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A critical investigation, using approaches drawn from action research, into how Year 9 students' learning about unseen poetry can be developed through a focus on accent and dialect in writing

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Abstract

Uniting the importance of sound within the teaching of poetry, with the notion of identity actualised through poetic voice, this study examines how poetry written in a dialect can influence and thus develop students' approaches to unseen poetry. The small-scale investigation focuses on a Year 9 class completing a sequence of lessons that concentrated on the poetry of Benjamin Zephaniah, Tom Leonard, Mike Jenkins and John Agard. Explored are the ways in which studying dialect poetry facilitates meaning-making within a 'new typical poetry classroom' that intertwines ideas of performance and analysis and how, by extension, this offers a space to reflect on students' own identities and the world around them.

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Hearing the Voice of Poetry: An Introduction

> What I call the 'auditory imagination' is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end.
>
> (T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism, 1933)

T.S. Eliot's notion of an "auditory imagination" speaks to the layers of poetry that are often overlooked within a Secondary English classroom. Indeed, Eliot goes beyond what we may, as teachers, allow poetry to be: past linguistics to levels of sound, rhythm, pace and thus musicality. When thinking back to my own education within a Welsh poetry classroom, I often account my experiences to my want to study English Literature, and my consequent choice to complete teacher training. Hours were spent during my primary school days reading and reciting poetry for annual Eisteddfods, utilising Eliot's "syllable and rhythm" for performance. Yet, my secondary school memories are saturated with coloured annotations, teacher-lectures, and print-poetry. We have, then, this jarring idea of what poetry is to my student-self: of performance versus print, enjoyment versus assessment, and potentially even Welsh versus English. With research-led pedagogy in mind, the question I have for my teacher-self is how do I unite these interwoven ideas of orality, analysis and identity to spark an appreciation for poetry within my own classroom?

Never are these ideas more pronounced than in dialect poetry. With roots in oral culture, it is preoccupied with linguistical choice and how this reflects a freedom of expression of the self. For all the anxieties that surround approaching the 'high art' of poetry, language in its most complex and crafted form, the introduction of dialectical phonetics subverts and thus overturns the authority of Standard English. Turning to Bakhtin's (2010) writing in *The Dialogic Imagination* is a useful way to comprehend the power-politics behind language, especially the Standard (of) English that is

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promoted within a school setting. The concept of a "unitary language" is far removed from a "living language", that "actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractual unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds", which generate "various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound" (p.288). If voice is the actualisation of the self, which plausibly plays out through word choice in poetry, dialect is a poetry of talk innately linked to social, and historical, identity. Bringing this into the English classroom allows it to become an arena of learning about cultural citizenship, where student 'selves' are formed through conversations with the wider world. As we read, or indeed listen to, dialect poetry, we inhabit the other's speech, whose words (and worlds, as Bakhtin might suggest) do not exist until they are spoken. Dialect poetry might just, then, have the power and ability to ignite the tradition of performing poetry in the modern silent classroom.

The following research seeks to answer how exposing students to poetry written in a dialect and performed with an accent (see Appendix 1 for definitions) unites the layers of sound and language to develop responses to poetry. Through the lens of Cummin's (2000) "transformative pedagogy", thus "encouraging learners to critically inquire into the world around them" (p.246), I additionally attempted to create a space for reflection on their own identity through exploration of the speakers' expression of the self through voice. This small-scale investigation took place in a Year 9 top set class completing an unseen poetry scheme of work on the overarching theme of 'identity', of which I had sole teaching responsibility. The school itself is a coeducational secondary school based in rural Essex, with a mostly monocultural demographic and low numbers of pupil premium and EAL students. Over a sequence of four lessons during the middle of the scheme, I aimed to supplement planned exploration of areas of unseen poetry with a specific emphasis on the analysis of sound. Recognising pace, tone, rhythm, rhyme, and the notion of the speaker through class activities facilitated different ways of making meaning within poetry, and by extension, the world around them.

Literature Review

Dialect: The *Non*-Standard English

To comprehend the pedagogical importance of allowing the space for dialect within British classrooms, we must firstly note the stature of 'Standard English' within educational literature.

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Both Jude Brady (2015) and John Moss (2019) observe the weighting this idea holds within past Teaching Standards and the National Curriculum documents respectively. In his essay on the varieties of English that are often brought to initial teacher training courses, Moss uncovers that two pages of the 1995 National Curriculum are “more concerned with stressing the importance of Standard English than justifying the position taken in relation to the whole English curriculum” (p.9). This draft may be nearly twenty years older than the current document, but the sentiment is no less true: within every aspect of English for KS3 and KS4 alike, confidence in Standard English is stressed. Brady recognises this same promotion within the 2013 Teaching Standards that “[endorse] this dialect as the authoritative language” (p.149), thus highlighting the power politics at play. The use of “dialect” here is interesting, as Standard English often lacks the negative connotations associated with the term. All of this is not to say that understanding of ‘dialect’ has been left out of the rhetoric altogether. In fact, the 1995 National Curriculum stated “[t]he richness of dialects and other languages can make an important contribution to pupils’ knowledge and understanding of Standard English” (p.2). When looking closely at the grammar within this periodic sentence, Standard English is centred. Moss (2019) echoes Brady’s (2015) notion of authority, believing that “the sentence makes the […] imperialistic claim that the main purpose and value of learning about other forms of language is to inform an understanding of Standard English” (p.9), which both *has* power and *gives* power.

When understood together, Brady and Moss reveal the problematic effects this push towards a ‘Standard’ English, one that is an idealised norm of regulated and formalised language, can have. Voice and identity are innately linked. Through speech, we do much more than communicate information: we reveal *who we are*. To look deeper into this, however, is to see how language and social class are interwoven within British socio-economic structures: to standardise is to make moves towards the “authoritative” and “imperialistic”. Brady turns towards Bourdieu to draw conclusions about the link between success in education, social class and language: “[t]he educational market is strictly dominated by the linguistic products of the dominant class and tends to sanction the pre-existing differences in capital” (Brady, 2015, p.149). Non-Standard English is the voice of the ‘other’ class, then. It exists only through the negation of the standard; it is lower within the hierarchy. If regulation of language is what equates to success, as Bourdieu suggests, what message does that give the students who have an accent or speak in a dialect, who are led to believe that “non-standard practices have been associated with ‘bad’ morals” (Myhill, 2015, p.151)? Seen most notably through the poems selected for this research, these stereotypical ideas of being

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lesser than, often sit at the heart of dialect poetry, albeit sardonically. For students to comprehend true ‘Britishness’, not just at the centre, but those who are often placed on the margins, we must break down the stereotypes that come with the term ‘dialect’.

