

# Using poststructuralism and postcolonialism in education praxis: an exploration of teaching about the ‘developing Other’ in an Australian high school

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*This paper analyses my journey as an early career postcolonial and poststructural theorist and teacher. I ask how different ways of knowing and engaging with the “developing Other” can be incorporated into teaching praxis and curriculum planning? The “developing Other” refers to those and that which is othered in the binary oppositions of developed/developing. The paper calls for a better understanding and incorporation of poststructuralism within the classroom by highlighting the uses of poststructural concepts, including discourse, subjectivity, and reflexivity in praxis. The paper begins by introducing my rationale, providing a discussion of the key theoretical concepts I use, and finishes by demonstrating these concepts in action. This is done by analysing a unit of work and my pedagogy created and delivered to an International Studies class during my final undergraduate internship. The unit explored Timor-Leste’s road to independence and focused on interrogating our relationship to the construction of peoples in Timor-Leste as the developing Other. This discussion aims to contribute the literature that supports poststructural and postcolonial classroom praxis by highlighting, critiquing, and deconstructing students’ perceptions of Otherness through the lens of one classroom. I hope to offer this experience as an instance for questioning and to provide an outline of how these concepts can establish small sites of resistance in education to the destructive forces of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism, especially in education.*

*Keywords: poststructuralism; postcolonialism; praxis, education*

## **INTRODUCTION: ESTABLISHING A RATIONALE**

Poststructuralism and postcolonialism offer classroom teachers a set of theoretical and practical concepts that can transform how we teach. In this paper, I explore how different ways of knowing and engaging with the developing Other can be incorporated into teaching praxis and curriculum planning. I aim to provide a theoretical dialogue through a unit of work on Timor-Leste’s road to “independence”<sup>1</sup> that I developed in 2014 for an international studies class of a predominantly white and female group of 14-

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<sup>1</sup> Timor-Leste was under Portuguese rule for over 400 years until 1974. In 1975 Indonesia invaded Timor-Leste and occupied the country until 1999 when a referendum was held and independence was achieved. In 2002 Timor-Leste became an independent nation.

15-year-old students studying at a selective performing arts public school. The school is in a metropolitan, broadly middle class community; I found the students to be active in issues of social justice.

Interrogating the main question of this paper occurred at the planning and implementation stages of the unit and directly after presenting a version of this paper at the 2014 Australia New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society (ANZCIES) conference. In preparing to deliver the unit I identified three pedagogical features that attempted to create a learning sequence and space that engaged with the “Other” in a tangled and disruptive way: identifying ethical spaces with students; the use of story sharing (through Aboriginal yarning circles); and deconstructing the language we use when talking about *them*, who are the subject of our inquiry. A recent trip to Timor-Leste stimulated a desire to further engage with these ideas and the original conference paper. I soon realised there was a lot of development as a teacher and academic in this time.

This example of praxis is offered at a time when alternatives and possibilities from a postcolonial lens are emerging in resistance to the dominance of neoliberalism in education and educational research globally (Goedl, 2016). My overarching recommendations as a result of my reflexive analysis lie in the need for a greater sense of praxis amongst teachers and the benefits of critique and deconstruction in classrooms with a focus on the production of ethical spaces of inquiry.

In addressing the belief in an opposition between theory and practice, Spivak (1988) argues: “the production of theory is also a practice; the opposition between abstract ‘pure’ theory and concrete ‘applied’ practice is too quick and easy” (p. 70). I looked to the concept of praxis to work against the opposition Spivak describes. Guattari (2000) illustrates praxis as actions and practices of experimentation rather than philosophical speculation. Kemmis (2012) provides an extensive definition of praxis from which I take the following key points: history-making action, in the beneficial interest of those involved and of human kind, which is morally committed and tradition informed, with a long-term perspective on the work we educators do. Achieving this definition of praxis requires an engagement in reflexive and (de)constructive dialogue.

