writing, reinforces and challenges particular value positions.

To conclude, SFL-informed approaches to educational linguistics have always been concerned with critical analysis (Matthiessen, 2012), and while this study reinforces this fundamental pedagogic aim, it also suggests that the outcomes of critical praxis cannot be taken for granted. Critical SFL-informed praxis in subject English requires a way of systematically analyzing the degree to which student interpretations take a critical stance towards of the texts, which can be accomplished by describing the axiological constellations in student writing.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: LANGUAGE, KNOWLEDGE, VALUES, AND CRITICAL PRAXIS IN

SUBJECT ENGLISH

After four years as a doctoral student in language and literacy education, I entered fall semester 2019 as an 8th grade English language arts (ELA) teacher with new tools for helping students analyze and interpret literary texts and for seeing the values constructed as a result of this pedagogy. I would now have the chance to try on a daily basis the techniques I had been advocating in several years of professional development while experiencing the benefits and challenges that go along with the daily grind of teaching. Having immersed myself in the theories and methods in this study and carrying out the analyses reported on in earlier chapters, I felt that I was better equipped to clearly communicate with my students about the language features they needed to use in their writing and the kinds of dispositions that I valued when it came to interpreting the literary texts. I was able to articulate that these were the "rules of the game" (Maton, 2014, p. 11) in literary response writing, with the theory that making these criteria more visible would facilitate dialogue with students regarding how different language choices construed particular values and aligned with other entities and ideas.

The unit under study was one of the first times that I attempted to use SFL in an ELA classroom context. I was new to the theory, and Natalie and I were hopeful that the systematic functional analysis of the language in the texts could help the students in her class identify and critique the problematic representations of an unjustifiable social practice that continues to be normalized in literature and other cultural discourses. This study is part of an on-going critical reflection on that praxis. While the study offers a narrow view of a few essays on a single classroom writing task, the findings have implications for teachers and teacher educators who are interested in critical literacy. The analyses of student writing in the study take a hard look at the knowledge and values that were actually reproduced in the unit as a means for a more visible and

dialogical critical pedagogy that remains committed to negotiating shared critical dispositions toward literary texts through culturally relevant and responsive discourse (Thomas, 2013).

Throughout the journey of critical praxis that was this study, I have reflected on how the classroom talk and writing brought in a vast network of meanings whose overlaps and disconnects created strikingly different value positions in the student's writing. Such reflection has not only impacted my practice as an instructional coach and teacher, but the ability to empirically study such phenomena through linguistic analysis has significant implications for critical praxis in subject English education. Critical praxis inherently involves taking a position of opposition to an identifiable dominant discourse, institution, or ideology, and helping students see how texts position them to align with culturally significant value positions is an essential part of using literary analysis to help students develop critical literacies (Martin, 1996; Macken-Horarik, 2006).

While this study also sought to support students' development of disciplinary literacy (Fang, 2012; Graham, Kirkhoff, & Spires, 2017; Moje, 2007, 2011, 2015; Rainey & Moje, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2015), the study was specifically concerned with students' development of critical literacy practices, as demonstrated through the dispositions realized in their written interpretations of the *Harry Potter* texts' representation of enslavement in the wizarding world of the novels. Critical literacy requires being able to identify the ways that such discourse reinforces social injustices and inequalities and being able to offer alternatives that can actually affect material realities. This study offers a means for critical reflection on student development of critical literacies based on the values and dispositions realized in their written responses to the passages and our SFL-informed critical analysis of them.

As noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, research informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), Code Theory (Bernstein, 2000), and Legitimation Code Theory (Maton, 2014) has distinguished between the language practices valued in different pedagogic situations and text genres in different academic disciplines and school subjects. These studies have provided a metalanguage and methods of analysis for conceptualizing the distinct practices that are deemed successful in classrooms and national standardized assessments, contributing to a relatively consistent depiction of disciplinary knowledge and approaches to literary analysis valued by experts in the field (Goldman, et al., 2016; Lee & Goldman, 2015; Rainey, 2017; Rainey & Moje, 2012; Reynolds & Rush, 2017;).

