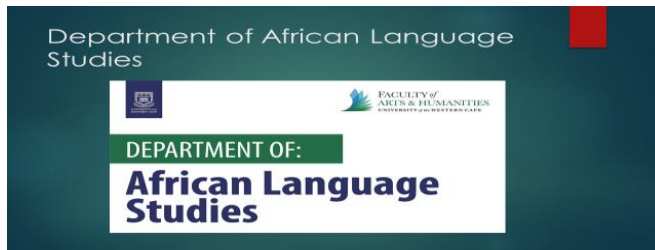




UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



CHAIR *in*
FORENSIC LINGUISTICS
& MULTILINGUALISM
UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE



EXAMINER'S REPORT

CANDIDATE: Michal Kapis

EXAMINER: Prof Russell H Kaschula (University of the Western Cape)

TITLE OF THESIS EXAMINED: Features of oralisation in indigenous prose of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand

DATE OF COMPLETION OF EXAMINER REPORT: 18 August 2022

Introductory remarks

This thesis is innovative in that it is comparative in nature. The selection of countries is also supportive of the thesis as all these countries have indigenous cultures embedded within them, though the context of each country and continent is unique, from Africa (South Africa) to North America (Canada) and New Zealand.

The thesis is divided into six chapters and the broad theoretical premise that underpins the work is the relationship between orality and literacy with its many dimensions, challenges and interpretations. The thesis also presents rich textual analysis of twenty-one texts from the

three selected countries in order to support the hypotheses that are put forward by the candidate.

Specific and general recommendations

The introduction is appreciated and presently acts as a type of abstract. However, I feel that a short pithy abstract of half a page should be presented before the introduction. Presently this comes at the end of the thesis. This very succinct summary of the work (in English and Polish) should rather come before the introduction. The introduction could also form a separate chapter (as with the conclusion) which would mean re-arranging the chapters, unless of course the candidate is following accepted conventions within Poland.

This introduction locates the great divide theory developed largely by Walter Ong and it also contextualises the debate in relation to Goody, Street and many other authors, which is good. Perhaps the work of Ruth Finnegan (as a seminal scholar in the field could be mentioned here too). There is also the extensive body of work by Jeff Opland where he applied the orality-literacy debate to isiXhosa orality in South Africa. His work covers Anglo-Saxon poetry in a comparative manner with isiXhosa orality and employs the orality literacy debate in relation to improvisation etc. by the amaXhosa oral poet – if possible it would be good to bring this study into the debate as well.

In the introduction on pages 2 and 3 the surname Kashula should be spelt as Kaschula.

Chapter 1 deals with the perceived tension between the oral and the written word. This is a rich theoretical area that underpins this research, beginning with the work of Walter Ong from 1982 where he took a very binary approach to the discussion as explicated by the candidate. This discussion does not necessarily provide new insights, but it is a good stepping stone for the research in order to create an understanding the dynamics related to what Walter Ong refers to as primary and secondary orality.

On page 19 the candidate rightfully points out that Ong's assertions and those of others should not be discarded as has been the case with other scholars who have done so. Rather, Ong provides us with a point of departure to discuss the interaction between orality and literacy more fully, especially in relation to societies that may exist in the twilight zone

between post-primary and pre-secondary society. The candidate makes a valid and insightful point here I believe.

The chapter then takes on an interesting comparative discussion covering Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. The work of Zakes Mda and the intsoni or folktale is mentioned.

Perhaps the work of Harold Scheub and how it relates to the orality-literacy debate could also be highlighted here but I leave that up to the candidate and supervisor for consideration.

I also thought the final part of the chapter regarding the discussion on terminology could have been broadened to take into account Ruth Finnegan's perception and support for the term oral literature as well as some reference to the term Technauriture and its place (which has already been mentioned). Finnegan was very much involved in the nomenclature debates between terms such as oral literature and folklore at some point in her career.

Can I also suggest a linking line that links chapter 1 and chapter 2? As it stands chapter 1 ends very abruptly and one is left hanging as the reader. Perhaps this conclusion and linking sentence can be given some attention.

Chapter 2 deals with the features of oralisation, using Ong's important work as a point of departure. Stylistic and typographic features are outlined. The work of established authors such as Okpewho, Cope, Tedlock and others in relation to Africa, North America etc. are used to support the argument made. The relationship between music and the oral word is also traced. The use of concepts such as parallelism in relation to amaZulu orality is also presented. The ontological and epistemological features of orality are also dealt with in the chapter. Native American, Maori and isiZulu texts are referred to in some detail. The archetypes related to characters are also further isolated, looking for example at mythological characters such as the Tokoloshe and Trickster that appears in Nguni orality and how this characterisation is represented elsewhere. The debate is then taken into a postmodern paradigm and this is handled very well by the candidate. The importance and power of storytelling is also highlighted.

This is a very well handled chapter that provides a framework for the analysis of indigenous literatures. It is a well-argued chapter that could be applied to indigenous and oral literatures globally.