In being reflexive to our practice as teachers, we engage in praxis and maintain commitment to the beneficial interest of education, a powerful rebuttal of neoliberal education policy.<sup>2</sup> The question of what is in the “beneficial” interest of those involved and human kind is problematic and contestable. In navigating my own understanding of this issue, I draw on Kemmis’s (2012) belief that educational praxis is to achieve “Living well . . . in a world worth living in” (p. 895).

I chose to use Timor-Leste’s story as my unit of work for an International Studies class because of my personal connection with a school in Timor-Leste. I visited the school multiple times in the past for short teaching trips and finally accepted a permanent teaching position in 2018. I hold strong convictions that there are stories that need to be explored by Australian school students about the history between the two countries: Timor-Leste and Australia. Despite their extremely connected history, their stories and

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<sup>2</sup> I come from the position that neoliberal policy which includes the commercialization and commodification of education is not the way forward for equitable access to education. Neoliberalism seeks to apply free market principals to social goods such as education which reduces the ability for education to work for social justice and societal equality.

histories are mute in the Australian curriculum.<sup>3</sup> Teaching International Studies presented me with an opportunity to write and deliver a program that aimed to align generic outcomes around cultural understanding. It was a rare opportunity of content freedom that also allowed me to work with the theoretical toolbox I had been interacting with in the academic space.

## **A THEORETICAL BASIS: EXPLORING POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM**

In this section, I aim to illustrate and highlight the key theoretical concepts, or toolkit, that I tried to put to work in my classroom. This section is structured as separate from the “at work” section below to show the process of an early career teacher who goes from the university space—often theoretical in its course nature—into one of my first classrooms. A divide between theory and practice occurs all too often when teachers and university students come to believe that the theory and knowledge taught at university cannot be applied in; such a belief results from technical training and “learning in the real world” discourses that plague the profession in Australia that are part of the neoliberal agenda in Education. Neoliberalism aims to quantify academic and teacher work against economic descriptors and output, undermining the theoretical nature of the teaching profession.

Poststructuralist theorists cite that a criticism of poststructuralism is the creation of inaction and a “theory” which renders relativists “immoral because they are incapable of action or commitment” (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 205). However, an extensive body of literature supports the incorporation of poststructuralism into not only comparative education research but also teaching praxis (see Ninnes & Burnett, 2003). I found that, as an early career teacher, the concept of poststructuralism offers both the ability to critique current teaching practices or systems, and the opportunity to create new spaces of entanglement within the bodies, practices, materials, and discourses that construct my pedagogy; new in the sense of spaces that have been closed off, hidden, or othered and not newly created. With a postcolonial optic, an aim of my praxis is to expose, trouble, and call into question the cultural inequalities and the cruelties that create the worlds of my students and the worlds that exist in the content of our studies. To achieve such exposition, researchers generally apply theoretical concepts, such as Foucauldian discourse, subjectivity, binary opposites, cultural hybridity, and monolithic representation. Each of these theoretical concepts have an important role to play in the classroom in seeking out the discourses and binary opposites that are historically conditioned to construct the other as inferior.

Before detailing classroom discussions from my unit, I will briefly discuss the concept of discourse, which is explored in both the poststructuralism and postcolonialism

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<sup>3</sup> The relationship dates back to WWII with Australian troops being deployed in Timor-Leste. During the Indonesian occupation (1975-99), consecutive Australian governments did not oppose the invasion and occupation (Hogg, 2000). In 1999 Australia led a military taskforce (INTERFET) to restore peace after a Timor-Leste referendum for independence. Australia has been involved in subsequent UN peacekeeping operations and remains a strong aid supporter of Timor-Leste. At the same time, Australia and Timor-Leste are in negotiations over ownership of oil in the Timor Sea, a dispute which is still in negotiations in the International Court of Justice (Clarke, 2014)

