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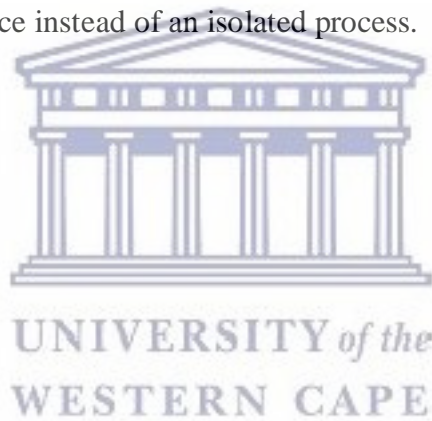


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Declaration

I declare that the mini-thesis entitled, *Psychology Masters students' experiences of conducting supervised research in their non-mother-tongue*, is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All the sources I used or quoted were acknowledged and fully referenced.

Signed: 

Nicolette Rae

Date: 30 November 2018



Abstract

Completion rates of postgraduate students are relatively low worldwide. Completion rates in South Africa are currently 20% for Masters students and 13% for Doctoral students. Differences between South African universities that are attributed to the political history and racially patterned ways of allocating resources and facilitating development have been identified by the literature. Recent student protests identified issues of access, representivity and language amongst others, as important concerns requiring redress. Research has shown that postgraduate graduation rates are higher among first language English speaking students than non-mother-tongue English speakers. This study utilized a collective case study design to explore the experiences of Psychology Masters students doing thesis work in their non-mother-tongue. The study was underpinned by a Social Constructionist framework. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and the transcribed interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Measures such as, member-checking, inquiry audit, providing thick descriptions, and reflexivity were employed to ensure all four aspects of trustworthiness. Ethics clearance was obtained from the Human and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape. Permission to conduct the study at the identified institution was obtained from the Registrar. The Ethics Rules of Conduct under the Health Professions Act were fully adhered to. Results indicated that participants struggled with conceptual thinking, reading, writing and speaking. Findings also illustrated that emotional support from family and friends is vital and highlighted characteristics of helpful supervisory relationships. On a latent level, three underlying forms of rhetoric were identified from participants' descriptions of their experience. These are skill, power, and identity. These are discussed as products of the social structures and institutional practices that undergird them.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Gurr (2001) identified in the early 2000s that completion rates of postgraduate research students were relatively low worldwide. More recently, MacGregor (2014) reported completion rates of 20% for Masters students and 13% for Doctoral students in South Africa. Wickham (2009) identified differences between South African universities that were attributed to the political history and racially patterned ways of allocating resources and facilitating development. Consequently historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) and historically advantaged institutions (HAIs) exist and compete in the same post-Apartheid Higher education landscape. In 1994, black students accounted for only 55% of university enrolments whereas in 2016 black students made up 83% of the student body in South Africa (CHE, 2018). Thus student enrolments now better reflect the general population with regard to race than before. However, in relation to the general population, 50% of the total White population is enrolled whereas only 16% of the total Black population is enrolled (CHE, 2018). Literature also underscored that changes in access and student enrolment have not translated into changes in completion rates (Cloete, 2009; CHE, 2018; NPC, 2011). The South African Strategic Framework reported that average completion rates for white students were estimated around 50% higher than those reported for black students (HESA, 2014). Thus the completion rates in South Africa appear to be racially skewed, favouring white students.

In South Africa, race and language are strongly intertwined. Afrikaans is the first language of 55.3% of South Africans and spoken mostly by the Coloured and White population. IsiXhosa is the first language of 23.7% and spoken primarily by the Black

population. English is the first language of 19.3% and spoken mostly by the White population (WESGRO, 2012). Recent student protests identified issues of access, representivity and language amongst others as important concerns requiring redress (Chetty & Knaus, 2016; Ngoepe, 2016; Suttner, 2016). A quote from *News24*, a popular news website, clearly showed the desire for mother tongue instruction as one student said, “If you can check globally, countries which use their mother tongues as languages of teaching, learning, research and science, are ahead in terms of innovation, research and graduation outputs” (Ngoepe, 2016). Letseka et al. (2010) reported differential patterns of attrition for language groups in a South African university. First language English speakers accounted for only 18% of student attrition and first language Afrikaans speakers accounted for 24% while first language isiXhosa speakers accounted for 45%. This author further reported that the majority of students who successfully completed their postgraduate degrees were first language English speakers (Letseka et al., 2010). To better understand this phenomenon we need to understand that education is deeply rooted in culture and politics (Apple, 1993). Education is not constituted by a collection of objective knowledge but rather by a selection of ideas and theories that reflect the particular knowledge of a select group (Chisholm, 2003). In order to adequately and effectively transform the higher education landscape then, we need to understand how this knowledge has been constructed, which group it was constructed to represent and what alternative constructions are possible (Ramrathan, 2016).

The South African studies in which language was identified as a potential barrier to completion merely recognised language as a variable and did not explore it in any great detail (Jansen, Ahmed & Wadee, 2006; Lessing & Schulze, 2003; Singh & Howard, 2013; Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). Though the correlation between academic performance and language has been well-established, the subjective experiences of local postgraduate

students studying in their non-mother tongue remains a focus for further exploration (Rae, 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

A small number of the universities in South Africa produce the majority of research output in the form of publications (Singh & Howard, 2013). The problem with building research capacity is that it requires existing capacity on which to build, which is a problem for HDI's due to a lack of resources and experienced senior faculty members (Singh & Howard, 2013). Research has already shown that language has the potential to contribute to incompleteness (Hoel, 2016; Nel, 2017; Wisker, Robinson, & Shacham, 2007; Wright, 2003). However, this does little to help us understand the process of students who must conduct their postgraduate research in their non-mother-tongue and how that relates to completion and capacitation, as well as overall student experience. It also does not provide us with an understanding of the role that institutionalized structures play in framing the experiences of these students. This study thus aimed to explore students' experiences of completing postgraduate thesis work in a non-mothertongue.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of Masters Psychology students completing thesis work or supervised research in English as a non-mothertongue.

1.4 Rationale for the study

In developing countries the vast majority of people are not first language English speakers (Green, 2004). In addition, multilingualism exponentially increases the challenges experienced related to language and non-completion (Ramathran, 2016). In 1996, the Higher Education Act, declared the goal of redressing the discrimination created by the apartheid

regime and ensuring equal access and representivity within South African universities (Badat, 2010). However, CHE (2018) shows that representivity remains lower for previously disadvantaged racial groups and attrition rates remain higher for non-English students. If universities and policy makers are serious about ensuring non-discriminatory practices and equal opportunities for the entire population then language as a dimension of intersectionality needs to be examined and addressed (Mkhize, 2017; Nudelman, 2015).

One of the mandates of The National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa was to “promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities” (DHET, 2001, p. 6). Understanding students’ experiences of completing Master’s thesis work in a non-mothertongue, may provide insights into the role of language in the current status of equity and fairness as perceived by students and may provide an indication of the current state of redress of past inequalities.

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP, 2012) identified higher education in need of reform. The plan identifies “low participation, high attrition rates and insufficient capacity to produce the required levels of skills” and states that this is because institutions of higher education “are still characterised by historical inequities and distortions” (NDP, 2012, p. 317). The 2016-2020 Institutional Operating Plan (IOP) of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) acknowledges this and identifies engaging critically with their own institutionalized practices as a key goal for the university (UWC, 2016). The current study contributes to this directive through the exploration of student experiences of the higher education system in South Africa. These experiences serve to highlight areas of difficulty and concern for students and can be used to inform further redress of the higher education landscape. The study also identifies areas of strength which can be consolidated.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Social Constructionism as the theoretical framework. Schwandt (2003) underscored that within social constructionism knowledge is assumed to be socially created rather than individually discovered.

1.5.1 Defining Social Constructionism. There does not appear to be an agreed upon definition of social constructionism and it has been viewed by various scholars across time as a movement, a position, an approach, or as a theoretical framework (Stam, 2001). A social constructionist point of view does not necessarily deny that there is something out there (Truth), but rather it insists that that which we know is dependent on how it is organized conceptually (Galbin, 2015). As the psychoanalyst and philosopher, Marshall Edelson notes, "even science does not involve direct knowledge of 'real' reality but an interpretation of reality in a particular framework of meaning" (Edelson, 1971, p. 28-29). Two distinguishing marks of social constructionism include the rejection of assumptions about the nature of mind and theories of causality, and placing an emphasis on the complexity and interrelatedness of the many facets of individuals within their communities (Galbin, 2014). Social constructionism focuses on meaning and power and meaning is not a property of the objects and events themselves, but a construction (Galbin, 2014). Meaning is the product of the prevailing cultural frame of social, linguistic, discursive and symbolic practices (Cojocaru & Bragaru, 2012). Persons and groups interacting together in social systems form, over time, concepts or mental representations of each other's actions (Galbin, 2014). These concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by people in relation to one another. The roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out and these reciprocal interactions are then said to be institutionalized. In this process of institutionalization, meaning is embedded in society. Knowledge and people's conception of

what reality is, becomes embedded in the institutional fabric of society (Berger & Luckmann 1996).

1.5.2 Ontological assumptions. Literature differentiates between two types of social constructionism, Micro social constructionism and Macro social constructionism (Burningham and Cooper, 1999; Burr, 2015; Danzinger, 1997). Micro social constructionism focuses upon the micro-structures of language use in everyday discourse between people in interaction (Burrman, 1999). From a micro social constructionist perspective, multiple versions of the world are available and no one individual's reality can be said to be more real than another's (Burr, 2015). Micro social constructionism includes the works of Kenneth Gergen and John Shotter, and is focussed around identifying the ways people frame their everyday interactions in order to achieve their own personal agendas (Harre, 1999). Macro social constructionism acknowledges the constructive power of language, but is less interested in the micro-structures of everyday interactions. Macro social constructionism is interested in the social structures and institutionalised practices which are formed by, and serve to form everyday interactions (Burr, 2003). The focus is often specifically on examining power dynamics and the social forces which undergird and serve to sustain the interests of dominant groups within society, with the aim of analysing social inequality for the purposes of challenging these (Cunliffe, 2008). The current study employed Micro Social Constructionism. On a micro level, each participant's reality was explored as it was represented through their expression of their lived experience.