Studies investigating curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in subject English have shown that the subject tends to reproduce dominant social norms, values, and language practices (Anson, 2016, 2017; Clark, 2005; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Collin, 2014; Macken-Horarik, 2006; Peim, 2009; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). For reasons that are sociological as well as pedagogical, access to genres does not guarantee equitable outcomes for students, particularly minoritized learners, and SFL-informed pedagogy has been criticized for reinforcing dominant discursive practices and raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores, & Rosa, 2015; Luke, 1996). This study addresses similar questions concerning SFL-informed praxis, specifically the degree to which critical outcomes are actually achieved in classroom situations. The study offers a means for helping practitioners reflect on the discourses that are actually reproduced in student talk and writing around literary texts (Thomas, 2013).

Critical literacy pedagogy has long been offered as one approach for helping students disrupt discourses that perpetuate social inequalities (Macken-Horarik, 2014), and many studies have demonstrated how SFL can be used to support critical dispositions towards texts in

classroom settings and beyond (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Martin, 1996; Martin & Rose, 2008; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012; Simmons, 2016). Such studies have shown that a consistent feature of responses deemed 'acceptable' in high stakes examinations and classroom settings is a general axiological orientation to the texts exemplified through specific identifiable language choices. As students are taught and learn to evaluate the characters, events, and themes in literary texts through the language choices of the author, they construct particular value positions in relation to meanings that extend beyond the classroom setting and analysis of the literary texts. The ideal knower position in this genre requires control over normative grammatical conventions to express mainstream readings of value positions in the texts to achieve a valued interpretation of the text's literary devices and language features (Macken-Horarik, 2006).

This research has led to many insights into subject English education and critical SFL-praxis in particular, but few studies have looked at the ways the value positions that underpin teaching and learning are constructed in student interpretations of literary texts. No studies have combined the particular LCT and SFL concepts used in the analysis of autonomy pathways and axiological constellations reported on here. The narrow focus on a central disciplinary practice in subject English as demonstrated in a small sample of student texts allowed for a thorough analysis of the ways the dispositions reinforced in the classroom unit related to broader notions and instantiations of critical literacy in subject English. This was a crucial step in my own critical praxis, as it allowed me to understand how my own role in the curriculum unit could, based on my negotiation of the discourses that intersected between text, context, and the individual understandings of the student, reinforce positions that aligned with dominant discourses or follow through with the critical pedagogy project of disrupting these cultural reproductions and

offering another way forward.

This study investigated student writing in an SFL-informed critical literary analysis unit as a means for determining the degree to which students adopted the critical disposition towards the representation of elvish enslavement in *Harry Potter*, and by extension, towards the dominant discourses in this particular context concerning historical enslavement in the United States. The study has served as an investigation of how students used language to adopt particular value positions in their writing that were valued as demonstrations of the kind of gaze towards the issues in the text intended by the unit. The findings of the study have implications for critical praxis and teacher education in subject English. The study models a form of systematic reflection on the kinds of knowledge and values that were reproduced and legitimated in the design, implementation, and assessment of the literary response writing in the unit under study, a crucial part of investigating student learning as a means for reflective praxis.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss the contributions this dissertation makes to SFL and code theory approaches to critical praxis in subject English discussed in Chapters 2 through 4. Second, I describe the implications this study provides for teachers and teacher educators whose goal is to help their students cultivate a critical gaze towards literary texts and the teaching and learning of literary response writing. Finally, I make an argument for LCT and SFL as complementary conceptual frameworks for informing critical praxis in subject English instruction as a means for helping students develop disciplinary literacies that can be used to construct critical interpretations of literary texts and the social issues represented therein.

Teaching Critical Literary Response: Mediating Text, Context, and Values

The findings from Chapters 2 through 4 have demonstrated the contributions of SFL and code theory research as a means for understanding disciplinary literacy in subject English. The

findings of the literature review in Chapter 2 focused on the basis of subject English pedagogy in social relations that tend to reproduce normative values and dispositions through literary response writing. These dispositions are a central part of disciplinary literacy and it is the way that they are positioned in relation to broader cultural discourses that determines the degree to which a particular instantiation of meaning demonstrates criticality. The analysis of the axiological constellations and autonomy pathways in the student writing in Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated how concepts from LCT and SFL can be used to analyze the ways that particular knowledge and values come together in student writing. This analysis showed how different student responses constructed different value positions and evaluated the degree to which these constituted critical orientations to the text and related cultural context that was the goal of the praxis.