theoretical frameworks and is key in the construction of my pedagogy. Discourse is understood as practices that systematically constitute the object of which they speak and therefore positions language as not only describing “worlds” but also creating and discursively constituting social realities (Foucault, 1972). This understanding allows us to view the present and the “way things are” as not inevitable or natural, but rather as historically conditioned phenomenon (Parkes, Gore, & Elsworth, 2010). With a Foucauldian optic, “we are looking for discursive operations, with ‘a discourse’ being a distinct way of making sense (and sense can be made through speaking, thinking, doing, feeling, enacting, etc.)” (Petersen, 2015, p. 64). The implication of understanding Foucauldian discourse is to focus on subjectivities which recognizes the role discourse plays in the formation and desires of bodies as subjects. Subjectivity is an ever-changing process by which we are discursively constituted by that which is around us. We begin to embody particular subjectivities in response to those discourses. By making visible the constitutive power of discourse and subjectivities, it is possible to create conditions that allow student agency in education. That is, rather than teachers creating social change and the possibilities of escape, they guide students towards “the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (Davies, 2004. p. 4). Through an ideas of the creation of a new space, the discourses are made visible and negotiated rather than taken for granted or hidden. If truth and reality are questioned—in this example by analysing colonialism—then we are led to the “problems *about knowledge itself*, for these analyses do not generally arise, and are not comfortably contained, within the knowledge structures in the global metropole” (Connell, 2014. p. 215).

The practice of reflexivity is an option available to educators to encourage discourse, subjects, and the construction of knowledge. It plays an important role in my praxis and in complicating realities and binary oppositions; it broadly forms the methodological approach to my discussion in this paper. Vvasti (2013) calls for “a level of theoretical literacy that will allow us to practice a rigorous (self-)examination of our deepest emotional and political investments” (p. 264). Reflexivity is a process of critique, awareness, and action that involves our understanding of ourselves and the other that constructs us.

There is an important distinction between reflecting on our praxis or being reflexive within it. Pillow (2003) references Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater’s distinction between reflexivity and reflection stating: “to be reflective does not demand an ‘other’, while to be reflexive demands both an other and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny” (p. 177). Reflexivity is never simply an act of looking at the self of yesterday. The self of yesterday does not exist without the Other so can not be an act of sole reflection. Therefore, to be reflexive or the practice of reflexivity includes our engagement with the Other, be it our students or the subjects of our teaching content.

Situating reflexivity within poststructuralism causes the subject to become unknowable and multiple and, thus, caught up in a continuously shifting process (Pillow, 2003). Reflexivity is also a postcolonial process whereby one is looking for what is hidden or Othered through critique and the questioning of the process of knowledge production itself (Goedl, 2016). However, when reflexivity is constantly employed to demonstrate ones’ self-awareness to provide a “cure for the problem of doing representation” (Pillow, 2003, p. 181) the broader purpose of reflexivity and ethical praxis is lost. To simply make our position or subjectivity transparent does not render that position unproblematic (Spivak, 1988). If our subjectivities are in a state of change through the

actions of reflexivity, then so too is our praxis. Pillow (2003) suggests an uncomfortable reflexivity which does not seek an end point of knowing self and other: “reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous” (p. 188). For teachers tangled in the accountability requirements of professional standards and the grids of what marks quality, this theoretical understanding of reflexivity is a powerful way to work within yet against accountability requirements.

### **IN ACTION: CURRICULUM PLANNING**

International Studies is an elective course offered to expand students’ understanding of the complexity of culture and diversity, and Australia’s growing relationships with Asian cultures. Schools can teach the topics provided by the curriculum, such as culture and beliefs, culture and travel, culture and gender, or schools can develop their own unit of work in line with the syllabus outcomes. The story of Timor-Leste is lacking in most of the Australian curriculum and is only available as a school-based option across Geography, Society and Culture, and International Studies.<sup>4</sup>