Chapter 3 proceeds to introduce the reader to the indigenous peoples of South Africa, New Zealand and Canada – a formidable and challenging task indeed. The chapter looks at the development of literature across what appear to be three vastly disconnected countries and the candidate is able to find similarities and commonalities which tie these indigenous peoples together across continents and spaces. The candidate also deals with the important issue of nomenclature and how Eurocentric views have affected debates. One is also introduced to the texts that emanate from each respective country that will be analysed to support the thesis at hand. With regard to South Africa it is a pity that the statistics that are used are still those from 2011 which makes them somewhat dated.

If the 2022 statistics are available when the candidate undertakes the revisions, then I would suggest that these be inserted into the thesis if possible.

On page 79 should it not be amaZulu in the title of the book?

It is interesting to see how the common factor or denominator in how indigenous communities were introduced to literacy was via missionaries. I think the candidate does well to formulate this chapter from a comparative point of view. The link between orality and literacy is also effectively represented in the chosen texts.

Again at the end I am wondering if there could not be a linking sentence that concludes the chapter and links to chapter 4 dealing with the textual analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 therefore represent the core of the thesis with the analysis of 21 texts chosen from the three countries.

Chapter 4 is a very important chapter indeed. In this chapter the candidate identifies repetition, parallelism, phrases, images, pauses and so on from a stylistic point of view. The works of Matlwa, Xaba, Hulme, Magona, Mda, King, Grace and authors from the three countries are analysed. There is also an interesting section on the use of indigenous language in relation to the dominance of English. This is done in relation to the use of single words, phrases and sentences etc.

I thought this debate could be broadened in relation to national debates that are plentiful regarding language policy, planning and implementation – there are some snippets that refer to the ‘broken link’ with the past, but this is an area that could be further developed I believe

as a possible publishable piece on its own and linking to national debates, but this may be for a separate article. The complications and challenges of using indigenous languages for those readers who do not speak them is also alluded to. The use of code-switching and other linguistic methods are further outlined.

Mhlongo's questioning of whether God can understand isiZulu for example is but one example of how authors deal with language issues in a way that speaks back to power, whether it be religious or colonial power. I found this aspect very illuminating.

I think the analysis of the texts in relation to the identified ways in which indigenous languages are used is indeed very powerful. What makes it unique is the comparative nature and the unusual similarities that are born in language usage between Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. The use of indigenous languages as an oralisation feature is indeed noted as very important.

The breaking of the fourth wall and the way in which authors sometimes speak directly to readers as part of an oralisation tactic is also well put. What is also good is the way the candidate cross-references this with what is espoused in chapter 1, thereby adding a depth to the thesis.

Again, at the end of the chapter the candidate needs to create a linking line that links to chapter 5 for the sake of creating continuity between chapters and for the overall presentation of the thesis.

Chapter 5 seeks to create an understanding of the ontological and epistemological features of the 21 texts in question. Issues around circular rather than linear perception of time are dealt with in relation to the texts. The role of music and song is again highlighted as an important part of oralisation. The role of mythic characters is also dealt with in relation to the texts from the three countries forming the focus of the research. The role of oralised metanarratives is also highlighted. The chapter is detailed and well-articulated.

Place a full stop at the end of the chapter on page 159 and also create a linking line to chapter 6.

Chapter 6 seeks to analyse oralised indigenous prose in relation to the three works that form part of the critique. This oralisation within the texts is analysed by referring to extracts from

the three works in a detailed manner. The candidate managed to show how oralisation in these three texts is in fact interlinked.

I would suggest that the conclusion that begins on page 186 also form a separate chapter as is normally the case in a thesis. The conclusion brings the study together, showing how the authors have been inspired by their own oral traditions and have managed to transport these onto the written page when writing primarily in English.

The abstract on pages 191 and 192 should come at the beginning of the thesis as pointed out above – the abstract is there to facilitate the readers understanding of the work and it makes no sense to have it at the end. Of course, the conventions might be different according to the respective university and country where the work is being presented, in which case then that would be fine.

In the bibliography the place of publication for Sindiwe Magona's novel should be reflected as Cape Town rather than South Africa.

Concluding remarks

There are no major structural flaws in this thesis. It is well written and argued. The candidate must be commended on embarking on a daunting comparative task of comparing and contrasting 21 works from three very different countries and handling the task at hand with great insight and critical vigour. The balance between theory and empirical data analysis is worthy of a doctoral degree.

In the light of all of the above I would suggest that the doctoral degree be awarded to Michal Kapis and that all corrections be done to the satisfaction of the supervisor.

It would also be good if this thesis could be published as a book in order to make it more accessible to the public, in Europe and in Africa as well as New Zealand. Also, parts of the thesis can be published as journal articles.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further information is required and thank you for the opportunity to examine and read this work.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. H. Kaschula', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Russell H Kaschula
Professor of African Language Studies

Chair: Forensic Linguistics and Multilingualism
Departmental Postgraduate Coordinator
Department of African Language Studies