LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN YOUNG INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LANGUAGE
SPEAKING MIDDLE CLASS ADULTS WHO ATTENDED EX-MODEL C SCHOOLS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in Psychology (Research) in the Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape

Boitumelo Monageng
3104232

January 2012

Supervisor: Prof. Elize Koch
Co-supervisor: Dr Shazly Savahl

Keywords:
Identity, language, ex-model C schools, learning in second languages, indigenous African languages, hegemony of English, racial interactions, ethnic and racial identities, Social Constructionism, thematic analysis.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Classification</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Structure</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructionism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical and cultural specificity</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is sustained by social processes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and social action got together</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Development in Post-colonial Contexts</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialectical theory of cultural in-betweenity</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Teaching and Learning in a Second Language

The Dominance of English

Interrelationships between Language, Ethnicity and Race in Identity in Schools

Language as Exclusion: Adoption or Resistance of Dominant Discourses

Summary

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Research Design

Participants

Data Collection

Procedure

Data Analysis

Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Study

Reflexivity

Ethical Considerations

Summary
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Findings in the Study

Theme 1: Making Sense of the New School Environment
  Adjustment to language
  Language and racial interactions

Theme 2: Identity Construction
  Ethnicity and language
  Socio-historical processes and influence on identity
  Constructions of black and white people as different
  Constructions of difference between black people who attended township schools and self

Theme 3: The Role of Language in Participants’ Lives
  Advantageous uses as a result of schooling experiences
  Contextual uses
  Perceived advantages of communicating in English

Summary

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Discussion of Objectives

Limitations

Implications of Findings
ABSTRACT

The central aim of this study was to explore the identity formation of black African middle class young adults in the context of their educational and language experiences in ex-model C schools. The study was motivated by a need to understand how socio-historical events which play out in language in education policies and practices, affected the identity constructions of young black adults who had been through a schooling system where English was used as the language of instruction. The study adopts social constructionism as the epistemological position, given that it considers individuals’ identities to be socially, historically and culturally constructed. Post-colonial approaches to identity construction were utilised, influenced by the works of Frantz Fanon and Hussein Bulhan. The study utilised a qualitative design, using semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. Three participants who formerly attended ex-model C schools were interviewed. One interview was conducted for each participant. Thematic analysis was then used as a method of data analysis to identify the ways these young adults make sense of their experiences relating to identity constructions. With regard to the findings of the study, three main themes were identified, namely making sense of the new school environment, identity construction, and the role of language in the participants’ lives. Overall, findings of the study revealed that identity constructions were not static, but instead reflected the historical and social processes in which the participants lived. The participants adapted to the language of the school, and considered themselves to be multilingual as they were able to communicate in the language that was required for economic success. The present hegemonic status of English was accepted by the participants, because the ability to communicate in this language meant job security and an ability to communicate beyond boundaries. The mother tongue was still used by these participants, but it was used in contexts which were deemed appropriate by the participants. Race and class as markers of difference emerged as important constructs for identity formation.
In conclusion, it was found that these young adult speakers of indigenous African languages were negating their mother tongue in the school and in social and economic contexts. In some cases, this led to alienation or feelings of inferiority. Indigenous African languages need to be promoted in the educational setting, and further acknowledged in other sectors of society and the economy. If African languages are presented as having some sort of utility in the economic sector, this will hopefully result in a change of attitude amongst indigenous African language speakers towards their own languages, contributing to the construction of multilingual identities which will reflect a truly democratic society.
DECLARATION

I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University’s policy in this regard. I declare that this mini-thesis is my own, original work. Where someone else’s work was used (whether from a printed source, the internet or any other source) due acknowledgement was given and reference was made according to departmental requirements.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deepest thanks to my supervisor, Professor Koch. The knowledge and feedback she provided was invaluable, but most importantly her enthusiasm, patience and interest made this journey a pleasant one.

A special thanks to the participants of this study, for willingly taking some of their time to share their experiences with me.

Thanks to Dr. Savahl for his feedback and input.

Lastly, I want to thank my family for their support throughout my studies. And a special thanks to my dad, for all the sacrifices and never ending, unquestioning support that he has always provided me with.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past century there has been a paradigm shift in the understanding of individual identity (Borg, Grech & Regan, 2010). Historically, one’s identity was essentially decided upon at birth, with three predominant factors, ethnicity, geography, and religion, determining individual identity (Haines, 2007). In recent times, however, characteristics that were previously considered predetermined have been seen to be continuously constructed in given social contexts (Borg, Grech & Regan, 2010). People are more likely to possess a number of different identities, some individual, some collective, and others which come into play depending on the social context (Jenkins, 2008). Individual identity can be considered to be far more fluid than it was in the past (Borg, Grech & Regan, 2010).

Studies on identity and identity formation can be approached in different ways, depending on the researcher’s interests and goals. The researcher’s conceptual definition of identity in this regard determines what aspect of identity will be focused on. Individual identity may be formed on intrapersonal, interpersonal, communal, national or international interactions (Borg, Grech & Regan, 2010). The focus may be on exploring the ways in which interpersonal interactions mould an individual’s identity. Alternatively, the study of identity can be approached focusing on collective groups, such as gender, race, ethnicity or political groups to which individuals may be affiliated (Cerulo, 1997).
In this study, the focus will be on individual identity and its construction against a given social and historical background, namely the setting of ex-model C schools (to be explained later). Identity will be considered as contingent on social and political factors (Hook, 2003). The term will be used to refer to the way people understand their relationships with the world, and how those relationships are constructed across time and space (Norton, 1997). It will be regarded as flexible and as a contextually contingent resource open to change (Hook, 2003; Miller, 2000).

It is essential to emphasise at this point that the literature differentiates between ‘self’ and ‘identity’. The ‘self’ refers to a reflexive process based on how individuals view themselves holistically, taken against their social environment (Giddens, 1991). Self-understanding is essential in the building of a coherent sense of identity. Identity can be considered as qualities that a person presents to others, which differentiate him/her from other people in the world (Soddy, 2001). The ‘self’ is closely related to the concept of identity, in that it refers to individuals’ reflections of who they are, while identity places the self in a social setting, and is seen more in interactions with other people (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). As already mentioned, for the purposes of this study, identity will be conceptualised as multifaceted and tied to social practice and interaction.

**Background**

In South Africa, the social markers of difference, namely race, language, culture, gender, religion, region and class, have at different times played a decisive role as determinants of identity (Alexander, 2001). Language, race and ethnicity as markers of difference, were particularly salient historically, as they played an important role in the construction of different
nation states, a consequence of the previous apartheid government. The introduction of ‘Bantu education’, intent on providing education for children in the former homelands, created an unequal platform in educational settings. Amongst other things, the Bantu education system advocated teaching taking place in the mother tongue for black learners. This was not necessarily a bad thing, but it did mean that they would be exposed to inferior job opportunities compared to white learners who had studied through the medium of English (Martin, 1997).

Post 1994, the South African government has aimed to promote language equity by supporting diversity within the school setting (Beukes, 2009). To reflect this, language rights in South Africa currently state that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice and to further participate in the cultural life of their choice (Republic of South Africa Bill of Rights - Chapter 2, 1996). On paper, the shift from the conception of a monolingual to that of a multilingual nation has been achieved (Alexander, 2001). In practice, however, the shift is not fully evident (Alexander, 2001; De Wet, 2002). As it now stands, specifically referring to education, African languages are considered to have little instrumental value in comparison to English, which is perceived as the preferred language of education (Beukes, 2009).

The powerful status of English is a major factor considered by parents when choosing to send their children to ex-model C schools. During the past 50 years or so, English has become not merely “a” but in fact, “the” global language (Crystal, 2003). The ability to speak the language grants access to job opportunities, and leads to economic rewards (Posel & Casale, 2010). For instance, Posel and Casale (2010), using data from a study from the National Income Dynamics
Study (NIDS) which sampled over 28000 South Africans, have shown that the average monthly earnings of African people who can speak English are about 27% higher than those who are not proficient in English. In contrast to Afrikaans, which was a forced medium of instruction in black schools leading to the famous Soweto uprisings of 1976, English appears to have a positive image to many black African language speaking South Africans (Alexander, 2001), so much so that the ability to speak the language also gives one a positive social image.

Many indigenous African language speaking learners are taught in a language that is different from the one spoken at home when entering the schooling system (De Klerk, 2002). Black African parents choose to send their children to ex-model C schools with the hope that it will grant their children access to opportunities that come with being able to communicate in English (Beukes, 2009; De Klerk, 2002). An additional motivating factor for choosing ex-Model C schools is the current state of first-language curriculums of African languages. These languages are not well developed, and there is a shortage of resources and lack of political will which would lead to their successful teaching (De Klerk, 2002). In addition, considering that black education collapsed with the enforcement of mother-tongue education during apartheid, black parents may have come to associate poor education with their mother tongues and educational success with English (Banda, 2000). However, in strong contrast to the present situation in which English is the preferred medium of instruction, the possibility is also considered that it may impede learning, and lead to poor mastery of both English and the mother tongue (Banda, 2000). In fact, poor matric results and the general lack of academic skills among black learners at schools and at tertiary levels have been attributed to the use of English as a second-language medium of instruction.
School Classification

In the early 1990s, towards the end of apartheid, the then Minister of Education Piet Clase, allowed former white state schools to choose one of three school Models, on the basis of a parental vote (Hofmeyr, 2000). If a school chose Model A, it was allowed to become private with no state subsidy. If Model B was chosen, the status quo would prevail, and state funding would be reduced to 70% of the current level. A Model C school would receive state funding only for its staff, and was allowed to determine its own admission policies. The majority of former ‘white’ schools chose the Model C option, also voting to admit black learners. A handful of schools became private and very few, mainly poor Afrikaans-speaking schools became Model B schools (Hofmeyr, 2000).

According to Hofmeyr (2000), the tag ‘ex- Model C’ covers many different realities. Labels such as Model A, Model B or Model C are no longer meaningful with regard to the composition of the pupils at the school and the quality of education offered by the school (Hofmeyr, 2000). Some ex-Model C schools now have an almost wholly black pupil enrolment, especially if they are English-medium schools in the centre of towns or in the nearest suburbs to the city centre. Other ex-Model C schools are racially mixed, primarily determined by the location of the school, the fees, and the racial composition of the geographical area. In terms of quality of education, in wealthier communities, ex-model C schools are able to charge relatively high fees, thereby being able to employ additional staff, have smaller classes, and offer a broad curriculum of activities (Christie, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the term “ex-model C schools” will be used to refer to formerly ‘white’ schools which opted to admit black learners with the demise of apartheid.
Rationale

As mentioned, a majority of black indigenous African language speaking children are sent to ex-model C schools with the hope of receiving better education, and being taught in English (De Klerk, 2000). The demise of apartheid, and with it school segregation, meant an influx into ex-Model C schools of black learners who spoke indigenous African languages (Kamwangamalu, 2003). When entering the school, these learners are introduced to a language different from the one spoken at home (De Klerk, 2000). The learners often have to adapt and get used to the new language, and those who cannot, find themselves unable to meet the minimum requirements for becoming successful learners (De Klerk, 2002). Some of these learners go on to become proficient in the language of learning and teaching, to such an extent that their mother tongue (MT) starts playing a minimal role in terms of communication and in their social lives.

This study explored the experiences of young speakers of indigenous African languages who formerly attended ex-Model C schools. The focus was on their subjective experiences in the context of the ex-Model C school in which they had to construct their identities, and which might still influence the way they view themselves and relate to other people. The study aims to see where African languages stand in these young adults’ lives now that they can reflect back on their experiences. Additionally, the way these experiences impacted on identity formation, based on exposure to their new school settings, was evident from this study.
Aims of the Study

The overall aim of the study was to explore the identity formation of black African middle class young adults, as a result of their educational and language experiences in ex-model C schools. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To explore the language experiences of young middle class Africans in ex-model C schools settings.

2. To explore the relation between these experiences and the identity construction of these participants.

3. To explore the attitudes about language use in different domains (both English and indigenous African language) of these young people.

Language has been cited as a symbol of one’s heritage, and instrumental in the formation of identity (Gudykunst & Tiny-Toomey, 1990). If one acknowledges that “learning appropriate linguistic habits involves more than learning the language; it often involves social and psychological adaptation, changes in beliefs, attitudes, values and other behavioural patterns” (De Klerk, 2000, p.200), it becomes clear that entering a school where one is taught in a language different from the one spoken at home, will certainly influence identity constructions. Motivated by an interest in the mediation and constructions of identity, this research has taken African language speakers in ex-model C schools as the focus, to understand specifically how the socio-historical environment has an impact on identity.
Summary

The introductory chapter started off with a discussion on identity construction as conceptualised in the study. Thereafter, a historically based discussion on language in the educational setting was provided. Based on the provided background and rationale, the aims and objectives of the research study were defined.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 2: Theoretical considerations

This chapter will deal with social constructionism as the epistemological position of the study. Issues relating to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of social constructionism will be discussed, and the main tenets of social constructionism outlined. Post-colonial approaches to identity will then be discussed as the theoretical framework of the study, drawing on the works of Frantz Fanon and Hussein Bulhan.

Chapter 3: Literature review

This chapter will contain a review of literature on the experiences of learners in schools, and the role of language in shaping and negotiating identity. Studies that focus on teaching and learning of second languages, the dominance of English, and the complex relationship between language, ethnicity and race in schools, will be reviewed. The exclusionary and assimilationist nature of language in ex-model C schools will also be discussed in this chapter. All these studies will be reviewed keeping in mind social context and its influence on identity constructions.
Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will describe the methodology of the study in terms of the research design, participant description, data collection and analysis methods. A section on reflexivity and trustworthiness of the study is included.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of findings and discussion

Chapter 5 will provide an interpretation of the findings after having conducted thematic analysis. Three themes will be discussed, namely making sense of the new school environment, identity constructions, and the role of language in participants’ lives. These themes are further divided into sub-themes allowing for an in-depth discussion. The discussion reveals that all participants had to adjust to the language of the school which was different from their mother tongue. They also considered themselves at an advantage for being able to communicate in the language that is associated with economic rewards and social mobility. The mother tongue was still used by these participants, its use being mainly governed by the contexts they found themselves in. The contextual uses of language and attitudes held by the participants had varying implications for identity constructions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter will deal with the implications of the findings as presented in Chapter 5. The findings will first be discussed with reference to the formulated objectives of the study, after which the limitations of the study will be stated. An integrated discussion focusing on the main aim, as well as the significance of the study, will be provided. Lastly, recommendations for future research will be suggested.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses social constructionism as the epistemological position of the study and as a broad theoretical framework adopted to understand identity. The key assumptions of social constructionism will be outlined. An argument will be presented on how identity as a construct can be in continual flux and influenced by social and historical processes, and consequently emerge as socially constructed. Approaches to identity development in the post-colonial context will then be discussed. More specifically, Bulhan’s theory of cultural in-betweenity (Bulhan 1980, 1985), which will structure the discussion of the findings in the study, will be elaborated on. In concluding the chapter, a brief discussion on the concept of culture and how it is approached in the study will be provided. It is emphasised that even though Bulhan’s theory of cultural in-betweenity is utilised, culture is not assumed to be static and unchanging; different ‘cultures’ are assumed to be able to learn from, and influence, each other in diverse ways.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism has its roots in numerous academic fields and traditions, with influences from phenomenology, philosophy, sociology of knowledge, and social psychology (Burr, 2003; Stam, 2002). Authors like Kenneth J. Gergen, Mary M. Gergen, John Shotter, and Theodore Sarbin may be viewed as the major contributors to the field of social constructionism (Burr, 2003). In the field of psychology, it was first introduced in the writings of Kenneth J. Gergen, who depicted knowledge as historically and culturally bound, and emphasised that research should be expanded beyond individuals into social, political, and economic arenas (Burr, 2003).
There is no agreed definition of social constructionism. Stam (2001) states that social constructionism may be regarded differently by scholars; at times it may be viewed as a movement, a position, an approach, or even as a theoretical framework. Overall, the term “social constructionism” serves as a label which encompasses different positions (Stam, 2001). There is no one specific characteristic that can be regarded as all-encompassing of social constructionism. However, the main underlying feature of the constructionist paradigm is that knowledge is assumed to be subjective, and created by individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowledge is based on individuals’ own understanding of social realities; it is variable and personal, such that individuals’ constructions are elicited through interactions between investigators and respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

At an ontological level, Burr (2003) differentiates between two broad major forms of social constructionism, namely micro and macro social constructionism. Micro social constructionism focuses upon the micro-structures of language use in interactions, while macro social constructionism is concerned more with the role of macro-linguistic and social structures in framing social life. Micro social constructionism regards social constructionism as taking place in everyday discourse between people in interaction. From a micro social constructionist perspective, multiple versions of the world are available through discursive constructive work, and there is no sense in which one individual’s reality can be said to be more real or true than another. Micro social constructionism includes the works of Kenneth Gergen and John Shotter, and is associated more with discursive psychology (Burr, 2003).
Macro social constructionism on the other hand, influenced by the work of Michel Foucault and Carla Willig, acknowledges the constructive power of language but sees this as derived from, and constitutive of, social structures, social relations and institutionalised practices (Burr, 2003). In this type of social constructionism, the focus is on issues of power, with aims of analysing various forms of social inequality, such as gender, race, and ethnicity, and with the intention of challenging these through research and practice. Macro social constructionism can be said to be characteristic of Foucauldian discourse analysis (Burr, 2003).