1.5.3. Epistemology. There are different varieties of Social Constructionism, but at its core it is underpinned by four assumptions (Burr, 2003; Galbin, 2014; Gergen, 1985).

1.5.3.1 Assumption 1 - Critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge: Social constructionism rejects Positivist and reductionist approaches to knowledge that are non-reflexive in nature (Galbin, 2014). It invites one to challenge the objective basis of

conventional knowledge, whether in the sciences or in daily life, and acts as a form of social criticism. One of the issues this study explored was the assumption of English as the preferred language of tertiary instruction. The status of English was particularly called into question when protesting students admitted that they feel they are at a disadvantage not being able to study in their mother tongue despite the fact that they are not studying abroad, while some of their peers do not face this same problem (Ngoepe, 2016).

1.5.3.2. Assumption 2 - Cultural and Historic Specificity: Galbin (2014) postulated that the way in which we understand the world was a function of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people. In other words, historically situated interchanges among people influence or produce the terms in which the world is understood (Gergen, 1985). Burr (2003) stated that our understanding of the world, including the categories and concepts we use to make sense of it, are culturally and historically specific constituted the main tenet of this assumption. This author argued further that our understandings are not only specific to culture and history, but are also products thereof and are dependent on the particular social and economic situation prevailing at that time, in that place. For the present study, it became important then to look back to the history of English in South Africa and how this history may have contributed towards the feelings and opinions which South Africans now hold towards English.

1.4.3.3. Assumption 3 - Knowledge is sustained through social processes: The degree to which any form of understanding is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question (Gergen, 1985). Burr (2003) then poses the question, “if our knowledge of the world...is not derived from the world as it really is, then where does it come from?” (p. 4). Galbin (2014) suggested that any form of knowledge or understanding is dependent on social processes such as communication, negotiation, conflict and rhetoric to form and sustain it. Galbin (2014) further stated that

social constructionists take a critical stance in relation to assumptions about the social world which are seen as reinforcing the interests of the dominant social groups. For example, many parents of black African children demand that their children be taught in English and not in their mother tongue. This seems to reinforce the taken-for-granted belief that English is the preferred language of instruction however, this does not speak to the multiple reasons for the decision of the parents. For example, Tshotsho (2013) reported that Black African parents believe that being educated in English will afford their children a more viable future in this country than if they studied in their mother tongue. Literature suggests that this preference may be reflective of deeper level power imbalances within society which result in language being used as a proxy for class and status (Bloch, 2016; Thobejane, 2013).

1.5.3.4. Assumption 4 - Knowledge and social action go together: Each different construction invites action from us as human beings and in this way serves to sustain certain patterns of social action and exclude others (Burr, 2003). Descriptions and explanations form integral parts of various social patterns. They are bound with power relations which serve as societal indicators for what is permissible and for whom (Burr, 2003). To alter description and explanation is thus to threaten certain actions and invite others (Galbin, 2014).

The emphasis on social context within this approach allowed for an exploration of the shared experiences of postgraduate students with regard to language in the context of the social, political and economic history of South Africa which greatly contributed to the current state of higher education. The taken-for-granted assumptions about English as the preferred language of higher education and upward mobility were examined to gain insight into how students construct and assign meaning to their experiences of conducting postgraduate research in their non-mother tongue.

1.6 Thesis organization

The study comprises of six chapters. Chapter One serves to introduce the topic by providing a background to the study, identifying the problem statement and explaining the rationale for conducting the study in line with the National Development Plan 2030 and the Department of Higher Education and Training (2001). Chapter one also introduces the theoretical framework to be utilised in the study. Chapter Two provides a thorough review of the literature. The literature review serves to provide information pertaining to the functional linguistic aspects of conducting thesis work in a non-mothertongue. It also serves to provide contextual information such as, the history of English in South Africa, in order to create a comprehensive lens through which to interpret the results. Chapter Three provides a detailed account of the methodology used with a clear description of the different methodological elements such as the design of the study, sampling techniques and the data collection process and analysis. Chapter Four is a presentation of the results. This chapter presents case summaries for all participants. Thereafter the categories and themes that were found in the data as well as, any sub-themes are presented. The fifth chapter is a discussion. In this chapter, the results are discussed on a micro and macro level, in line with the theoretical framework. Results are also linked to the study objectives and discussed in relation to literature. The sixth and final chapter provides a conclusion, which serves to tie the study together by highlighting its significance, the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conducting supervised research and thesis writing is a significant challenge for all students, but for students who do so in a language other than their mother-tongue there are added layers of complexity which make it even more difficult to succeed (Hove, 2017). In South Africa, particularly, the context in which students are studying as well as the social and political history may contribute to the experiences of these students (Ramathran, 2016). This chapter provides an introduction to the concept of a global language, with particular focus on how a language garners such status as well as who has the power to proclaim it as such. This is followed by an overview of the history of language development in South Africa. The aim of this is to gather the contextual information necessary to understand the current views of people toward English as the language of instruction in tertiary education. Academic performance at a tertiary level is largely reliant on the educational input received at primary and secondary levels. For this reason, theories of second language acquisition are presented and discussed in relation to their relevance in the South African educational context. This is followed by an overview of the transformation of higher education in South Africa, with particular emphasis on the transformation of language policies. Finally, the practical implication of second language tertiary education on academic performance are discussed, particularly as they pertain to the thesis process.

2.1 Perception of English as a Global Language

Gnutzmann and Intemann (2005) reported that there is no official definition for a global language. Mastin, (2011) stated that a global language is essentially characterized by four considerations or qualifications. First, the number of people using the language as either a mother tongue or second language speakers. Second, the geographical distribution of the

speakers. Third, the priority status held by the language in being taught as a foreign language. Fourth, the use of the language in international organizations and diplomatic relations.

Crystal (2003) argued that the reason a language obtains global status has little to do with the number of people who speak it and more to do with who those speakers are. He goes on to say that “history shows us that a language becomes a global language mainly due to the political power of its native speakers, and the economic power with which it is able to maintain and expand its position” (Crystal, 2003, p. 7). Mastin (2011) illustrated this with the example of Latin, which became a global language despite the fact that its speakers constituted a numerical minority, but they were powerful (e.g. Roman military, Roman Catholic Church). Today, English is the nearest to a global language (Graddol, 2006). Mastin (2011) reported that the worldwide reach of English is much greater than Latin or French. Graddol (2006) stated that there has never been a language as widely spoken as English.

People for whom English is not the mother tongue however, often report mixed feelings about its status as a global language (Brutt-Giffler, 2002). For example, Crystal (2003) reported that making progress in learning English often comes with a sense of pride in the accomplishment and a feeling of communicative power, but it also comes with an overriding sense that mother tongue speakers of English hold a distinct and unfair advantage over the rest of the world’s population. These feelings are often expressed by means of language riots or protests (Gnutzmann & Intemann, 2005). In fact, many of the student protests which took place in South Africa in 2015 and 2016 were due, at least in part, to language concerns and frustrations (e.g. Chutel, 2016; Hall, 2016; Makoni & MacGregor, 2016; Ngoepe, 2015).

2.2 History of English in South Africa

Social Constructionism emphasizes that an individual should be understood as the outcome of the societal structures and institutional practices of that society (Cruickshank, 2012). If that is the case then in order to understand the current landscape of tertiary education, we first need to understand the history that undergirds it. Below is a brief history of South Africa, with particular focus on those aspects which impacted the development and evolution of language in the country.

Access to pre-colonial history of South Africa is limited because it is largely reliant on oral tradition and vaguely presented school curriculums, which largely deny the existence of a functional, resourceful and thriving pre-colonial past in South Africa (Wright, 2017; Hamilton, 1995). However, pre-colonial historians provide accounts dating back to the first humans, which gives an indication of the language evolution within South Africa. Between 200 BC and 200 AD, Bantu-speaking people came to South Africa from along the border of Cameroon and Nigeria in West Africa (Greenburgh, 1995). Approximately 1000 years later, the Nguni speaking people moved from East Africa into the Kwazulu-Natal area and later into the Gauteng and Northwest Provinces (Huffman, 2007). In 1300 AD, also coming from East Africa, the Sotho-Tswana speaking people moved across into the Gauteng and Northwest provinces (Huffman, 2007).

English came to South Africa via the British occupation of the Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town) in 1795 (Kamwangamalu, 2002). Prior to this, between 1652 and 1795, had been the period of Dutchification during which access to resources and employment in civil service was dependent on the knowledge of Dutch (Kamwangamalu, 2002). This period came to an end in 1795 and was replaced by Anglicization wherein the British sought to replace Dutch with English in all facets of public life (Davenport, 1991). By 1814, English was firmly established as the official language of the colony (Lanham, 1978). Dutch, and later Afrikaans, were suppressed by the British government. Even in education, children had

to be taught in English rather than their mother tongue and teachers were instructed to promote the acceptance of British rule among Afrikaners (Kamwangamalu, 2002). This, along with the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902), led to a deep resentment towards English among Afrikaans mother tongue speakers and English became known as “die vyand se taal” (the language of the enemy) or the language of oppression (Silva, 1997).

Anglicization ended in 1948 when Afrikaners came into power and Afrikaans became the official language for the conduct of business of the state (Gough, 1996). In 1953, the apartheid government adopted the Bantu Education Act which sought to reduce the influence of English in black schools by imposing Afrikaans as the medium of instruction; This led to the Soweto uprisings of June 16, 1976 (Bloch, 2016). The aftermath of the Soweto uprisings saw Afrikaans emerge, in the minds of black South Africans, as the language of oppression (Kamwangamalu, 1997). English, on the other hand, was the language used by members of the African National Congress (ANC) to communicate underground during Apartheid. As such, English became the language of liberation against apartheid for black South Africans (Silva, 1997).



In post-apartheid South Africa, English enjoys more prestige than any other official language and is viewed by many as the language of power and status (Samuels, 1995). However, Thobejane (2013) commented that English was seen by some as a remnant of colonialism and a cause of cultural alienation.