My unit of work focused on Timor Leste’s road to “independence” and was designed to be a historical investigation of the Timorese peoples’ *struggle* to gain “independence.” I placed quote marks around the word independence to signal that the unit would critique the independent status of Timor-Leste<sup>5</sup> and examine the role of neo-colonialism or, as described by Spivak (cited in Childs & Williams, 1997) “post-colonial neo-colonised world” (p. 7). The unit was structured around the linear historical timeframes of Portuguese Timor-Leste, Indonesian Timor-Leste, and “Independent” Timor-Leste. I left out the time before Portuguese colonization but hoped to weave throughout the unit the presence of a long-thriving Indigenous culture which has transformed, been maintained, and is heterogeneous despite the brutal periods of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The postcolonial framing of my teaching asked students to explore these timeframes with an understanding of the physical and ideological forces of colonialism in its various manifestations. Primarily, we looked at the time of Indonesian occupation and the concurrent global silence; itself an act of global colonialism.<sup>6</sup> The unit spent time focusing on the responses of women, children, guerrilla fighters, Timorese people in exile, and the Catholic Church from both within and outside Timor-Leste. A break down of experiences meant that we would not be looking at the peoples of Timor-Leste as a monolithic group who experienced colonialism; rather we acknowledged cultural hybridity and differences in lived experiences, perspectives, and narratives including

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<sup>4</sup> A 2000 Federal Government Senate report found that Australian governments between 1975 and 1999 hushed reports of human rights abuses in Timor-Leste in order to maintain strong economic ties to Indonesia (Hogg, 2000). The current complex and political nature of the relationship with regard to oil in the Timor Sea makes the history and relationship, perhaps, too political and shameful to enable meaningful ways for inclusion in the Australian curriculum.

<sup>5</sup> Australia played a central role in the rebuilding Timor-Leste after 1999, providing over one billion dollars (AUD) from 1999-2014 (DFAT, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> The occupation’s human rights abuses involved the forced displacement of peoples, violations of the *Geneva Convention*, torture and illegal detention of political prisoners, widespread sexual violence, and the deaths of an estimated 250,000 Timorese peoples as a result of conflict and hunger (CAVR, 2005)

that of the elite creole established by Portuguese colonialism.<sup>7</sup> How these individual or collective stories formed a historical understanding and a collective memory for society became a site of reflection and critical interrogation explored by the students. Thus, in this unit, students came to understand that “history” is fragile and not necessarily based in a fixed reality of truths. It becomes narratives of difference and similarities beholden to the fluid subjectivities of narrative form.

Further to breaking down monolithic representations, we explored the hybrid nature of lived experiences and the “heterogeneity of cultural identities” (Subedi & Daza, 2008, p. 5). I believed it was important to focus on the survival of Timor-Leste’s culture in the face of colonisation, to ensure the achievements of Indigenous cultures are no longer hidden from Eurocentric curricula (Hickling-Hudson, 2011). We focussed on lessons about Tetum, the language of Timor-Leste; spirituality; different lifestyles based on geography; and the various achievements of the guerrilla fighters during the Indonesian occupation rather than on the Other as being a helpless victim to colonial oppression. We acknowledged that there was survival and resistance. This presents its own ethical challenge of how teachers manage the risk of romantic representations of the Other, especially a romantic representation of poverty.

A principal concept we interrogated at the start of this unit on Timor-Leste was poverty. Poverty is often positioned as a fixed and truth phenomenon. Rather than accepting this position, we asked, together, how poverty is constructed. How have poverty and the object of the poor and marginalized people been shaped as a reality? We explored the belief that a person in poverty or a community in poverty is more complex and nuanced than the economic indicators used to define poverty. On reflection, however, I regret not identifying the growing middle class in Timor-Leste, nor spending much time questioning which groups of people within Timor-Leste would describe themselves as “poor”. Nevertheless, I hope that having raised questions about issues concerning the concept of poverty, other teachers and classes will explore the issues further. Questions, such as how have the poor come to be poor, should stimulate a greater awareness of the exploitation created by imperialism and maintained by capitalism and neo-colonialism. As stressed by Said (1993), we must recognize that the past, seemingly distant by time, cannot be separated from today.