Macro and micro versions of social constructionism should not be seen as mutually exclusive (Burr, 2003). It may be more suited to the aims of this study to take into account the multiple versions of reality created through everyday interactions and analyse these in the context of power and social inequality in which these interactions occur (Burr, 2003). As the study aimed to explore identity constructions of three individuals within the context of the ex-model C school, analysis was conducted drawing mainly on the historically constituted nature of the social world, in this case the historical background of ex-model C schools. The micro-structures of language used as a constructor of social reality have not been emphasised. Where applicable, interpretations were linked to existing discourses, for instance those relating to multiculturalism and the English-only discourses in the educational setting. The resistance of existing discourses pertaining to race, referred to by the participants, was also discussed in the findings and discussion chapter. This analytical approach would seem to be more characteristic of the macro approaches of social constructionism, as it focuses on power dynamics in society. Having said that, multiple versions of the world (which are considered to be more aligned with the micro approach to social constructionism) were elicited by the interview method, and all three
participants’ accounts were taken to be true and representative of their realities. Thus one could argue that the analytical approach seems to be characteristic of both micro and macro approaches to social constructionism.

Although social constructionism is associated with different scholars and linked to various disciplines, there are key assumptions which can be said to define all types of social constructionism (Burr, 2003). To be discussed next are the key assumptions which can be said to define and unite the different types of social constructionism. These assumptions have guided the conceptualisation of the study.

A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge
Social constructionism insists that one takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge (Burr, 2003). It encourages critical thinking about the observations encountered in the social world. For instance, categories used and observed in the world do not reflect real divisions, but are socially constructed by people. The assumption that knowledge is based on objective, unbiased observations must be questioned, because knowledge is assumed to be the product of human constructions (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985).

Historical and cultural specificity
From a social constructionist perspective, ‘historical and cultural specificity’ refers to the ways in which individuals come to understand the world, which are dependent on history and culture (Burr, 2003). Concepts and categories used in the world are historically and culturally specific. Meaning is attached to different categories and concepts, which reflect where one lives in the
world. Furthermore, one culture’s way of understanding is not necessarily better than the next; instead, different cultures, situated in historical times, have their own ways of knowledge production. This implies relativism in which knowledge is considered to be local and specific (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

**Knowledge is sustained by social processes**

Social constructionists are of the opinion that knowledge is created through human interaction. The encounters and interactions amongst individuals are regarded as ways in which people construct different versions of reality. Through these interactions, individuals also share and transmit information. Thus from a social constructionist perspective, knowledge is something which is actively created and which does not inherently exist within people (Burr, 2003).

**Knowledge and social action go together**

The constructions made about the world guide people’s actions (Burr, 2003), and each construction can lead to diverse types of action from different people. Constructions about the social world sustain some patterns of social action, and exclude others. Language is also thought to have a performative role in social constructionism (Burr, 2003). It is more than a way of simply expressing oneself; it is conceptualised as productive, and as constructing different versions of social reality (Willig, 2008). Concepts and categories are used and reproduced through language. Consequently the way a person thinks and acts, and the concepts and categories they use, are created and reproduced through language, and are a further reflection of the society in which one lives (Burr, 2003).
This study has adopted social constructionism as its epistemological position in that it treats the information generated as subjective, intersubjective, and co-constructed by the researcher and the participants. Moreover, this information is considered to be situated in a specific historical, social, and cultural period, so that it is unique to this context and may differ if viewed from a different socio-historical period. Ex-model C schools were taken as institutions whose making was influenced by complex historical processes, which in turn influenced individuals’ identity constructions. The participants’ accounts of their experiences in the school were taken as true representatives of their realities. None of the participants’ accounts were interpreted to be more real or true than others (Burr, 2003). To be discussed next is the theoretical framework of the study. The framework places identity construction in a post-colonial context, and draws on Bulhan’s (1980, 1985) theory of cultural in-betweenity to explain the process of identity development in this context.

**Identity Development in a Post-colonial Context**

Hook (2003) refers to the post-colonial period as “the historical period immediately following the age of European colonial expansion” (p.110). Unique to the South African context is the post-apartheid period, which can be considered as a variant of the post-colonial period (Hook, 2003). Although apartheid laws and forms of governance have been non-existent since 1994, the divisive legacies are still present in the country. For many South Africans, post-apartheid is more than just a historical time period. The term “denotes a particular critical orientation to understanding the relationship between colonisers and colonised, and the psychological, material and cultural effects of these relationships” (Hook, 2003, p.110).
In the educational setting, the ex-model C school emerges as an institution which resembles the legacies of apartheid policies. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, towards the end of apartheid, the then Minister of Education allowed former white state schools to choose one of three school Models (Hofmeyr, 2000), which were explained above. The majority of former white schools chose the Model C option, voting to admit black learners. Many black learners then moved to these ex-model C schools, hoping to gain access to a better education.

Even though, on paper, South African schools had become integrated, with all learners regardless of the colour of their skin gaining access to the schools they wished, the language needs of all learners were, and still are, not taken into account. The ex-model C school is not equipped to deal with multi-cultural and multi-lingual classes, which also means that the language needs of most learners are not met (Hofmeyr, 2000). The language situation in ex-model C schools excludes indigenous African language speakers, and favours those who can speak English. This situation, where one group adopts a dominant language, is seen in the ex-model C context. In these schools the use of African languages is discouraged, and learners are encouraged to speak English, the dominant powerful language. Having stated this, the theory of cultural in-betweenity will be elaborated on in order to put into context identity formation in the ex-model C school.

**Dialectical theory of cultural in-betweenity**

The socio-political landscape in South Africa has been significantly altered and reshaped after the demise of apartheid, providing necessary and often uncomfortable spaces for the exploration of shifting identifications (Prinsloo & de la Rey, 1999). Bulhan (1980, 1985) in his dialectical theory of cultural in-betweenity, elaborates on the process of identity development when one
group of individuals has become dominated by another. The theory proposes three identification phases or patterns. Each phase represents reactions to the dominant Euro-American world on the one hand, and to the dominated indigenous culture on the other. These stages should be kept in mind with regard to the ex-model C school context and identity construction in that context.

The first stage consists of efforts of increased assimilation into the dominant culture while simultaneously rejecting one’s own culture (Bulhan, 1980, 1985). This is called the ‘capitulation’ stage and involves a pattern of compromise. This first stage is where “cultural and racial alienation is at its highest; the standards, values and ways of knowing and understanding our self are almost exclusively those of the dominant culture” (Hook, 2003, p.122). Being exposed to a language other than one’s own in an environment which discourages the use of the mother tongue and encourages the use of the dominant language, may come to mean that children in ex-model C schools will reject their mother tongue and identify more with the language of the school.

The second phase of identity development is marked by a rejection of the dominant culture, and romanticised identification with one’s own culture; this phase is referred to as ‘revitalisation’ (Bulhan, 1980; 1985). This is where people come to reject the dominant culture and come to associate more with their own culture (Hook, 2003). In the ex-model C school context, it might be difficult to stay in this phase because learning requires that pupils speak the dominant language of the school, which is English. Therefore, even though learners may have romanticised views of their cultures, the mere fact that they may have to communicate in English within the school setting forces them to identity linguistically with the dominant culture.
The third phase is marked by synthesis and revolutionary commitment to socio-political transformation. This is called ‘radicalisation’ (Bulhan, 1980, 1985). In this phase people do not merely accept the domination, but also synthesise aspects of the dominating culture with those of their own, to change and construct their social realities (Hook, 2003). This phase emerges as the ideal, where one group does not dominate another, or one culture is considered superior to another, but rather where individuals transform themselves in society and come to define themselves in such a way that they are emancipated from all forms of racial categorisation. The ideal situation, transferred to the ex-model C school, would be where all learners’ language needs are taken into account, and where learners have space to play and construct their identities, drawing on all resources available to them.

These stages will be looked at in the context of the ex-model C school, to understand how African young adults constructed their identities in a context which was not accommodating to their languages. All three of these stages are said to exist in marginalised people, with one of the stages being the most dominant (Hook, 2003). The phases may co-exist in individuals simultaneously, and should not be imagined as occurring in a separate sequential manner, but rather co-existing in a state of tension (Hook, 2003). In order to clarify how the concept of culture is approached in this study, the next section provides a brief account of various conceptualisations of culture.

**Culture**

There are varying ways in which ‘culture’ can be defined. Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008) suggest that culture was historically viewed as a general universal process of social development which
occurred in all societies in the world. With this conception of culture, some societies, or groups of people, were regarded as further up the ‘culture scale’ than others. This view of culture is usually associated with ‘European Enlightenment’, where Europe was essentially higher up the culture scale and all other groups were lower, according to the criteria which were used then (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008). The ‘civilising’ mission was motivated by this view of culture and was driven by the underlying motive that all other societies should adopt the European way of doing things, as the European culture was the most developed (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008). This led to the creation of colonial societies, which unfortunately also meant social and political discrimination for the colonised.

The German philosopher, Johann G. Herder, questioned the idea of culture as emanating from European society, and asserted that every group of people had its own way of life, and could therefore be considered to have its own culture (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008). This idea introduced a different view of culture, which has also been adopted in South Africa and seen through discourses of multiculturalism, where groups of people are assumed to have their own distinct cultures.

In this study, the emphasis will be on language use as a marker of ‘difference’ rather than other assumed aspects of culture. The emphasis will be on the shift from using one language to an environment which encourages the use of another language. Culture is not considered as fixed or unchanging; it is acknowledged that it remains fluid, and that individuals living in South Africa learn and practise each other’s cultures. Language, in the school context, emerges as an aspect which creates the space of cultural in-betweeness as referred to in Bulhan’s (1980, 1985) theory.
Language is central in that people come to resist, assimilate or transcend the linguistic environment they find themselves in. Therefore language will be the primary focus of analysis, and culture is not at all assumed to be essential.

**Summary**

This chapter has outlined social constructionism as the epistemological position conceptualising the study. Identity was considered as a product of social interaction, in that people come to know who they are through interactions with others (Burr, 2003). Identity is multifaceted and is constantly being constructed and mediated in a given context. In addition, the importance of historical events cannot be ignored when understanding identity constructions. This implies that past systems of rule, and the political, social, and economic climate of South Africa, all contribute to the current social environment, which in turn influences identity constructions. It is as a result of past events that individuals find themselves at particular points in time where they have to negotiate their identity. It is with this in mind that post-colonial approaches to identity development were adopted, which situates the study in a historical context.
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Understanding the educational experiences of African young adults who live in post-apartheid South Africa is important, especially considering the history of South Africa which is not lacking in its pivotal moments when it comes to educational language policies. The literature review centres on research about the experiences of learners in schools and the role of language in shaping and negotiating identity constructions (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007; Makubalo, 2007; Nongongo 2007). Studies that focus on teaching and learning of second languages in South African schools will be reviewed, with a focus on language encounters between learners and teachers (Evans & Clerghorn, 2010; Nel & Muller, 2010). The dominance of English in schools will then be discussed, with the hegemonic status of English considered as an important factor contributing to the construction of identity by learners (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007; Makoe, 2007; Makubalo, 2007; Nongongo 2007). The dominant role of English will also be exemplified in Mckay and Chick’s (2001) study, which highlights the English only discourses promoted in ex-model C schools.

The complex relationship between language, ethnicity and race in schools will be looked at (Gaganakis, 1992; Gaganakis, 2006; Nongongo, 2007) before focusing on the exclusionary and assimilationist nature of language in schools and educational settings in general. Although studies that have explored migrants’ experiences of being in a different linguistic environments -
including international contexts - will be reviewed (Halic, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009; Miller, 2000), the focus will be mainly on South African experiences within the school setting.

Teaching and Learning in a Second Language

South Africa is a linguistically diverse country. The ideal situation would be that learners be taught in the language that they best understand, however, this is not always possible. According to Mda (2004) the right of the learner or parent to request a particular language of learning may not be easy to grant and implement. This is because in racially, culturally and ethnically integrated schools, teachers are not usually multilingual. Consequently, learners are put in situations where they are taught in the language of the school, which is often neither the first language of the teachers, or the learners. One strategy of addressing this problem could be the deployment and redeployment of teachers to different geographical regions (Mda, 2004). Deployment would mean that teachers can be placed in schools were they would teach in the language that the learner understands (their African mother tongue) and in which the teacher is also proficient in. However, this seldom happens.

The studies in this section of the literature highlight encounters that occur in the classroom as a result of language. These ‘complex language encounters’ (Evans & Clerghorn, 2010) occur when neither the teacher nor the learner are proficient or first language speakers in the language of teaching and learning. The studies are reviewed bearing in mind the effect that these encounters have on learning and identity.
Evans and Clerghorn (2010) reported on a longitudinal study which explored complex language encounters in grades R to 3 classrooms in pre-primary and primary schools in South Africa. The research took place in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. The study presented vignettes to illustrate how critical it is for teachers to possess first language ability in the language of instruction and to be cross-culturally competent in these languages. In one of the vignettes, the researchers described a situation where the teacher’s first language was Afrikaans and the preschoolers were black and spoke any one of the nine official African languages. The language of instruction on the other hand was English. In this situation, the teacher was not always understood by the children. To understand, the children watched each other, asked each other questions and in some instances, the cleaning lady explained in a language most of the children understood. In other words, the children relied heavily on modelling, watching and imitating those who understood in order to make sense of what is being taught.

While these researchers supported the way the children compensated for these language experiences in the classroom, from a critical perspective, one could argue that learners should not have to rely on cleaning ladies to get the quality of education that they deserve. Knowledgeable qualified teachers should be available to help learners when they struggle in the classroom. In addition to this, whilst peer interaction might be necessary for teaching and learning in some cases, for primary understanding, learners should have a right to a teacher who is competent to explain classroom material in a language that the learners comprehends. The learners may watch each other and use modelling for clarification, but this does not mean they would be transferring the correct knowledge amongst each other.
An implication of classroom environments such as these is that the learners may end up feeling inferior, being unable to understand any of the work being taught. This certainly affects the quality of learning and identity constructions as competent individuals. The authors rightly conclude that without a high level of linguistic security in the instructional language, teachers cannot adequately develop their learners’ basic communicative skills or their cognitive ability (Evans & Clerghorn, 2010). A school which is unable to develop communicative skills and cognitive ability for its learners, certainly goes against the purposes of education.

In a similar study, Nel and Muller (2010) looked at the importance of the role of language in teacher education programmes and in children’s learning. The use of English and its impact on the language development of second language English learners was explored. Observations were carried out as part of the study, in which practical teaching portfolios (including learners’ work submitted by final year teaching students) were assessed for English proficiency. In this case as well, neither the teachers nor the learners were first language speakers of English - the language of teaching and learning. Findings revealed that teachers made basic errors such as grammatical errors, incorrect use of tenses, concord and spelling errors and were consequently responsible for inadequate English language teaching due to their own limited English proficiency. The learners in this study were deprived of good quality education because of language incompetence on the part of the teacher.

The hegemonic status of English has taken over in education to the extent that all resources are invested in keeping up English-only discourses (Makoe, 2007). An ideal situation would be one where both the teachers and learners can interact in a language that they are both most proficient
in. The dynamics of implementing this is ideal would require efforts from policy developers, attitude change in teachers and learners, and resources to develop the skills and materials to teach in these languages (Mda, 2004). The powerful status of English however, means that learners taught in their mother tongue could possibly not get equal access to economic rewards that are associated with proficiency in English. The dominance of the English language, and its’ relation to the mother tongue, is explored in the next section of the literature review.

**The Dominance of English**

An aspect that has been explored widely in literature is the positive attitude held by individuals towards English, because of the perception that knowledge in the language grants access to opportunities (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007; Mckinney, 2007; Novick, 2010; Rudwick, 2008). Recent research, as discussed in the introduction, by Posel and Casale (2010) has reported on the economic returns of being able to communicate in English. In their research, they have shown that people who read and write English earn more in the labour market, compared to those who speak indigenous languages only. In this section of the literature, the role of English in ex-model C schools is explored.

Makoe (2007) asserts that competence in English can result in a favourable position in terms of the way learners view themselves in ex-model C schools. The manner in which English is discursively constructed in the classroom relates to the larger discourse of the powerful status of English (Makoe, 2007). The study looked at language discourses and identity construction in a multilingual primary school. It was found that when a learner was able to articulate themselves well in English in the classroom, they would receive positive reinforcement and rendered as
successful learners. The teacher and deputy principal in the school operated with the understanding that children came to school deficient in one way or the other. For instance, one teacher expressed that “children from rural areas who come to his school have basically no language” (Makoe, 2007, p.66). This assertion highlights discourses in schools which viewed English as superior compared to indigenous African languages. Not being able to communicate in English was equated with having no language. These learners may have been proficient speakers of their own mother tongues, however in the school setting, their mother tongues became useless. As a result of influence from the school, learners may also come to view their own mother tongues as deficient, lacking and worthless. As Miller (2000) states “to be told, whether directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, that your language and the language of your parents, of your home and of your friends is non-functional in school is to negate your sense of self” (p.101).

Mckay and Chick (2001) also reported on English medium schools where learners’ ethnicity and linguistic background is not accounted for. In their research, conducted on learners in linguistically diverse ex-Model C schools in Kwazulu-Natal, they found that when learners speak an indigenous African language in the school environment, they were considered to be ‘reverting’ in terms of their progress in school. The implications of being told that speaking one’s MT is the equivalent of reverting, shapes perceptions of what learners think about their MT and whether they are likely to continue communicating in it.