Because subject English tends to reproduce normative values and dispositions towards literary texts and the social issues they represent, there is a need for concepts and methods that can inform the practices of teachers and students as they analyze characters and interpret literary themes through written response. The literature review in Chapter 2 established that literary response, the central disciplinary practice in subject English, involves the construction of value positions to culturally significant texts and ideas, and determining the degree to which pedagogy achieves critical outcomes is clearly an important part of reflection through critical praxis. A crucial question in reflecting on critical praxis relates to which dispositions are valued and legitimated in particular pedagogic situations and how teachers can mediate a range of discourses in diverse classrooms in ways that remain culturally relevant and responsive (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1996; Thomas, 2013). This realization requires that teachers and teacher

educators grapple with what kinds of values and dispositions they want to cultivate and how they intend to respond to those that do not align with these perspectives.

Such an approach to pedagogic praxis acknowledges the teacher's inescapable authority in determining legitimate knowledge and values (Christie, 2004) based on the inherently hierarchical, though optimally dialogical, relationship between teacher and learner. This perspective acknowledges the teacher's significant responsibility for the values that are validated as acceptable positions with regard to culturally significant social issues. The teacher's implicit and explicit evaluations of student discourse also regulate the range of acceptable value positions within the pedagogic context (Christie, 1999/2005). No matter where a teacher or student is on their journey towards critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002), it is important to be able to identify the ways that pedagogic discourse reinforces and reproduces particular value positions in relation to broader sociocultural discourses. While we live in a world of social constructions, these "phenomena and interactions" that make up social life "are substantive and material, real, and consequential" (Luke, 2018, p. 349). This realization places further emphasis on the teacher's role in helping students develop awareness of how their orientations to different value positions represented in literary texts position themselves and others in relation to broader cultural discourses. Language choices have effects on the world, and critical text analysis allows students and teachers alike to learn to analyze how the structural and semantic features of certain texts produce "consequences in material and social contexts," particularly recognizing how these consequences contribute to social inequality (Luke, 2018, p. 350).

This study shows how tools for critical text analysis can also be used to reflexively analyze the products of teaching practices. Luke (2018) notes that critical text analysis as a pedagogic tool can assist in "unpacking the relationship between discourse representation and

reality" (p. 359). The relationship between the value positions demonstrated by students towards the *Harry Potter* passages and the social realities they represent was described in this study in terms of autonomy pathways and axiological constellations in student writing.

The study has allowed me to consider the critical nature of the unit as implemented in this cultural context. The continued oppression, discrimination, and violence in our contemporary culture is perpetuated by discursive moves that downplay racial injustice and promote values that project a kind of willful ignorance and presumed innocence. Some student responses demonstrated similar discursive moves when judging Harry's character based on his role perpetuating a practice that they unanimously agreed was wrong in class discussions. This suggests that while we may have been successful in helping students see how the depictions of enslavement in the texts went against a shared moral principle, not all students followed through with demonstrating such a disposition in their individual writing.

Critical orientations in pedagogic situations can be manifested in different ways. The intended disposition was not critical in the sense of challenging the hierarchical teacher-student dynamic in classroom pedagogy. Instead, the unit was intended to develop critical literacies that disrupt status quo discourses in the broader culture that normalize and downplay the practices of slavery, discrimination, and political and economic disenfranchisement, and violence have been an unjustifiable part of this country's past and present. Natalie and I felt that in our particular cultural context critical practice could not be achieved if we were not willing to take a position that was transparently against the normalization of bigotry and discrimination and the social problems associated with these that continue to plague our society.

This study was carried out in a cultural context where the ideology of White supremacy is not only structural, systemic, and implicit, but also blatant and overt in the form of monuments to

enslavers and segregationists. This includes the school in which the study was carried out, named after a staunch segregationist US Senator who advocated against civil rights and was re-elected for nearly four decades. This is a context I know well, since I was born and raised and now live not far from where the study was carried out, just as my grandparents and many of their grandparents lived their lives in this place. While Natalie was originally from a smaller town a few hours away, she was also familiar with the discourse around enslavement and civil rights in the White community in this part of the rural southeastern United States. The goal of the unit was to disrupt what Natalie and I understood as the common rationalizations for historical injustices such as slavery that continue to perpetuate social inequalities today. Our approach was an SFL-informed analysis of the texts that created dialogue around what remains a controversial issue in our community, attempting to challenge dominant discourses around these issues through an analysis of the literary texts.