2.3. Theories of Second language Acquisition

In South Africa, approximately 60% of learners in grade 3 are learning in a language other than English and in grade 4 this is reduced to 5% (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). The Department of Basic Education (2011) promotes English as a language of instruction as early as the foundation phase. However, literature suggests that home language education during

the foundation phase leads to improved English ability later on (Brock-Untne, 2007; Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000; Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). To better understand the influence of different kinds of English exposure, theories of second language acquisition are presented. According to the literature, there are three main theories which attempt to explain language development namely, the Learning Perspective, the Nativist Perspective, and Interactionist Theory (Brown, 2006; Mahone, 2012). These theories are discussed below.

2.3.1 The Learning Perspective. The Learning Perspective is influenced by structural linguistics and the behavioural psychology of B.F Skinner (Brown, 2006). Structural linguistics functioned around the belief that only empirically observable responses could be subject to investigation and the task of the structural linguist was, therefore, to describe human languages and identify the structural characteristics of those languages (Osgood, 1957). Typical behavioural psychology models were based on operant conditioning, rote verbal learning and other empirical approaches to studying human behaviour (Malone, 2012). The Learning Perspective draws from structural linguistics and behavioural psychology and states that “language can be dismantled into small units and that the units can be described scientifically, contrasted and added up again to form a whole” (Brown, 2006, p. 21). Teachers using the learning perspective believe that learners can be conditioned to respond in the desired way, given the correct reinforcement. Therefore the second language is learned by using techniques such as, structural drills and pattern practices in the classroom (Malone, 2012).

2.3.2. The Nativist Perspective. This theory emerged largely as a critique of the Learning Perspective and posited that human language cannot simply be studied in terms of observable stimuli and responses (Anderson, 1983; Ellis, 1994). The Nativist Perspective is based on generative linguistics and cognitive psychology, and is interested not only in describing language, but also in arriving at an explanatory level (Brown, 2006). Nativist

theorists believe that there is an important distinction between the overtly observable aspects of language and the hidden levels of meaning and thought which serve to generate observable linguistic performance (Butzkamm, 2007). Steven Krashen (1985) developed the Monitor Model for second language acquisition. According to Mahone (2012) this model was built on five core hypotheses; 1) There is a natural order for learning the structure of a second language, 2) There is a distinction between language acquisition and language learning, 3) There is a monitor involved in the production of the second language, figuratively speaking, which corrects speech that is incorrect or inappropriate in the second language, 4) If a learner receives comprehensible input they will learn to understand and speak the language, and 5) The emotions or feelings of the learner, in relation to the second language, play a critical role in language acquisition and if the process causes fear or anxiety in the learner then little, if any, of the second language will be learnt or acquired.

Cummins (2000) posited that natural second language acquisition may also include a “silent phase” wherein the learner is receiving meaningful input and thereby improving their understanding of the second language, but they are not yet comfortable or confident enough to speak. The work of both Krashen and Cummings build on Chomsky’s theory that learners possess the inherent ability to acquire a second language using the same language learning aptitude they display when acquiring their first language (Mahone, 2012). Krashen (1985) predicted that a learner’s competence in his or her mother tongue would play a critical role in the acquisition of a second language and that a first language which is well developed in a learner on all four communicative levels (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) would lay the foundation for the transfer of those skills to the second language. Thomas and Collier (2002) later confirmed this prediction with their longitudinal study of 42 000 second language learners of English. Their primary finding was that the strongest predictor of success in Matric final exams (completed in English), was the number of years that the

learner had received education in their mother tongue. Van der Berg et al. (2011) add that once home language proficiency has been achieved, the transition to English instruction must come with high level teacher expertise and appropriate support materials. This suggests potential problems then for the many South African primary school learners who are taught by teachers who use code switching devices due to insufficient English proficiency (Meyer, 1997; Bloch, 2016).

2.3.3. Interactionist Theory. This is a multidisciplinary approach as it is an integration of linguistic, psychological, and sociological paradigms and there is an emphasis on social interaction and discovery or construction of meaning (Brown, 2006). This theory, developed by Vygotsky posited that the process of developing a new linguistic system is dependent upon a combination of the learner personally making meaning out of the linguistic input they are provided with, as well as the critical role of social interaction with others (Siavin, 2003). This approach suggests that learners need to learn the kind of language that they will need for real life situations and there is therefore an emphasis on learning through interaction in the second language, as well as combining classroom learning with learning in the real world (Gass, 2002). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed as a practical teaching method based on Interactionist theory. The technique is centred on a set of four principles as developed by Nunan (1991). First, a second language is learned by speaking the language. Second, the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation promotes learning. Third, the personal experiences of learners own are important contributing elements to classroom learning and must be acknowledged. Fourth, classroom language learning must be linked with language activities outside the classroom. One of the main critiques to this approach though is that placing that much emphasis on natural interaction outside the classroom presupposes that the learners live in an environment with readily available opportunities to engage in conversations in the second language. This is often not

the case and many students do not encounter the second language meaningfully in the communities in which they live (Mahone, 2012). Based on the literature, this appears to be the case with many children in South Africa, particularly those living in rural areas with little or no access to English speakers or even English media (Tshotsho, 2013).

2.4. Transformation of the Higher Education Landscape in South Africa

In 1961 South Africa became a republic and English and Afrikaans were given official language status (UNICEF, 2016). The new language policy of South Africa was introduced in 1994 when South Africa became a democratic country (Bloch, 2016). Under democracy, redress was sought for the injustices of Apartheid including redressing the higher status given to English and Afrikaans at the expense of other indigenous languages (Tshotsho, 2013). The South African Language Policy states:

i) The right for the individual to choose which language or languages to study and to use as a language of learning.

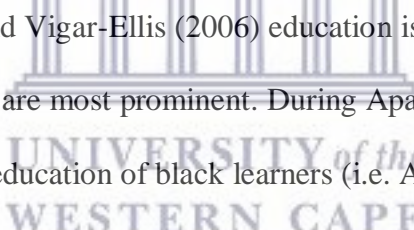
ii) The right of the individual to develop linguistic skills in the language/s of his/her choice, which are necessary for full participation in national, provincial, and local life.

iii) The necessity to promote and develop South African languages that were previously disadvantaged and neglected.

(ANC, 1994, p. 124)

This policy remains a symbolic gesture as, in spite of government policy on multilingualism, English and Afrikaans remain the only two languages used in tertiary education (Tshotsho, 2013). The Department of Education has not been able to convince tertiary institutions to use an African language as medium of instruction (Pandor, 2005). Reasons include insufficient funds, availability of textbooks in any of the official languages

aside from English and Afrikaans and lack of enthusiasm among black South Africans to use an African language as a medium of instruction based on the belief that it will hold no merit in the current society (Pandor, 2005). The lack of enthusiasm among black South Africans to use an African Language as a medium of instructions is due to the fact that African parents believe that mother tongue education will not lead to socio-economic mobility for their children unless socio-economic conditions change (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014). English is the dominant language of government, business, commerce and industry and parents who can afford it, send their children to English medium schools (Heugh, 2005). However, the majority of black students do not have the means to sufficiently develop English language skills, thereby putting them at a disadvantage (Thobejane, 2013). Therefore, the functional value of English as a medium of instruction is endorsed and students are obliged to adhere to English in order to progress at a tertiary level (Tshotsho, 2013).



According to Chetty and Vigar-Ellis (2006) education is the sector within society where the effects of Apartheid are most prominent. During Apartheid, significantly fewer resources were allotted to the education of black learners (i.e. African, Coloured and Indian learners) than to the education of white learners (Bloch, 2016). Shortly following the end of Apartheid, some historically privileged tertiary institutions maintained their language policies which served as exclusions for some students (Moja & Cloete, 1996). Tait (2007) stated that the transformation of language policies were not adequately carried out due to vagueness within those policies which did not compel universities to implement them.

Mkhize and Belfour (2017) suggested that maintaining English and Afrikaans as the sole languages of tertiary education, serves to undermine the constitutional rights of African language students. At a tertiary level, lack of proficiency in academic English translates into high attrition rates (Ndebele et al., 2013). Contributing to these high attrition rates is limited participation in lectures due to insufficient verbal English proficiency (Makalela, 2015) and

negative attitudes toward an English and largely Westernized curriculum (Nkosi, 2014). Aside from English proficiency, African languages do not share the academic tradition of English and Afrikaans. This means that academic language in and of itself is a novel concept for African language students (Mkhize & Belfour, 2017). Ramathran (2016) emphasized that in order to address the high attrition rates of non-mothertongue English speakers in South Africa, it is important to consider transformation at a curriculum level as opposed to assessing transformation purely via enrolment statistics. The practical implications of undertaking tertiary education in a second language are discussed in the section that follows.

2.5. Second Language Students and Academic Performance

Literature suggest cultural identity, meta-discourse, writing skills, and challenges in supervision as areas affecting academic performance for second language students (Claudius, 2013; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013). These are unpacked below.

2.5.1 Cultural identity. Postgraduate studies in a developed (western) country is not simply about being proficient in English in terms of the mechanics of the language; it also requires a knowledge of the cultural conventions and discipline specific discourses which are guided by the context in which the research is being conducted (Bartolome, 1998). Many students find this difficult because they fear that full enculturation would mean giving up their own cultural identity (Makgalemele, 2016). Acculturation is defined as the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values (Cole, 2018). Hirvela and Belcher (2001) purport that before we can help students deal with identity issues in their second language, we must first have some knowledge of the way in which they understand their research identity in their first language and how this is linguistically reflected in their writing. For example, one student found it difficult to critique articles in his thesis, not because of language difficulties, but because being critical directly

opposed his cultural identity (Cadman, 2000). In essence, these authors argued that language is an important artefact of culture and race that constitutes more than just a technical exercise in academic writing.

2.5.2. General writing skills. According to Mukminin and McMahon (2013) writing was found to be the most challenging of the language skills and writing a thesis or dissertation was more difficult and significantly more stressful than general course work for postgraduate students. These authors also found while other language skills improved over time, writing skills did not improve in any significant way. Li and Vandermensbrughe (2011) found that non-mother-tongue speakers struggle with thesis writing on three levels: Grammatical accuracy, Discourse, and Rhetorical conventions. Grammatical accuracy includes sentence structure, use of tenses, wording and punctuation. Discourse includes the creation of meaning via larger portions of text such as paragraph. Rhetorical conventions includes having an awareness of the context in which the thesis is being written, as well as the accepted conventions of thesis writing within the specific discipline of study. Strauss (2012) found that non-mother-tongue speakers tend to spend a disproportionate amount of time on the level of grammatical accuracy and therefore spend less time focussing on generating meaning at the level of discourse.