Chick (2001) reporting on the same study conducted by him and Mckay in 2001, presents evidence that schools are sites of struggle between competing discourses that construct, maintain,
and change social identities in communities. Discourses observed in these schools were related to language-in-education policies. While multicultural discourses were evident, it was found that participants had to negotiate their identities within an English-only discourse. In one of the schools that were observed, the use of isiZulu in the classes was rejected, other than during isiZulu lessons. Code switching from English to isiZulu was also not permitted except in the playground or in cases where the learners were ‘deficient’ in English. This study exemplified that despite multilingualism being advocated for at policy level, English-only discourse are pervasive and have institutional support at a practical level (Chick, 2001). The English-only discourse maintains English as more of a desirable language than African languages. The discourses also reduce opportunities for learners to co-construct a truly multicultural identity - one that is multiple, overlapping and give right to one’s mother tongue.

Mckinney (2007), also focusing on the role of English for learners in ex-model C schools, presented an analysis of the ways in which learners characterized the different kinds of English used around them. In this study, learners made a distinction between the varieties of English or accent produced by township schooling and those produced in suburban schooling, regarding the latter accent as having a higher standing. Some accents which were associated with white people, were also associated with snobbery and a higher social class. The class dimension could be seen in one case where a learner described another learner’s English as posh *Louis Vuitton* English, an expensive elite brand which could signal being part of a higher class. According to Mckinney (2007) the class dimension in different accents not only links posh English to white people, but also to wealth and the ability to afford expensive brands such as *Louis Vuitton*. 
The learners in this study also claimed to use language in different ways depending on who they were communicating with (Mckinney, 2007). In one instance, a learner said she used English, Tsotsi-taal and isiXhosa as required. In each case, she referred not only to the use of a particular language in certain geographical spaces but, linked language usage to different linguistic identities. By choosing to speak certain languages the learner adopts certain identities. For instance she referred to her ability use tsotsi-taal to position herself as “as kasi as all of them” (Mckinney, 2007, p.18), meaning that by speaking tsotsi-taal she could adopt a township identity and be like people who reside in the township. In another example the learner refers to her ability to use American hip-hop English to position herself as a ‘nigger’, and by doing this she could identify as part of that youth sub-culture. Language in this case positioned the learner as having different identities and was not used merely for communication.

Makubalo (2007) similarly explored the English language practices of four learners in a desegregated Johannesburg high school. English accent was one aspect that came up in the study and was related to how learners positioned themselves. The learners differentiated between ‘Afrikaans accents’, ‘African accents’ and ‘normal English accents’. The learners who took part in the study, however, asserted that they had no accents or in some case described their own accents as ‘English English accents’. One of the participants who lived in the township resisted the stigmatised township black identity, with its associations of poor use of English by claiming he had no accent. By making this claim, the learner refused to be associated with township people who have ‘poor’ accents. This also reflects positioning on the part of the learner in that he does not want to be constrained or associated with certain types of accents. This learner stated that English should not be used in a particular way and that “We speak however I want, when I
want” (Makubalo, 2007, p.33). This is similar to the learner in Mckinney’s (2007) study who claimed to use English, Tsotsi-taal and isiXhosa as she pleased or as required by the context.

The learners’ statements about speaking the way they want or as they pleased, resists constructions of a fixed identity and moves toward one which is fluid and context dependent. In some cases, the learners associated accents with places. For instance one of the participants made it known that he lived in the suburbs and that one “can’t go to the suburbs with an African accent” (Makubalo, 2007, p.31). The learner appropriated certain accents to specific places. By doing this, the learner resisted constructions of a fixed linguistic identity and moved toward one which is context dependent and determined by one’s geographical location.

The participants in Makubalo (2007) and McKinney’s (2007) studies operated in a different historical time from their parents, one where there is no fixed categories of ethnic linguistic identity (Mckinney, 2007). These learners played with their identities, and did not stick to an essentialised view of the construct. The learners changed their languages depending on context. However, even though they did this, English was still accorded a higher standing. This was seen in Makubalo’s (2007) study where learners made reference to ‘Louis Vuitton English’ and associated it with fluent communication in the language.

The next section reviews the complex relationship between ones race, language and ethnicity. These concepts have all been shaped by history and politics in South Africa. The review will focus on ex-model C schools and the learners’ experiences which are embedded in complex relationships of race, language and ethnicity.
Interrelationships between Language, Ethnicity and Race in Identity in Schools

A concern raised by parents who send their children to ex-model C schools is that their children will be unable to communicate in their mother tongue (De Klerk, 2002). Black African children who attend ex-model C schools often find themselves in dual positions where they have to mediate between roles enacted in the school setting and those in other social contexts. Relationships between, language (mother tongue and English), race and ethnicity cannot be understood without consideration of South Africa’s history previously characterized by essentialised notions of identity.

Prior to the first South African democratic elections in 1994, Gaganakis (1992) conducted a study that focused on the experiences of black minority pupils in private schools. These learners resided in surrounding Johannesburg townships, but were in schools that were racially mixed. The author reports that when the learners initially entered the school, they perceived themselves as inferior because they could not speak English. The learners expressed fear of being ridiculed as a result of their inability to speak English. However, once their fluency in English was established and kept improving, the well accented English was said to symbolize upward mobility in terms of social status and opportunities in the labour market. The learners were said to have gained linguistic capital and proficiency in the language of education.

Gaganakis (1992) pointed out that outside of the school environment, whilst the importance of speaking English was acknowledged, the learners only spoke the language with family and close friends or those they could trust. Learners claimed that they avoided using English in public to conceal the fact that they attended racially mixed schools. These learners were marginalized in
their community as a result of the schools they attended. Many were perceived by peers in
government township schools as arrogant or snobs. As a result of this, the learners reported that
they socialized only with fellow private school learners, isolating themselves from the rest of the
community.

The learners also perceived themselves to be elites in the community; this elite status resided in
access to better education and particularly the ability to speak fluent English. What is interesting
is that although the learners perceived themselves as different and as elites, they proclaimed that
they were proud to be black and made reference to ‘our people’ when speaking about other black
people. Thus the learners did not completely distance themselves from other black people, but on
the contrary, considered their race as part of their identity. They differentiated between being
black and being English speakers. Being black was linked to their township background,
characterised by the real effects of apartheid: a world of violence, poverty, inadequate housing
and facilities and unemployed (Gaganakis, 1992). And being English speakers was linked to the
school environment, where they were safe, “free from the troubles at home” (Gaganakis, 1992,
p.50) and where there is “no smog, no smoke and proper lighting” (Gaganakis, 1992, p.50).

In 1996, two years into the new democratic South Africa, Gaganakis conducted another study
focusing on adolescent girls and their experiences in the school setting. The participants were
basically from two groups; black and white girls from the ex-model C school and black girls
from township schools who were part of an outreach programme for disadvantage schools. In the
discussion of the findings, Gaganakis (2006) asserts that for white girls, there was confidence
and ambiguity in their race. The white girls took no particular pride in ‘being white’ and
expressed a sense of marginalization and being sidelined as Whites. Many saw their privileges and status being taken away by the new political order and by affirmative action. Consistent with the discourses of the time, just after the first democratic elections in the country, they expressed sentiments like ‘colour doesn’t count’. However in the interviews, the girls also expressed statements which showed that race was an important aspect to them and it influenced their decisions. In one interview for instance, one of the participants who was white, expressed that she hoped to go to a university where there were “not too many Blacks” (Gaganakis, 2006, p.373), contradicting the statement that race was not important to her. The black girls (particularly from the township) regarded ‘being black’ as a source of pride and at the same time as a source of deprivation and lack of material possessions. The time frames of Gaganakis’ studies are important as they reflect the state of social and political affairs at the time and consequent influences on identity.

Nongongo (2007) focusing on identity in the school setting, explored language and identity among multilingual learners at a private desegregated school. The black learners in this study asserted their ethnic identity and were proud proficient speakers of African languages. These learners made claims of ‘pure’ ethnic identities. ‘Purity’ in this sense meant they asserted themselves as being of only one ethnicity as opposed to a more fluid, changing view of identity. Nongogo (2007) explained that the claim for ethnic purity resembles the presence of the discourse of ethnicity which can be linked back to the Apartheid era with its divisions. However, whilst learners expressed a ‘pure’ African ethnicity, claiming to be ‘pure’ ethnically and linguistically, they were often observed code switching in their linguistic encounters in the school context. They were equally comfortable using African languages and English in different
contexts, mentioning their ability to adapt their spoken languages depending on context. These learners also stated that their English was far better than their African language proficiency.

According to the researcher, the claim for ethnic purity highlights “the complex tension between the enunciated identities of the young people and their actual performed language identities” (Nongongo, 2007, p. 52). Although the learners emphasized ethnic purity, their language interactions in the school contrasted with these claims. They used language in a variety of contexts often switching between African languages and English.

A study by Rudwick (2004), which sampled ex-model C school learners residing in the township, exemplified the ambivalent relationship between mother tongue, ethnicity and English. The youngsters who participated in the study explicitly drew a direct link between their mother-tongue and their home culture and expressed strong pride with regards to ethno-linguistic identity. IsiZulu was regarded as a cultural resource and prerequisite to maintain symbols and practices of the isiZulu tradition. The English language was strongly associated with what the participants termed ‘white culture’, which was differentiated from the Zulu culture. However, even though the learners in this study emphasized the importance of their mother tongue in relation to culture, the importance of English for economic and pragmatic purposes was mentioned as being important.

This part of the review has shown how the concepts of race, ethnicity and language interact in learners’ lives. The last part of the literature reviews focuses on the ways in which the social
environment can isolate, exclude or assimilate learners into certain discourses. Language remains central, as it is the means by which isolation and exclusion is manifested.

**Language as Exclusion: Adoption or Resistance of Dominant Discourses**

This section of literature starts off with international studies on language. Miller’s (2000) study focusing on the experiences of migrants will be reviewed, followed by Halic, Greenberg and Paulus’ (2009) study, which brings forth how participant self-esteem can be affected by linguistic exclusion in new social environments. These are international studies. They are relevant because South African learners who enter the ex-model C school setting are similar to immigrants, in that they both do not know the language spoken by the majority in the new context. Secondly, African language speakers and immigrants both have to adjust, to the new country and the new school environment, respectively. Studies by Peirce (1995), Thesen (1997) and Bangeni and Kapp (2007) will draw attention to how individuals can either be assimilated into discourses (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007) or resist the discourses and assert their own identity (Peirce, 1995; Thesen, 1997).

Miller’s (2000) study on language use, identity, and social interaction amongst migrant students in Australia aimed to understand how students constructed and were constructed by sites of representation where language played a major role. Self representation referred to the ways in which individuals represent themselves, and was related to the types of social interactions they participated in (Miller, 2000). The key notion linking language use and identity was self-representation. In this study it was found that if immigrant students did not feel that they could represent themselves and enact social roles in ways that other students recognized, a degree of
exclusion from social interaction seemed inevitable. Indeed for some of the participants in this study, it was found that if they had not developed confidence in communicating in English, they would associate more with individuals who communicated in their mother tongue, and isolated themselves from other learners in the school. For instance, one participant stated that she socialized with individuals who communicated in her native language because she could not speak Australian much, thus it was easier for her to socialise with people who spoke her native mother tongue (Miller, 2000).

Miller (2000) asserts that even though conditions and practices of the school may favour rapid acquisition of English and a broad social mix in terms of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, if learners cannot represent themselves linguistically, they exclude themselves and do not interact with others in the school. Miller (2000) concludes that in cases where the first language of the student goes unrecognized, untapped, and undeveloped, and where proficiency in English is or remains very limited, identity may be seriously affected.

A similar study to that conducted by Miller (2000) explored the experiences of non-native English-speaking international students’ language, culture and identity in the context of their graduate studies. The participants were international students at the university, meaning that they were also migrants in the new setting. It was found that the participants were challenged by the diversity of accents in the university setting. Moreover, they felt restrained by their limited ability to communicate in English. Tasks such as identifying words and expressions in order to convey meaning, was a challenge for these participants.
The participants in this study further acknowledged that as they moved between the two linguistic systems - that of their native language and that of English - their identities were reshaped. Specifically, two constructs related to identity were affected; self-esteem and confidence. Students seemed to experience a loss of personal coherence and experienced ambivalent feelings regarding their English proficiency (Halic, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009). They expressed anxiety when speaking to native English speakers, and even doubted their intellectual abilities and worth as individuals. These students experienced themselves as incompetent speakers of the English language, which then affected their confidence and self esteem.

The studies reviewed thus far have shown how individuals often had to mediate their identity in a given context. Identity would be constructed against influences in the university or the new country. In the next section, a different approach emerges where individuals are not only subjected to the discourses around them, but also exercise agency when constructing their identities.

An agent is regarded as a person capable of bringing about something in their world (Harre, 1995). In other words, from an agentic perspective, individuals do not just react to the social structures around them but rather, social structures are also created and influenced by human activity and intention (Bandura, 1999). Thus identity may be socially constituted, but human agency also operates generatively and proactively on social systems and not just reactively (Bandura, 1999). Studies by Peirce (1995) and Thesen (1997) will be reviewed to illustrate this sense of agency.
Peirce (1995) explored immigrant women’s language learning experiences in the home, workplace, and community in Canada. The focus of the study was on second language acquisition, and emphasis was made on the way identity must be understood with reference to the larger social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interactions. The researcher also argued that individuals should not be regarded as passive in social interactions. Rather, individuals have agency in that even though functioning in particular discourses, they are active in the construction of their identities. Furthermore, the positions that a person takes up within a particular discourse are open to change. Although a person may be positioned in a particular way at a certain point in time, they might resist the subject position or even set up a counter discourse to place themselves in a powerful, rather than marginalized, position (Peirce, 1995).

In the study, all the participants were second language speakers of English. The participants took extra English classes in the new country, Canada, with the hope of improving their language proficiency and consequently having better chances of employment. Although participants were not first language speakers of English, all the participants indicated that they felt comfortable speaking English to friends or people they knew well. However, they felt uncomfortable talking to people who they had a particular symbolic or materially invested relationship. On arrival in the country, participants reported feeling stupid and inferior because of the inability to speak English fluently. As time progressed, they developed identity as multicultural citizens, and with this came an awareness of the right to speak. The participants were no longer silenced because of accent, but spoke regardless of comments made about their accents. Peirce (1995) asserts that over time, and having developed identity as citizens of the country, communicative
competence developed to include an awareness of how to challenge and transform social practices of marginalization. The individuals did not just accept that they were not proficient in the language of the majority, but they asserted themselves by speaking back to dominant discourses. The study makes clear that power relations can create or limit opportunities for second language learners to speak in new social environments. Participants in this study were placed in an environment where they were isolated and marginalized; however they developed strategies to speak back to dominant discourses thereby claiming their identities as multicultural citizens.

In a South Africa study, Thesen (1997) conducted research on identities of 1st year students in a South African university. The discrepancy between the institutional categories that were used to identify and define students and the way students described themselves was investigated in the study. Black students entering the university were considered to encounter a new identity category, namely ‘disadvantaged’, generated by the new context in its attempt to manage the process of institutional change. These labels signalled institutional discourses, which translated in practical terms into special paths for black students.

Thesen (1997) states that although the participants’ actions were bounded by discourses, they are not merely passively positioned, but negotiated between different discourses, motivated by the need to locate themselves and to know who they were. One participant had moved from a farm school, to a township school, to a historically white university, meaning constant identity construction with exposure to new discourses. This participant in particular, highlighted the need
to constantly revise categories in order to make sense of the transitions he was going through, challenging the old discourses as he moved into new ones.

Although academics might embrace the concept of multiple identities in theory, in practice they often impose their own versions of which identity categories are salient in students (Thesen, 1997). The study brings forth how an exploration of identity over a period of time, depicts a different picture of identity, than an exploration at one point in time. These students, similar to the study by Bangeni and Kapp (2007) participated in the study over a period of time, thereby capturing identity constructions as it constantly changed based on contextual feedback.

Two important points should be mentioned with reference to this study. Firstly, the move to new educational institutions not only represents a linguistic shift which might influence identity, but various discourses that exist within the school setting emerged and were highlighted. The constructions of identity moved beyond interactions based on language, to existing discourses in the social context. In Thesen’s (1997) study, not only is language emphasized, but discourses of being ‘disadvantaged’ within the institutional setting are brought forth, relating to the larger social context. Another important point that comes through in both studies by Peirce (1995) and Thesen (1997) studies is agency. Even though individuals have at their disposal various discourses to draw on, individuals still negotiate their own identities and are not just ‘subjects’ of the social environment and existing discourses.

In contradiction to the previous studies by Peirce (1995) and Thesen (1997), the last study to be reviewed exemplifies the way students can be assimilated into the new school context and come
to adopt discourses of the institution in their identity constructions. Bangeni and Kapp (2007) explored “the shifting language attitudes of students who spoke an indigenous language at a historically ‘white’ South African university” (p.253). With first entrance to the university, African language speaking students, who did not go to racially mixed schools, experienced difficulties understanding the work and expressing themselves in an environment that was regarded as primarily English. Students spoke of being silenced in class by the level and speed of English spoken. They also spoke of being judged as ‘second-language’ speakers and consequently being stigmatised. The students were said to be located in the alienating world of the academy in which they wish to succeed (through mastery of English), and the world (characterised by their home languages) in which they felt they belonged, but which held few opportunities.

Compared to students from ethnically heterogeneous schools, students from ethnically homogenous schools entered the institution with a strong desire to preserve their home languages. These students considered ethnicity an important marker of their identities. In the second year of school however, the cohorts admitted how they had been using English often, even when speaking to people who could understand their mother tongue.