Simmons' (2016) model of critical literacy involves scaffolding SFL concepts along with an increasingly critical relationship to culturally significant texts. Natalie and I built upon the historical connections made in the analysis of the *Harry Potter* passages in subsequent units, including immediately designing a unit that more clearly connected the depiction of Harry Potter in the novels to a relevant historical figure. In this unit, students analyzed texts about Thomas Jefferson to see how his major role in the institution of slavery in the United States was represented in different online sources including the Smithsonian and his Monticello plantation museum website.

To illustrate the critical nature of these units in this cultural context, not long after the implementation of these units, a parent approached Natalie complaining that they had to spend a considerable amount of time restoring Jefferson's reputation and emphasizing his positive

contributions to our society after the units had presented such a harsh judgment of his character. The position taken by the parent is similar to that taken by several student essays in the data set, which downplayed and rationalized the negative aspects of Harry's character while playing up his heroic qualities and deeds. This perspective is endemic to the cultural context in which this study was carried out, and a significant contributor to the racial injustices that continue to be explained away in our society, and this explains the need for pedagogic practices that can help students develop critical literacies.

Constructing a non-critical reading of the text as a result of this unit required avoiding the most relevant evidence of each character's attitudes towards enslavement in the passages, which suggests a resistance towards those understandings developed in the classroom discussion and co-constructed writing. Students who avoided a critical interpretation of Harry's character tended to draw in other information from the novels to justify Harry's representation in the text as an enslaver and someone who is apathetic to the liberation of the enslaved elves. Writers who took up the intended critical disposition towards the issue of enslavement as represented in the text, and of Harry's and Ron's characters and their attitudes and actions in particular, tended to draw upon information from beyond the prompt to make connections to enslavement and its legacy in our cultural context.

When faced with such a result, teachers are presented with the problem of how to counter this cultivated disposition towards a clearly immoral practice and those who perpetuate it. This study suggests that the tools for critical discourse analysis offered by SFL can facilitate critical analysis of literary texts, and that such analysis can shape the dispositions students take towards culturally relevant themes and ideas represented within them. But this study reinforces literature arguing that the facilitation of disciplinary literacy practices in subject English do not simply

reinforce normative language practices and dominant values positions but develops consensus

understandings that promote social justice (Thomas, 2013). The findings of this study have led

me to engage in more culturally relevant and responsive dialogue with my students regarding the

range of possible value positions that can be taken in this literary response task. The analysis has

allowed me to help my students better understand the implications of their interpretations as

related to material realities and the discourses that shape them (Luke, 2018).

LCT and SFL as Tools for Critical Praxis

This study has contributed to a body of research that has sought to understand and affect

social change through critical praxis based on theories of language, knowledge, and pedagogy

that have been applied in a wide variety of contexts to distinguish between the "rules of the

game" (Maton, 2014, p. 11) in particular educational settings. For many years, scholars using

SFL, Bernsteinian sociology, and LCT have studied the underlying principles of subject English

pedagogy and the language choices in successful literary response writing (Anson, 2017;

Christie, 2016; Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2011; Macken-Horarik, 2006; Rothery, 1994), this

study showed how LCT and SFL can be used as complementary analytic frameworks for

analyzing student writing. Investigating student learning is an important part of critical praxis

(Achugar and Carpenter, 2018), and the conceptual tools offered in these theories are effective in

determining the ways knowledge and values in student texts come together to construct

particular stances towards representations of social issues in literary texts and the sociocultural

discourses to which these relate.