It is too easy to teach about poverty with amnesia as to how poverty was created in the first place, and inquire as to how does poverty still exist? We must emphasise the developed world’s link to the creation of poor subjectivities and exposes the binary opposites which are created and maintained. Binary opposites form power relationships that privilege one term or concept over another and continue domination over what is the inferior Other, such as developed/developing, poor/rich, north/south and so on. Burman and Maclure (2011) suggest we “look for the binary opposites in texts and worry away with them” (p. 288). Stronach and Maclure (1997) argue the task is not to choose between the binary opposites one engages with, “but to complicate the relations between them. To open up the complications that have been smothered” (p. 5).

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<sup>7</sup> De Almeida (2001) argues that Portuguese remains one official language of Timor-Leste to ensure that those who speak Portuguese, historically the Timorese elite Creole, remain in power and continue to control the majority who speak Tetum.

## IN ACTION: PEDAGOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

I introduced a deconstruction of the ethics around doing historical inquiry about *them* by *us*, so that the questions *we* ask might change. The praxis of the intellectual teacher should be attempting to know how the other is constructed within our current worlds and unravel the processes and structures of othering with our students. Spivak calls on intellectuals to, “attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society’s Other” (1988, p. 66). In order to do this, I structured three questioning frameworks:

- Consider how ethical is it to study the other without examining *our* interconnectedness to the other in the past, present, and future. For my unit of work, the Other was formed by the binary opposites available of rich/poor, developed/developing, colonizer/colonized, Western/Indigenous, white/black, and so on.
- Highlight the conditions that allow for our engagement with the other via school studies, including the historical conditions, the regimes of truth and our connection to the binary opposites investigated.
- Deconstruct the implication of our study. Who does it benefit? How may it continue monolithic representations of the Other which are oppressive or could our study be transformative? And for whom?

These are difficult questions to navigate with students but need to be embedded and discussed along the entirety of the unit of work. The idea of opening up an ethical space allows for conceptualizing and engaging with a space of “difference and diversity between human communities” (Ermine, 2007, p. 194). While it doesn’t negate the ethical risks, it does allow for a dialogue around them and the opportunity to create grids of ethical conduct with our students.

Focusing on the types of questions we should ask when studying the Other helped frame our deconstruction of monolithic representations, and the processes involved in othering. Deconstruction is a way of affirming what has been Othered or forgotten in discourse, and to do this we must first not assume that what is “conditioned by history, institutions or society is natural” (Derrida in Kofman, 2002). For example, asking “how” the people of Timor-Leste have been constructed as the developing Other rather than taking it for granted that Timor-Leste is naturally poor. “How” questions enable us to explore the discourses at play in whatever context we are interested in (Petersen, 2015). Rather than looking for “why,” which seeks a more constructed set of answers, “how” allows a messier exploration of discourse and phenomenon. For example: How does Australia maintain poverty in Timor-Leste or help alleviate it? How did the Indigenous traditions of Timor-Leste survive colonization and neo-colonisation?

Questions that trouble the binaries between Australia and Timor-Leste allowed students to comprehend poverty as not existing in a far off distant land. Rather, it is connected to their ability to sit in this developed world classroom and study poverty. This was challenging for many students: to have the historical inquiry of poverty end up as an inquiry of themselves and the action of doing historical inquiry. By spending time investigating with a focus on *us* rather than *them*, we were able to trouble and expose the dominance of Western narratives through binary opposition. This allows for the postcolonial aspiration of beginning to affirm what has been othered or forgotten in discourse.