The interactions that the students had in the university setting, be it in the classroom or socially, influenced their identity constructions. Ethnicity was no longer considered as the sole marker of identity (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007). Students admitted communicating in different languages, but also listening to different radio stations for example, as a result of the interactions they had in the university. The students also started to mix more freely across traditional, ethnic and class
boundaries. Changes in identity were directly related to the way students were positioned and repositioned. The positioning occurred because of increasing access to and fluency in a range of institutional discourses on the one hand, and increased closing off of connections to their township communities on the other hand (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007). This study showed that institutional discourses have an effect on students and identity formations. In some cases, students resist these discourses, whereas in others, as in this study, they become assimilated and adopt the social and linguistic practices of the institution.

**Summary**

This chapter has reviewed literature on identity and identity construction in educational settings. The studies reviewed exemplified that identity is constructed within specific social contexts. Identity emerged as fluid and adaptable, although in some cases, learners had essentialised views of the construct. This was especially seen in Gaganakis’ (1992, 2006) studies, where learners differentiated between themselves and others based on race. Essentialised views of identity were also evident in Nongogo’s (2007) study where ethnicity was regarded as a static concept and not as a social construction. These learners’ statements were however contradicted by their language uses, which was used appropriately based on the contextual demands. Learners also used language to position themselves and thereby constructing certain identities. For instance, the use of English was associated with an elite status and with being educated.

Discourses were also influential in the constructions of identity. Individuals either assimilated to the dominant discourse as seen in Bangeni and Kapps (2007) study, or in some cases they resisted dominant discourses as seen in studies by Thesen (1997) and Peirce (1995). Overall, the
studies reviewed in this chapter shed light on identity as a socially constructed construct. The studies made it evident that identity is malleable; it differs with changing historical times and with interactions amongst people.
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in the study. Given that the study seeks to explore experiences of individuals, requiring detailed ‘thick’ descriptions, a qualitative methodology was adopted. In the following sections the research design, data collection method and analysis strategies are discussed. In addition, a detailed description of the procedure is provided, as well as a discussion on how the findings in the study can be considered to be trustworthy. To elaborate further on ensuring the trustworthiness of the study, a section on reflexivity is included, in which a detailed account is provided of the researcher’s role throughout the study.

Research Design

The study was conducted in the qualitative research design. Qualitative research is concerned with how people make sense of the world and the social experiences around them (Willig, 2008). It places emphasis on meaning, with the aim being to gain a deeper understanding of the topic of investigation. In qualitative research, what the researcher discovers is derived from subjective accounts of individuals’ life worlds, full of meanings and personal interpretations (Flick, 2009; Willig, 2008). The aim of qualitative data collection is to provide rich, thick, detailed descriptions when it comes to analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Glesne, 2006). In other words, qualitative researchers “emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.13).
Qualitative research locates the researcher in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The researcher cannot be separated from what he/she intends to find out; he/she influences and is influenced by their research (Willig, 2008). Knowledge is generated within the constraints of everyday life, meaning qualitative researchers see the “world in action and embed their findings in it” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.16). Thus what the researcher finds out lies in the social world, with an acknowledgement of his/her involvement in it. The fluid nature of reality is also acknowledged (Willig, 2008). Findings from research can always change because of the ever-changing socially constructed nature of reality. This reality is always mediated, changed and adapted by changing social contexts, and the researcher can only capture the changes and processes as they happen in participants’ lives.

The study adopts a social constructionist stance to knowledge, and will focus on participants’ meaning-making, situated in context, in other words, how participants constructed their identities in light of the contexts they found themselves in at school. Post-colonial views about identity will be adopted, utilising Bulhan’s (1980, 1985) theory of cultural in-betweenity to guide the interpretations and discussions in the next chapter. The focus will be on the relative subjective accounts of individuals, discovered through a thematic analysis approach. Analysis will be interpreted against a contextual background taken to be historically, socially and culturally mediated, and will include examples where participants drew on existing discourses to make sense of their experiences and construct their identities.
Participants

Three young indigenous African language speaking adults under the age of 30 were interviewed, two men and one woman. These young adults had attended ex-Model C schools. As described in Chapter 1, ex-model C schools are formerly ‘white’ schools which voted to admit black students in the early 1990s (Hofmeyr, 2000). All the participants had an African language as their mother tongue, with the former school environment being the primary source of exposure to a second language. Two of the participants attended schools which were formerly Afrikaans-medium schools in small towns, but which changed to dual-medium schools (Afrikaans-English) with the changing educational policies of the then new democratic society. The third participant attended an English-medium school in the city. The participants were all employed full-time at the time of the interviews.

The first participant (P1) was female. She lived in a suburban area and worked full-time as a junior financial analyst, while studying part-time towards an Honours degree. She attended what can be considered a primarily Afrikaans-medium school in the province of Limpopo. She was educated through the medium of English at that school, the complexities of which will be described in the findings section. She started attending the ex-model C school in Grade 8 and went on to obtain a tertiary qualification in Johannesburg.

The second participant (P2) was male and attended a school in a small mining town in Mpumalanga. The school was primarily Afrikaans prior to its admittance of black pupils, but the participant received most of his education at the school through the medium of English. He was taught in English from primary school up to high school. The complexities of the language in the
school context will also be described in the findings section. Unlike the other participants, this young man entered the working environment directly after he completed school, and he had no tertiary qualifications. What also differentiated this participant from the other two was that he lived in an African township, while the others lived in the (largely white) suburbs. Like the lady participant, this participant was exposed to Afrikaans in addition to English (as alternatives to the mother tongue) when he first entered the school. He worked as a site manager for a mine in Mpumalanga.

The last participant (P3) attended a boys-only school in the Tshwane metropolitan area. Unlike the other two schools, this school was located in the city, and was attended by male learners only. This school was also primarily an English-medium school, as opposed to the other two schools which were initially Afrikaans-medium schools. This participant, like the lady participant, had post-matric qualifications and also lived in a suburban area. This participant was taught in English and Setswana for the first two years of primary school, and then moved to an English-medium school. After school, he furthered his studies at a university, and now worked as a candidate attorney in a law firm.

The participants were located through the snowball sampling technique based on “referrals made among people who share or know others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p.141). Eligibility to be a participant in the study was verified prior to conducting the interviews. All participants were located through mutual acquaintances of the participants and the researcher. The primary criteria were that they had to have attended a multiracial ex-model C school, where they were taught in a language that was
different from their mother tongue. The school had to be multiracial, with a reasonable representation of all races. Some ex-model C schools, located near to cities, have mainly black students with white teachers, and are still considered multiracial schools (Hofmeyr, 2000). These schools were not eligible for this study. Representation of the different races in schools was necessary in order to see if any of the participants’ experiences centred on racial interactions in the school.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants (see Appendix C for interview schedule). In semi-structured interviews, each participant is asked a set of similar questions based on an interview guide (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Interview questions were asked, using a variety of probes to ensure that the responses met the research objectives (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The research objectives were:

1. To explore the language experiences of young middle class Africans in ex-model C schools settings.

2. To explore the relation between these experiences and the identity construction of these participants.

3. To explore the attitudes about language use in different domains (both English and indigenous African language) of the participants.

Data collection was conducted, keeping in mind these objectives. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Answering open-ended questions enabled the participants to make sense of their own experiences and narrate their experiences in a manner they were comfortable with. The
aim was to keep the interviews as natural as possible so that participants felt comfortable in expressing their views openly. In addition, rapport was established prior to conducting the interview. This is important because one wants participants to give as much detailed response as possible to enable thick descriptions of the data.

The questions were broadly framed, but at the same time, the central theme was communicated in the question, so that responses relevant to the study were elicited (Flick, 2009). The questions aimed to elicit responses which related to the schooling experiences and focused mainly on language, the main theme of the study. The interviews were conducted in English. In one case, the participant enquired about which language they would be expected to respond in. I replied that they could speak in any language they felt comfortable with. The language spoken by this participant was isiZulu, which I understand well, so I felt comfortable that we would be able to communicate without misunderstandings. A quality check for this participant’s interview was made to ensure that the verbal narratives were accurately transcribed. A first language speaker of isiZulu listened to the transcribed interviews with me, and made corrections of all identified mistakes. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 1 hour and 20 minutes.

**Procedure**

Permission to conduct the research was requested from both the Higher Degrees and Research Grants Committee of the University of the Western Cape. After receiving ethical clearance, participants who met the criteria of the study were identified through a snowballing technique. One interview was conducted per participant individually. The participants were required to sign an informed consent letter indicating that they understood what the study entailed, and that they
had the right to withdraw from the study if they so wished. The informed consent letter and participant information sheet are attached as Appendix A and B respectively. I arranged times and dates with the participants after they had agreed to be part of the study. All interviews were conducted during the day; one interview was conducted at the participant’s workplace, one at the participant’s home, and the last in a library seminar room. In one case, the information sheet with details of the study was e-mailed to the participant beforehand. The other two participants were given the opportunity to review the information sheet before the interview started, after I had given a summary of the study and their involvement in it. At the start of the interview, the objectives of the study were discussed with the participants. The participants were told that the study was voluntary and they need not participate if they did not wish to. Opportunity was also presented to them to raise any questions or concerns they may have had. The interview schedule was adhered to as much as possible, with probing done when considered necessary. All the interview sessions were recorded, following permission from participants. These recorded interviews were later transcribed for interpretation and analysis. When examining the transcripts, thematic analysis was used. A discussion of the emerging themes is provided in the next chapter.

**Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used as a method of data analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns found in data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is widely used, but there are different approaches which give detail on the exact steps of conducting it (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it can be seen as a poorly branded method, in that it does not appear to exist as a
named analysis in the same way that other methods, like narrative analysis or conversation analysis, do.

Themes or patterns within data can be identified in one of two ways: in an inductive approach or in a theoretical/deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theoretical or deductive thematic analysis would be driven by the researcher’s theoretical interest. The researcher would be actively searching for themes that go in line with their own frameworks or which support the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach, on the other hand, implies that the themes identified are strongly linked to the data itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006), that is, the data speaks for itself without imposition from the researcher.

For this study, when conducting the analysis, the intention was to let the data speak for itself and try as much as possible not to transfer ideas from the literature or the theoretical frameworks. However, it is important to keep in mind that researchers cannot always free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is especially so in qualitative research where the researcher’s role often shapes the outcome of the research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), referring to themes as ‘emerging’ or ‘being discovered’ denies the active role the researcher has when identifying patterns. So although an inductive approach was the goal, knowledge from the literature studies might have influenced the choice of themes which were further conceptualised by the theoretical framework. According to Joffe and Yardley (2004), a good thematic analysis must describe the bulk of the data and not simply select text segments that support one’s argument. It was the intention when analysing the data, to analyse it holistically and allow for deeper understanding.
While there are several possible approaches to conducting thematic analyses, for this research the steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. The first step as reported by them was to familiarise oneself with the data. The transcripts were read repeatedly in an active manner, to get a sense of wholeness from the data. Rereading the data also meant gaining depth and breadth of the data as well as identifying provisional meanings or patterns.

The next step is generating initial codes. Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This may involve making lists of what is interesting about the data. In this case, the transcripts were read and whatever was found interesting in the data was then cut and pasted on a separate Word Document. Notes were then made of what seemed interesting about the codes.

After having made lists of interesting patterns in the data, the third step was followed, which involves searching for themes. This entails sorting the different codes into potential themes. The different codes that were pasted on a separate Word Document were reviewed, keeping in mind how different codes may combine to form themes. At this level, the relationship between codes, themes, and different levels of themes, was considered (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As with all data, this data was not without contradictions. The contradictions and nuances were dealt with in the analysis.

The next step is to review the themes. The most important aspect at this stage is that there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. Some themes may not have enough data to support them, while others may collapse into each other. Reviewing the themes was done
repeatedly, as themes kept being changed, moving from being just themes to making up sub-themes, and eventually some fell away. The main aim was to ensure that the data within themes cohered together meaningfully (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After having reviewed the themes, the next step was to name the themes. When naming the themes, the most important aspect to keep in mind is to capture what the theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006), that is, to identify the essence of each theme. In this case, naming the themes was not conducted after the themes had been identified, but as the themes were reviewed and being identified ideas for names were generated. The last stage is where the report is produced. This takes place after the themes and sub-themes have been worked out. In this study, this will be the discussion and interpretation chapter where interpretation will centre on themes found in the analysis. The themes will be discussed with reference to literature and the theoretical position of the study.

**Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Study**

To ascertain that the findings from the study are trustworthy, no personal opinions regarding the topic were expressed or implied to the participants. However, considering the nature of the study and the theoretical considerations adopted, it is important to acknowledge the researcher cannot be dismissed from their findings (Willig, 2008). Although the questions were all directed at the participants, and no personal opinions were consciously expressed, an interview itself serves as an interaction which guides or influences what the other person says. At times during the interviews, facial expressions, body language or verbal comments might have influenced the participants to respond in a certain manner. The context of the interviews might also have affected the responses given by the participants.
Reflexivity “requires an awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meaning throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining outside of one’s subject when conducting the research” (Willig, 2008, p.10). Personal reflexivity was undertaken as much as possible during the interviews, when analysing the data, and when writing up of the discussion. In fact, reflexivity was conducted throughout the study, acknowledging that the manner in which ideas were approached had a lot to do with the researcher’s own views and understandings on the topic. In the next section, a more detailed account of the reflexive process is provided. Reflexivity makes the findings in the study explicit, as it clarifies the researcher’s role in the study.

**Reflexivity**

In qualitative research, it is essential that one actively engages with the topic, from its formulation to the data analysis and discussion stage (Willig, 2008). The necessary level of engagement means that there will be an element of subjectivity that is bound to be introduced throughout the research process (Willig, 2008). Therefore researchers need to constantly ask whether the study is still in line with its initial aims, and continuously question how much of what is being communicated centres around the researcher’s personal interests. Exposing the researcher’s own values and assumptions allows the reader to consider possible alternative interpretations of the work (Willig, 2008).

The participants’ experiences and responses were probably influenced by my non-verbal and verbal reactions, and/or my race. My race in particular might have influenced the participants to engage with me in a certain way. This was especially so with Participant 2, who frequently
referred to issues of race throughout the interview, and provided examples on the assumption that I would understand because I am also black. Additionally, since I am also an African language speaker who attended an ex-model C school, similar to the participants, I found myself relating to some of their experiences. Interacting with the participants was also a learning process for me, as it made me aware of different views, opinions and experiences to which I had never given much thought. Therefore throughout the interviews and writing up stage, and as I became aware of the variety of issues, I had to be aware and be careful not to impose my opinions and focus on their identity constructions.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics deal with beliefs about what is right or wrong in a given situation (Silverman, 2006). The study ensured that no harm was brought upon the participants in any manner. The participants were reminded that they need only discuss issues that they felt comfortable with. They were also made aware that they could at any time discontinue participation in the study with no consequences to themselves. Should participants have felt disturbed or upset as a result of the interview, they would have been given a national counselling call centre number which they could have called to deal with the disturbing issue. The aims, objectives and rationale of the study were made clear before commencement of data collection. Informed consent forms were signed by participants, agreeing to partaking in the study and to having the information used for analysis. Anonymity and confidentiality of the individual’s personal details will be maintained at all times.
Summary

This chapter has described the methodological approach of the study. The research design, description of participants, data collection and analysis methods were discussed. Furthermore, a section on reflexivity and how the trustworthiness of the study could be accounted for was provided. Lastly, ethical considerations of the study were stated, emphasising that no harm was brought upon the participants at any stage of the research.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction
The aim of the study was to explore how the identity of black African middle class young adults is constructed, based on educational and language experiences in ex-model C schools. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, ‘identity’ refers to how people understand their relationships with the world, and how those relationships are constructed across time and space (Norton, 1997). Identity is multifaceted in complex, contradictory ways, and tied to social practice and interaction. After having conducted thematic analysis, following steps outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), three main themes emerged from the transcripts. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings which emerged from the thematic analysis.

Findings in the Study
Three dominant themes were found in the data. Several sub-themes emerged under each of the themes. The outlined themes and sub-themes are presented below with a detailed discussion of each theme to follow.

Theme 1: Making sense of the new school environment

Sub-themes:

- Adjustment to language
- Language and racial interactions
Theme 2: Identity construction

Sub-themes:

- Ethnic and language identity
- Socio-historical processes and influences on identity
- Constructions of black and white people as different
- Constructions of difference between black people who attended township schools and self

Theme 3: The role of language in participants’ lives

Sub-themes:

- Advantageous uses as a result of schooling experiences
- Contextual uses
- Perceived advantages of communicating in English

Theme 1: Making Sense of the New School Environment

Ex-model C schools were taken as social environments which mediated much of the participants’ experiences. Participants were exposed to people from different linguistic and racial backgrounds as a result of being in the school. This theme explores how participants made sense of the new environments. The first sub-theme will look at how they adjusted to the school setting (if at all), focusing mainly on language. The second sub-theme will be broader, and will focus primarily on racial and language interactions which took place in the school. It will also be evident in this sub-theme that the racial and language interactions were not just applicable to the school setting, but also extended outside it.
Adjustment to language

Participants had to make certain adaptations as a result of being exposed to the new language of the schools, as well as the context of the school in general. They found ways to adjust to the school context even though they claimed that it was often difficult. As the following extract exemplifies, language was a source of difficulty which then affected the participants’ experiences.