2.5.3. Meta-discourse. Meta-discourse is defined as the manner in which writers use language to organise their thoughts and ideas in text, in relation to the perceived expectations of potential readers (Ozdemir & Longo, 2014). Kawase (2015) postulated that the task of the thesis writer is not as simple as providing an accurate account of reality, but that the writer must also consider in the formulation and organisation of the text and their own views in relation to those held by the readers. Hyland (2004) stated that in thesis writing students “shape their arguments to the needs and expectations of their target readers” (p. 134).

According to Duruk (2017) the notion of meta-discourse dictates that it is the responsibility of the writer not only to present ideas, but to garner interest from the reader by convincing them of the relevance of what is being written. The author adds that it is this which is particularly challenging for students writing in a second language. Paltridge and Starfield (2007) stated that meta-discourse is used particularly frequently in the social sciences and it is important, therefore, that non-mother tongue speakers in this field be aware of the implications thereof in their own writing.

2.5.4 Challenges in supervision. Writing a thesis at Masters or Doctoral level involves complex thought processes and the articulation thereof can be severely hindered when studying in your non-mother tongue (Odena, 2017). This is a problem because inadequate language proficiency can affect the ability of students and supervisors to relate to each other in terms of sharing ideas and providing helpful critique and assistance (Albertyn, Kapp & Bitzer, 2008). Nel (2017) reported that language proficiency can hinder the progress of the student. Tummala-Narra and Claudius (2013) stated that students and supervisors often experienced problems in communication due to limited English ability of one or both parties and this often lead to feelings of frustration for both student and supervisor. Rice et al. (2009) found that some supervisors discriminated against non-mothertongue speakers for not being able to speak what they deemed to be “proper English”. Making progress in their writing becomes a greater challenge when non-mother-tongue speakers are afraid of the feedback they may receive from their supervisors (Hove & Nkamta, 2017; Strauss, 2012).

In South Africa, many students are writing their theses in a language that is not their mother-tongue and many supervisors are supervising in English even though it is not their first language (Van Aswagan, 2007). Poor use of language by students writing in their second language was found to be a major challenge for supervisors (Malan, Marnewick & Lourens

2010). Hove & Nkamta (2017) added that language problems experienced by postgraduate students in South Africa are often exacerbated by the low literacy level of many students from previously disadvantaged background that detract from their preparedness to handle the demands of postgraduate research. Additionally, Psychology as a discipline is very language dependent and contains philosophical and nuanced academic jargon (Whitbourne, 2013). Segalo and Cakata (2017) add that, because of its reliance on Eurocentric ideas, Psychology does not reflect the knowledge of most Africans. This makes it substantially more difficult for African students to understand the language of Psychology (Makhubela, 2016).

Literature has shown that the influence of the political landscape on language evolution in South Africa has influenced perceptions toward language. It is unclear though how these perceptions shape students' attitudes toward studying in English as a non-mothertongue and how this feeds into the experience of completing postgraduate research. Second language acquisition theories provide a useful theoretical framework. Looking at the experiences of students at a postgraduate university levels, in relation to their educational background, provides the opportunity to examine the practical implications of these theories in a South African context. In terms of the thesis process, the ways in which students experience the various elements of writing a thesis needs to be examined in order to illuminate areas of difficulty as well effective facilitating factors. The impact in the social sciences, and particularly Psychology as an example within the social sciences must be examined, due to the language dependent nature of the field. The present study thus set out to examine the experience of writing a thesis in your non-mother tongue amongst Psychology Masters students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of Masters Psychology students completing thesis work or supervised research in English as a non-mothertongue.

3.2 Objectives of the study

- To establish the profile of non-mother tongue speakers of English
- To explore the experiences of conceptualizing research in terms of project formulation, constructing arguments, expressive communication, and language convention (e.g. editing, grammar), discipline specific language
- To explore the experiences of executing research or conducting fieldwork in terms of language convention, expressive communication, and idiomatic expression or convention, and discipline specific language
- To explore the experiences of writing up a thesis in terms of formulation, expressive communication, organization of the text and convention (e.g. editing, grammar), and discipline specific language
- To explore the integration of feedback received in English in terms of organisation of text and convention (e.g. editing, grammar), formulation, and discipline specific language

3.3 Research setting

The department of Psychology at a historically disadvantaged university was selected as the research setting. The department offers two structured Masters programmes: Masters in Research Psychology and Masters in Clinical Psychology.

Registration records provided by the university indicate that the average intake per year ranges between 14 and 16 students averaged across the programmes (Department of Psychology, UWC, 2017). Approximately 60% of the intake are non-mother tongue speakers which is consistent with national statistics provided in the literature review (Prof. M. Smith, Personal communication, April 13, 2016). Typically students complete their studies in 18 months to 2 years (Prof. M. Smith, Personal communication, April 13, 2016). Thus approximately two cohorts were accessed for the purposes of the present study

3.4 Design

The study utilised a collective case study design. Collective case studies provide a depth of understanding which is not possible with conventional experimentation and survey design (Cresswell, 2011). This design involves taking the narratives of individuals who share common characteristics and combining them to form holistic descriptions (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Stakes (1995) stated that collective case studies aim to gain a better understanding of the universal by studying the individual.

Case summaries were used in this study to provide an indication of the way in which participants reported on their experiences of writing a thesis. The experiences they choose to report on and background information they decide to include as well as the information they omit helps us understand the experiences of the participants. What they chose to speak about also provides some insight into the social and institutionalized structures that frame their experiences. This contributes to our understanding of larger societal issues, such as language transformation in the higher education landscape in South Africa.

For this study, the individual participants constituted individual cases. The information provided about the individual cases provided a context for the results. They also

summarized and showcased which aspects each participants chose to focus on during the data collection. The individual case summaries provided linguistic descriptions of the participants, rather than general demographic information. These individual cases were then combined to form a collective unit that provide holistic understandings across the experiences of individual participants or cases. This identified the forms of rhetoric used by the participants in describing their experiences. The collective case study design was appropriate for the present study in that the researcher was interested in both the individual and collective experience of writing a thesis in English as a non-mother tongue.

3.5. Target group

Participants were eligible for inclusion in the study if three criteria were met: 1) They were students registered for either the Clinical Masters programme or the structured Research Masters programme in the department of Psychology. These programmes were selected as they are accredited programmes intended to lead to registration (HPCSA, 2017) which incorporate a compulsory mini-thesis component comprising 50% of the programme (CHS information brochure, 2018). The Masters by full thesis programme was not included as the intention was to explore the experiences of students who desired a professional accreditation and had to complete a mandatory thesis component in order to achieve that, as opposed to students who had elected to pursue a full thesis. 2) Participants were considered eligible for inclusion if they were busy with the coursework component of their degree (i.e. first year of registration) or if they were busy with their internship (i.e. second year of registration). This meant that students who registered for coursework in 2015 or 2016 comprised the two cohorts included in this study. Participants in their first year of Masters studies had to have completed at least the first three chapters of their thesis and started with data collection. 3) Participants had to identify as non-mothertongue English speakers. The two cohorts comprised a total of eleven students meeting all three criteria.

3.6 Sample

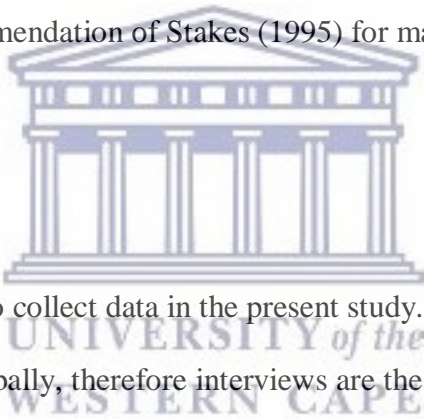
Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Purposive sampling is considered to be reflexive in nature and increases the likelihood for productive data collection which may generate rich and complex data (Cresswell & Plano-Clarke, 2011). Purposive sampling also operates with the goal of maximising limited resources in terms of a limited population pool (Patton, 2002). Thus of those who were eligible for inclusion, eligible participants were identified who were reflexive and expressive. From the target group of eleven students, eight satisfied these criteria and were then purposively invited to participate in the study. All eight agreed to participate in the study. Thus the sample consisted of eight participants.

There is no agreed upon ideal number of participants for qualitative studies as researchers tend to agree that the numbers depends largely on factors such as the nature of the research, the theoretical framework and the available resources (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Tuckett, 2004). For epistemologies such as Social Constructionism and collective case studies, where a particular depth and richness of data is required, it is suggested that the sample size be between six and twelve (Baker & Edwards, 2012). The sample size of the current study (n=8) was consistent with this recommendation. Baker and Edwards (2012) recommended that data collection continue until such a time as saturation has been reached and this is to be monitored by means of constant comparison of the collected data in order to avoid data which is insufficient to adequately answer the research question or alternatively, redundant and superfluous. In line with this recommendation, data collection and analysis were done simultaneously to allow for comparison of the collected data.

The final sample was also examined for maximum variation. Crossman (2018) identified that maximum variation provide maximum insight into the phenomenon under study by ensuring that the range of cases selected is as diverse as possible. The sample

included an equal number of participants from each programme. Four were enrolled in the Research programme and four in the Clinical programme. Six participants were busy with coursework i.e. first year and three from each respective programme. Two participants were busy with the internship, one from each programme. The sample included five female (2 research and three clinical) and three male (2 research and one clinical) students. The sample included five black (3 research and 2 clinical) and three white (1 research and 2 clinical) students. The sample included two foreign nationals and six South African students. The three white students were all Afrikaans. Each of the black students had a different first language. Thus the sample included maximum variation in terms of home language while maintaining representivity in terms of programme, gender and race. The sample composition was consistent with the recommendation of Stakes (1995) for maximum variation in purposive sampling.