In thinking of the types of questions to investigate and the ethics of doing so, the subjectivity of those who construct knowledge is key within a poststructural and

postcolonial praxis. Subjectivity was introduced into the classroom by challenging the traditional classroom understandings of bias, which has a negative association and students have often been taught to avoid their own and to look for bias in texts. We questioned how knowledge has been constructed, and the way truths are created as discourse is circulated and widely shared, creating social realities. This tied in with our understanding of narratives forming metanarratives. By considering our subjectivities in studying the Other, I endeavoured to open a space where students understood that this entire course was created and presented through the subjectivity of an individual: myself. They were learning about the culture and experience of others predominantly through one person's representation. Students were engaging in discussion that highlighted the unspoken discourses of the student teacher relationship, and the way they are positioned daily at school. We also began to highlight the power teachers can have in presenting knowledge as objective fact and truth and, at times, the students' lack of power to question this without being labelled reprimanded.

To talk through my subjectivity as teacher and to explore the ethics around that, I showed my students a picture of me with "my Timorese family." There are around 20 people in the photo, all of them Timorese except me and the people I was travelling with. We posed in front of the family's house and have done so now each time I have visited them. In the version of the photo I showed my class, I blurred out all the faces except my own. I asked in our learning space who has the voice? Who does not? Whose life am I talking about? Is it a problem that I talk about other peoples' history but they *cannot*? How can we reposition this? This wasn't a case of throw your hands in the air and walk away from the unit or walk away from discussing the life of the Other, but rather this visual aid positioned our learning experience in a way that acknowledged silencing is taking place as we construct our knowledge and understanding of the subject of our inquiry. As such, the Other has not been engaged in dialogue or agreement as Ermine (2007) suggests is needed when creating ethical engagement between Western and Indigenous communities. I have acknowledged the lack of agreement and dialogue and tried to both incorporate and challenge my own subjective implicatedness in the learning process.

Poststructuralism provides a space to incorporate the personal into research to ensure the subjectivity of the researcher is represented so that they are no longer granted the, "absolute authority for representing 'the other' of the research" (Gannon, 2006, p. 475). This same space can be incorporated into teaching praxis. It becomes a task of performing the position of "teacher" who is providing students with an education, while also calling this performative subjectivity into question. It can become a process of making these subjectivities both visible and strange so that teachers are not granted authority to speak for those who have for so long been, and continue to be, silenced. The availability of technology and the increased availability of direct testimonies and so forth does enable other voices to enter into the classroom.

My voice and other voices were constructed as narratives. Rather than using the word narrative with students, I spoke of stories and story sharing. As an Aboriginal man, story sharing is a central focus of my culture and pedagogy. My postcolonial praxis often "is simply the defence and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and practices, in the chaos and violence of conquest" (Connell, 2014, p. 214). In researching Aboriginal Australian knowledge and pedagogies, Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) found story sharing as central to successful lessons. Thus, I tried to create a space whereby stories form the central focus of pedagogy, rather than as a segue from facts or the "real



discussion” at hand. Often, this was done in the form of a yarning circle. It was important that, as a class, we selected an area outside that became our space for yarning circles, and that we understood the spiritual significance of the land as the source of energy and life for Aboriginal peoples. In the yarning circle, the students could share their own stories and the discussion would weave in any direction the students wanted. Not only was the subject of our learning about the Other, but the pedagogical approach was other. It was an experience the students responded to positively. Through my story telling and our yarning circles, it was readily acknowledged that the stories were inherently subjective. This meant all the history I presented through story telling and the sharing of stories, experiences and knowledge in the yarning circle was understood to be subjective. The subjective nature of knowledge, stories, and our understanding of ethics of representation lead us to ask how are some stories more “right” than others and accepted as truth? Or why some stories are not circulated and silenced in discourse or school curriculum.