This research is not a suggestion that we stop the teaching of Standard English altogether, however, to do so would be to neglect it as a dialect in and of itself. Denying access to this learning may also reinforce socio-economic inequalities, and further limit working class pupils. What Brady (2015) does call for is a search for “a way in which to facilitate access to the standard dialect whilst empowering pupils to understand the complex hierarchies of power that support Standard English as the ‘proper’ mode of communication” (p.155-6), which stands at the heart of my own research. It is essential to mention that for some students, Standard English and Received Pronunciation (RP) may be the norm, as it is for my own. Whilst forming the basis for this research, I feared that the concept of expressing an identity through language would be too dissident for my students. Would my results be as poignant as if I was based in an inner-city London school, or my own Welsh one? We are, however, sending students into a world outside of the classroom, one that is attempting to recognise the diversity of ‘Englishes’. Whilst the literature validates that the value we place on diverse Englishes is not necessarily mirrored within the classroom, as was the case throughout my own education, it is applicable to the society in which students are forming their identities. Through the eyes of transformative pedagogy, teachers must “use ‘contemporary materials’ […] that are relevant to the pupils’ lives to invite them to ‘challenge […] essentialised notions of culture’” (Anderson, 2015, p.156). I am privileged to be training in a department that not only recognises this, but strives to diversify its curriculum. In granting permission for this research, they have accepted that the inclusion of dialect poetry is just one of many ways to achieve this.

The Reception of Poetry in the Classroom: On Being Met with a Sea of Sighs

On announcement that we would be studying poetry, my enthusiasm was met with a sea of sighs. I immediately asked the students to write down one word to describe their reaction: ‘sad’, ‘apprehensive’, ‘disappointed’, ‘unenthusiastic’ and ‘disheartened’ all appeared a multitude of times. Only one showed a glimmer of positivity: ‘intrigued’. Expecting to spend the next six weeks “tie[ing] the poem to a chair with rope/ and torture[ing] a confession out of it”, the students’ sighs embodied the characters from the poem that we studied that very lesson: Billy Collins’ ‘Introduction to Poetry’ (1988, p.58). From Collins’ metaphor, we perceive students’ need to

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squeeze the meaning out of poetry, free from both enjoyment and an appreciation for it as art. Gabrielle Cliff Hodges and Elizabeth Rawlinson-Mills (2019) cite Joy Alexander in their research on this idea of poetry in the classroom, denoting that this way of approaching poetry can often lead to misreading: "pupils bypass 'the pure act of reading' rather than 'allowing the poet to speak and the reader to hear'" (p.182). In light of my own pedagogy, Alexander's use of metaphorical sound is refreshing, albeit affecting that students are not in the practice of trusting poets' words for making meaning. Instead, "they begin beating it with a hose/ to find out what it really means". For Nicholas McGuinn (2014), this is mainly attributed to "not getting enough exposure to poetry" (p.10), which by extension reflects anxiety about presenting poems in the classroom. Exposure, however, does not seem to be the problem here, where poems line the hallways. What may be a better justification is assessment, and thus poetry that is taught being a part of "narrow categories" (McGuinn, 2014, p.10).

Without the "chair" (assessment) and the "rope" (structured analysis), the possibilities that poetry offers to the student-reader can be infinitely powerful and daunting. Turning to Rosenblatt's (2015) distinction between 'efferent' and 'aesthetic' reading may be a useful way to contemplate just how to shift these sighs: "we come to poetry not to 'take away' information (efferent) but to engage in the experience of reading (aesthetic)" (p.178). Although I appreciate shifting the focus of studying poetry to what we experience through language, engaging in aesthetic reading, especially with dialect poetry and its preoccupation with the self within the wider world, does allow for a "take away". This learning is not from instructions within the words, but through the reader's own experiences, and thus their unique conversation with a particular poem. Can we promote this within the classroom, then? McGuinn (2014) goes as far as to suggest that teachers should "ask students to listen to a poem in a language they do not understand" (p.13) to completely take away the possibility of centring exam style technique-spotting. Dialect poetry may not be quite so incomprehensible, but it may pave the way for reform within the poetry classroom. Poetry now belongs to the print era, enabling students to bypass aesthetics and often mistake the natural rhythm of the language. Little opportunity to enjoy poetry as an artform with roots in oral culture means that students lack the 'ear', the knowledge, and the motivation to be receptive to poetry.

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Performing Dialect Poetry: Analysing Sound through Reading Aloud

Bringing poetry to life for aesthetic 'reading' means lifting it off the printed page through performance: whole-class readings, teacher reading aloud, and videos of poets' performances. Highlighting the notion that poetry and performance go hand-in-hand, Auden and Garrett (2014) believe poetry to be "memorable speech", stating that "it is the patterning of sound and the cadence of language that we must surrender when we read" (p.21). The term "memorable" is powerful and speaks to the musicality of "patterning" and "cadence" that relate to recitation of poetry facilitating recall. We fall into the trap of surrendering the poem to the "chair" and allowing the tying of the "rope" by breaking the connection between voice and text. The possibilities of poetry classrooms can likewise be daunting for teachers who have the added pressure adopting dependable approaches that enable expected examination outcomes. The reader, however, must become the "listener-reader" in order for poetry to "come into being" (Steele, 2014, p.22). Performance is significant for memorability, too. In her research on the underestimation of listening as a valuable tool in the English classroom, Joy Alexander (2008) uses the idea of an 'epireader' to extend this idea, and, in doing so, speaks directly to my reasoning behind marrying sound and dialect poetry. Epi, from the Greek *epos*, comes to mean a voicing aloud; the text is lifted off the page into 'being' within speech. Again, the auditory function is stressed, but this time, the writer's *style* is thought about: "a writer's style restores what is lost in communicating by means of a silent page" (p.224), and is the manifestation of identity interwoven with experience. Alexander goes on further to write, "it is a means of re-constituting the author's voice" (p.227). In dialect poetry, where the writer's style may be an authorial voice that the student's ear is not attuned to, it is more important than ever to note that difficulty hearing said 'voice' impacts students' ability to access the poetry.

Centring reading aloud within poetry lessons can attune students to the true, natural rhythms that poetry calls for. In an assessment preparation class at the end of the scheme of work, I asked what we should do first when presented with an unseen poem, to which a student eagerly shouted 'read it aloud'. It is aggravating that there is no space under assessment conditions for this to be reality; what the interjection does show is a *want* to approach poems in this way for making meaning. When building up this practice, Dia and Hayhoe's (2008) own poeticism states that "the tongue is aware of textures, pressures and movement as it collaborates in taking a poem from its silence on the page and makes it into sound" (p.230), and through experience becomes awareness. Although unfamiliar dialects may be harder to access through student reading, the preoccupation with

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phonetics allows sound to be more pronounced, aiding the importance of listening in poetry where sound may not be so overt. How does one answer the student and still place importance on sound, then? The more students are aware of voicing a poem externally, the more they hone the 'other' voice inside their head, and their own listening to that voice. Alexander (2008) suggests that "this is not as a performance" (p.232), however I do not entirely conform to the definition of performance here. Performing poetry is unique from the dramatic performance we expect within a Shakespeare classroom. Reading, even aloud, can be expressionless, silencing sound qualities. Performance allows poetry to speak through the reader, following the preconscious rhythms the words call for through enjambment, caesura or syllabic stress. This may be just to themselves, outwardly or inwardly, but it is 'performance' nonetheless.