3.7 Data Collection



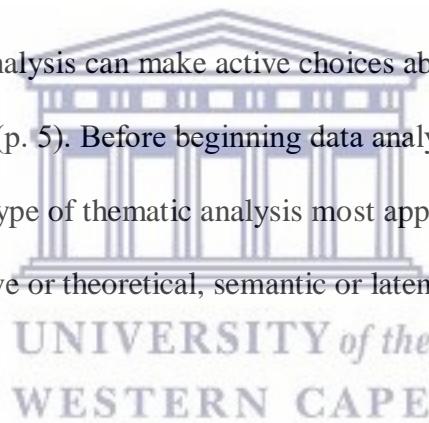
Interviews were used to collect data in the present study. The social construction of reality is largely generated verbally, therefore interviews are the most recommended data collection technique for qualitative studies utilising a social constructionist framework (Darlostion-Jones, 2007; Walker, 2015). In social constructionism, participants are seen to share their meanings and interpretations of social reality not only through what they say, but also how a discourse is communicated during the interview (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). This has implications for the way in which the interview is conducted, because the goal is not only to provide rich descriptions of what the respondent is saying but to seek an understanding of the underlying historical, socio-political, cultural and personal factors which have contributed to the views and understandings of social reality that participants now hold (Czarniawska, 2001).

The semi-structured format was selected for the interviews. This allowed the researcher to gain insight into all areas of interest while still allowing the interviewees to control the flow and direction of the conversation by means of open ended questions and allowing the space for the participant to speak freely, as suggested by Smith and Dunworth (2003). An interview schedule was designed to elicit information in line with a Social Constructionism framework. The interview schedule was created to elicit information pertaining to the areas deemed most challenging for non-mothertongue students, as discussed in the literature review (Appendix F). As such, it aimed to promote the discussion of contextual information such as prior exposure to English and home environment as well as participants' motivations for studying in English. Care was taken to not assume that participants were expressing themselves optimally, thus questions were included that allowed them to reflect on the process.

The interviews were conducted by myself as the researcher. Five of the interviews were conducted on the university campus, in the Department of Psychology. Three of the interview were conducted off campus at a location chosen by the participants, as this was more convenient for these participants. All interviews were conducted in English. Due to the nature of the research question, it was understood that English is not the first language of any of the participants. It was assumed though, that in order for the participants to have gained access to Masters level studies, they would have a command of the English language that is sufficient for verbal communication. Having grown up in South Africa, I am familiar with non-standardized models of English, as well as informal ways of speaking which utilise words from other South African languages such as Afrikaans and isiXhosa and this aided in creating an informal, conversational interview setting in which the participants felt comfortable enough to express themselves. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by myself as the researcher.

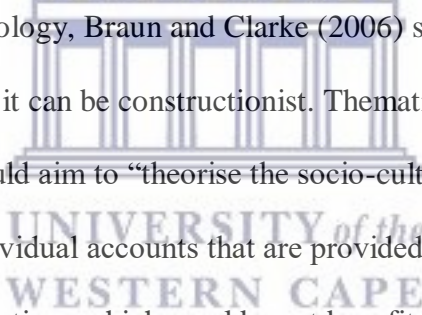
3.8 Data analysis

Data collected from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2013) stated that thematic analysis entails the identification of codes and recognition of common themes within the data. Starkes and Trinidad (2007) stated that one of the main benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility and for this reason it is an analytic method which is accessible even for amateur qualitative researchers and is widely used. However, it is also a method which is often poorly demarcated and undertaken without due consideration of its different levels and knowledge of how these various levels interact with all the methodological elements of each particular study (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007). Braun and Clarke (2006) postulated that “a clear demarcation of this method will be useful to ensure that those who use thematic analysis can make active choices about the particular form of analysis they are engaged in” (p. 5). Before beginning data analysis, researchers must consider, on three levels, the type of thematic analysis most appropriate for the study. These levels of decision are; Inductive or theoretical, semantic or latent, and epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990).



Inductive thematic analysis is data driven and is therefore not conducted to fit into the researcher’s analytic preconceptions (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Theoretical or deductive thematic analysis is guided by the researcher’s theoretical interest and is analyst driven rather than data driven (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011). This form of thematic analysis generally provides a more detailed analysis of some aspects of the data as opposed to a broad overall description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the purpose of this study, a deductive approach was taken to ensure a thorough and detailed analysis of elements contributing to the participants’ experiences of conducting thesis work in a non-mothertongue. Line by line coding was then used to ensure that no information was overlooked and also allowed for the inclusion of any unexpected information, insofar as it addressed the topic.

Semantic thematic analysis requires themes to be identified purely within the surface meaning of the data and the researcher does not search for anything beyond what a participant has made explicit (Boyatzis, 1998). This is then interpreted in relation to existing literature (Patton, 1990). Latent thematic analysis however, goes beyond the semantic content of the data and attempts to identify and examine underlying ideologies or conceptualisations that are theorised as informing the semantic content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, semantic thematic analysis attempts to describe form and meaning while latent thematic analysis attempts to identify the factors that gave it that particular form and meaning. This study utilised semantic thematic analysis to identify themes that speak to the participants experiences and then used latent thematic analysis to identify the discourses underlying those experiences.



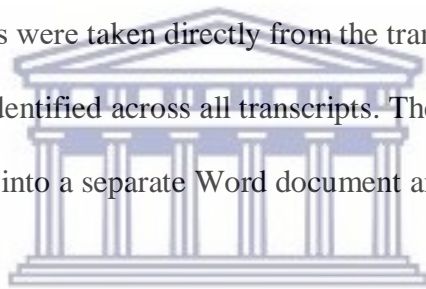
With regard to epistemology, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis can either be realist/ essentialist or it can be constructionist. Thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework would aim to “theorise the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided” (p.14). Braun and Clarke (2013) added that research questions which would most benefit from the use of thematic analysis would be those questions inquiring about the social construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts. The current study looks at experiences of Masters students studying in a non-mothertongue. This approach allowed for exploration of taken for granted “truths” such as the perception of English as a global language and the social construction of English as the preferred medium of study. Thematic analysis is sometimes thought of as being incompatible with Social Constructionism, however, Braun and Clarke (2013) clearly outline how these things comfortably intersect. Additionally, Vivien Burr, one of the main contributors to Social Constructionism, published an article in which she used Thematic Analysis within a Social Constructionist paradigm (see Budds, Locke & Burr, 2013). She

stated that "... a social constructionist version of thematic analysis enable[s] us to identify discourses as 'themes' within the data set" (Budds et al., 2013, p. 11). This study therefore made use of deductive, latent thematic analysis within a Social Constructionist paradigm.

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) emphasize that thick description of the data analysis process is vital in contributing toward the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. For this reason, the data analysis process for this study is presented in detail below. The steps followed were those of Braun and Clarke (2006) and are described below.

3.8.1. Familiarising yourself with the data. The first step involves processes designed to help the researcher become familiar with the data. These include transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, and noting down initial ideas. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) emphasized that it is impossible to proceed with the thematic analysis before you are thoroughly familiar with your data. I familiarized myself by transcribing the interviews myself. The process of transcription was slow and required replaying the audio-recordings multiple times in order to compare them to the written transcriptions to ensure that the transcribed data was an accurate reflection of the audio-recorded data. Listening to the audio-recordings during the transcription process allowed me to really listen to what participants were saying and introduced me to things I missed or did not notice during the interviews. Once the interviews was transcribed, I read through the transcripts one at a time and made notes using the "comment" feature of Microsoft Word. These notes included my thoughts, descriptions of what the participant said, and similarities or discrepancies within the interview. I also noted any similarities and differences between transcripts. Through this process, I was able to immerse myself in the data and get a good sense of the participants' experiences.

3.8.2. Generating initial codes. The second step involves working through the data set and coding interesting features in a systematic fashion (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study used deductive thematic analysis. Therefore, coding was based primarily on the outlined objectives and knowledge derived during the literature review, but was also open to other unforeseen information which emerged. Coding was also informed by preliminary codes created informally during the familiarization process. For the first transcript, line by line coding was used. At this stage, each individual phrase or sentence from the participant was viewed as a potential code. I then read through all the codes and organized them in terms of relevance to the topic. Codes were only assigned to novel ideas which ensured that there were no duplicates. Every subsequent transcript served thus added to or build on the existing codes. Participants' own words were taken directly from the transcripts as the initial codes. There were 217 initial codes identified across all transcripts. These were copied from the original transcripts and pasted into a separate Word document and used for the next step of analysis.



3.8.3. Searching for themes. The step requires the researcher to collate the codes into potential themes. A theme can be defined as a collection of individual statements or ideas (Aronson, 1994). On their own, the statements are fairly meaningless, but together serve as a descriptor of the dataset as a whole (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000). This was achieved by grouping similar codes together. To achieve this, I highlighted the initial codes in the Word document, using different colours to indicate different potential themes. I then grouped all the codes by colour, read through them to get a sense of what they were about and wrote a brief description for each theme. At this stage, I combined codes which were similar. Any codes which did not fit into a theme were grouped together and labelled as “miscellaneous”. The themes were informed by findings in the reviewed literature, requirements of the theoretical framework and the objectives of the study. This was relatively straight forward as the coding

had been done in the same manner. At this stage, I also made notes under each theme about any potential discourses or underlying forms of rhetoric which I found in the data and which were relevant to that theme. I also noted any mention of social or institutional structures as potential influencers of the identified discourses. A total of 26 initial themes were identified.

3.8.4. Reviewing themes. This stage involved checking that the themes work in relation to the coded extracts as well as, the dataset as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). At the beginning of this stage, there were 26 themes. There was significant overlap among some of the themes. This was because during the previous stages, I had been hesitant to delete anything in case it became relevant at a later stage. During this stage, I reread my theoretical framework and reviewed the objectives of the study. This reminded me what I was trying to achieve. With this information foregrounded, I reviewed the themes. Some themes were merged and others were deleted due to insufficient support from the data. Themes were then grouped into categories. At the end of this stage, five categories emerged. These were: General Language Skills, Thesis Specific Skills, Motivation for Studying in English, Support, and Coping Strategies.