The analyses presented in this collection of papers offered an opportunity to reflexively

analyze student writing produced in what was designed as a critical literacy analysis unit in an

8th grade ELA classroom. Based on the work of Simmons (2012, 2016), the goal was to use

concepts with SFL to cultivate a critical disposition towards the representation of slavery in the text and towards the texts. This analysis was designed to analyze the results of the pedagogy through a discourse analysis of the student products. Concepts from LCT and SFL were combined to provide a multifaceted view of the ways students brought in information from different sources to construct particular value positions in their interpretations. The result is a theoretical and methodological model that can contribute to reflective practice.

Participating in the teaching of this unit and the analysis of the small set of texts in this data set allowed me to experience a cycle of critical praxis in which the theories used to design the classroom activities and analyze the student products continuously inform the redesign of the lessons based on my dialogical interactions with the students in each class. The insights gleaned from the study have helped me be more transparent about the goals of the unit in order to more dialogically invite students to question aspects of Harry's character in ways that can help them question the character of others from beyond the literature.

Over the course of this study, I moved between the roles of instructional coach and classroom teacher in my personal practice, while analyzing data while re-teaching the unit in many classrooms with many teachers, and most recently teaching it back in my own classroom. Being immersed in this context while analyzing the data from various perspectives influenced the way I worked with students and teachers to construct interpretations of the characters and representations of social issues in the texts. As I have developed my own gaze towards literary texts and student responses, through my reflexive engagement with SFL and LCT as tools for critical praxis, I have become more adept at facilitating student awareness of how the language choices in their own texts align them with broader discourses in our cultural context.

This study owes a tremendous amount to Dr. Amber Simmons, whose work Natalie and I attempted to emulate as an entry-point into SFL-informed pedagogy. The critical analysis of *Harry Potter* that Dr. Simmons conducted with Advanced Placement high school students in a similar cultural context (Simmons, 2012, 2016) became such a compelling pedagogic project because the analysis so clearly connected challenged status quo discourses that rationalize historical enslavement and contemporary discrimination in our cultural context. In both the literary texts and the cultural context beyond, the practice of enslavement is normalized by presenting the issue as if there are two sides that can be morally justified. This critical literary analysis unit was designed to show students how to see the artifice of this normalization in the texts so that they could better recognize it in our broader society.

This limited case study has demonstrated the usefulness of using LCT and SFL to analyze the underlying principles of successful literary response writing. Axiological constellation analysis can reveal how attitudes are condensed around particular ideas and their sources in texts to construct particular value positions (Doran, 2020). Autonomy is useful for systematically analyzing how writers bring ideas and entities into the texts to see how closely successful students adhere to the stated boundaries of the prompt and relate to the core content and targeted purpose of the task (Maton & Howard, 2018). Because subject English is based on context-dependent social relations and a relatively weakly-defined knowledge-base, the criteria for success are often vaguely identified and the instruction more implicit than in other school subjects. The complementary lenses used in this study allow teachers to better assess whether what was intended to be taught and learned was realized in the student products. This is a crucial step in critical praxis if teachers intend to dialogically respond to students through written and verbal feedback that reinforce critical dispositions.

Implications for Teachers and Teacher Educators

A major contribution of SFL research has been to illuminate the language choices used in different school genres as a means for helping students develop control over and a critical orientation to the genres in which they are reading and writing. Part of this research has involved systematic description of the lexicogrammatical patterns and genre staging (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Derewianka & Jones, 2012; Humphrey, 2017; Rose & Martin, 2012) as well as semantic waves (Christie, 2016), each of which allows for clearer descriptions of the grammatical and semantic features of texts in the genre. Other studies in this tradition have established the underlying principle of success in this subject over the years of schooling as a particular set of dispositions realized through these particular language patterns (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Christie & Humphrey, 2008; Macken-Horarik, 2011; Maton, 2014).

This study suggests that using SFL to analyze literary texts can facilitate critical interpretations of the text by allowing for shared understandings of the ways values and ideational meanings are realized in narrative writing. The SFL concepts offered to the students provided a systematic means for recognizing the ways that language choices evaluate particular entities and ideas in literary texts. The student texts were analyzed using other concepts from SFL and from LCT to reveal the ways the students positioned themselves in relation to ideas from within and beyond the prompt and source texts. But the analysis shows the broad range of positions students took on the issue, sometimes completely ignoring the findings of the analysis and reinforcing dominant discourses that downplay the historical and lasting injustice of slavery and discrimination in our society.

