

Reconfiguring the 'distribution of the sensible: towards co-creation and equality in higher education assessment

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Overview

- Context
- Theoretical Underpinnings
- Motivation and Research Objectives
- Methodological Framework
- Preliminary Findings
- Implications so far



Context of the Research

The specific objectives of the research within the context of a full-time one-year postgraduate programme in Language Teaching are to:

1. Develop assessments that stimulate critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application of language teaching principles
2. Utilise diverse assessment methods to effectively evaluate different learning preferences and abilities in language teaching contexts
3. Facilitate collaboration between students and educators in the design and evaluation of assessments to enhance learning outcomes in language teaching (Bovill et al., 2011)

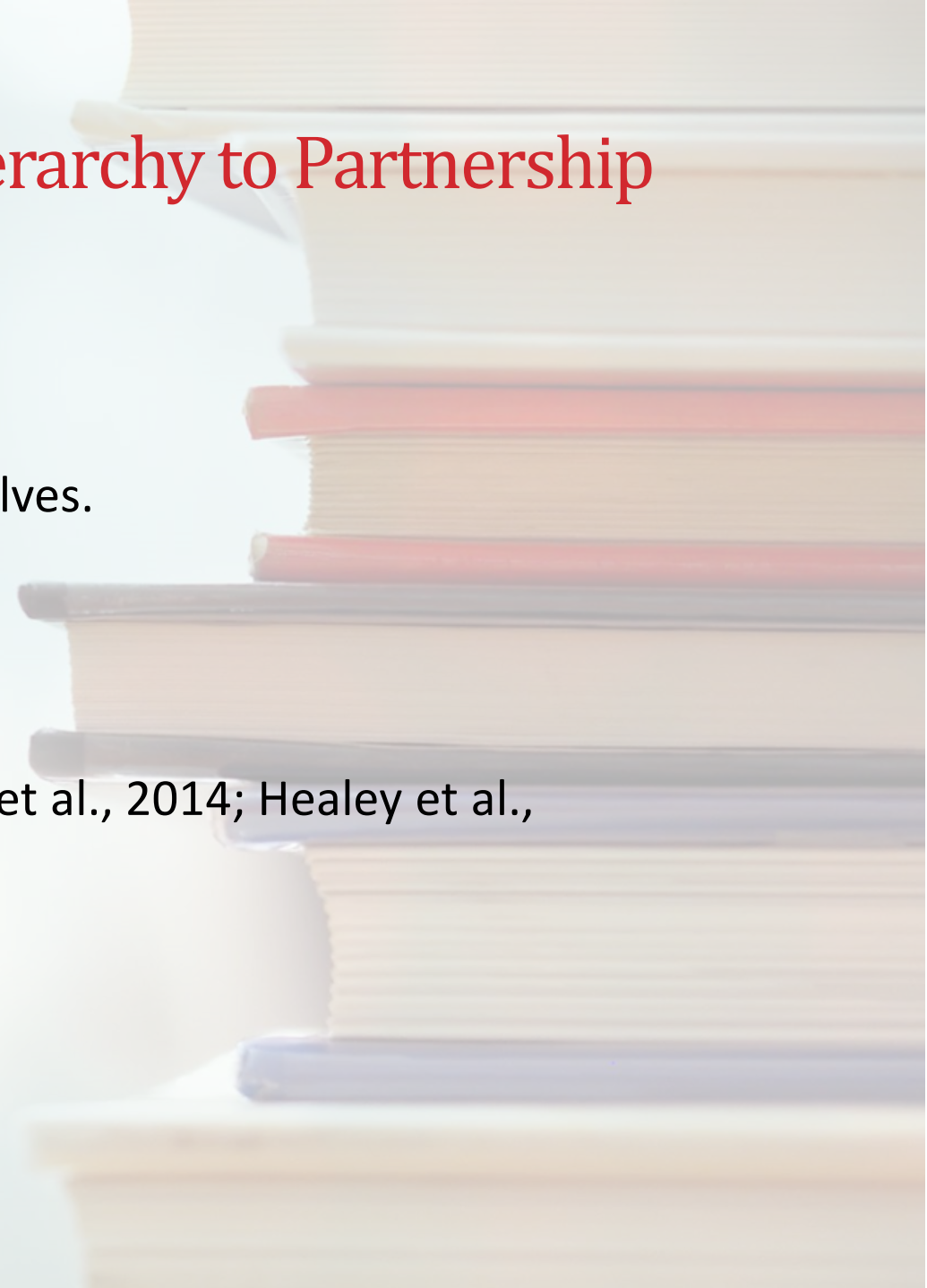
Rethinking Power in Education: from Hierarchy to Partnership

1. Learning, Not Banking

- Freire (1972): Students aren't empty vessels.
- Rancière (1991, 2009): All learners can think for themselves.