3.8.5. Defining and naming themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated this stage requires generating clear definitions and names for each theme. Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000) suggested that theme names should be concise and descriptive in order to give the reader an immediate sense of what the theme is about. The process of naming and defining themes, lead to the categories being reduced from five to three. The categories “Support” and “Coping Strategies” were merged as I realized that support was a means of coping for some of the participants. “General Language Skills” and “Thesis Specific Skills” were also combined to form “Language Skills”. This was done due to significant overlap of the themes. During this stage, I discussed the five categories and their related themes with a second researcher who is familiar both with the topic and the method of analysis. I also consulted

with my supervisor. This led to a deeper understanding of the themes and helped me to create the final three categories.

3.8.6. Producing the report. Once the final themes have been established and sorted into appropriate categories, you are ready to write the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Part of this process is selecting quotes with which to illustrate your themes (King, 2004). While constructing the report, I read through all the quotes pertaining to each theme and tried to select those that were most compelling. My selection of quotes was based on three criteria which were clarity, perceived poignancy, and diversity. I used maximum variation purposive sampling precisely to get a diverse range of views on the topic. Therefore, when selecting quotes, I tried to do so in a way that reflected as many different perspectives as possible. King (2004) further states that a mere description is insufficient and providing interpretations of the presented themes is vital. During this process of interpretation, I referred back to the case summaries that I had written and reread the full transcripts. This, in relation to the themes, made the underlying discourses clearer to me. I also read additional literature on Social Constructionism to ensure that my reporting adhered to the requirements of the framework.

4.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Polit & Beck, 2014). These are defined below along with an explanation of if and how they were achieved during this study. Each aspect is presented separately aside from dependability and confirmability, which are presented under one heading. This was done because of their similarity as well as, the fact that the same technique was used to achieve them.

4.9.1. Credibility. Credibility is intended to provide insight into how accurately the findings represent reality (Anney, 2014). This is achieved by establishing whether the research findings offer a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Recommended strategies for ensuring credibility include triangulation, member-checking, and peer debriefing (Guba, 1981). For the current study, I utilized peer debriefing. This was done by presenting my findings to two colleagues, separately, in order to receive their comments. One colleague is currently a final year Masters student with experience in conducting thematic analysis. The other has a Masters in Research Psychology and is currently completing a PhD. I gave my colleagues the original interview transcripts, with participants' names removed for anonymity. I then gave them my preliminary themes, final themes and categories, and results chapter in order to receive their comments. The comments alerted me to areas that required clarification, information that had been overlooked and themes that had been presented with insufficient detail. Additionally, supervisory input was used as a form of external auditing. This aided in shaping the final results chapter. I had intended on using member checking as well however, participants were unavailable for the follow up.

4.9.2. Dependability and confirmability. Dependability establishes the extent to which findings are consistent and repeatable (Polit & Beck, 2014). Confirmability enhances neutrality by ensuring that the findings are truly based on the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Both enable other researchers to follow the same research process and arrive at similar findings and conclusions (Connelly, 2016). One of the strategies for achieving both dependability and confirmability is creating an audit trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Tobin and Begley (2004) explain that this means ensuring that the research process is clearly documented in a way that is logical and traceable. The audit trail can be intellectual or physical (Carcary, 2009). This author explains that an intellectual audit trail involves

reflecting on how your thinking has evolved throughout the thesis process whereas a physical audit trail requires the documentation of all methodological decisions. A physical audit can be integrated into the methodology chapter or provided separately; either way, information regarding conceptualisation of topic, the literature review process, design selection, framework selection, research setting and data collection, data analysis, and compilation of results must be reported (Patter, 2014). For the current study, most of this information has been integrated and discussed under the relevant headings of the methodology section. This was done by providing an account of how these aspects were carried out during the study. An aspect not discussed in the methodology section was conceptualisation of the topic.

The process surrounding decision-making in project conceptualisation was more intellectual than physical. Conceptualisation of the topic was based on the results of previous research conducted by myself (Rae, 2015). The topic was originally outlined to look at non-mother-tongue speakers as well as, first language speakers of non-standard versions of English. During the literature review, it became apparent that non-standard would be difficult to define, however not impossible. One of the selection criteria of the current study was that participants would have to self-identify as members of either of the aforementioned groups. As the researcher, I was uncomfortable with the idea of inviting people to participate in the study by means of purposive selection, on the basis of having identified them as potential speakers of non-standard versions of English. I also felt that focussing on one area would allow for a more in-depth analysis and cleaner presentation of results. Upon discussion of these issues with my supervisor, the final topic was agreed upon.

4.9.3. Transferability. Transferability in qualitative research, is synonymous with generalizability in quantitative research and refers to the extent to which the results can be applied in different settings with different participants (Korsjens & Moser, 2018). This can be achieved by providing thick descriptions of the participants as well as, the research setting

(Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Korsjens and Moser (2018) emphasized that it is not only the behaviour and experience of participants which is important to document, but also a rich description of their context. In the current study, this was achieved by providing a detailed description of the setting in which data collection took place, sampling procedure and inclusion/ exclusion criteria, as well as the data collection process. Contextual information was provided by means of case summaries for each participant, which served to provide a context within which to interpret the results. Readers can use this information to determine whether the results will be applicable to their particular context.

In addition to the above, the researcher was overseen by a supervisor with experience in qualitative research methodology which served as external auditing (Cresswell, 2011). This served to facilitate all aspects of trustworthiness as outlined above and aided in providing a sense of accountability.

4.10 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is paramount to a good audit trail (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Reflexivity involves keeping an introspective and critical account of the internal and external dialogue that occurs throughout the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). In social constructionism, the researcher is viewed as a visible part of the research process (Berger, 2015). Therefore, researchers working within this framework are encouraged to practice reflexivity and to use reflexive techniques for the purposes of being aware of your own influence on the research and not for the purposes of removing these influences (Valentine, 2007). I used self-reflection, journaling and debriefing after each interview to critically track the factors which are discussed below.

During the project conceptualisation phase of this study, I reflected on and documented the process of topic selection, my motivation for deciding on this topic as well as

my subject position in relation to that of potential participants. I chose this topic, because it was a recommendation that emerged from the findings of a previous research study I conducted. I chose to follow up on this particular recommendation, because I completed an undergraduate degree in languages and culture, majoring in Psychology and Linguistics. I felt this topic would allow me to combine two of my interests. Additionally, having completed a full thesis, I am aware of the struggles I faced, and how difficult I found it to persevere at times. This led me to reflect on what it would be like if I had been struggling with language at the same time. All of these factors contributed to my choice of topic.

With regard to my own context in relation to participants, at the time of this study I was completing the course work year of the Research Master's degree. This meant that some of the participants were my classmates. I felt it was easier to establish rapport with the participants from the Research programme than those from the Clinical programme. This was perhaps due to our familiarity and shared experience. In most cases this familiarity seemed to benefit the process of data collection in terms of participants being very open and willing to share the details of their experience. However, there was one case where it seemed as though the participant was hesitant to share too much, perhaps because we were in the same class. Conversely, one of the participants from the research Masters cohort was a close friend of mine. The data collected from her was quite superficial which made it challenging to extract quotes during data analysis. My feeling was that this was because our existing relationship created the sense that I already understood her experience and therefore she did not need to make things as explicit as she may otherwise have done.

My own subjective experiences and subject position may have affected the way in which I related to the participants and my interpretation of their subjective experiences reported to me. I tried to maintain an awareness of my own demographic signifiers and the effect on rapport with the participants, and the research process. I am a white female whose

first language is English. With regard to race, I did not feel that the research process was impacted in any major way, positively or negatively. There was only one instance in which I felt race may have impacted the interview process. This was an interview with a white participant who disclosed how he had spent much of his life feeling intellectually superior to other races. I got the sense that the detail shared during this portion of the interview may have been dependent on me being of the same race. However, this participant was generally quite self-reflexive so I cannot be sure that it had anything to do with me.

Cutcliffe (2003) states that it is important to make these reflections explicit because the better researchers can articulate their role in the research process and the product thereof, the more readers can engage in symbolic dialogues with the author and the more confidence in their work will increase.

4.11 Ethics considerations

Ethics clearance was granted from the Senate Research committee of the University of the Western Cape (Appendix A). Permission to conduct the study at the identified institution was requested from the Registrar (Appendix B). This permission was granted (Appendix C). The Ethics Rules of Conduct under the Health Professions Act were fully adhered to, specifically anonymity and confidentiality. Case summaries are included for each participant in the results section. In order to maintain anonymity, the names of participants were not included and all potentially identifying information, such as home towns and jobs were removed. First language was included for Afrikaans participants as it did not affect anonymity. First language was not included for African language participants as each participant spoke a different first language and anonymity would have been compromised. All raw data, including audio recordings and transcripts, was stored on my computer in a password protected folder. Only my supervisor and I had access to the raw data. Interviews were audio-recorded using my cell phone and a Dictaphone. All audio files were deleted from

both devices after copying the files onto my laptop. These files were password encrypted. All participants received an information sheet clearly documenting all necessary information pertaining to the interview, underscoring that participation is voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw without fear of negative consequence or loss of perceived benefit (Appendix D). This was also explained verbally prior to beginning the interview and it was emphasized that if at any point during the interview they wished to stop, they would be able to do so without consequence. Informed consent was obtained from participants which explicitly included permission for audio recording (Appendix E). According to the university requirements, the data will be kept for five years before being destroyed. I also identified a dissemination protocol including manuscript, unpublished thesis, and conference presentation and will keep the identity of participants and the institution anonymous.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Target Group

Enrolment records indicate that 27 students enrolled for structured Masters programmes in the department of Psychology at the participating university between 2015 and 2016. Eleven of the 27 students identified as non-mother-tongue speakers of English.

Table 4.1 summarises the identification in relation to programme and year of intake.

Table 4.1: *Identification in relation to programme and year of intake (N=27)*

Year	Research Masters		Clinical Masters	
	Total students	Non-English mother-tongue	Total students	Non-English mother-tongue
2015	8	3	5	2
2016	8	3	6	3
Total	16	6	11	5

A purposive sample was recruited from the total cohort of eleven non-mother-tongue students. Eight students agreed to take part in the study. As mentioned before, the participants were split evenly between the Clinical and Research programmes. Six students were completing coursework requirements at the time of the study and two were completing internships. Of the two completing internships, one was clinical and one was research.