Even as we allow such ways of reading to enter the classroom, exploration of meaning adds a layer that we *need* to account for. As Pullinger and Whitley (2013) suggest through their ideas on sound and meaning, "contemporary practice has consequently tended to create a space for experience of performance that is separate from the kinds of knowledge of poems developed through detailed analysis" (p.163). This division plays out through the sequencing of activities within lessons: performance tends to be at the beginning, then relegation to the printed page for analysis. There is a call for the uniting of these elements to allow for new learning of poetry that has the same weighting as the exam-driven analysis students are used to. My optimism believes that responses to sounded voice may be just as fruitful as typical student-led analysis. Just as each poet has their own unique voice that comes from their own histories, each student does too; when these meet, there is the potential for thirty distinct encounters. John Gordon (2009) uses the concept of "lifeworlds" to relay this, believing that each poem is "an articulation of the voice, history and culture – the life – of an individual" (p.165), which has been prevalent in my research so far. Gordon foregrounds the word "voice" here, reflected in his earlier statement: "poets are the voices of their societies" (p.165). In this way, each lifeworld brought to the English classroom is enacted *through* poetry, both through reading (aloud), and as we later notice, through writing. For Gordon, "response is relative" (p.172); as poetry can only come into being through 'speaking', and so poet's worlds come into being through their unique voices, meaning can only come into being through 'listening' through the lens of the students' worlds which in turn influences responses. It is with awareness of student 'lifeworlds', which I use interchangeably with 'self', that we comprehend how poetry as performance can allow for consideration of identity, interweaving students' own identities with those of others, diving into cultural understanding within the English classroom.

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Identity: Literature's Role of Engaging Students with the Wider World

Entitled 'A Language for Life', the 1975 Bullock Report stresses an English language that is not separate from, or indeed stripped of, the identity that a student embodies within their world outside of the classroom:

> No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart.
>
> (DES, 1975, p.543)

There is a language of a united self here. Interestingly, this rhetoric has not seeped into National Curriculum (2014) documents that establish Britishness as separate from 'other' cultures, yet propose a standardised curriculum for all. Speaking from the context of inner-city London, one dissimilar to my own, John Yandell (2008) asks, "[w]hat […] could be more comforting to those […] who regard the curriculum as a means of both asserting and re-establishing a single, national identity?" (p.29). The notion of a "single" identity is astounding, with the implication that opportunity comes through *one* way of being. Yandell's use of "asserting" further portrays a push to make students leave this identity at the entrance of a school. Yet, "students do not – cannot – simply cast off their out-of-school identities" (p.30). This is especially true of the English classroom, which subconsciously asks students to approach texts through the lens of their own experiences. We can extend this to teachers, too.

If an aim for the English classroom is to develop cultural awareness, there is an irony in calling for a "single, national identity" (Yandell, 2008, p.29). This idea is echoed by Ofsted's rhetoric surrounding 'cultural capital' as a way to prepare students for success outside of school. It is hard not to separate these calls from the knowledge of regular inaccessibility by pupils who experience social inequality. Bourdieu's original ideas imply that every student, and indeed, every teacher, brings their own unique version of 'cultural capital' to the classroom. This seems far from the gravitas of the evolved meaning. As Asha Rogers (2015) points out "reflection on matters of culture naturally takes us back to the question of whose culture counts" (p.89). Bringing dialect poetry into the classroom allows students to transfer monolithic 'Englishness' into multitudinous 'Britishness'; it is cultural capital that encapsulates the modern world that we live in. There should not be a need to choose between poets such as Keats and Shelley or Zephaniah and Nagra. Despite concentrating on a small cohort of EAL students, Vicky Obied (2013) believes that the language of poetry allows

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students the opportunity to “understand the complexity and nuance of deeper word knowledge” (p.145), which is compelling to look at in relation to my students who may have to approach dialect poetry as if they are learning an additional language. These findings can be applied to all students, then, however I would extend them to word and *world* knowledge. Exposing students to these margins of Britishness allows for learning how to form an identity in “a world in which an ability to move comfortably across linguistic and cultural boundaries has become vital” (Obied, 2013, p.146). The dichotomy between centralised ‘English literature’ and marginalised ‘literature from other cultures’ ingrains in learners a divide: a divide between Standard English and other dialects, and between “single, national identity” and the other. What seems to be forgotten is that ‘Britishness’ itself is a fusion of ‘other’ cultures. Celebrating this through dialect poetry may be the first step towards this kind of realisation.

Research Questions

After undergoing this audit of education literature surrounding the ideas relevant to the inclusion of dialect poetry in the classroom, I devised three questions (RQs) to focus my own research. They went on to form the basis of the learning objectives of the lesson sequence.

RQ1. How does performing dialect poetry enable students to access poetry generally?

RQ2. How does dialect poetry facilitate analysis of sound, pace, tone, rhythm, rhyme, and thus meaning making?

RQ3. How can studying dialect poetry allow students the space to reflect on their own identity and the world around them?

Ethics and Methodology

Ethics

Prior to teaching and collecting data for my research, I sought permission from the English Department at my placement school following Faculty ethics guidelines. My mentor and I were in frequent conversation about my research, and together we decided on the specific class with the best-fit scheme of work. Both the class teacher and my mentor were aware of my lesson plans, which were written to not veer students away from the poetry assessment they would write at the

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end of the term. Changes to the policy surrounding research at my placement school meant that opt-in consent had to be given by parents for data, albeit anonymised, to be used. This presented extra challenges as not all parents responded to the letter before the lessons took place, some only doing so after, placing stress on the organisation and evaluation of the data collected. Data, however, was collected from every student with foresight that permission would be granted; for those who did not respond, their child's data was taken out of the research. I also read the BERA (2018) guide for education research, that noted the importance of all participants having an "awareness of the process" (p.5). Due to this, students were reminded of the research and the role of specific activities in my process of data collection within every lesson.

Methodology

It was Denscombe's (2010) suggestion that "its commitment to a process of research in which the application of findings as an evaluation of their impact on practice become part of a cycle of research" (p.127) that directed me to use action research approaches. When reflecting on this further, O'Leary's (2010) cycles of research (see Figure 1) spoke to the experiential nature of my own evaluative practice and felt like the best fit for this project.

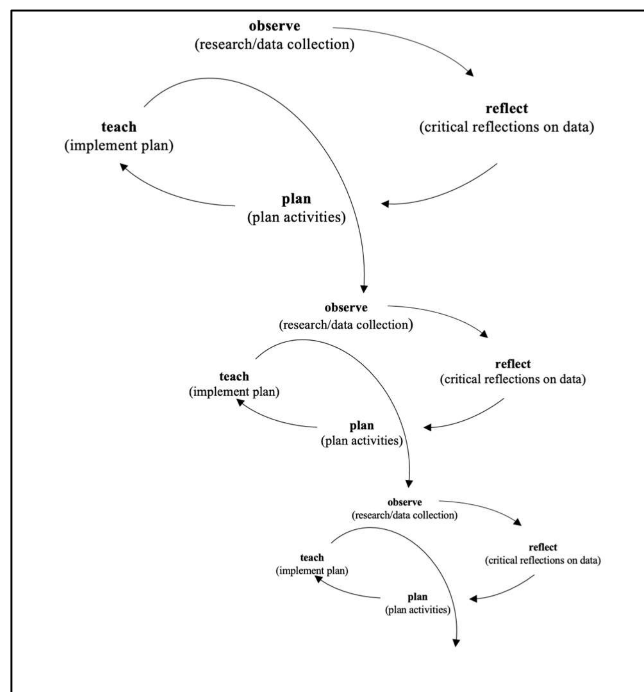

Figure 1: Action Research Cycles

Based on O'Leary's Cycles of Research (2010)

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Although conscious that relying on one model alone may affect the flexibility I craved, the focus on observing my students for the first few lessons embedded an understanding of their approaches to poetry needed to inform my lesson planning. This cyclical process, then, "continually refine[s] the methods […] in the light of understanding developed in the earlier cycles" (p.7) and thus allowed me to plan more specialised activities as the sequence progressed.