The conceptual tools and analytic methods in this study offer a means of identifying the language choices students used to construct critical readings of the texts so that these may be

more intentionally taught, but clearly there is more to helping students develop critical literacies in this genre than exposing them to SFL concepts. Despite rich conversations around the texts and jointly-constructed writing that models the intended disposition toward the texts, students consistently adopt a value position that reinforces dominant attitudes towards social issues like that of historical enslavement and its legacy.

The subject English gaze is cultivated over many years and through repeated interactions with a wide range of texts, and repeated critical analysis of literary texts may be necessary to shift student dispositions. An essential aspect of this pedagogy is dialogue, and the methods and theories offered here enable dialogue between teachers and students at all levels of schooling by illuminating the linguistic and semiotic success in this genre of writing. Attention to the types of knowledge students bring into the texts and the ways that these are aligned and disaligned to construct particular value positions can inform big picture pedagogic design questions related to the targeted content and purpose of classroom activities as well as specific interactions with students in classroom settings. The result is a multifaceted way of seeing the knowledge and values actually constructed through classroom discourse and how these relate to broader cultural discourses, a cultivated gaze of its own.

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Figure A.1

Critical Literary Analysis Essay from the Data Set (Text 1)

> One of the most stable and dependable things in our lives is our morals. We make most of our choices based around these ideas that we, as individuals, have determined to be right or wrong. In the wizarding world of the Harry Potter book series, there is an ongoing debate concerning the injustice and exploitation against the house elves. The protagonists are pulled into different directions with each of their varying opinions. Contemplating the different perspectives on the topic, Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger are forced to question their morals, ethics, and philosophical views regarding the status quo.
>
> In the excerpt of Goblet of Fire, Hermione is an advocate for securing house elves with fair wages, working conditions, and legal status with equal representation. Because Hermione is a muggleborn wizard, with two non-magical parents, she is able to sympathize and relate with the elves. In the magical world J.K. Rowling has created, Hermione is discriminated against for being a mudblood. Therefore, Hermione is passionate for the equality of all magical beings. She is even shocked by the lack of representation of house elves legal status, claiming, "I can't believe no one's done anything" about it before now." The author could have just as easily chosen one of the male characters to overcome these prejudicial judgments, however J.K. Rowling selected Hermione in particular. The author is known for conquering stereotypes in her male dominated career field, so it is logical she appointed the female protagonist to take a stand for righteousness and tolerance. Hermione resembles abolitionists in American history, who started a movement to extinguish enslavement of African Americans. She is willing to sacrifice everything she has worked diligently to achieve, to ensure a fair treatment for the "shockingly unrepresented" house elves. Because of the struggle she is faced in the past, Hermione is determined to establish a metaphorical platform for the house elves to express their opinions to other magical creatures.
>
> On the other hand, Ron Weasley has an opposing opinion on the house elves, emphasizing the claim "they like being enslaved." Ron is a pure blood, who has many privileges Hermione does not. Being raised in the wizard world, he has never questioned or challenged the utilization of house elves. He is a strong promoter of the status quo, assuming if it has always been this way, it shouldn't change. Claiming he has "never heard of it," Ron thinks the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare is a waste of time and doomed to fail. In his eyes, the club is a joke with no members, ignorant badges, and an unsuccessful leader. Ron is considered to be ranked higher in society and does not have the same compassion Hermione has for the house elves. He has never been in either of their situations, so Ron couldn't care less about the fate of the house elves. In comparison to American history, Ron is similar to privileged white men during the civil rights era in the southeastern United States. If the issue of enslavement and bigotry does not negatively affect him, Ron is not going to do

anything to stop it. He assumes the house elves enjoy being enslaved, because they haven't done anything to suggest otherwise, and believes it is pointless to campaign for their freedom.