Demographic information for the sample is presented in a summation in order to protect the identity of the participants. Table 4.2 below provides a high level summary of the demographic profile of the sample.

Table 4.2: *Participant demographics*

Home Language		Race		Gender	
African	Afrikaans	Black	White	Female	Male
5	3	5	3	5	3

Due to the small cohort from which the participants were selected, the African languages are not listed individually in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. All of the African language speaking participants were Black and one was male. All of the Afrikaans speaking participants were White and two were male. Three of the participants from the Research programme were black and one was white. Two of the participants from the Clinical programme were black and two were white. The ages of the participants at the time of the study ranged from 23 to 36 years in both the research and clinical programmes. Participants' exposure to English is provided in Table 4.3 below to provide context for the results.

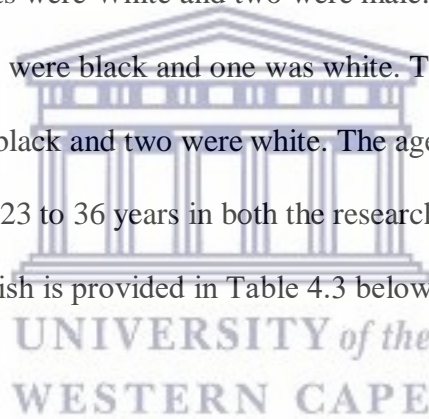


Table 4.3: *Exposure to English*

Participant	Initial English exposure	Foundation phase education	English exposure outside school
1	Pre-primary	English	Home/ Friends/ Media
2	Pre-primary	English	None
3	Primary	English	None
4	Primary	English	None
5	High School	Home Language	None

6	University	Home Language	None
7	University	Home Language	None
8	High School	Home Language	Friends/ Media

Half of the sample was exposed to English as a language of instruction during the foundation phase of education. All of the African language speaking participants were exposed to English as a language of instruction before university. As a whole the exposure to English outside of the school context was very limited for the sample. Some participants had early exposure to English, inside or outside of the school setting, however that exposure was generally to non-mother tongue speakers which led to the development of a non-standard model of English being acquired.

4.2 Collective Case Study

Linguistic case summaries are provided for each of the participants. The focus of the case summaries is to create a narrative summation of the participants' stories. These stories provide the context within which to understand the themes that were drawn from the data. A case summary for each participant is presented below.

4.2.1. Participant 1.

Gender: Female

This Participant has been exposed to English since birth. She attended an English church with her family and attended an English crèche. She watched English cartoons and the radio at home was always set to an English station. Her parents spoke in their home language to her and her siblings until they started primary school. The primary school she attended is described as a formerly model C school and was English medium. The learners attending the school did not all share the same home language, so they spoke English to one

another on the playground. It was at this stage that her parents began speaking mainly English to her and her siblings at home. This was due to their perception of English as a vehicle to upward mobility and social advancement.

I think they saw from that that you can only get somewhere in life if you speak in English...they wanted us to be at an English only school, I guess so that we can be able to progress in life. I think that's why they did it.

She continued studying in English all the way through high school and university. She now thinks in English most of the time and is very assured of her English ability. Due to this, she explains how conceptualising her thesis was easy, in terms of language. She also states that there is no part of language she struggles with, aside from creating flow between sections of the thesis. She attributes this to reading books and watching documentaries to improve her vocabulary. She also attributes her success during the thesis process to the positive relationship she had with her supervisor. Throughout the interview she actively reflected on the loss of her home language.

...so I grasp English better than my own language which is quite sad but ja...

I'm a bit disappointed because I can't speak my own language well enough... but what can one do?

The participant never attended school in her home language and only started taking it as a subject from grade 4 in primary school. Even the subject was taught in English, due to the school she attended. In high school, she elected to drop her home language as a subject as it was no longer mandatory and she felt she was proficient enough. Other than taking her home language as a subject, the only other time she spoke it was to her “maid”. In giving

advice to future students, as in the excerpt below, her main focal point is not losing your home language.

If you are given the chance to speak in your own language and think in your own language, take that chance... because if you speaking majority of the time English then you would lose your language so try and balance it out. Obviously when it comes to the academic side think, speak, do in English but I'd say maybe when you're at home, speak your own language and do that so that you don't lose that part of you.

She does not regret the way in which her upbringing has contributed to her proficiency in English, but she does regret that her home language has disintegrated. Even so, she still self-identifies as a non-mothertongue speaker of English.

4.2.2. Participant 2.

Gender: Female

This participant grew up in a small town where most residents spoke either the local African language or Afrikaans. In her childhood home, they spoke the local African language most of the time. The pre-primary school she attended was English-medium and that was where she was first exposed to English. The primary school she attended was English and Afrikaans, but her classes were in English. She found it easy to acquire English, because of being exposed at such a young age. However, she found it confusing having to switch between three different languages, depending on context. She spoke English at school, the local African language at home and with most of her friends, and Afrikaans with a few other friends. When she started getting homework in primary school, her parents tried to facilitate her acquisition of English by speaking more of it around the house. Switching to speaking English in the home environment had a negative effect on her home language proficiency.

There was a point where I really didn't really understand much of my own language, much of my own African language...Um, I understood it but just basic but then when the elderly people would speak I wouldn't really understand what they saying.

She now speaks English most of the time, outside of the university setting. This is more out of necessity than choice.

It's so weird because I've become so accustomed to speaking English... because even with my friends, my African friends, we speak English... Western Cape people, African people here, don't know my language so the only other medium is English because I can't... my Xhosa is really bad, so in that sense, outside of here [university] I would still speak English anyway.

The participant does not think in words, because she has been exposed to so many different languages that it is easier to think in pictures. This makes it difficult for her to express complex ideas. She also experienced challenges with summarizing information. These two factors made project conceptualisation difficult which delayed the whole thesis process. Reading was also a challenge. The participant used a technique wherein she wrote down all the words she did not understand while reading and then looked those words up afterwards. This technique was helpful at the time, but when reading other texts she was unable to recognize the words she had previously looked up. Data collection for her study was done in both English and her home language and she was comfortable with both.

Ja, the participants are mostly [home language] speaking... participants knew that if they felt comfortable speaking in [home language], they could and if they felt comfortable speaking in English, they could because I could work with either so it was quite a good experience.

Writing was not difficult in terms of creating flow and meaning but she did struggle with grammar and sentence structure. The participant would have preferred to study in her home language, however she also expresses that she would not be able to explain some psychological concepts in her home language.

Um, it would be a cherry on top being able to study in my own language, but that would mean I'd literally start afresh from when I was little to actually be taught in my home language which to me would be a challenge because I was never taught in my home language at school, so my understanding really, with regards to school work, is in English... I can't talk about my work or what I do in class with my mom or my aunts, my family at home, because I wouldn't know how to interpret that in my home language.

4.2.3. Participant 3.

Gender: Female

Participant 3 is a foreign national. She grew up in a country in the South-west of Africa and moved to South Africa to attend university. This participant attended an English primary school where all classes were taught by non-mother tongue English teachers. The learners were not forced to speak English in the classroom and were allowed to address the teachers in their home language. There was no exposure to English outside of the classroom so even though she attended an English medium school, the language she mastered first was her home language. She now thinks in her home language but struggles to translate into English. She also struggles with translating from English back into her home language. Project conceptualisation was particularly difficult, because some concepts had no English equivalent.

If I want to think about something to get more ideas obviously, I'll think in my own language and then try to convert that into English then it becomes a problem to do that.

Although translating concepts during conceptualisation was difficult, the most challenging part of the thesis process for this participant was writing, specifically turning her thoughts into English writing from her home language. She also struggled with grammar and sentence construction and felt it took considerable time and effort to get those aspects right. The participant did a secondary study for her thesis and found data collection challenging because of translation issues.

Well, right now, I'm doing my searches. I'm searching for my data... I try to convert it back into my own language to better understand it. So sometimes, yes, I might end up omitting journals that are really important, because I can't put them into my own language and understand the whole meaning of the title. So, I end up just omitting the journal that I don't really understand some of the words that are there

Being a foreign national, there was no one around her with whom she could speak in her home language. This contributed to feelings of loneliness and isolation. She found support in her classmates, her landlord and her supervisor and she also expresses that her Christian faith helped when she was feeling overwhelmed. The acceptance of Cape Townians also helped.

I actually found... find people in Cape Town they are more friendly they are open, they are very helpful so I haven't felt like really much of an outsider, I can't say I've really felt like an outsider.

Nevertheless, she still felt something was missing because no one around her could speak her home language.

If I had someone who speaks my own language they would understand me and you know, ja talk to me. That's where that feeling that just creeps in.

She found her supervisor to be very approachable. She also describes him as relatable due to the fact that he also had personal experience of being a foreigner. These characteristics enabled her to seek out his support when necessary, both practically and emotionally.

Despite the challenges, the participant would elect to do her PhD in English because she feels that English is an international language and also because she enjoys exposing herself to new challenges.

4.2.4. Participant 4.

Gender: Male

This participant is a foreign national from a East Africa. He was not exposed to any English before the age of six. They did not have a television at home and the radio was always tuned to the local language radio station. It was when the participant started primary school at the age of six that he was first exposed to English. All of his classes were presented in English, starting in grade 1. The teachers were all non-mother tongue speakers of English. Outside of the classroom, he had very little exposure to English. If any of the children tried to speak English outside of the classroom at school, they were mocked and called names. His only exposure to English outside of the classroom was from the English books, which his father bought for him in childhood. He feels that reading those books helped improve his English language ability immensely. He only ever read English books. Even his bible was English. He completed his undergraduate degree in his home country and then moved to South Africa to complete his postgraduate studies. During his undergraduate degree, the medium of education was English and classes were taught by non-mother tongue speakers.

The only time he ever speaks his home language now is with his wife. The reason he provides for this is that in Cape Town, even black people do not speak his language so English is the only means of communication. He has now lost the ability to speak complex

versions of his home language (i.e when speaking to elders back home) and he is unsure in which language he thinks. He also struggles with translating from English back into his home language.