As there is a lack of specific literature on my research topic, it was also important for me to triangulate the qualitative data capture to establish a comprehensive insight into student learning.

Questionnaires

To evaluate the students' learning in a 'typical poetry classroom', I began with a questionnaire (Appendix 2) starter activity within the first lesson. I purposefully aimed to see whether the literature remained relevant within my own classroom. I asked mostly closed questions that were free from any complicated or subject-specific lexis for students to complete the questionnaire without any input from others. Tracking quantitative data in this way enabled clearer analysis of student thoughts comparatively within the class, however I tended to follow these up with a qualitative 'how?' or 'why?' to comprehend the reasoning. As always with questionnaires, there is the possibility that students may not answer truthfully out of worry of being negative, especially as, for ethical reasons, all collected data had to include names. However, as I had been teaching the class for a half term before this scheme, I had gained rapport with the students and established the safe atmosphere needed to allow for honest ideas.

Student Work

Due to phonetically-written poetry being unfamiliar to the students, and the lack of UK- conducted pedagogical research on this topic, planned lessons were activity-heavy to allow for access to, and progression through, learning. As the driving force for activities, making notes of student responses during the lesson verged on the impossible. I am thankful to the class teacher for noting down conversation thoroughly, however recognise the many fascinating ideas that were lost to over-planned lessons. Thus, my research is driven by analysis of written work to a greater degree, which includes a mix of reflection questions, poetry analysis and mini-responses to broader questions surrounding dialect. What this does mean, however, is that I was able to evaluate the ideas of every student within my action research model (see Figure 1), and so have more grounds for

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understanding the effect of using dialect poetry on learning. The danger with English as a subject is the subjectivity of the analysis of any texts. As a teacher, I am always subconsciously looking at responses through the lens of my own interpretations. However, I relished in the nuanced and personal ideas the students gave, despite the extensive amount of data I sifted through.

The Teaching Sequence

Dialect poetry found its place within a Year 9 scheme of work on unseen poetry with the linking theme of identity. This six-week scheme looked forwards to ground approaches to poetry for GCSE examinations. By the time the students were presented with written and performed dialect poetry, they were already familiar with traditional approaches to analysis; our initial lessons had focused on what poetry *is*, imagery, symbolism and structural form. My sequence aimed to introduce the concepts of pace, tone, rhythm, rhyme, and the speaker through analysis of sound as poetic voice. All poems from the sequence are presented in Appendix 1.

Lesson 1: Shaped By Our Environment

The first lesson sought to lift the poem off the page by teaching students that poetry has its roots in the oral tradition, just as identity has its roots in voice and thus language choice. Students were first asked to think about what 'shaped by our environment' means, before being given a sentence (unbeknownst to students, a line from 'London Mine') to turn into a poem in pairs to play with rhythm. We performed the 'poem' as a class, thinking about what title we would give the poem and why. It was then revealed to the students that this is a song, and the music video was played before a discussion about how Crookes is shaped by her environment. My intentions behind using Joy Crookes' song 'London Mine' were two-fold: not only was it due to the poeticism of the lyrics, the driving drumbeat, and Crookes' use of London slang sung with a South London accent, but I wanted to prove that we experience poetry every day without it being held as such a lofty artform.

Lesson 2: Poetic Choice, Poetic Voice

Through continuous reflections on their own learning, the students focused on the divide between Standard English and Non-Standard English. There were two key questions that drove this: Is poetry written in Non-Standard English still poetry? Thinking about the connotations of Non-

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Standard English, why do poets still choose to write in a dialect? We used these queries to access Benjamin Zephaniah's sentiments in 'Dis Poetry'. I made the choice not to present the printed poem to highlight the importance of listening to language; it was only accessible through the poet's performance which was shown multiple times. Students were asked to think about memorability and word choice, before 'translating' a line of the poem into Standard English. As the students listened to the poem for the final time, they completed a graph to track the sense of pace and how it reflects expression. Homework was given to the students to produce a multimodal poem influenced by Dean Atta's identity poem 'I Come From'.

Lesson 3: Subject, Speaker, Sound and Stereotypes

Students were placed in groups of four as organised by their seating plan for the entirety of the third lesson, which had the underlying theme of stereotypes. We firstly looked closely at how the features we prescribe to British accents can link to tone within poetry. We then listened to Tom Leonard read 'Unrelated Incidents #3' and, unknowingly, a recording of me performing 'Int All Bard' by Mike Jenkins. Some time was spent firstly analysing the subject of the poem, before thinking about speaker and sound; traditional approaches were combined with the newly learnt ones here. In order to further link these ideas of analysis and performance, students then planned a choral reading of the poems.

Lesson 4: The English Language Cannot Contain Me

Bringing together the learning from the previous three lessons, the final lesson set the precedent for how students can make meaning from each poem they encounter in the future. We began by listening to John Agard perform 'Listen Mr Oxford Don', before learning some context about the poet and discussing how lived experiences cannot be separated from poetic voice (and poetic analysis, as the class would find out later). The students then read the poem 'aloud' to themselves again to analyse the poem within their *new* typical poetry classroom: with added emphasis on sound, and thus pace, rhythm and phonetics. After a class discussion on this analysis, a new layer, quite literally, was added to this meaning making, as students were prompted to glue a see-through sheet over the top of their poems and draw connections with their own (life)world through text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world analysis.

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Data: Analysis and Evaluation

Notes from the 'Typical Poetry Classroom': Initial Questionnaire

As someone who deems poetry to be the motive for her interest in words and education, it grieved me to receive such loud sighs in the very first lesson. To fully understand the reasoning for this, I began my research with questioning why my students dread the study of poetry, and thus potentially answer their calls for change (see Appendix 2). Out of twenty-eight students who were present in the first lesson, only five answered 'yes' to enjoying studying poetry. This was not unexpected, but saddening nonetheless. When asked to state their reasons why, the positives tended to reveal other motivations outside of 'studying' poetry: Student A writes 'unlike creative writing, when writing poetry I don't have to think about how the readers might interpret it', and Student B explains 'I find reading poetry relaxing'. It is inside the realms of the verb 'studying' where the negativity lies, with one 'no' student explicitly detailing that 'the way we study it makes it boring and not interesting'. Other impactful answers note 'analysing', 'getting good grades', 'spotting techniques', and 'dull poems' to be the reasons behind their sighs, all points far removed from how artful poetry can be. It is interesting to look at Question 2 alongside these qualitative remarks, as the ideas are often mirrored within the word choice. There are three prevalent semantic fields of disinterest (boring, disappointing), anxiety (fear, draining, confusing) and techniques for analysis (metaphorical, stanza, rhyming). The 'flowing elegance' that Student B was able to identify manifests itself as just another point to be analysed by most, and, as one student puts it 'when will I ever need to analyse a poem?'