2. From Telling to Partnering

- Move from hierarchy to co-creation.
- Students as collaborators, not consumers (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014).



Towards Transformative Assessment and Co-Creation

3. Reframing Assessment

- Conventional assessment promotes learner dependency (Ahmadi & Hasani, 2018).
- Sustainable assessment fosters long-term, self-directed learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2006).

4. Co-Creation in Practice

- Grounded in constructivist learning theory (Doyle et al., 2019).
- Bridges student engagement and authentic partnership (Bovill et al., 2016).
- Emphasises meaningful learner contributions (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013).
- Encourages integration of student and institutional resources (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Who Decides What Counts? Rethinking Power in Assessment

1. Power and Voice

Teachers still hold most assessment authority (Liu & Carless, 2006)

Student voice often clashes with traditional roles (Cook-Sather et al., 2014)

2. Structural Barriers

Professional standards limit assessment change (Deeley & Bovill, 2017)

Student input may be seen as unrealistic or tokenistic (Cook-Sather et al., 2014)

3. Philosophical Challenges

Rancière: traditional teaching divides intelligence unfairly (1991)

Calls to rethink whose voices are "sensible" in education (2004)

Why this Research

- To challenge top-down assessment structures
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- To foreground meaningful student involvement
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- To apply Rancière's ideas in rethinking assessment
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- To design a model grounded in equality and co-creation



Designing with Subversion in Mind

Rooted in Rancière,
this study doesn't ask *how to include* students —
but what changes when they already belong.

It listens to educators and students
not as data points,
but as **co-theorisers of possibility**.

It builds a space
where student-teachers and lecturers think *with*, not *about*, each other.

Not just assessing learning —
but **co-authoring the means of assessment itself**.



Research Question

"How does a collaborative approach to assessment design and implementation impact student learning and engagement within a postgraduate language teaching module?"



Co-creation as pedagogical practice

1. Question Development: Students collaborate to co-construct three assessment questions aligned with one module learning outcome
2. Format Selection: In small groups, students select one question and determine their response format from options including:
 - Short essay; Poster presentation; Podcast; Recorded presentation with voiceover; Webinar
3. Assessment Implementation: Students complete the assessment in their chosen format
4. Evaluation: A dual assessment approach where:
 - Students conduct peer assessment (50% of marks)
 - Teachers provide assessment (50% of marks)

Data Collection Methods

1. **Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted after assessment completion to explore:**

- How active involvement affects motivation and independent learning
- Whether group projects encourage greater ownership of learning
- If group projects demonstrate a broader range of skills compared to traditional assessments
- How co-created assessments promote self-discovery and collaborative learning
- The effectiveness of group projects as platforms for applied knowledge

Preliminary themes

- **Deep-end co-creation** – ‘we ha[d] an opportunity to design the criteria with our teachers together’
- **Empowerment** – ‘It enhanced our understating. ‘I can better understand [what I] learned in lectures and seminars’.
- **Redefining hierarchy** – ‘it connects students and teachers. During co-creating, they need to discuss and negotiate too [not like] top to down traditional feedback [...] the rubrics is designed by students themselves
- **Pedagogical togetherness** – ‘Co creating assessment it shift from teacher centric model to student and teacher together model’
- **Apprenticeship in action** - And I think if we have the opportunities to be trained or discussed with experienced professors, maybe we can design better
- **Tensions** – peer collaboration vs professional obligations. ‘maybe some of them don't want to. Show their own homework assignments to their peers especially the students wait with lower academic. Maybe they they think [it] is not good enough, maybe they will lose face

Points for discussion

- **Calling for a paradigm shift** – teacher as a co-learner and emancipator
- **Towards intellectual equality** – unsettling the distribution of the sensible. Students capable of thought, judgement and contribution
- **Pedagogical togetherness** – shared space of sense making. Learning is ‘produced’ with, not for, students
- **Internalisation of academic judgment** – creation through ‘doing’