Finally, the protagonist of The Goblet of Fire, none other than Harry Potter, is torn between the two extreme positions in regards to house elves. He does not want to pick a side because his loyalty to Hermione and Ron. Much like his best friend Ron, he is a pure blood wizard, who cannot sympathize with the discriminated house elves. Reasoning more with Ron than Hermione, Harry does not want slavery to be abolished, as long as they have proper treatment. This is a very problematic point of view because slavery is not in the least bit okay, even with the absence of brutality. Harry seems to be more concerned with saving the wizarding world from Voldemort's revolution, than helping the house elves. There's a lot of weight on Harry's shoulders and house elves aren't a priority. He believes Hermione has unrealistic and impactful expectations for her club, questioning "how do we do all this?" He doesn't think it's possible to liberate all house elves. Throughout the book series, he has had a very complicated and complex opinion on house elves. Harry loathes his house elf, Kreacher, a despicable and repulsive slave, who abandoned Sirius to join Voldemort's evil monstrosity. He doesn't hate all house elves however. After Dobby saved his life, Harry went out of his way to free Dobby from the maltreatment of his owner. Regarding the liberation of house elves, he draws the line at Dobby. Since Harry has experience with this master slave dynamic with house elves, he has a sense of supremacy over the creatures. In American history, slave owners have freed African Americans, without being an abolitionist completely against the idea of slavery. This directly relates with Harry's point of view on emancipating Dobby, but tyrannizing other house elves to an extent. Harry respects and accepts Hermione's passion to protect the welfare of house elves, but he is not willing to contribute to the cause and values friendship more than society.

In conclusion, the three protagonists have extremely different perspectives concerning the enslavement of house elves, depending on their ethics, values, and backgrounds. Hermione wants to not only abolish slavery, but establish representation within the magical world. However, Ron and Harry want the elves to be enslaved, as long as they have proper treatment. Even with this belief, Ron and Harry still do not fall to the level of Voldemort. Voldemort believes in brutality and wants to execute any magical creature with the tainted blood of a muggle. He resembles the infamous Adolf Hitler, who almost succeeded in wiping out the entire Jewish race through mass murder, during the second world war. The exploitation of house elves makes several connections to the enslavement of African Americans. Depending on the struggles they have faced in the past, Harry, Ron, and Hermione have different outlooks on whether or not house elves deserve to be emancipated into the wizard world J. K. Rowling has created.

Figure A.2

Non-Critical Literary Analysis Essay from the Data Set (Text 2)

In the magical world of Harry Potter, there is a big debate on the issue of the enslavement of house elves. Many people agree with elves being enslaved, and others strongly disagree. However, the three main characters of the Harry Potter series (Hermione, Ron, and Harry) are very divided on the issue.

Hermione is strongly against the idea of enslaving house elves. One reason Hermione wants to free these fellow magical beings is because she knows how it feels to be degraded and dehumanized because of her "blood status." Hermione is what purebloods like to call "mud blood", and is often seen as lower in the society of the wizarding world, just like house elves. Hermione's views are very much like an abolitionist's from the days of slavery in America. Instead of just advocating to free house elves, Hermione goes far enough to start an organization called S.P.E.W, to help fight for rights, representation, and the advancement of house elves in society as a whole. Hermione starts the organization because she has sympathy for the elves and doesn't want their oppression to continue.

Ron Weasley however, believes much differently compared to Hermione. Ron is a "pureblood" so he comes from a much more traditionalist family that is much more privileged than half-bloods, mud-bloods, muggles, and house elves. When Hermione brings up the idea of S.P.E.W, Ron quickly tries to shoot down the idea claiming that it's stupid, that it would never work, and that house elves "like" being enslaved. Though Ron never fully comes out as a supporter of keeping house elves enslaved, his comment about how they like being enslaved ultimately shows the reader that Ron doesn't believe that they are oppressed. With that being said, the reader could imply that Ron is for elvish enslavement. The reader could imply that because Ron thinks it's stupid to free a house elf from something they like.

Harry is a whole different story. Throughout the passage the only thing Harry asks Hermione is how they would fight for the house elves rights with S.P.E.W. We do know however, that Harry freed Dobby (house elf) in earlier books, but also treated Kreacher (house elf) poorly in latter books. Ultimately the textual evidence shows that Harry doesn't care at the moment, because he is getting closer and closer to fighting Voldemort. However after Harry defeats Voldemort, he would most likely free or fight for the rights of house elves just as he did with Dobby.

In conclusion we know that Hermione is for freeing house elves, Ron thinks freeing them is stupid, and Harry is more focused on other things like fighting Voldemort to be very involved.