Moving onto ideas around analysis revealed some unanticipated results about the students' prior understanding of sound in poetry. Students showed more confidence in their understanding of terms such as 'rhythm' and 'rhyme' than in 'meaning' or 'imagery', despite such a heavy emphasis on meaning in answers to previous questions (see Figure 2). On reflection, phrasing the question in this way does not necessarily prove that students are confident in *using* these terms within their analysis, which is where my research lies. It is likely that students may understand 'rhyme' from their early exposure to poetry, for instance. This same sentiment is reflected within Figure 3, where students were asked to rank aspects of poetry. 'The way the poem sounds' was mostly ranked the second most important aspect, with four students even ranking it the *most* important. Why, then, has it escaped our analysis of poetry so far?

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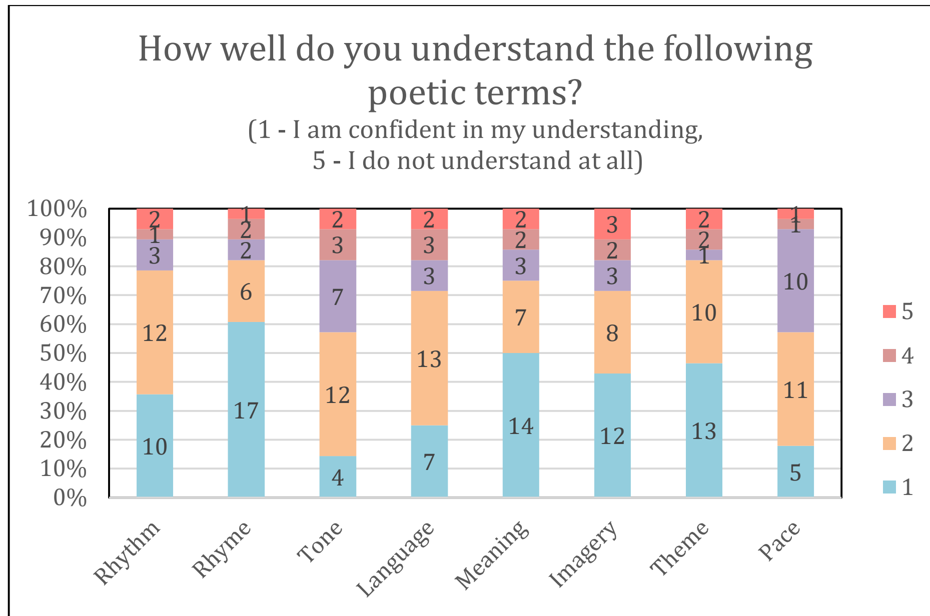

Figure 2: Stacked Bar Graph Modelled on Question 5

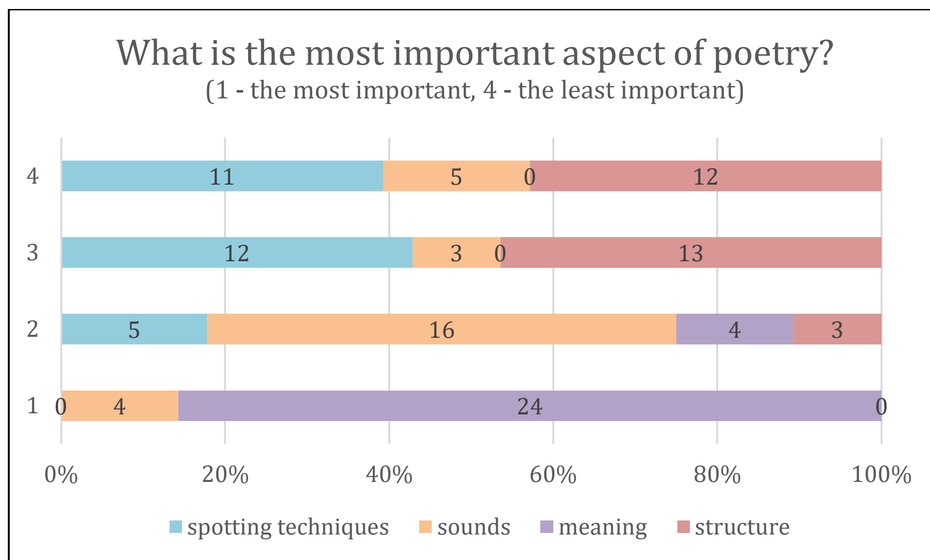

Figure 3: Stacked Bar Graph Modelled on Question 6

Even with this newly uncovered awareness of the importance students place on sound in poetry, there is still a tip (57%) towards not reading poetry aloud, which seems almost counterintuitive to the previous answers. However, almost all these students detailed in their reasoning ideas of reading poetry 'in their heads', some even going so far as to suggest that this way it is in their thoughts and thus more personal to them. Here, the students already seem subconsciously aware of the 'inner voice' and 'inner ear' (Alexander, 2008). For those readers aloud, 'the sound of the poem is part of its beauty' that 'gives you a better understanding of the tone, rhyme, rhythm and pace' and 'focuses

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the attention on how the language sounds'. What is most inspiring about this initial research is that it depicts an openness to be attuned to the sounds of poetry. It may be because this is a group of avid readers who display other motivations in approaching the subject of English, but this top set go far to defy the literature detailing a 'typical poetry classroom'.

Despite having three specific research questions driving this paper, the learning relevant to each one is interwoven and built upon throughout the sequence. For this reason, the following evaluations will take relevant points from each lesson with a focus on answering the question at hand.

How does performing dialect poetry enable students to access poetry generally?

Hearing poetry is a method of accessing poetry that, as literature suggests, is often overlooked in the poetry classroom. It is, however, centred in my own, as dialect is enacted through voice. In every class, students listened to the poet perform their own poem, which allowed students to hear the reality of rhythm, pace, volume, and pitch in the dialect itself. Within the very first activity in the first lesson, students were able to play with language through arranging a line of the 'poem', reinforcing that rhythm is a choice made by the poet. Performing these mini-poems together as a class was mesmerising, and unlocked some interesting analysis points through hearing alone. When asked how they felt about reading it aloud as a class, Student D replied, 'I think none of the rhythm really matched because everyone tried to make it different'. Their use of 'rhythm' without scaffolding here suggests a keen ear for sound analysis even within the early stages of the sequence. When further prompted to think about what that says about poetry, the student replied, 'it doesn't feel like a poem because it feels like it is kinda different pieces that don't go together'. The rigidity of poetic structure is alluded to here, delineating a knowledge of poetry that may stem from previous experience. What the student's intriguing comment infers, though, is that we all bring our own self, our "lifeworlds" (Gordon, 2009), to poems; they did not necessarily *try* to make it different, it *must* be different because we all are. Student B was able to come to this conclusion, yet also link it with the meaning she had started to draw from the poem: 'There is more uniqueness to do with the rhythm. I think it was about London. There is an abundance of people so it links with that, the fact that there were lots of voices'. Through our reading aloud, we were able to recreate 'London' within our classroom, imitating the 'world that appears to be broken' from Crookes' lyrics, through 'lots of voices', 'Bangla noise', Spanish interjections and London slang. In their later analysis, one student sensitively picked up on the use of the verb 'appears', detailing that

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although broken, the fragments are allowed to come together to make ‘London mine’. It is this amalgamation of rhythms and voices, only heard aloud, that make London special for Crookes, just as our own classroom-London became a special space to bring poetry alive for the students.