P1: For the first year, I think Grade 8 and 9, it was still very Afrikaans... Some of them (the teachers) would, like, not really speak English, like you can hear that that person can’t really speak English, it’s like Afrikaans translated into English, so it was quite difficult for the first year, but, like, second year grade 9-10-11-12 was much better. Interview 1, p.3.

This participant attended a school which was formerly an Afrikaans-medium school and made note particularly of the teacher’s limited English fluency which made learning difficult. The participant described her initial experience in the schools as challenging, and explicitly asserted that it was ‘difficult’ and attributed this to the fact that the teacher did not have English verbal fluency. The participant went on to say that from her second year onwards, the language situation improved, implying that she found ways to adjust as she spent more time in the school.

The participant’s experiences exemplify the capitulation stage with reference to Bulhan’s (1980, 1985) theory of cultural in-betweenity. With entrance to the new school, the participant found that she assimilated the language of the school, and her mother tongue emerged as inappropriate for that context. One can argue that the process of adjustment involved a level of compromise in that the participant was in an environment that did not allow the use of her mother tongue and
consequently adopted the language of the school, which was also the dominant language. In the next extract the participant explained how she felt she had to learn a second language as if it was her first language; this gives an indication of the importance of learning the language of the school.

P1: We learnt Afrikaans as if it was, like, our first language when we started, because you had to know what they were saying, you know, like even the prefects when, like, the initiation phase whatever, they talk to you in Afrikaans and you were like ‘oh my gosh I don’t know what you’re saying’. Interview 1, p.3.

This extract shows that even outside of the classroom, the participant was placed in situations where she felt she was in the dark because of language. She described situations where she would be spoken to in Afrikaans by the prefects and had no idea what they were saying to her because of the language. Furthermore the participant claimed that she had to learn Afrikaans as if it was her first language, otherwise she would not be able to understand what was being communicated to her.

The interactions described by the participant are an example of complex language encounters which occur in multiracial schools. Evans and Clerghorn (2010) describe complex language encounters as situations that occur when neither the teacher nor the learner are first language speakers of the language of teaching and learning. They refer specifically to classroom situations where learning might be affected because language is a barrier. Although the participant did not say she could not understand the work, she did say that ‘you can hear that that person can’t really speak English’ and this could have affected her level of understanding in the classroom.
When educators cannot speak the language of their learners, the problem goes deeper than practical communication (Murray, 2002). It prevents teachers from fully engaging with learners and also stands in the way of creating an inclusive culture in a school (Murray, 2002). Moreover, it leads to a sense of alienation in that one is not able to embrace and communicate in a language one is accustomed to using. The former learner, upon entrance into the school, experienced alienation from an aspect of self, her mother tongue, which was useless in the ex-model C context (Bulhan, 1985).

In another extract the same participant explained that the experiences she had then in school, seemed to benefit her now. In other words, she explained that even though it might have been ‘difficult’ for her in that school, her experiences then, contribute positively to her life now. She explained:

P1: I didn’t really know Afrikaans that much, but in a way it did help me to learn Afrikaans cause, like, I think I’m quite good now. Interview 1, p.3.

Although the participant might have had difficulties initially, she perceived her ability to communicate in Afrikaans as a positive thing, claiming that it was useful now. As will be discussed in sub-themes to follow, her ability to communicate in Afrikaans emerged as advantageous, especially in the working environment.

In summary, one can say that the ex-Model-C school served two purposes for this participant. Firstly, it provided exposure to new languages in the school environment which were ‘difficult’ but which the participant ultimately adjusted to. This resembled some sort of assimilation to the
language of the school from the participant’s side. Secondly, having attended the ex-Model C school resulted in transference of language skills that were now considered as beneficial to the participant, especially in the working environment.

Still within the broader theme of *Making sense of the school environment*, Participant 2 explained how language was a contributor to his level of adjustment in the new school. He said that his attendance of the school was also difficult, and he attributed the difficulty to the fact that he was not able to express himself well in the language spoken in the school. He explained that:

P2: *la es’kolweni zabelungu* [at the white schools] even though *bekunzima* [it was hard] at times *ukufunda kizu* [studying there], I’m telling you it’s very difficult *ukufunda es’kolweni zabelungu* [to study at white schools]. Interview 2, p.6

F: The difficult part is the language?

P2: *i*-Language [language] and, uhm.. *izintoze* [things that]... *ngingathini, mina es’kolweni* [what can I say, me at school], I was head boy, head boy *i-music hoofseun* [of music, head boy], so what would happen, even though I was in charge of the choir, I would find myself feeling small, *ngingakhoni ukukhuluma ngama gama a-serious* [unable to speak with ‘serious’ words]. Interview 2, p.6.

In the above abstract the participant firstly acknowledged that it was ‘difficult’ studying at that particular school. He emphasised that it was not only difficult at that school, but referred to the school as a ‘white school’, bringing in the race element when he made sense of his experiences. He also attributed the difficulty of his experiences to not being able to talk with ‘serious words’,...
thus language in this regard served as a barrier to communicating and consequently asserting his place in the school.

The participants’ experiences can be said to be indicative of the effects of being part of the new school, and adopting a different language from the one spoken at home. This is seen where the participant explained that he felt small, as he was not able to express himself well in the language of the school. Similar findings were reported by Gaganakis (1992) where black learners who had entered private schools perceived themselves as inferior because they could not speak English fluently.

In Bangeni and Kapp’s (2007) study, students also reported being silenced in class by the level and speed of English spoken. One can see that Participant 2 felt that his English was not at the same level as that of the other learners as he could not use the same vocabulary that they used. Instead of being silenced, this participant found himself feeling inferior because he was not able to express himself in English. Even though he was in what can be considered a powerful position (the head boy of the choir group), he was still not able to assert himself because he could not speak the language (English) with ‘serious words’. Miller (2000) emphasises how self-esteem and confidence can be affected because of limited ability to communicate in the language of the majority in the school context, which was the case with this participant.

In another part of the interview, the participant contradicted his opinion of studying at white schools as being ‘difficult’. He went on to say that it was not difficult for him to speak English or Afrikaans because black people can easily ‘adapt’ to other people’s languages. These
contradictions show that the participant was constantly trying to make sense of the events and realities around him, drawing on the experiences he had in the school, and what he was exposed to in the social environment.

P2: *thina singabantu [us people] uhm abantu abamnyama, [black people], abantsudu si si [black people we... we...], ngingathini nje si [what can I say we] are gifted nge [with] language, you get what I’m trying to say, thina siyakwazi uku-adapter [we know how to adapt to another person’s language] so easy uk’hlukana na belungu [better than white people], so it was never difficult for me to speak Afrikaans or English. Interview 2, p.1.

The excerpt shows that the participant considered his race as the main reason that he was able to adapt to the language of the school. To him, being black was advantageous as it meant he would easily adapt to the language spoken in the school. Thus like the first participant, Participant 2 had to learn the languages spoken in the school. However, Participant 2 regarded his race as being a factor in his ability to adapt. He regarded black people as gifted when it comes to language and this is seen in the ability to adapt to any person’s language. By adopting these categories of black and white, the participant firstly constructed his sense of identity based on a difference between black and white people, and assumed that black and white people somehow have innately different qualities. The participant’s reasons were influenced by the socio-political era in which he lives. He subscribed to racial categories, a consequence of the historical divisive rule which was practised in the country.

As mentioned, the fact that the participant drew on race to explain the relative ease with which he could adapt to any language cannot be separated from racial historical processes in South
Africa. As Mda (2004) asserts, black South Africans often have to adjust their language, and in most cases speak the language of other people. This is primarily because languages spoken by the majority, black South Africans, have minimal status and power compared to those spoken by the minority population of white South Africans (Martin, 1997). This also reflects increased assimilation to the dominant culture where mother tongues become dysfunctional and useless, and the dominant languages, like English and Afrikaans, takes priority. In most cases, English is the required languages for employment and upward social mobility, whereas as African languages do not have the same status (Martin, 1997; Mda, 2004; Posel & Casale, 2010). This participant was aware that African language speakers often had to adapt their languages, but he regarded this as a gift, an essential quality that black people seem to have. This explanation does tend to negate the unequal power structures that are present in South Africa regarding language. Nonetheless, race, particularly being gifted in language as a black person, helped this young man to make sense of his experiences in the school setting, and consequently, he adjusted to the environment by adapting to another language.

**Language and racial interactions**

This sub-theme describes the language and racial interactions of the participants in the school. Although language interactions emerged in all three participants’ interviews, race was especially salient for Participant 2. For this participant interactions based on language and race were frequently linked. This means that there was explicit racial positioning, where the participant was aware of his race within the school and this was further linked to language. The first excerpt shows the complex relationship between race and language which occurred in the school, elaborated on by Participant 2.
P2: Most of the time, uhm, *i-race yethu namanje k’sese nzima* [our race even now is difficult]. Cause if you look at it these school that we studied at as *abantu abamnyma* [black people], they don’t take us as people who want education. Interview 2, p.1.

P2: Let’s say maybe there is something that we must do as a group, *siyi-class* [as a class], most of the time people who would represent us in the thing that we did *izoba abelungu* [would be white people] even though, *thina* [us] as a group we did it, maybe it’s a project *nomayini* [or whatever it is], *sikhulumile ngayo* [we spoke about it], we discussed it, but most of the time *u-Mam ebenayo lento yokuthi ama-percentage, ukuthi* [the teacher had that thing that the percentages, that] uhm, *ukhuluma njani nomuntu omnyana, ukhuluma njani nomuntu owumlungu, bezinga-balance* [how she spoke to a black person and how she spoke to white person did not balance] *kahle* [properly]. Interview 2, p.2.

In this excerpt, the participant explained that he felt he was taken as a person who did not want education, particularly in that school. This was mainly because of his race. To elaborate, he reflected on situations where he felt that he was treated unfairly in the classroom. He perceived the manner in which the teachers spoke to black and white learners as unequal. Thus the participant firstly drew on race to emphasise that the ex-Model C did not regard black people as wanting education. Then he drew on experiences in the classroom, emphasising again his race as the reason for the perceived different treatment. This resembles a sense of alienation which the participant felt as a result of being in the school. It cannot be said to what extent the participant was actually alienated, but he felt that he was taken as a person who did not want education because he is black.
Bangeni and Kapp (2007) report in their study that second language English speakers may be taken as incompetent students, leading to differential treatment in the classroom. The participants in that study reported being told that they should not expect good marks because English was not their first language. In some cases they were accused of not doing their own work if they had produced outstanding work. Although it might not be the intention of teachers, it might happen that second language speakers are treated differently by educators because of perceived inability to do the work.

Thesen (1997) supports these findings, stating that black learners at historically white educational institutions may be viewed as ‘disadvantaged’. Terms such as ‘underprepared’ and ‘second language’ speakers are used to refer to these students. This leads to differential treatment in that these learners may be put on language development courses which may enable the learners to cope with the work, but at the same time may also stigmatise them. In this instance, Participant 2 considered race, rather than language, to be the main contributor of perceived differential treatment. Considering the saliency of race in South Africa and how divisive it was in the country, one can understand how the participant drew on the construct to understand perceived differential treatment in the school.

**Theme 2: Identity Constructions**

This theme explores how identity constructions were shaped by interactions in the schools. Four sub-themes will be discussed in this section, namely ethnicity and language, socio-historical processes and influences on identity, constructions of black and white people as different, and constructions of differences between black people who attended township schools in comparison
to self. Although the aim of the study was to look at the identity constructions based on language experiences in former ex-model C schools, the thematic analysis revealed sub-themes relating to racial positioning, ‘difference’ and class. These concepts will be discussed in the sub-themes to follow.

**Ethnicity and language**

This sub-theme focuses on language and ethnicity as a marker of identity. Ethnicity and language were salient for Participant 3 in particular, and not for all three participants. This participant made reference to culture and language being linked. He emphasised the importance of being able to communicate in his mother tongue, which also meant an appreciation of his culture. He explained:

P3: I mean if you're aware, if you appreciate your culture then you will appreciate your language. Interview 3, p.6 -7.

You need to be able to communicate with your fellow Tswana people in Setswana and be able to enjoy your language and certain cultures associated with your language and practices and what not. Interview 3, p.7.

For this participant, being able to speak his mother tongue is important because language is associated with culture. He explained that it was important for him to communicate with other Setswana speakers and enjoy practices associated with the Setswana culture. As Novick (2010) explains, one’s mother tongue may be seen as “the repository of culture, family, and affective connection” (p.8), so knowledge thereof of it may be considered important to identity. However, one should also keep in mind that culture should not be viewed as deterministic (De Klerk,
People are able to draw from culture in unique ways, depending on personal affiliations and interactions (De Klerk, 2000). Ethnic identification should be viewed as a *subjective* process whereby individuals use labels to define themselves (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990). However, it is not essential, and is mainly determined by the interactions that people have in the social context.

The participant also made reference to English, and its role in influencing people to neglect their home languages. He explained:

P3: I feel that English has taken over many households especially in the city and I don’t know... I see the westernisation of the world basically is coming to the point where people are beginning to forget what their home languages are. I mean, you find in a household where there is two children with black parents who can speak their home language fluently and then the child knows nothing of the language, can’t even put together a sentence or have a conversation at least in their home language, and I find that to be very poor. Interview 3, p.6 - 7.

The participant takes note of black children who are unable to speak their home language, and regards the diminishing role of African languages to be a consequence of ‘the westernisation of the world’. As seen in De Klerk’s (2002) study, many black parents exposed their children to English as early as possible and made efforts to speak the language themselves in the home. Although some parents may make an effort to retain the use of home languages, most parents see the use of English as ‘progressive’. Parents view English as an international language and remark that it prepares children for the ‘modern’ world (De Klerk, 2000). This study showed that parents
may promote the use of English in the home, which this participant was aware of, and did not approve of.

Participant 3 did, however, see the necessity of a balanced use of Setswana and other languages. In other words, it is important to retain one’s home language, but this does not mean that one cannot speak other languages. Thus one can say that the participant was aware of the need for socio-political transformation (Bulhan, 1985), where different cultures, more specifically different languages, are synthesised in order to arrive at a new state of balance which moves beyond the dominant languages (Hook, 2003).

P3: I’m not saying that you must be a stoned Setswana speaker, you must constantly speak Setswana all the time, but it doesn’t help if we all strive to speak English but forget where we come from or what our parents taught us in the beginning, or what their parents taught them that was going to be passed on to us. Interview 3, p.7.

The above extract shows commitment to socio-political transformation (Bulhan, 1985). The participant says that one does not necessarily ‘have to be a stoned Setswana speaker’ thus acknowledging the need to speak other languages (for example English and Afrikaans), but then he also sees the necessity of speaking Setswana to understand his heritage, a component of ethnic identity. In another excerpt he clearly stated that one cannot limit oneself to only one language, because language makes one aware of various qualities about different people.
P3: If you isolate yourself to one language, then you put yourself in a corner and isolate yourself from learning different things about different people, I don’t know if that makes sense... It makes you aware of different things, different cultural practices, different beliefs, different opinion, perceptions. Interview 3, p.7 – 8.

For this participant, language does not only function as a means of communication. It enables one to communicate beyond boundaries and to learn new things in the world. Thus language serves to develop cultural awareness, tolerance and communication with other groups, as many of the parents in De Klerk’s (2000) study wish for their children.

Participant 3 subscribed to a fluid notion of identity; although acknowledging the importance of his own culture, he also recognized the importance of being able to communicate in other languages. This participant said he could communicate (to different degrees) in nine South African languages. Thus although he regarded communicating in Setswana as important, and linked this to culture, he recognised the importance of learning different languages and consequently different things about people. This certainly shows the presence of multi-lingual identities. Even though the participant was committed, and saw the utility of speaking in his mother tongue, he also acknowledged the need to learn other people’s languages, again exemplifying a state of revolutionary commitment to socio-political change.

Socio-historical processes and influences on identity

Frantz Fanon (as cited in Bulhan, 1985) views the social structure as a dynamic force, and as having influence on the individual. According to him, psychological theories should not negate the social context and its role in individuals’ psychologies (Bulhan, 1985). Prinsloo and de la
Rey (1999) support this view and assert that “research on identity, especially within psychology, has frequently endorsed an apolitical individualistic view that treats the psychological and social as separate spheres” (p.70). Politically salient aspects of the self, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and class, link and imbricate themselves in fundamental ways and are important to understand identity. Therefore they should be taken into consideration when conducting studies of identity. People constantly construct their identities with exposure to different social contexts, and integrate various aspects of self to form a coherent sense of identity (Soddy, 2001). The constructed identities are situated and performed in the midst of social and political contexts, such that the context will be influential in the construction of such identities.

In this sub-theme, processes which highlight the transition from apartheid to democratic rule, will be made evident. These processes will be highlighted first by drawing on the experiences of Participant 1, who entered the ex-model C school (formerly an Afrikaans-only school) when it was still in transition to accommodate black learners. The views of Participant 2 will follow, moving outside of the school setting and focusing on the work environment.

Participant 1 drew on encounters that occurred in the school during that stage of transition. Language was central in these interactions; however, it was not the main factor shaping experience. She explained:

P1: We were the first English medium class, so when we started ko [in] Grade 8 like there was like maybe how many people (pause) like 10 or 12, and some left because, like, they had said like, no they won’t do it because they don’t have enough teachers and our parents had to come for meetings and what not... Department of Education and all those things. Interview 1, p.2.
The participant recalled that her class was the first English-medium class. Her parents had to be involved with the school in order for the former learner to be taught in a language she understood. In addition, she recalled that some learners left the school because the language of teaching was still being negotiated between parents, teachers and the Department of Education. The participant further recalled that the reason she could not be taught in English was because of a shortage of teachers who would be competent in that language of teaching.