Bigger challenges

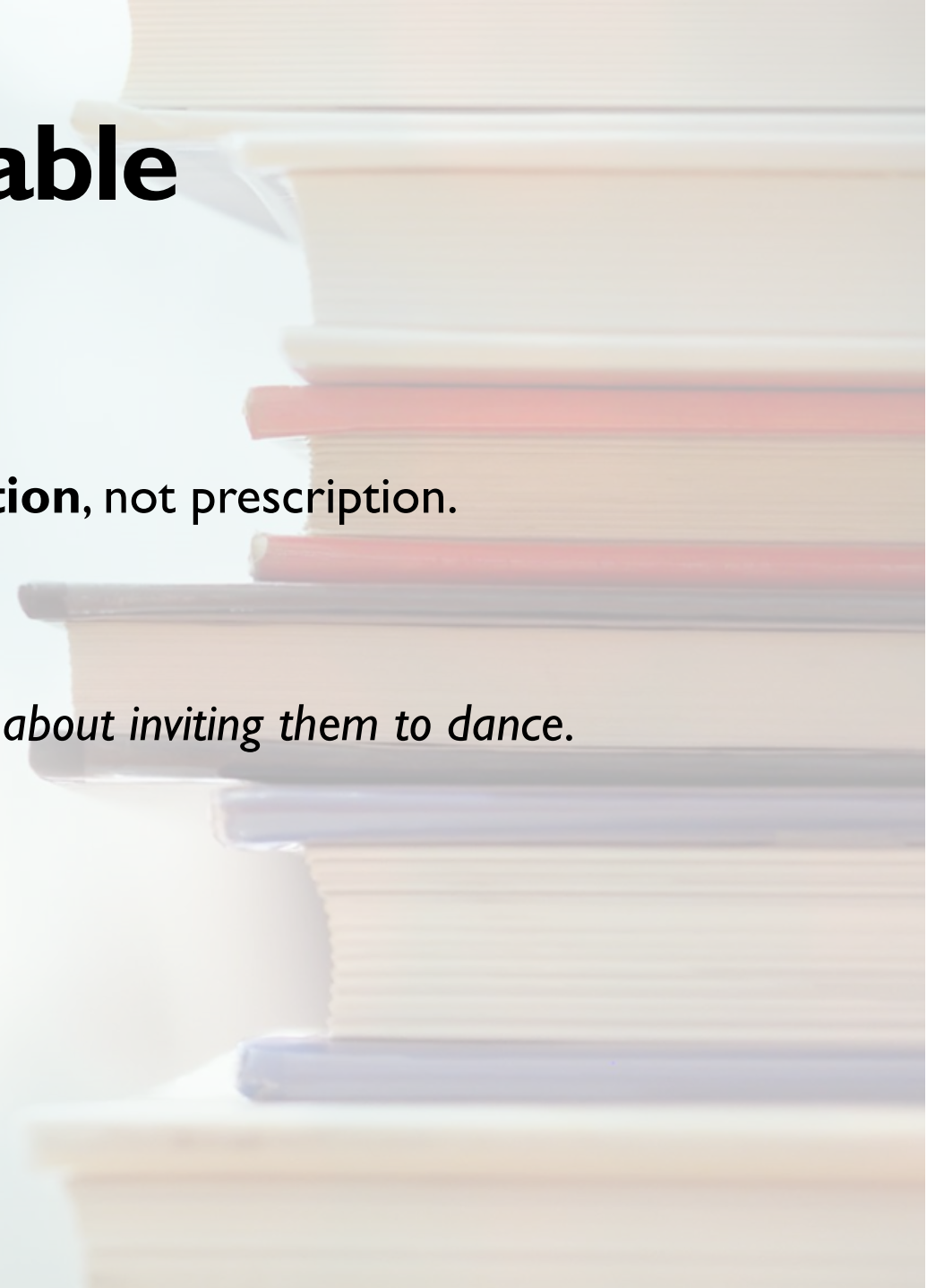
- **Assessment becomes relational** – ensuring standards through negotiations
- **Dealing with risks** of integrity, identity and peer dynamics
- **Rethinking validity** – traditional notions of consistency and fairness need to be reconceptualised?

More than a seat at the table

- It's a call to **co-construct meaning**, not just consult.
- A pedagogy of **risk, care, and shared authorship**.
- A reminder that transformation happens through **relation**, not prescription.

In short,

- *It is not just about giving students a seat at the table —it's about inviting them to dance.*
(adapted from Verna Myers)



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Thank you & Questions?