As songs exclusively exist through performance, in perhaps a way that poetry has come to not be, it was important that the students comprehended why I interwove music into the lessons. At the end of the first lesson, I wanted students to pause on this point:

> *Teacher: Why did I pick a song for today? If we think about what poetry is? And one of the things I said really early on was okay, we are not looking at poetry on our desks here. We are looking at poetry being performed, so why would I pick a song do you think? Student E?*
>
> *E: The way you take in sound and the way you read is different. You get more of a picture when you sing it out loud.*
>
> *F: I was going to say the same thing.*
>
> *Teacher: Okay, so when it is on the sheet, you can’t really see what’s going on. When you say it out loud, you learn more of the story, more of the meaning.*

By the end of the lesson, most students were of the same mindset as Student E: songs have the ability to ‘create more of an image’, ‘allow you to appreciate the language techniques’, ‘help the poem flow better’. One student was able to pick up on the pace: ‘it is also sung quite fast, portraying the speed London moves at’ which is something that may only come from authentic performance. Although reading aloud as a class did its job of breaking down the barriers of accessing poetry, the disconnected and thus unstructured reading seemed to be no match for listening to the original song. It was at this point that I realised the importance of listening to authentic performances to firstly ‘access’ the poem, but also how music may be a way to gear up the ears ready for poetry analysis.

In order to foreground the learning from this first lesson in the next one, that focused on sound but lacked the musical backdrop that facilitated the learning originally, I decided to get the students entering the classroom to an Afrobeats song written in a Pidgin English dialect: ‘Crazy Tings’ by Tems. I was met with confusion: ‘What’s this noise?’, ‘There’s music playing, right?’, ‘Miss, why is there music on?’, ‘What song is this?’, after which I was fearful that I had created ‘too different’ an environment from that typical poetry classroom. Surprisingly, this worry was not reflected in the minds of the students, who highlighted that it made them feel more relaxed, with one feeling ‘connected to the classroom’. The ‘vibey rhythm’ had the ability to unlock the first barrier to

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learning, then: motivation. Although students were unable to pick out the lyrics to the song, maybe due to the raucous of entering a classroom, most students had a go at describing the rhythm as 'strong', 'upbeat' or 'driving', and some students were able to form links with my decision and the 'importance of rhythm and how it makes us feel', for a 'song is a type of poem, and rhythm is a part of that.'

The ability of the human brain to retain song lyrics is fascinating, and recalls the idea of recitation that no longer seems prominent in a poetry classroom. However, within this second lesson, I wanted to see how sound fed into the memorisation process, and interestingly whether students would be able to access a dialect poem without reinforcement from the printed page. Directly after we listened to 'Dis Poetry', I asked the students to make a note of any words they remembered from the poem, which then elicited learning as to why these were so memorable. Without explicitly stating poetic terms, students remembered words due to pace ('he slowed down when he said it'), rhyme, repetition, and volume ('I think he said it a bit louder than the other lines'), echoing Auden and Garrett's (2014) notion of "memorable speech" (p.21). Student G stated 'there was a line of Standard English in there' but could not recall the actual words within the line, potentially due to a normalcy, or the lack of rhythm compared to emulated speech. At the very end of the class, I uncovered to the students that I had not given them a printed version of the poem, and asked them to note down their reflections on how they felt about that. There was a general feeling that the meaning of the poem was 'found', although some worried that the lack of handout meant they missed a lot of the actual words (which were in a dialect dissimilar to their own). The most striking answers believed that 'it isn't always about being analytical with it, sometimes we should just enjoy it', and that this loud emphasis on sound allowed them to 'remember his voice' and thus draw connections between 'rhythm and individuality' which 'makes the poem have its own identity'. Although some craved the "contemporary practice" noted by Pullinger and Whitley (2013, p.163), others felt their learning progressed through poetry only as performance.

When I brought the printed poem back into the classroom for the third lesson, some students had the opportunity to rush through a silent reading before I was able to play both performances. After listening to 'Unrelated Incidents #3', it took a few extra seconds to settle the class as they were busy imitating the accent: I smiled to myself at their attempt to access the language in this way. Student G relayed that it made more sense when hearing it as 'the spellings on here aren't actual spellings of words'. Another student came to the rescue here, introducing the term 'phonetics' into the class:

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'it's like when you like, it's said how its spelt, or like, spelt how it's said'. Despite these students being of the generation that learnt to read through phonics, authentic performance was the only way for some students to even access the poem altogether. This poses the question: if we recognise that poetry is layered, how much are our students missing out by not hearing the voice of poetry, not just for analysis, but for meaning-making? To ponder this question further, I asked the students to plan a choral reading of the poems in groups. There is a sensitivity to dialect poetry which makes tasks like this quite difficult; although many include humour, there is a sardonic undertone that cuts through. The reason why these choral readings were only ever *plans* was so that students could connect performance with meaning, without losing the poem through an overemphasis on humorously acting out a dialect. One group working on 'Unrelated Incidents #3' wanted the poem to be read in unison, with one person speaking in a 'BBC accent' the other with a Glaswegian accent, so that the two accents were almost in conversation with each other, just as the students were able to converse with dialect poetry through performance.

How does dialect poetry facilitate analysis of sound, pace, tone, rhythm, rhyme, and thus meaning making?

As dialect exists through voice, it would seem fair to suggest that the layer of sound in this type of poetry is more pronounced. My aim was to introduce ideas of pace, tone, rhythm and rhyme in a more overt way to facilitate new learning, with Alexander's (2008) idea of the "epireader" in mind (p.224). This will allow students to take new knowledge to unseen poems. To ground this notion, I first wanted the students to recognise the hyperawareness of sound in Non-Standard English, by asking them to translate a line of 'Dis Poetry' into Standard English. All of the students within the class were able to recognise a change here, but to varying degrees, which depended on the line they were given to translate. The change, however, was not a welcome one; students believed the poem 'lost something', its 'snappiness', or its 'harsh and guttural' sounds, and even the 'lots of beats' it had at first. One student went so far as to say that, as it no longer sounds the same, it has lost its individuality and thus its identity, and without this, 'it doesn't actually say what the meaning is'. With this understanding that sound was the manifestation of identity in dialect poetry, we moved on to look at Zephaniah's use of pace and what we could draw from that. Each student completed a graph similar to Figure 4.

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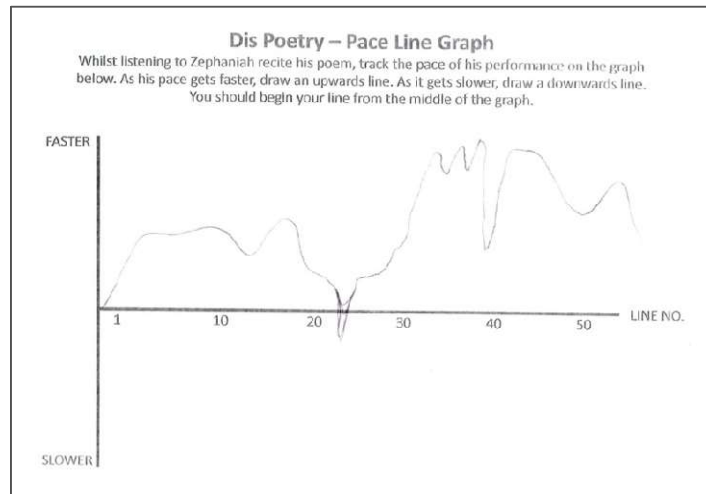