Although language serves as the main factor governing these interactions, socio-political process cannot be ignored. After the demise of apartheid there was considerable change in South African schools (Hofmeyr, 2000). The beginning of democratic government meant restructuring of former apartheid education departments into one national and nine provincial education departments, as well as policy changes in education (Hofmeyr, 2000). As mentioned, this meant the migration of black learners to schools to which they were previously denied access (Kamwangamalu, 2003). For these former ‘white schools’ it meant changing the racial and socio-economic status of pupil enrolments (Hofmeyr, 2000). Although there were dramatic shifts in pupil composition, the same was not true for teachers, leading to problems of teacher supply and utilisation (Hofmeyr, 2000). Schools were unable to cope with multicultural and multilingual classes, as the participant’s experiences exemplify. In the school attended by Participant 1, there was a shortage of teachers competent in English, her desired language of education.

In another excerpt, Participant 2 drew on power relations to make sense of his experiences. He moved away from the school context and drew more on the work environment to make his point about power and how this is related to race, especially in South Africa. He explained that:
This participant noted an observation that he had made at his place of work. He started off by saying that most managerial positions were occupied by white people in the company. This is supported in the literature where it has been stated that managerial positions are still, for the most part, dominated by white people because of the legacies of apartheid (Modisha, 2007). He further stated that white people had money, and with money comes power.

The participant regarded white people as having more power, but this power was a result of having money, and consequently having access to the means of production and other resources. Furthermore, the participant regarded his race as almost a limiting factor, by stating that ‘when you come to South Africa, if you black, you black’. Thus for this participant, it does not matter what level of education one has, but race means that black people will always be seen as inferior.
to white people. Race appears as an important construct for this participant when making sense of his experiences, whether in the work or the school environment.

The participant seemed to be experiencing some sense of alienation because of his race. Bulhan (1980) reporting on Fanon’s work, speaks of different forms of alienation which are influential in the construction of identity. What suits this participant is alienation from the self, which is defined as alienation from one’s personal identity (Bulhan, 1985). One can argue that being black was an important aspect of the participant’s identity. For him, race seemed to play a key part of the way he viewed himself, and consequently in the construction of his personal identity. Being black was certainly regarded as a limiting factor by the participant and was almost viewed as a negative thing in this instance. The participant then experienced alienation from an important aspect of his identity (his race/being black) because of the negative experiences he had which were associated with his race.

Another differentiating feature of this participant, which might have influenced his perceptions of race, was that he still lived in the township. As learners in Gaganakis’ (1992) study have said, living in the township exposed one to different realities, where the effects of apartheid such as poverty, violence, and inadequate housing facilities are still present. Thus the participant’s perceptions might have been largely influenced by where he lived and being exposed to the effects of apartheid. He made sense of his reality by noting perceived differences between black and white people, which might have been clearer because of where he lived, and this was further influential in the construction of his identity.
Although this participant acknowledged that he perceived the present unequal power relations between black and white people, he stated that South Africa needed to have different races for it to ‘function’. Although he said that the interactions between black and white people would never be easy, he asserted that a multicultural South Africa was indeed necessary.

P2:  

*kuyafuneka kube nabelungu* [there needs to be white people], *kube namaXhosa* [Xhosa people], *nabantu nje babe*-different [there must just be different people] *bayenzani i-South Africa?* [what do they do to South Africa?] *Ukuthi ibe ne-taste* [They make it have taste], even though it won’t be easy, it won’t be easy *vele* [really], never until we die, *ngeke kube* [it will never be] easy. Interview 2, p.7.

In the above extract, the participant speaks of the presence and importance of having different races in South Africa. He asserts that having different races makes South Africa have ‘taste’ which can be interpreted as referring to the diversity and uniqueness of South Africa with its racial compositions. He goes on to say that the presence of many different races will never be easy. This might be primarily because of the power relations that the participant mentioned.

The participant’s views are drawn on discourses of multiculturalism, which surfaced in the newly democratic South Africa (Gqola, 2001). These discourses emphasise bringing together different people into one common democratic entity (Francis & Hemson, 2011). They are exemplified in South Africa’s Constitution, which forbids discrimination against people based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language and physical ability, in addition to other markers of identity. Multiculturalism was also emphasised publicly in the ‘undoing’ of apartheid and the creation of new realities (Gqola, 2001). South Africa has even been described by Anglican Archbishop
Desmond Tutu as “the rainbow nation” (Francis & Hemson, 2011), to draw attention to the cultural groups that co-exist in the country in spite of, and because of, differences (Gqola, 2001). Overall, this participant constantly referred to race and racial interactions in the former school, his workplace and the larger social environment when he spoke of his experiences. However, he also acknowledged the importance of different races in South Africa, and the unique contributions that they made in the country. The importance of having different races in South Africa can be considered as linked to public discourse which regards South Africa as being a multicultural society.

**Constructions of black and white people as different**

This sub-theme draws mainly on accounts of Participant 2. One can say that the participant’s constructions based on race might have been influenced by the legacy of apartheid, specifically the categorisation of races. Considering that racial segregation was based on the grounds that particular populations and groups have different lifestyles which should be preserved in their own unique social and political systems and settings (Gaganakis, 2006), it is not entirely surprising that the participant regarded black and white people as having different unique qualities. As mentioned, in comparison to the other two participants, this participant seemed to emphasise race in his explanations.

In the previous sub-theme, Participant 2 mentioned the power relations that he had noticed in the workplace, and attributed this to white people having money, and consequently more power. The participant further elaborated on this saying he did not only see the advantages in relation to
access to money and other resources, but considered white people to have something innate, almost biologically determined, that makes them different from black people.

P2: umlungu yaz’ lento lena man, angazi ngingak’bekela kanjani [a white person you know, this thing man, I don’t know how I could put it for you] I don’t know maybe what happened ngaleskhathi uNkulunkulu asdala [when God created us], I don’t know

But like abelungu [white people] they have this thing that it’s so powerful when it comes to izinto abazi representayo [what they represent]

Like (Pause) umlungu man yaz’ ngingak’bekela kanjani? [a white person you I know how I could explain this to you?] bawusizo, that’s how I can put it, bawusizo

I What does that mean?

P2: Like they helpful... Interview 2, p.6-7

The participant clearly differentiates between black and white people. For him, white people are considered to have been possibly created differently. He considers white people as helpful, to have something that is innately ‘powerful’ in them. The participant first uses race as a marker of difference and in doing so contributes to his construction of identity. In a previous sub-theme it was shown how he regarded black people having an advantage, being gifted, and consequently able to adapt to anyone’s language, unlike white people. The participant is constantly trying to understand his reality, and he does this by drawing on perceived differences between black and
white people. In another instance he further clarifies his views of difference between black and white people by saying that:

P2: ...a black person respects, you won’t speak to your dad like you are mad, but *mhlampe ufunde nabelungu uzo biza ubabakho* [maybe if you studied with white people you will call your dad] if *ufunde nabelungu* [you studied with white people] you will call your dad with their name, let’s say *ubabakho mhlambe uJacque* [maybe your father is Jacque], ha! they will call them Jacque, *ak’na nkinga* [there’s no problem], but with black people you will never do that, call your father with their name? Never, *lento leyo angeke yenzeka* [that thing will never happen]. Interview 2, p.13

In this case the participant considered the fact that black people do not call their elders by their name as being respectful. He contrasted this with white people who easily call their elders by their first name to emphasize his point. Again it seems as if the participant was in a kind of negotiation with himself, and trying to make sense of reality. Both black and white people were presumed to have different qualities that make them who they are. The participant in some cases elevated the one race over the other, because he was trying to make sense of these racial categories and in doing so, also to understand where he himself stood. The participant also showed an awareness of unequal power relations in South African society when he spoke of white people having money and consequently power.
**Constructions of difference between black people who attended township schools and self**

This is the last sub-theme to be discussed under identity constructions. This theme also focused on perceived differences, but more between former attendees of ex-model C schools and black learners who attended township schools. Rudwick (2008) has shown how learners who live in a township, attending an ex-model C school, may be called ‘Coconuts’ or ‘Oreos’. Coconuts and Oreos refer to people who are black on the outside and white on the inside (Rudwick, 2008). Although learners who attend ex-model C schools may be viewed as ‘different’ by community members, it was interesting to see that these former learners (specifically Participant 1 and 2) also perceived themselves as ‘different’ as a result of their schooling experiences. This difference was seen in being able to secure jobs more easily, having different manners, and being interested in different activities and brands than former township school learners.

Participant 2 referred to hygiene, confidence, and experiencing ‘big things’ in the ex-model C school as markers of difference. He considered himself not just different from people who studied in township schools, but also as being above and better than those people.

**P2:**  *Uzoba* [You’ll be] different *mawufunde nabelungu, uzoba* [if you studied with white people, you’ll be] clean *uzobonakala* [you will stand out], *mawuhamba, i-confidence yakho* [when you walk, your confidence] it’s big, because you experienced things that are huge than *abantu abamnyama* [black people]. But *umuntu omnyama into ayicabangayo...* [a black person what they think of...] *efunde nabantu abamnyama...* [the one who studied with black people...] *yena kuye uphezulu kakhulu* [to him you are above]. *Noma mhlambe uhlala ekasi, njengam’, ngihlale ekasi* [even if you stay in the township like me, I live in the
township but people, when I walk down endleleni bathi ngiyazitjela [the road they say I’m full of myself/big headed]. Interview 2, p.10.

Ngihlala ekasi [I live in the township] ang na stress ngihlall ekasi [it doesn’t stress me that I live in the township]... but izinto engzenzayo akusi izinto zase kasi [the things I do are not township things]. Interview 2, p.12.

The participant regarded his self-confidence as being ‘big’ as a result of having attended the school which he did. His confidence was ‘big’ because he experienced things which learners who studied in township schools had not experienced. The elite status was mainly attributed to receiving a better education and speaking fluent English. This participant also said that other people perceived him to be ‘full of himself’”. These sentiments were also found in Gaganakis’ (1992) study, where learners were perceived by their peers to be special, arrogant, or snobs if they were attending ex-model C schools. It is interesting that, although the participant was no longer in school, as the learners in Gaganakis’ study were, he was still regarded as ‘different’ because of the school he had attended. He also said that although he lived in the township, the activities that he engaged in were not ‘township things’. This suggests perceived difference between activities presumed to be appropriate for townships and those appropriate for other areas.

Participant 2 had previously stated that black people had a problem in the sense that they were scared to express themselves when speaking to white people. This participant gave the ex-model C school credit for building his self-confidence and consequently allowing him to interact with white people without fear.
The participant perceived his attendance at a white school as having built confidence to speak back, making him fearless and able to assert himself. He considered black people who studied at township schools as being unable to speak as freely as he now could, and being restricted in some ways. He also regarded language as a marker of difference between himself and persons who attended township schools. He asserted that he spoke ‘powerful’ English; again, these views of speaking better English are supported by Gaganakis’ (1992) and McKinney’s (2007) studies.

P2: Let’s say mhlampe une [maybe you have a] supervisor yemlungu [who is white] or manager awumsabi ngalendlela le munt’ omnyama amsaba ngayo [you won’t be scared of him the way a black person would be scared of them], if i-wrong lento lena uyam’tjela [what they are doing is wrong you tell them] straight forward that i-wrong [it’s wrong], but abantu abamnyama abafunde khona ezikolweni zabo izinto zabo ku-difficult [black people who studied at their schools, their things are difficult]. Cause... cause a lot things... angazi ngingaku explainela kanjani [I don’t know how I could explain to you] but awubi [you are not] free, njenge nyoni [like a bird], yazi inyoni vele [you know that a bird] it’s free, but you are not free. Interview 2, p.9-10

P2: i-English yam’ engfunde ebelungwini [My English that I learned at a white school] it’s more powerful than someone ofunde ekasi [who studied in the township]. Umuntu ofunde ekasi une-problem eyi-one [A person who studied in the township has one problem]. Uyyayaz’ kuthi... [You know that...] say there is three of us here siyacoca [we are talking], abantu [people] most abafunde emakasi [who studied in the township], Bantu education, bayi bizanjalo angithi? [that’s what they call it, right?] Bantu education. They believe when they socialise bakhuluma bonke [they all speak] at the same time. I’m telling you at the same time. So like they don’t give each other a chance, let’s say mhlampe [maybe] “yah uyenze so naso naso” (speaking louder) things like that. Ayikho
lento [there’s no such thing] that okay, you wait for your chance and you speak. Interview 2, p.4.

To people abafunde ekasi [who studied in the township], it’s really difficult. They don’t ask baya demander mabakhuluma [they demand when they speak]. Interview 2, p.4.

In addition to speaking ‘powerful’ English, Participant 2 stressed that he had better manners because he had attended an ex-model C school. He illustrated this by saying that people who attended township schools do not wait for a turn to speak. They also know nothing about asking, and they make demands when they speak to other people. For this participant, the experiences in the ex-model C school came not only with an ability to speak better English, but also with a different way to carry himself. Therefore, the participant saw himself as different, and this was primarily because of his school experience.

Hook (2003) elaborating on the works of Frantz Fanon, writes that when a black person masters the former coloniser’s language, he may get increased acceptance by whites, but this also alienates and distances him/her from the community in which they live. Participant 1’s comments reflected this situation as she referred to the need to distance herself from people who did not attend ex-model C schools. She found it necessary to associate with people who had ‘the same understanding of life’, people who also attended ex-model C schools.
I think you yourself should try maybe not really distance yourself, not really associate yourself with those people, because it does sometimes get to be negative... So you must always just remember to associate yourself with people, that are not necessarily the same level as you, but like around there, because you would have the same ideas, the same understanding of life, compared to someone that’s still \( ko \text{ at} \) the location, like maybe \( o na le \text{ they have} \) matric and working at Shoprite, like whatever you have it’s like better than theirs, like where you are.

Interview 1, p.5.

This extract draws attention to the fact that the school as a social environment can have an influence on learners beyond academic educational effects. The participant perceived the need to socialise with people who had ‘the same understanding of life’ because of the school she attended. She was able to learn in both English and Afrikaans - the languages which were used in the workplace. This also meant that the participant found it necessary to distance herself from other community members as she was not able to relate to them because she had different experiences.

Learners from Gaganakis’ (1992) study likewise reported that they mixed only with other private school learners, and were isolated from the rest of the community. The learners in that study made statements like people who attend township schools are “not my type of people” (Gaganakis, 1992, p. 52) or “are inferior to us” (Gaganakis, 1992, p. 52), similarly to Participant 1, who regarded it as important to associate with people who had ‘the same understanding of life’. Thus the participant perceived herself as elite, even having things that were ‘better than theirs’ perhaps as a result of having a better job, because of the schools she attended.
In the last extract on this sub-theme, the male participant who lived in the township summed up the impact of having been in an ex-model C school as follows:

P2: *Impilo yethu ayifane* [our lives are not the same]. Bottom line *loku ngiyak’tjela ngeke ifane impilo yomuntu ofunde...* [that I’m telling you it won’t be the same for a person who studied...] Cause *i-skin* [skin] the same fine, but inside, *sekuplantwe* [there’s been planted] something else. So *umlungu kahle kahle* [you are white] even though uhm most of the time... *noma sewuphupha k’yenzenka uphupha nga... nge* [even when you are dreaming you dream in] English, *angithi ujwayele isingisi* [because you are used to English], *ujwayele isingisi* [you are used to English], uhm *izinto* [things], let’s say uhm... *abelungu sebayi thethe indawo impilweni zethu* [white people have taken their place in our lives]. Interview 2, p.12.

This participant felt that life between township and ex-model C school learners was not the same. For him, exposure to the school meant an adoption of ‘white’ ways of doing things. Moreover, he showed profound awareness of mediators of his experiences by stating ‘white people have taken their place in our lives’. Thus not only did he do things differently from people who attended township schools, but he realised that he had adopted a ‘white’ way of doing things. The participant, by stating that ‘white people have taken their place in our lives’ acknowledged some form of acceptance of a new way of approaching and doing things. His new way of doing things was further associated with the ‘other’, the white person whom the participant had at some point marked as being different from the black person. He felt that even though his skin might be the same as other township scholars, there was something else that had been ‘planted’ into him. The experiences that he had had in the school went beyond fluent English verbal ability; his experiences had immensely contributed to his construction of identity.
One can argue that the participant finds himself at a place of negotiation, where he is battling with the simultaneous identities he holds. One of these identities is black, the other is associated with white people, which has granted him confidence and comes with a different manner by which he carries himself. The participant could not identify fully as being black, but he could not be white either as he felt the white people were innately different. His identity was in a state of flux, and he was trying to make sense of it. He embodied a true state of in-betweenity; he was neither here nor there (Bulhan, 1985). He tried to place himself into categories because categorisations, through our history, have come to be the way in which we understand ourselves. As Bulhan (1985) states, “the delusion of having arrived there, but the fact of having lost ground here, the fact of being a battleground for many social contradictions, the feeling of being torn between two opposing worlds” (p.192) all have an impact on the participant’s identity constructions.

**Theme 3: The Role of Language in Participants’ Lives**

The last theme to be discussed is the role of language in the participants’ lives. The use of language is differentiated between advantageous uses, contextual uses, and the role of English in the participants’ lives. All three participants displayed an awareness that having been in ex-Model C schools had resulted in exposure to both English and Afrikaans, which contributed positively to their lives.