The social sciences should not avoid talking “about the destruction of social relations, about discontinuity and dispossession, about the bloodshed and suffering involved in creating the world in which we currently live” (Connell, 2007, p. 215). These elements of human history and existence should be discussed in the classroom but not in a way that aims to shock or overwhelm students. Embedding them is one way to continue the discussion around the silencing process in school curriculum and social discourse. Rather than giving facts or numerical statistics about those living in poverty or suffering, we discussed the bloodshed and suffering as an experienced story of one individual with one family, one community and so on. From here we built that up. When I said to students there were over 1,000 recorded cases of sexual violence as a weapon of war in Timor-Leste, students could immediately think of the individual testimonies we had read first. Stories before statistics is a vital shift in historical pedagogy. It was one way available to me in a classroom to make history individual. However, we were not looking to make our lessons filled with sympathy. We made our lessons a space filled with people. Filled with the understanding that history is the lives of people. That these individual stories may resonate with the experience of other peoples, which then creates a historical metanarrative. In this action, I hope the students started to view difference among peoples without a deficit gaze, as well as break down the exotic representations of the global poor or global suffering.

By this stage, we come to one of the biggest hurdles for teachers interested in social change and deconstructive praxis: the requirement to conduct an assessment which seeks to find truth, construct the right answer, and provide a quantified rank of student achievement. It is a struggle global academics are fighting against, as neoliberalism seeks to “assume that there is a homogenous domain of knowledge on which measuring operations may be performed” (Connell, 2014, p. 211). In schools, an assessment task will generally establish a homogenous truth, measured against outcomes or generalized descriptors. How do we ensure oppressive truths don’t continue to be replicated through assessments that decide what is truth or not? We asked how ethical it is to reduce the history of peoples of human beings to a series of comprehension examination questions or a task that shows *our* knowledge of *their* history. I decided to focus on Timor Leste’s involvement in WWII, where, in groups, the students created an awareness campaign, highlighting this moment in Timor-Leste and Australia’s history. We hadn’t learnt the story in class, so it was an opportunity for the students to apply their knowledge of the types of questions we should ask and the ethics of historical inquiry.

Their assignment was to ask questions and make judgements as to how history has been constructed and circulated, and to then try and tell the story to their peers. Some students made presentations, picture books, and some wrote a verbatim play. This form of assessment task was praised by my peers in the staffroom for engaging students in a creative form of higher order assessment. It aligned to the syllabus outcomes as well as other measurements of quality teaching, such as high expectations. Students made a judgement about why the story is either important or not, and why they believed it wasn't taught in schools. Why is the story of the loss of 40,000–60,000 Timorese lives during WWII not widely circulated in Australian classrooms? How has *this* story become one that is less mobile, less circulated, less known, in comparison to other war stories and narratives, such as Gallipoli or the “Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels” of Papua New Guinea. Even now, as a full time history teacher, this exact set of questions has re-emerged as written into the history program as the Kokoda story and not that of Timor-Leste. This example in the history or international studies classroom is a way students can see clearly how history is subjectively constructed.

## CONCLUSION

In aiming to achieve a poststructural and postcolonial praxis I have discussed how different ways of knowing and engaging with the “Other” might/can be incorporated into teaching praxis and curriculum planning. This discussion contributes to the alternatives in education from a postcolonial optic which resist neoliberalism in all domains of education, from classroom pedagogy to academic work and knowledge production. I hope to have highlighted what “different ways of knowing” may mean and how this can be interrogated collaboratively with students by exploring a variety of theoretical concepts and tools. This included identifying ethical spaces with students so that they may be reflexive to the conditions that allow for their inquiry of the Other and the implications of studying the lives of Othered communities. Through incorporating story sharing and deconstructing language, my unit of work resisted Western ways of knowing by placing significant value on Indigenous ways of knowing and practice. Students also identified the inherent subjective nature of knowledge, history, and the teachers who guide them. I was fortunate to engage a class and group of peers who were supportive of my praxis and the unit of work. It was seen as creative and engaging rather than an overt challenge to the norms. Working within the prevailing structures to resist, subvert, and expose them seems a tangible way forward for the poststructural and/or postcolonial educator. Exploring seemingly small sites of resistance has guided my praxis since, in the hope that each class I teach is exposed in some small or major way to the postcolonial and poststructural project of a decolonised more peaceful world.

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