Figure 4: Example Pace Line Graph

Even though all the graphs looked very different due to students' subjective notions around 'faster' and 'slower', they all had one thing in common: the line fluctuated frequently. This culminated in a striking conversation:

> *Teacher: He is trying to use his own voice within his poetry. So why does his pace change? Why does it fluctuate? And why is that different from 'They Mess You Up Your Mum and Dad' *claps hand along with the rhythm*?*
>
> *H: Because we don't speak at one pace, we change. He is trying to sound like he is just speaking normally.*
>
> *Teacher: Lovely, he is emulating his patterns of speech. This is something called free verse. It doesn't really have a structure. It emulates the voice that Zephaniah has.*

And, Zephaniah has to emulate the voice he has because he would not be himself without it, and his poetry would not be 'dis poetry':

> *I: So his identity is mirroring his culture and his culture is linked to the way he speaks so if he doesn't write his poetry in that way he's not using his identity.*
>
> *Teacher: If we think about the kind of way that he uses pace and rhythm, and the language that he uses in free verse, it shows his freedom of expression, which in turn shows his freedom of his identity, of his speech that he shows through his poetry.*
>
> *J: He is also kinda saying why should I change?*
>
> *K: He is him. He is free.*
>
> *L: I think it is kinda like acceptance.*
>
> *Teacher: And being authentic within yourself too.*

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The students took this cry for authenticity into their analysis tasks within the next two lessons, where I slowly began to build the idea of looking at sound back into more typical methods of analysis. After listening to the poems, and being introduced to the concept of 'the speaker', students were able to recognise the 'defensive', 'sarcastic' and 'ironic' tone quintessential to dialect poetry. However, without scaffolding from me, their analysis of sound seemed to revert to pre-dialect poetry ways. Students were able to spot 'plosives' or 'sibilance' well, but did not link this back to meaning. There was also a lack of attention to the pace or rhythm that we spent so much time working on the lesson before. Although students were able to make meaning, then, this did not necessarily come from analysing sound; they returned to embodying Billy Collins' (1988) student. On reflection, this may have been because of the use of two different, and quite complicated, poems with the classroom, and thus the lack of time for sufficient input from myself. I amended my final plan on John Agard's 'Listen Mr Oxford Don' and decided to return to a 'new-typical poetry classroom' which included the elements of performance and sound (and context), but was driven by a coloured pen and a visualiser, moulding together my own experiences of poetry whilst growing up. Individual analysis highlighted points such as 'the rhythm in this one changes, which is like his life because life doesn't have a set structure for everyone', and 'the repetition of the monosyllabic 'dem' re-establishes the separation'. Thus, we see much more of a connection between sound and meaning making at the end of the sequence.

How can studying dialect poetry allow students the space to reflect on their own identity and the world around them?

The title 'shaped by our environment' was given to the first class, but it is applicable to the sequence of lessons, and progresses through each one. When asked to add their ideas to a sticky note and pin them to the whiteboard, all students were able to provide a definition of this, some even linking it to poetry itself. One answer that stands out is that of Student M: 'Different life experiences link with different ideas of identity. In poetry, people write about their experiences'. Exactly *how* we are shaped by our environment is recognised through the words of Crookes, as 'she is shaped because she grew up there and has been influenced by others living there, so is picking up things from her society, e.g. the slang'. From the beginning, we have this sense of celebrating difference, and how that forms art, or a self, that sounds beautiful. What is powerful about dialect poetry is that the poet has made the conscious choice not to silence their own voice that has been shaped by their environment. Student M suggests this about Zephaniah: 'he is saying, it doesn't

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matter how you speak, it is still valid almost'. The use of 'almost' almost signals here that the student is shy to commit to something that seems like a defiance. Zephaniah and other dialect poets do not adhere to how people believe they should write, instead they stand their ground (the written page), which is a freedom recognised within the students' homework poems (see Appendix 1).

Only at the halfway mark of the sequence did I realise that the class teacher and I were, almost ironically, the only ones in the room with an accent other than RP. The students, however, had gone a whole half term without recognising my 'difference', which made for stimulating conversation when I brought a Welsh dialect poem into the third lesson. I was unable to find Mike Jenkins performing, thus decided to record myself to find out whether the students would recognise my voice with my Welsh accent. They did not, but then proceeded to clap. Although grateful for such a sweet gesture, it made me think about the masking of my own identity within a space where I am teaching others to be true to theirs, to the point where my real accent is only enacted as a performance. This realisation, and subsequent conversation with the class teacher, fuelled us to complete the set homework for ourselves (see Appendix 1). The students questioned this too:

> *Teacher: So, when I was growing up in Wales, that's what my accent would have sounded like. Now it isn't like that so much.*
>
> *M: Do you miss your Welsh accent, Miss?*
>
> *Teacher: I do miss my Welsh accent, a little bit.*
>
> *N: But why isn't it like that now?*
>
> *Teacher: Because, I've been everywhere, I suppose. I used to live in Wales, but I haven't lived there for about ten years now. I went up to Durham, and to China, and to London and now I am here so.*
>
> *D: If you went to live there again, do you think your accent would change again?*
>
> *Teacher: Yes, so when I go back to visit my family, my accent goes back like that… Okay, what are your thoughts on the poem?*
>
> *O: Well, like, I mean, it is saying like, just because we have a very aggressive accent, we aren't that bad.*

Through his interaction with dialect poetry, Student O proves Myhill's (2015) ideas do not have to be the case for everybody. The inquisition shows a reflective element to their learning about identity within the wider world. At a point where they have made meaning that accent is intertwined with authentic identity, their questions are not only requiring answers from myself, but are also

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opening their minds to part of their identities that ask questions and seek answers. It is this reflection that initiated such detailed text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world analysis in the final lesson (see Table 1).

Text-to-text	Text-to-self	Text-to-world
'London Mine by Joy Crookes and 'streets that are tailored to no one'' 'Reminds me of 'Story of My Life' by One Direction' 'Atticus in To Kill a Mockingbird because he uses words for justice' 'Benjamin Zephaniah's 'Dis Poetry'' 'Julio Polanco's 'Identity' – he will be different shamelessly' 'Reminds me of Levi Roots' song'	'People at the train station are always stopped by security because they look and sound different' 'My dad gets mad at me for not using the word 'to'' 'The ideas in this poem relate to my own life by saying don't be ashamed of the way you speak or for being different. The themes are relatable for many people because there are many stereotypes broken here' 'He didn't graduate but I probably will'	'Racism and stereotypes' 'Non-Standard English and not afraid to use own voice' 'Related to the idea of racial hierarchy and racism still exists' 'Prejudice because of accent and background'

Table 1: A Selection of Annotations

Through these realisations comes the unlearning of stereotypes. When asked to complete connotation curves for 'Standard English' and 'accent/dialect' at the beginning of the second lesson, students scribed juxtaposing lexical fields: one surrounding 'education', 'privilege' and 'wealth, the other focusing on the 'lack of' such. Yet, by the very end of that same lesson, students' empathy in learning that identity is actualised through language prevailed. 'Translating' a dialect prompted most students to include 'wrong' within the first sentence of their feelings-reflection. This poignant activity facilitated such nuanced thoughts on stereotypes when looking at the Welsh and Scottish dialects: 'He is silencing the stereotype, because he doesn't agree'. What is most compelling is that we can take this statement out of context and place it within any lesson of the sequence, and it would still be agonisingly true. By the time students were prompted to complete exit tickets to consolidate their learning, they did not agree either, believing that 'the reader feels included in the Welsh peoples' struggle against stereotypes', and 'there's no way all Welsh people are one way because of how they talk'. Maybe, as Moss (2019) and Brady (2015) infer, "the richness of dialects can" instead "make important contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of" (DfE, 1995, p.2) *the world around them*. Is Standard English too restrictive,

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then? Students were able to provide balanced arguments when answering this, more so than the previous connotation curves suggest, identifying that expressing 'individuality' without 'prejudice' is important. The use of 'too' was queried, however, as some situations require such formalities like 'job interviews', a link back to their previous 'You're Hired!' scheme of work, or 'meeting the queen', 'cos you've gotta be formal then!'