**Advantageous uses as a result of schooling experiences**

The perceived advantages of having been a learner at an ex-model C school were touched on in the previous theme. These advantages were seen through constructed differences between
individuals who attended ex-model C schools and those who attended schools in the township.
The present sub-theme focuses especially on language and its advantageous uses as a result of
having been in the ex-model C school. Advantages were mainly related to proficiency in specific
languages as used in the working environment.

Participant 1, who had attended a school which was formerly an Afrikaans-medium school, made
references to the benefits of her knowledge in Afrikaans in the workplace, where she was able to
communicate with Afrikaans-speaking people in contrast to her colleagues who could not do so.

P1: I used to, like, say maybe like for Afrikaans because, like, we were like “ahg
these people like they making us learn Afrikaans and like it’s not necessary, we
don’t need Afrikaans, I mean who uses Afrikaans, we all use English and what
not”, but like now I explained to you earlier that at work there are people,
especially people from Pretoria branch, they still speak Afrikaans, they write e-
mails in Afrikaans, when you call them they respond in Afrikaans even if you
speak English, so it has in a way helped me like be able to communicate with
other people in like their own language whatever. Interview 1, p.7.

Even though the participant acknowledged that she initially did not have a favourable attitude
towards Afrikaans, this had changed with entrance to the working environment. The positive
attitude held by learners in ex-model C schools towards English remains unquestionable
(Bangeni & Kapp, 2007; Mckinney, 2007; Novick, 2010; Rudwick, 2008). But it was interesting
to see that for this participant it was Afrikaans which was regarded as beneficial in the
workplace. The participant did, however, comment on the international aspect of English (to be
discussed later) showing that both languages learned in the school environment were advantageous to her.

Participant 3 also noted the advantageous use of languages learned in the school to secure a job. He recalled an occasion where he went for an interview and it counted in his favour that he was able to communicate in both English and Afrikaans. In this case, the participant’s English was presumed to be of good quality because of the school he attended.

P3: Well I remember from my interview, four years ago, um the guy said to me, cause he saw my high school report, he said to me ah, you from Boys High, so your English must be good, and then he looked at my report and he saw a B for English and then he also... He started talking Afrikaans, he said okay, well, your Afrikaans is also good. Interview 3, p.4.

The above extract shows that the school attended by Participant 3 had a good reputation in the opinion of the interviewer, and this counted in the participant’s favour. It was his ability to communicate both in English and Afrikaans which placed him in a favourable position with the interviewer. In this case, and with the case of Participant 1, fluency in Afrikaans emerged as an advantage for both securing a job, and communicating in the workplace. Thus perhaps both English and Afrikaans may place individuals in favourable positions, depending on the language requirements of the job.

The extract below shows Participant 2 saying that as a result of his schooling experiences, he found it easier to speak to white people. He not only highlighted the importance of being able to
communicate fluently in English, but added that because he was used to communicating with white people ‘without being scared’, he could speak without limitations.

P1: Let’s say umlungu neh (a white person), you go for an interview, now, because you used to talking abelungu [with white people], you are friends with them, but now mhlampe [maybe] in the working environment, ngingabeka kanjani, ufun’ umsebenzi [how can I put this, you want a job], to the person afunde nabelungu [who studied with white people] it’s much easier to speak English ungamsabi, uyangthola ukuthi ngicaz’ukuthini, ungamsabi [without being scared, do you get what I’m explaining, without being scared], you would just speak fluently nje, nge-English [in English]. Interview 2, p.2.

The participant first drew attention to the fact that being in the ex-Model C school had led to the ability to speak English fluently. He elaborated on this by saying that, because one is used to speaking with white people, one can just speak without fear. He went beyond the advantageous uses as a result of having attended ex-Model C schools and again highlighted racial interactions. That is, he was able to speak ‘without being scared’ because he was used to socialising with white people. It was not only the education he gained in the ex-Model C school which placed him at an advantage, but also the interactions he had in the school which played a part in his experiences. Having been in that school meant association and interaction with white people, who were now considered as equals and could be spoken to ‘without fear’.

Speaking ‘without fear’ calls attention to the power relations which existed historically between black and white people. Having attended the ex-model C school placed the participant in a position where he felt on the same level or an equal of white people. This calls attention to
construction of identity based on difference, where white people were first considered as the other, and second as people who were historically feared by black people. His schooling experiences had thus contributed to his level of comfort when he communicates with white people.

**Contextual uses**

Supporting the studies by Makubalo (2007), McKinney (2007) and Nongogo (2007), the participants’ views made it clear that their use of language was influenced by context. That is, language was not used in the same way by all the participants; they adopted different languages depending on who they were speaking to, or based on their locations. One participant summarised the link between language and context effectively by stating the following:

P3: Language is basically based on your surroundings and the people around you; if you study *ko* [at] the location, basically you will adapt to speaking your mother tongue more, because that’s what everybody speaks, whereas opposed to *ga oya* [when you go] to a multiracial school you are surrounded by different nationalities, different cultures, different people, and English becomes the common ground of communication. Interview 3, p.3.

The participant explained that when you have been in a certain context, you will adopt the language that is spoken in that particular place. For this participant, the ex-model C schools meant exposure to different cultures and people. English in this case served as the ‘common ground for communication’, and therefore served a pragmatic purpose for communication. The participant contrasted the use of English in multiracial schools to language use in the townships. He stated that because people were in the township, (emphasising location and surrounding) they
would speak their mother tongue more often. In Mckinney’s (2007) study, particularly with regard to variety of accents produced in different places, participants asserted that township learners were exposed to ‘black people’ which contributed to them having different accents. Therefore in both cases, language or accent was associated with particular locations and the interactions that one has in those locations.

Participant 2 highlighted some of the complexities of language uses in different contexts. Firstly, the participant supported the notion of contextual uses of language by saying it depends what language a person ‘approaches him with’, based on that he would respond accordingly. He did, however, emphasise that when he was at home, he would speak his home language, therefore when at home the condition of which language he is approached with did not apply. He further explained that he communicated in English because he was used to communicating in the language.

P2:  

*Ngathi uya-mixer kahle kahle* [I could say you mix], most of the time *ukhulum’i-English* [you speak English], *nes’Xhosa, ne-Afrikaans* [and Xhosa and Afrikaans], most of the time, but when you with *abazali, nakanjani uzokhuluma i-home language ke* [your parents no matter what you will speak your home language] *uzokhuluma isiXhosa sasekhaya*... [you will speak isiXhosa from back home]. Interview 2, p.13.

It depends what language a person approaches you with...Interview 2, p.1.

*so mang’se khaya* [when I am at home], obviously, *lapho khona umamakho uzok’thethisa nges’Xhosa* [there your mother will speak you in Xhosa] then you gonna reply *nges’Xhosa* [in Xhosa], but most of the time *sikhuluma* [we speak] in
English cause into *esijwayele uku expressah ama-feelings wakho* [you are used to expressing your feelings]... How to speak you speak *i-English* [English]. Interview 2, p.13.

Although the participant emphasised that in most cases his languages would be mixed, and was determined by what language he was approached in, he did seem to contradict himself by stating that most times he would communicate in English because that was what he was used to communicating in. In another extract, he said that he liked speaking isiZulu (even though he said that he was Xhosa), and that English ‘bored’ him. Thus although he said most often he would ‘express’ himself in English, he showed a preference for speaking in isiZulu.

P2: *Manje mina ngiyathanda ukukhuluma* [So I like speaking] isiZulu, cause *ngikhuuse kakhulu i-English ang funi ukuk’shela manga, isize iyang’ bhora i-English* [I spoke English a lot, I don’t want to lie to you, English bores me]. From *ngisase mncance* [when I was young], pre-school, grade R, *i-English* [English] *hawu standard 1-2-3-4-5, i-English* [English], 6-7-8-9-10, *yi-English* [it’s English], *hayi, manje ngikhuluza isiZulu mina manje* [no, so now I speak isiZulu]. Interview 2, p.14.

Another interesting point is that Participant 2 enquired about whether he was expected to respond in English during the interview, and then went on to speak in isiZulu. He did switch between the two languages, but he spoke more in isiZulu than English. Even though he said that most of the time he would express himself in English, because that was what he was used to, it did not show in his actions. What might also be the case is that he might be equally comfortable using African languages and English, and might alternate the use of each according to the place and purpose of the conversation, as was seen in the learners in Nongogo’s (2007) study.
The participant may have perceived the interview as an interaction which allowed him to speak isiZulu; based on this he might have chosen to speak this language instead of English. As Mckinney (2007) explains, people may draw on and respond to diverse linguistic contexts in different ways. They may also take positions and be positioned differently in different contexts or geographical spaces. Linguistic identity in this regard then emerges as fluid, context-dependent and situation-bound (Mckinney, 2007; Nongogo, 2007). It is furthermore subject to particular local influences, being flexible and often contradictory (Gaganakis, 2006).

**Perceived advantages of communicating in English**

With all three participants, English was referred to as a global language and as the language which makes communication possible across boundaries. The practical uses of English cannot be understood without taking into consideration the powerful status of the language, which will be explored further in this sub-theme.

To explore her attitude towards English, Participant 1 was asked if she would have preferred to be taught in Setswana, her mother tongue, if she could, to which she responded that she would not. She explains:

P1: Like I don’t think so, because, like, internationally, you would still need to know English, I don’t know maybe if English was second language, but I don’t know. I don’t think so. Cause, like, say maybe if you were to go overseas you wouldn’t really know like how to communicate with those people. Interview 1, p.8.
The participant drew attention to English as enabling communication beyond boundaries. She was of the opinion that if she had been taught in her mother tongue in school, she would be at a disadvantage. Her ability to communicate with other people if she were to go ‘overseas’ would be limited. Another participant supported this statement by saying that:

P3: in the bigger scheme of things, you have to, well how do I put this, in the bigger scheme of things, everybody speaks English and at some point or other whether you like it or not, you’ll have to learn to speak English in order to survive. Interview 3, p.5.

I mean, if you don’t know the basic language that is spoken all over the world then you gonna battle to communicate with different people from all over the show... Interview 3, p.5.

The participant referred to English as the language that is spoken all over the world. Being able to communicate in English was considered so necessary, even essential for ‘survival’. In addition to this, being able to communicate in English was taken to mean that one is able to communicate with different people, who come from different parts of the world. English is widespread, thus it only makes sense that two people who speak dissimilar languages, will find English as common ground for communication. Having said that, one realises the hegemonic status of English, and the important role it has come to have in many individuals’ lives. The fact that it is the most pragmatic language cannot be separated from the powerful status the language has.

Mda (2004) points out that learners who have attended ex-model C schools have mastered the language needed in the South African economic sphere, to the extent that they do not see the
need of communicating in their mother tongue. He adds that the preference to speak English is understandable since education has been through the medium of English. Therefore, from the learner’s perspective there is no perceived need to communicate in the mother tongue. Participant 1’s extract exemplify these statements.

P1: Okay like I don’t know, like some people think that it’s not fair that black people are taught in English or whatever language... I don’t think so because like, you won’t be able to, say maybe if you were taught in Tswana, like in the working environment, when we being realistic, it doesn’t happen. Interview 1, p.7.

I think English as a medium is fine because, like, everybody understands it. Interview 1, p.7.

This participant commented on the unfairness of black people being taught in English, but saw no problem with it because being able to communicate in English meant one acquired the language necessary to communicate in the workplace. She had come to view communicating in English as a norm, and saw no need to communicate in her mother tongue, as everyone understands English. This unfortunately reproduces the power imbalances between language groups, and maintains the status quo of English as having a higher standing (Mda, 2004).

The participant had also come to uncritically accept the status quo of English as the powerful language. She did not find it necessary to be taught in Setswana, as this might mean that she would not be able to secure a job. Being able to communicate in English in this case ensured that one would be able to advance one’s career if one was proficient in the language required to do the job.
Career success, however, occurs at the expense of indigenous languages. As many African language speakers perceive English as offering greater socio-economic, educational opportunities and unifying a linguistically diverse nation, they avoid the use of their own indigenous languages as these are not validated in the marketplace (Kamwangamalu, 2003; Mda, 2004). This was shown where Participant 1 clearly stated that she had no desire to be taught in her home language. The mother tongue then emerges as being of no material or social benefit to the speaker (Kamwangamalu, 2003).

In spite of the change from apartheid to a democratic government, indigenous African languages remain marginalised, much as they were in the apartheid era. They continue to be seen, even by their own speakers, as inferior languages, unsuitable for use in higher domains like the workplace (Kamwangamalu, 2003). Socio-economic pressures, low status of the indigenous African languages, and language practices in education, media and legislature, place English in a dominant position (Kamwangamalu, 2003). As for the African languages, some of their own speakers shun them because they carry the status of inferior languages; they are less useful in the market place and are not internationally recognised.

According to participant 2, the ability to communicate in English is essential to the extent that without it, South Africans would be in trouble, unable to communicate amongst themselves.

P2: i-English [English] I don’t wanna lie to you without yona [it] ngabe sisenkingeni [we would be in trouble], serious cause i-English ihlanganisa [English brings together] Xhosa, isiZulu, Pedi, Tswana, Shangaan everything. i-English i-language [English is a language] ehlanganisa abantu abaningi [that brings
together a lot of people] at the same time, iyenza izinto zibe... [it makes things be...]

sibantu abamnyama [we are black people] imagine sonke sibantu

abamnyama [we are black people] but sine [we have] nine official languages so i-

English i-wrapper zonke i-nine [English wraps all nine] official languages.

Interview 2, p.15.

The participant stressed that English unifies many South Africans. According to him the

linguistically diverse nature of the country allows English to serve as a common ground for

communication. However, in addition to this, not only does English allow for communication

beyond boundaries, as noted earlier by this participant, but as Kamwangamalu (2003) states,

there is in fact a “language shift from demographically majority South African languages such as

Sesotho, isiXhosa, and isiZulu to a minority but economically dominant language, English”

(Kamwangamalu, 2003, p.226). While all of the indigenous languages and dialects are still

spoken in South Africa, the demands of the global economy are increasing the necessity of

communication in English (Singh, 2009). The powerful status of English is made clear when the

next participant speaks of the necessity of English just to secure a job:

P2: It is helpful for abantu abamnyama [black people] to speak English. For an

interview, most people fail, not to say they do not have skills, but just to talk

nomuntu ku-difficult [with a person it’s difficult] cause you have to be free when

you speak to them. But manje [now] let’s say they ask you a question and wena

usacabang’igama eli [you are still thinking of a] suitable word for lento leyo

ufunu kuyisho [that thing you want to say] then it’s difficult because asi... [it’s

not...] you are not used to speaking English. Interview 2, p.6.

The participant was aware that when one cannot communicate in English during an interview,

for instance, one may not be able to get the job. He realised that it is not a case of people not
having the skills for the job, but language becomes a barrier during interviews when one cannot think of a suitable word. Being able to communicate in English was perceived as an advantage and considered to be ‘helpful’ by the participant. However, the imbalances remain as people unable to communicate in the language have less chance of securing employment (Posel & Casale, 2010). English has always occupied and continues to occupy the most privileged position in the South African economy, and it is the language which offers access to socio-economic goals (Heugh, 2009).

This last extract by Participant 2 exemplifies the powerful impact that English has come to have on South African languages. It also makes evident the awareness by the participant of the inherent power relations that are associated with English, specifically in South African society.

P2: Uyabona [You see], you know mos about i-AIDS [AIDS] for example, i-AIDS [AIDS], i-AIDS [AIDS], let me say HIV, i-HIV [HIV] um let’s say mhlampe uyithole [maybe you got it] just by i-cut [a cut] but at the end of the day izobe igcwele umzimba wonke [it will be in your whole body] Interview 2, p.14.

It’s the same as i-English [English], i-English [English], yinto efike [it’s something that came] with certain people but at the end of the day zonke [everyone], black, white, Indian, i-first language yala e-South Africa [its South Africa’s first language] nowadays, ngasho vele [I could say] that English is taking over cause yonk’indawo sekukhulunywa nge-English [everywhere English is being spoken]. Interview 2, p.14.
The participant was aware that the inception of English in the country was from a small group of people. He also showed profound awareness of the invasive effect that English has had on the use of indigenous African languages by comparing it to a deadly virus.

English is widespread and has come to be adopted by many South Africans. Being able to communicate in the language is associated with being educated, privileged, having better access to job opportunities - the advantages are limitless. Many South Africans who are indigenous African language speakers have had no choice but to learn English as it was the language of the dominating group. In this manner, by having to speak the language of the powerful minority, black African language speakers have assimilated or have come to adopt the language of the former colonisers. The privileged position that English holds, is a consequence of historical events, power relations, and continuing social process which also maintains African languages as inferior.

**Summary**

This chapter has presented an interpretation and discussion of the findings after conducting thematic analysis. The identity constructions of three young adults were explored, drawing on language experiences in their former schools. Although the participants all attended ex-model C schools, there were differences as well as similarities in the way their identities were constructed. Participant 1 regarded the experiences in the ex-model C school as mostly positive. Even though there was adjustment required on her part with entrance to the school, she said that she was able to adjust and consequently cope in the school. The experiences she had in the school also contributed positively in her workplace. She perceived herself at an advantage for being able to
communicate in Afrikaans and English, the languages learned in the former school. One can see that with regard to language, this participant had assimilated the dominant culture. She did not see the need to be taught in Setswana. She distanced herself from people who did not attend ex-model C schools, and associated with people she regarded as having the same understanding of life. Taking the theory of cultural in-betweenity into consideration, one could say that this participant had generally assimilated to the dominant culture in the ex-model C school and later on in the workplace, as well as in other areas of her life.

