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Giving voice to Mandela: an analysis of accent acquisition intervention for the role of Nelson Mandela in the film Mandela: Long walk to freedom : a case study

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Abstract

Framed by the experiences of the dialogue coaching process for the accent acquisition of the IsiXhosa accent for the role of Nelson Mandela, this study aims to test the methodology I have devised. My tutelage has been rooted in, but not confined to, Western pedagogy, and is present and reflected in the embodied knowledge that I bring to the research. I investigate the use of Received Pronunciation to facilitate this process of accent acquisition and the role a medial point of articulation plays in aiding sound shifts for an accent.

From a socio-linguistic perspective the study investigates the elements that constitute and contribute to an authentic accent and examines placement as one of these as action research. I am testing the methodology and as an active participant in the research, while at the same time conducting the research, I am investigating my praxis and process. Favouring a post-structuralist position, I deconstruct and identify good vocal production and question whether this influences the ability to acquire an accent and facilitates this process. The study analyses vocal coaching as a series of modified interventions, which require continual re-modification through the course of action.

Language subsists and reflects the cultural paradigm within which it exists. Through an analysis of the characteristics and content of that paradigm I suggest how this knowledge can develop the process of accent acquisition.

The study demonstrates the use of Received Pronunciation as a tool coupled with a technical precision and cultural accuracy as valuable and necessary in authentic accent acquisition.