'But where is the evidence for that?' 'Just roam around in the moment, J!': A Conclusion

Whilst wandering around the classroom within the first lesson of the sequence, I overheard the above exchange. Stressed about spotting techniques, as he would within a typical poetry classroom, J was told through a pun on Crookes' lyrics to just enjoy poetry for its voice. For this student, lifting poetry off the printed page enabled an enjoyment previously unheard over sighs. In 'returning to the origin [of poetry] and bringing something back' (Eliot), the musicality of dialect poetry has propelled a move forward to a 'new-typical poetry classroom' that centres meaning making through the intertwined ideas of performance and analysis. Despite my initial fears of bringing such different, and often difficult, dialectical language into a cohort grounded in Standard English, in the final questionnaire all students were able to say that studying dialect poetry has aided their analysis of unseen poetry, even if only by 'a little bit'.

A word in a standardised language is always half someone else's, in the same way that poetic meaning-making is a conversation between the listener-reader and the poet. Each party presents ideas that stem from their own experiences and lifeworlds. To return to the words of Bakhtin allows us to recognise the power of voices. He states '[language] becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word' (Bakhtin, 2010, p.293). There is a strength, then, in the dialect poets' choice in taking back their language. Although unmeasurable, what has been most striking through discussion, and touching through creativity, is the students' own reflections on 'one's own' self. Indeed, there seems to be an opening here for further research in classrooms where dialectical forms of English are more prominent. In exposing classes to the lyrical beauty created through such strength, my hope is for dialect poetry to instil this into the identity of the students' place within the wider world.

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Appendix 1

The following is just a small selection of poems taken from an anthology of identity poetry written by the students (and teachers) who gave permission to be part of this research. The poems were influenced by Dean Atta's 'I Come From', and the aim of including them here is to extend the understanding of the ideas surrounding identity and voice expressed above.

Hearing the Voice of Poetry: An Anthology

For my Year 9 class, who taught me that being Welsh and being an English teacher needn't be two separate identities after-all...

For you, a reminder:

accent (noun): a distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class.

dialect (noun): a provincial, rural, or socially distinct variety of a language that differs from the standard language, especially when considered as substandard.

identity (noun): the fact of being who or what a person or thing is.

self (noun): a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action.

I Come From Yer, Mun! by Teacher E

I come from rolling hills and lulling lilts.
Whispers of hiraeth, untranslatable calls, travelling through winds
Over mountain tops, along musical bloodstreams
And green, green grasses of home.
I come from the land of myth and legend,
From fire-bellied dragons and,
'You have a dragon on your flag? That's so sick!'
'Yeah, but it's not on the Union Jack, you know? We don' belong there.'
I come from elongated syllables, word stress, Welsh stress, too many towns on anti-depressants, twin-town communities, unlocked doors and
Mind tha' over there, will 'ew?

I come from the King of the Valleys.
From shower-song echoing through the town and tales of Dai Gravy across the road

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(he used to be a chef)
And Dai Cake, Dai the Post, and you know Gwyneth from around the corner?
'Yeah?'
'Son was Bandy, Jim?'
'Yeah?'
'Oh, wha' was their surname now?'
'Oh, I carn remember! But, I know 'er, yeah.'
'Died about two weeks ago now.'

I come from grinding mint for nanny's cooked dinners.
From cough, cough, cigarette smoke and coal-covered lungs.
I come from illiteracy.
From thinking of university, is she?
From fire in my belly.
From 'you should apply, you know, there's a quota. They take some from yer,
from The Valleys.'
I come from pride and poetry shelves and self-preservation,
pressure and people from a small nation.

I come from 'You sounded really Welsh then!'
I come from 'As if I am supposed to sound any other way, mun.'

I Come From by Student A

'Where do you come from?' They ask.
When uncertainty stares at us in the face,
It is a natural human quality to understand exactly
Who is in the race.
Never satisfied with acknowledging, but
Always searching for a definition
Because those we see diverging
From a broken society
Have risen.

'Where do you come from?' They ask.
Experience will tell you this answer is never short.
From rolling hills in the humble countryside,
At least that is what I thought.
Lugging around a trail of Canadian baggage but
Proudly armed with a British passport.
I belong to a world of chasing dreams,
Not to see my ambitions being shackled in court.

'Where do you come from?' They ask.
A house erupting with expectations,
An unwavering desire to be unbeatable
Passed down through the generations.
A past littered and disrupted with graves
Mourning the forgotten hopes,
Clawing their way through the silence
Trying to climb the endless slope.

(continues on next page)

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'Where do you come from?' They ask.
A place where apologies dissipate in the silence.
Where a lack of meaningless manners
Is recognised as a bold act of defiance.
A place where mistakes are labelled as weakness,
Second chances are deceitful traps,
And we are too blind to see the bleakness of
The world's own spontaneous attacks.

'Where do you come from?' They ask.
Where Austen and Dickens are the language
Rolling through time like a wave.
Where a single dialect is languid and
Watches the accents, a different road they pave.
Where all our tongues say similar words but
Speak of different times.
Sworn we are to their terms so
We all commit the same crime.

'Where do you come from?' They ask.
I answer:
'I come from a home. A home
Isn't confined to a single place,
Isn't constricted to accepting people by blood.
A home that will welcome strangers' faces.
A home where people are free from being misjudged.
A home that harbours no grudges.
A home sworn to protect.
A home free from the penetrating convict of judges.
A home built and supported by respect.'

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Appendix 2

Poetry Questionnaire

1. Do you enjoy studying poetry? Tick the correct box.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

Why?____

____

2. List six words that come to mind when you think about poetry in the box below.

☐

3. Are the Young Identity poems that you studied for homework different to the poetry that we study in class?

Yes ☐ No ☐

How? Which do you prefer?____

____

4. Do you feel that you can identify with the poetry that we study in class? Think about meaning and use of language here.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

5. How well do you understand the following poetic terms?

(1 - I am confident in my understanding, 5 – I do not understand at all)

Rhythm ________ Tone ______ Meaning ______ Theme ______

Rhyme _______ Language ______ Imagery ______ Pace ______

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6. What, in your opinion, is the most important aspect of poetry? Rank the following in the order, 1 – the most important, 4 – the least important.

(a) spotting poetic techniques within the language _____

(b) the way the poem sounds _____

(c) the meaning and message of the poem _____

(d) the structure of the poem _____

7. When you read a poem, do you read the words aloud?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? ____

____

8. What aspect of poetry would you like to gain more confidence in?

____

____

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

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