Participant 2 emphasised race in his construction of identity. He explicitly positioned himself racially, and drew on discourses of difference to make sense of his identity. Difference was seen between black and white people in South Africa, as well as between people who attended ex-model C schools and those who did not. Even though initial entrance in the school came with feelings of inferiority as a result of being unable to speak the language spoken in the school, the participant later regarded himself at an advantage because of the school he attended and the languages in which he was able to communicate. Lastly, compared to the other participants, this participant displayed an awareness of unequal power relations which exist in society. He, more than the other two, seemed to be in a battle with his identity constructions; his statements were marked by contradictions and ambiguity. Having been exposed to the ex-model C school, made him feel that he was equal to white people and that he could almost identify as ‘white’, which increased his confidence when it came to communicating in English. At the same time, he identified as being black, linking this to feelings of inferiority as well as some positive factors such as being ‘gifted’ when it came to language. Thus the participant exemplified the state of being lost in between two worlds, and ultimately this influenced the construction of his identity
(Bulhan, 1985). The participant in some instances seemed to have assimilated to the dominant culture, whereas in other cases he had romanticised views of his culture. He was in constant battle when constructing his identity, and could not be said to be in any one phase of the theory of cultural in-betweenity.

Participant 3 emphasised ethnicity and the importance of maintaining one’s culture in his constructions of identity. For this participant, the westernisation of the world emerged as a problem in that it resulted in people speaking their mother tongues less often, and replacing it with English. The inability to speak the mother tongue was associated with the loss of one’s culture. Therefore the participant linked language and culture together. Even though the participant regarded being able to communicate in one’s mother tongue as necessary, he stressed that it was essential that individuals be multi-lingual, as this allowed one to be aware of different things in the world, such as other people’s perceptions, opinions, or practices. Thus the participant moved beyond the utility of English as the dominant language in the workplace and emphasised that language be viewed as a platform to learn about people. He moved beyond seeing superior or inferior languages. He could be regarded as being at a phase of socio-political transformation as he found new ways to make sense of his experiences which did not negate his mother tongue or the languages learned in the school.

Lastly, all three participants regarded the ability to communicate in English as important for economic reasons. English was also assumed to enable one to communicate across and beyond boundaries. The mother tongue was not neglected by the participants, but as seen in the literature review chapter, it was used in contexts which allowed its use and where deemed appropriate by
the speaker. The concluding chapter discusses the implication of the findings, with a focus on identity constructions.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the identity formation of black African middle class young adults in the context of their educational and language experiences in ex-model C schools. Social constructionism was adopted as the epistemological position to conceptualise the methodology of the study. In addition, the ex-model C school was regarded as a social entity constructed by the past system of rule in the country, which also produced differentiation in education amongst racial groups. Identity construction was considered against the post-colonial context, taking into account racial dynamics which occur in the ex-model C school setting. The theory of cultural in-betweenity was adopted to exemplify the dual positions in which learners who attended ex model C school found themselves in these contexts.

Participants who had attended ex-model C schools were interviewed. The interview as a method of data collection was appropriate in that it allowed participants to draw on their accounts and to fully explain their experiences on the subject without limitations. As social constructionism was adopted as the epistemological position of the study, the interview was the most appropriate method of data collection. The interview was regarded as an interaction, where the researcher and participant were considered to co-construct knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This chapter discusses the implications of the findings as presented in the previous chapter. The findings will first be discussed with reference to the formulated objectives of the study. Thereafter, the limitations of the study, mainly methodological concerns, will be stated. An
Discussion of Objectives

Objective 1: To explore the language experiences of young middle class Africans in ex-model C schools settings.

Findings relevant to this objective revealed that all three participants needed to adjust to the new language of the school. The participants’ home languages appeared to be used less in the new context as teaching took place in English. The encounter with different races in the ex-model C school setting meant English became the common language of communication. The participants came to adopt the language of the school, and in this sense assimilated to the dominant language. Learning the language of the school also meant declined communication in their mother tongues.

The experiences were further marked by racial interactions, where constructions of difference and especially racial positioning were emphasised, particularly by one participant. This participant highlighted that being in the school led to feelings of inferiority as he was not able to communicate well in the language of the school. Therefore, the participants experienced a sense of alienation in the ex-model C school because of language.

All three participants displayed an awareness that having been in ex-Model C schools had resulted in exposure to Afrikaans and English, which emerged as advantageous in the workplace. However, the experiences with Afrikaans were not entirely positive in the school environment.
Participant 1 described situations where she would be spoken to in Afrikaans by the prefects, but had no idea what they were saying to her because she did not understand the language. Thus the participant was placed in a position where her mother tongue was not acknowledged or spoken, and consequently she felt lost. This resulted in the former learner assimilating to the dominant language of the school, where she learnt Afrikaans as if it was her first language.

Overall, it appears that the interactions around language required major adjustment on the part of the former learners. The adaptations to the school environment were successful for all the participants; however, this came with feelings of inferiority and a sense of alienation for some, in that they could not express themselves in their mother tongue, and were in an environment which did not encourage its use.

**Objective 2: To explore the relation between these experiences and the identity construction of these participants.**

Firstly, experiences in the ex-model C school contributed to constructions of multi-lingual identities. Having attended an ex-Model C school meant that the participants were proficient in other languages besides their mother tongues. These languages included English, a widely recognised language as stated by the participants, and Afrikaans, which emerged as useful in the workplace. Language was further said to lead to a state of ‘awareness’ where, if one knows different languages, one is exposed to various attributes about other people such as cultural practices, beliefs, opinions or perceptions. Participants were also able to use the appropriate language when deemed necessary in the specific context or situation. Overall, the participants were aware of the different uses of language: its ability to unite people, to produce unequal
opportunities, and also to allow one to form relationships with people who were regarded as having the same understanding of life because of school experiences. These capacities of language were clear to the participants as a result of the experiences they had after completing school.

Secondly, attendance at ex-model C schools came with an elite status granted by the ability to speak better English and having access to better material things as a result of their education. Two of the participants, perceived themselves as ‘elites’ because of the schools they attended. Participant 2 further elaborated on the complexities of having attended an ex-model C school. He perceived himself as confident, regarded white people as equals, and could speak ‘without fear’ as he had mastered ‘their’ language in the school. At the same time, the participant described how he regarded white people as superior, and constantly called on differences between black and white people. White people were regarded as having more money, and this was perceived to result in a more powerful status, especially in the workplace. However, black people were seen to be ‘gifted’ with the ability to speak other languages besides their mother tongue.

The assertions by the participant were important as they showed the complexities of identity development in the post-colonial context. The history of the country, marked by racial division and domination of one group by another, had adverse implications for this participant. Identity was constructed drawing on existing discourses of racial stereotypes of differences between black and white people. Overall, the participant constructed his identity based on difference, although he could not neatly categorise himself; in his statements were contradictions and ambiguities which he constantly tried to make sense of.
Objective 3: To explore the attitudes about language use in different domains of these young people.

Findings relevant to this objective were consistent with literature findings and revealed that language was used differently in diverse domains by the participants. Moreover, general attitudes towards the usefulness of the mother tongue were ambivalent. The negative attitude towards the mother tongue was made clear where one of the participants stated that she had no desire to be taught in her home language. Although the participants saw the need to speak their mother tongues, the working environment required them to be knowledgeable in English. Furthermore, English was perceived to allow one to communicate beyond boundaries and thus it was generally evaluated positively. English was also rated positively because it was regarded as bringing all the different South African language speakers together as most people understand English. Exclusive use of the mother tongue, on the other hand, meant that one would not really be able to secure a job, or communicate with other people; therefore its utility in most contexts appeared inferior compared to English. As already mentioned, Afrikaans was also seen as advantageous, especially in the workplace or to secure employment.

Limitations

One of the main tenets of social constructionism is that knowledge and reality are created and maintained through language (Burr, 2003). In most cases discourse analysis, which can be defined as the study of language as used in social contexts (Gee, 2010), is adopted as a method of analysis when utilising social constructionism as an epistemological position. This study made use of thematic analysis; this means that the use of language as a constructor of social reality was not emphasised. However, where applicable, interpretations were linked to existing discourses,
and a critical approach was adopted throughout the study. Considering the nature of the topic and the approach to the type of issues discussed in the analysis, discourses analysis could have been equally or better suited to the aims of the study, and will be discussed further under recommendations. The theory of cultural in-betweenity could have also been further explored from a discourse analytic perspective. In doing so, the stages spoken about in the theory, could have been examined more in depth, taking into consideration issues of power and social inequalities in a post-colonial society. However, given the scope of this study, the analysis conducted here can be regarded as sufficient as a first point of analysis. Important themes were identified with widespread implications for the schooling system.

**Implication of Findings**

With the demise of apartheid, South Africa has come to be considered as an integrated multilingual country. If ex-model C schools are also to be regarded as fully integrated, the needs of all learners, especially language needs, have to be catered for. As was shown in this study, the radical stage of socio-political transformation, where people are truly integrated and able to draw on all resources to construct their identities, remains an ideal which is yet to materialise. For some of the participants in the study, identity was formed and mediated in a context which encourages the use of English and where the use of the mother tongue was not acknowledged. As has been repeatedly stated throughout the study, learners in these contexts came to adopt the language of the school, and for some, this meant the mother tongue was playing a minimal role in communication.
School integration requires that teachers, school staff and communities be equipped to promote a democratic environment, which amongst other things, will encourage the use of all languages (Nkomo, Chisholm & McKinney, 2004). As it now stands, migration in the country has increased and lines of division that existed between groups are becoming blurred (Banda, 2000). Different cultures learn and take from each other in varying ways. This indicates a move beyond the dominated and the dominators, towards a state where all groups are able to learn from and influence each other. Only one of the participants in the study exemplified this ability for sociopolitical transformation. He expressed how language led to a state of awareness, which allowed him to define and construct his identity in new ways which were not based on difference. The language in education policies should be designed in such a way that it would encourage the use of all languages. Certain languages should not be given preference over others, as doing this continues the divide of languages between those that are regarded as powerful and those perceived as powerless.

Kamwangamalu (2003) speaks of the ‘language shift’ described as “the move from the use of indigenous African languages to adopting the English language particularly amongst black communities”. The language shift is in itself not necessarily a negative thing. However, this language shift leads to a disadvantaged position for indigenous African language-speaking learners who enter the ex-model C schools and who are unable to communicate in the language of the school. As mentioned earlier, the experiences of African language speakers in English medium schools revealed that studying through English can be frustrating and requires adjustment from learners (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007). Moreover, as was shown in the literature review and in this study, learners’ mother tongues are not adequately accounted for in these
contexts, and this negates a part of these learners’ identities (Chick, 2001; Mckay & Chick, 2001). The fact that the participants had to adjust to the language of the school provides evidence that the mother tongue was not accounted for in the school context. This then led to a sense of alienation and feelings of inferiority, resulting in a diminishing use of the mother tongue. To reverse this language shift, there needs to be promotion and systematic implementation of African languages in educational settings and the broader social, political, and economic context (Kamwangamalu, 2003). If other languages besides English are considered as useful in the educational, social, political and economic contexts, it might lead to positive attitudes from black African language speakers towards their own languages.

Significance of the Study
This study contributed to an understanding of the identities of young adult speakers of indigenous African languages. In addition to giving knowledge on the nature of the experiences in ex-model C schools, the study also contributed to an understanding of how these young people negotiated their multilingual identities in contexts where there was little validation of their mother tongue. This suggests a need to transform the ex-model C school, specifically language policies, so that they are truly reflective of a multilingual integrated society, as advocated in state policies.

Recommendations
Future research can be directed at exploring Bulhan’s (1980, 1985) theory of cultural in-betweenity and its relevance and applicability in the post-colonial South African society. From a discourse analytic perspective, one can further explore this data to demonstrate how resistance
and adaptation around language are negotiated in this society. Furthermore, future research could focus on finding working solutions for the application of African languages in educational sectors and economic contexts. African languages cannot be promoted in the educational setting, without acknowledgement of their usefulness in other sectors of society and the economy. Applied research in the form of evaluations, for instance, needs to be conducted in order to assess whether African languages actually work at implementation level in the work setting. If African languages are presented as having some sort of utility in the economic sector, this might result in a change of attitudes amongst African-language speakers towards their own languages. This will hopefully contribute to the construction of multilingual identities reflecting a truly democratic country which acknowledges all its languages.
REFERENCES


De Klerk, V. (2000). To be Xhosa or not to be Xhosa ... That is the Question. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 21*(3), 198 – 221.


APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2283, Fax: 27 21-959 3515
E-mail: 3104232@uwc.ac.za

LETTER OF CONSENT

I, the undersigned, fully understand the research aims, my rights and my role as participant in the study, as well as issues related to confidentiality, as outlined in the information leaflet. I hereby express my willingness to participate in this study. I am aware of my right to withdraw at any time. I also grant permission to the researcher to use the information obtained as part of a research project and to publish the findings as part of the research report and any other related report in future.

_________________________________  ______________________________
Participant’s signature          Date

Student researcher’s Contact Details
Boitumelo Monageng, University of the Western Cape, Department of Psychology. Cell phone number: 072 373 9447. Email address: 3104232@uwc.ac.za

Supervisors Contact Details
Professor Elize Koch, University of the Western Cape, Department of Psychology. Cell phone number: 0824439311. Email address: skoch@uwc.ac.za

I thank you for your cooperation. You are welcome to contact me for any queries at the address given above
PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

Dear participant

Thank you for your willingness to partake in this study. What follows is an explanation of the research project and an outline of your potential involvement. The research is conducted for a mini thesis as a requirement for the completion of M.A degree in Research Psychology which I am completing at the University of the Western Cape. The aim of the research is to describe the identity formation of African middle class young adults, as a result of their educational experiences in ex-model C schools. If there is anything you do not understand or are unclear about, please do not hesitate to ask. My contact details and those of my supervisor are recorded at the end of the letter

TITLE OF RESEARCH
Language and identity in young African language speaking middle class adults who attended ex-model C schools

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This is a research study being conducted in partial completion of my M.A Research Psychology Degree at the University of the Western Cape. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you have attended an ex-model C school and are under the age of 30. The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences pertaining to language identity, of young adults who have attended ex-model C school. This research will contribute to a better
understanding of how exposure to different schooling environments, as seen in individuals who attended ex-model C schools contributes to constructions of identity.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT
One interview will be done with you, with the questions asked centred around your experiences in these ex-model C schools. For instance, you will be asked to share your experiences of having been in ex-model C schools. All the questions will be related to this issue of your past school environment and as related to language. The interview will be approximately an hour long and participation in this research is NOT forced.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your personal information will be kept confidential, with the researcher and supervisor being the only people that have access to it. In the thesis your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary i.e. you do not have to participate. If you choose to participate you may stop at any time. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked during the interview process. If there is anything that you would prefer not to discuss, please feel free to say so.

BENEFIT AND COST
You may not get any direct benefit from this study. However the information we learn from participants in this study will lead knowledge generation. There are no cost for participating in the study other than the time you will spend in the interview.

INFORMED CONSENT
Your signed consent to participate in this research study is required before I proceed to interview you. The consent form is attached and must be signed to indicate your willingness to participate.
QUESTIONS
Should you have further questions or wish to know more, I can be contacted using the following details:

Boitumelo Monageng
E-mail: s27276318@tuks.co.za

I am accountable to Prof Elize Koch, my Supervisor at UWC. Her contact details are:

Elize Koch
E-mail: skoch@uwc.ac.za
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Time: 1 hour

Introduction

1. Introduce research topic

2. Remind participant of the following:
   - Objective of the study
     - To explore the language experiences of young middle class Africans in ex-model C schools settings.
     - To explore the relation between these experiences and the identity construction of these young middle class African adults.
     - To explore the attitudes about language use in different domains (both English and indigenous African language) of these young middle class Africans and how their attitudes relate to their experiences at their former schools.
   - Possible harms.
     - Discomfort, counselling can be arranged or the interview maybe discontinues
   - Ethical considerations:
     - Guarantee privacy to the research participants and informed consent therefore guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity, also ensure the participant of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Obtain permission to record the interview.

3. Provide opportunity to raise questions
General Discussion (Aim: To build rapport and to put participants at ease and to get background info on the participants)

Discussion will centre on:

- Where did you grow up, tell me about that
- What do you do currently?
  - Are you employed?
  - As what?
  - How do you find that?
- Tell me about the schools you’ve attended and varsity
- Can you tell me more about the languages that were used and taught at those schools

Interview

1. I would like you to tell me your experiences, in general but also related to language, as a learner in your former school.
   
   Possible probing questions:
   - Thinking back from when you started school to the end of your school career, tell me about how you found school in general.
   - Can you remember how it was for you as a first language speaker of an African language being in that school? Do you mind telling me about that?

2. How has those experiences affected the way you see yourself, and “your” languages, and as a South African today?
   
   Possible probing questions:
   - Do you think you would describe yourself differently had you not attended the school you attended? If so, how so?
   - How did those experiences; fact that you attended that/those schools impact on how others see you?
   - What do you think of the fact that you sometimes have to change or adapt the language you speaking depending on where you are or who you are speaking to?
• How did your former school experiences influence the extent to which you can now say you are more comfortable using one language over the other when communicating?

3. How have these experiences influenced the way you view how different languages are used/should be used in different domains in the South African context?

Possible probing schedule:

• What do you think about language in South Africa generally, namely which languages are used where e.g. in schools and for learning?

• In what ways would you have a different view of language had you not attended the school you did?

4. Do you still think the same now that you are a young working adult? If you changed your views, why?