The participant did not have any issues with conceptualising the topic for his thesis. However, he did experience challenges with writing as well as, data collection. In terms of writing, he found it difficult to create flow and experienced challenges with academic writing. For data collection, he felt that it was more difficult because of his pronunciation. This participant focused much of the interview on pronunciation, mentioning many times that his pronunciation is different, but not incorrect. In relation to reading and writing he comments on his ability, but with regard to speaking he is unwilling to rate himself.

Reading, excellent. That's the highest. Writing, ja I'm not bad. I'm there. Speaking, I can't say. What do you think?

Only once I have affirmed his ability does he rate himself.

Good! Ja, it's good. I speak, I even teach. But so I feel people judge. Some people judge because of pronunciation. I don't have problem. Maybe I'm being rude in that, but that's the way I pronounce...so I'm good. I'm very very good.

He acknowledges that he feels judged due to his pronunciation and this is perhaps why he is unwilling to rate his speaking ability. However, once I have affirmed his ability, he was quick to agree. He does however feel the need to use his position as a lecturer to justify his beliefs.

He emphasizes many times that studying in English was a necessity rather than a choice, due to career opportunity and upward mobility. He also expressed some sadness that he has lost some level of proficiency in his home language. The thesis process was helped

though by the fact that his supervisor had also studied in a foreign country. This helped foster trust between them and this relationship helped him to persevere.

4.2.5. Participant 5.

Gender: Female

Participant 5 attended an English primary school. The classes were taught by non-mothertongue English speakers so although lessons were technically supposed to be in English, they were actually a mix between her home language and English.

In class, because we were taught by [home language] speaking teachers who themselves were struggling with English, whatever English was spoken was really a mix of English with [home language].

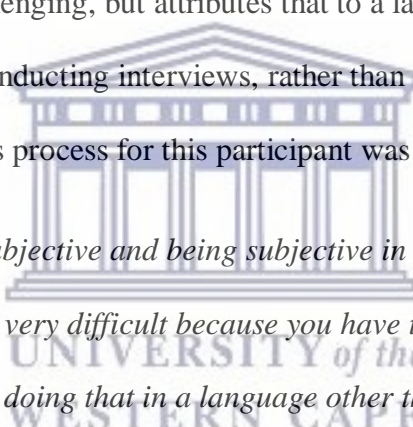
For that reason, she states that she actually started learning in English in grade nine, when she was transferred to an English high school with English first language teachers. Learning in English was a major adjustment for her. One of the main struggles she faced was realizing that the type of English spoken by first language speakers was very different to the English she had previously been exposed to. She found it difficult to speak as well as understand.

You think you speak English until you actually speak to people who English is their first language and then you see how actually behind you actually are... I had to really struggle just to understand what was being said.

Reading English fiction books helped with her adjustment. Particularly reading in combination with speaking. She states that she had always read English books, since she was a child, but she found that reading combined with listening to and speaking with first

language speakers on a daily basis is what allowed her to progress like she had not previously been able to do.

When moving to university, she did not find it particularly challenging studying in English as she had already been doing so for four years prior to that. She did however struggle with academic language. The academic English which is used in universities was entirely different to the English she knew. She also emphasized that it was not just the language that was on another level, but also the type of thinking required. She had never been taught how to think conceptually or deal with abstract concepts so she found that challenging. She did not have to conceptualise her thesis topic as she was provided one by her supervisor. She found data collection challenging, but attributes that to a lack of knowledge of the thesis topic and inexperience with conducting interviews, rather than language issues. The most challenging aspect of the thesis process for this participant was data analysis.



Qualitative work is very subjective and being subjective in that way, in a second or third or even fourth language is very difficult because you have to hold many things in your mind at the same time and doing that in a language other than your mother-tongue becomes almost impossible, because you switching between the two languages and it's difficult to know where you stop and the participant starts and you want to honour them and the stories that they've shared with you but when you trying to pick out themes, it just feels so random sometimes.

She also struggled with argument formulation and creating flow in her writing. The support she received from her supervisor helped with this aspect. She found it particularly helpful that her supervisor was not afraid of offending her and would sometimes delete entire paragraphs if they were not up to the required standard. This made her feel safe in that her supervisor would not allow her to submit sub-par work and it pushed her to improve.

4.2.6. Participant 6.

Gender: Male

This participant started studying in English for the first time at a university level. Prior to that, his exposure to English was very limited. He grew up in a small Afrikaans town where the majority of residents spoke Afrikaans. He attended an Afrikaans church and attended both primary school and high school in Afrikaans. The radio at home was always tuned to an Afrikaans station and they only ever watched Afrikaans television. He had no exposure to English until age 14 or 15. English was taken as a compulsory subject throughout school, but even the textbooks for that class were written in Afrikaans. The community in which he lived had a very negative perception of English-speaking people. They were looked down on and people would not generally respond to anyone who addressed them in English. According to this participant, the underlying reason was a sense of Afrikaner superiority which came as a by-product of the Apartheid government who were in power at that time. Throughout the interview, he refers to Apartheid many times and speaks quite negatively about Afrikaans because of this history. He states that he prefers English and his motivation stems at least partially from the desire to distance himself from the self-entitlement of Afrikaans. He experienced the sense of self-entitlement himself when he first entered university.

So coming into university, I had this idea of um... you know... I'm in a class with a lot of other... black people, so the way I was brought up... and it's not because my parents' fault I mean they were conditioned as well, you would think that ja you cleverer than others.

He expected to excel due to his language and ethnicity, but his expectations changed when that was not achieved.

I realized that you are not smart because of your ethnicity and realizing that you are not smart because of your language.

Contributing to the difficulties he faced upon entering university, was the sudden transition to studying in English. His first year marks were poor by his own standards and he attributes this to the sudden transition from receiving education in Afrikaans to receiving it in English. He mentions reading as something which helped to improve his English ability. He did not get to conceptualise his project, as he was given a topic by his supervisor. He was able to do data collection in his home language; although he expresses that collecting data in English would not have been a problem.

Throughout the thesis work process, there was no support available to him from family or friends as his family does not speak much English and his English friends were not interested in assisting him. At university, he had access to a mentor which he did make use of, but he emphasises that the mentor offered purely emotional assistance. The only practical support he had was from his supervisor, with whom he had a good relationship. Prior to Masters, he had an existing relationship with his supervisor which offered benefit in that he was motivated to work hard so as not to disappoint; however, for the same reason he was also hesitant to reach out for help.

Personally I already feel that I've disappointed him... um, so ja... scared of it [disappointing him]? I'm terrified of it.

He feels that he did struggle more due to not studying in his mother-tongue. He asserts that studying in English was not a choice because although the option of studying in his mother-tongue exists, it was not something he realistically had access to due to finances and knowledge of academic Afrikaans. Another contributing factor is his firm belief that English is a global language and not studying in English would be limiting.

4.2.7. Participant 7.

Gender: Male

Participant 7 grew up in a small Afrikaans town. He had limited exposure to English until the age of 18 when he started university. He attended an Afrikaans primary school and high school and lived in an Afrikaans area. He attended an Afrikaans church and all his friends were Afrikaans. At school, all of his subjects were presented in Afrikaans, aside from his English language class which was presented in English by a non-mothertongue speaker.

I was not in the apartheid era...but early 90's at my primary school it was quite a Afrikaans based community so I think a parent at that stage wouldn't even think twice about putting you in an English school or English medium. Afrikaans was the language and that's it.

Adjusting to studying in English at a university level was time consuming. Time is referred to by this participant more than anything else, specifically referring to how much more time consuming it is doing thesis work in your non-mother-tongue. He does not struggle with reading or speaking but he does struggle with writing, particularly with spelling, grammar and sentence construction. To assist with this, he makes use of a copyeditor. The service is however expensive so he only uses it for every completed chapter. He did not use any electronic tools to assist with grammar as he believes that those applications encourage laziness from the student.

He would have preferred to study in his home language, but chose English because of the upward mobility he believed it would afford him. He also expresses that because there are 11 official languages in South Africa, he understands why studying in his home language would not be feasible.

I think it is [more difficult studying in English]. I think it is... definitely it is um... but at the same time I'm quite consciously aware it's not practical. I mean, you can't have education in all what, 11 languages?

The participant believes though that had he studied in his home language, he would have done better. He states that his university lecturers understood Afrikaans which made code switching in class possible, although it was not ideal.

I think they help me a lot, this university, my lecturers, to understand I'm Afrikaans and they understand Afrikaans, but they raised it to me as a concern, I need to work on it.

Project conceptualisation for the thesis was not a problem. He also did not experience any issues with conducting data collection in English or with data analysis. Although he did not explicitly experience difficulties, he does emphasize that everything took him much longer than it would have taken a mother-tongue speaker. He does not struggle with translation and because academic Afrikaans exists, he is able to translate words into his home language in order to better understand them. Another thing that helps is the support from his supervisor. The fact that she is aware of the pressure of Masters level studies as well as the language issue makes her approachable. The participant also appreciates that although his supervisor is patient with regard to his language issues, she pushes him to improve and does not set lower standards than for other students. The participant states at the end of the interview that although he has experienced challenges, when he has children one day he will provide them with an English education from the beginning so that they do not experience those same difficulties.

4.2.8. Participant 8.

Gender: Female

Participant 8 grew up in an Afrikaans speaking household. She was exposed to English via television, reading and friends. She attended a dual medium high school where she was taught purely in Afrikaans from grade 8 to grade 10. From grade 10, some of her subjects were taught in English. She had Afrikaans textbooks for all subjects, even those presented in English. She had friends in the English classes with whom she communicated in English. She did not find the classes presented in English too challenging and attributes that to her strong language abilities as well as her exposure to English as a child. As a child her best friend lived across the road from her. This friend was English first language and they communicated primarily in English. By the time she started high school she had some experience communicating in English. Many of her extracurricular activities, such as sport and after school clubs, took place in English due to the fact that English and Afrikaans learners were together and some English learners did not understand Afrikaans.

She attended an Afrikaans university for her undergraduate degree. The lectures were presented in Afrikaans but the textbooks were English and all tests and exams were written in English. Having the lectures presented in Afrikaans helped her understand the English textbook. Prior to starting her Masters, she completed an Honours degree in English and also worked as a lecturer for a few years which required her to teach and mark in English. The Honours degree also required her to complete a research project in English. She found it difficult to understand the academic language in the journal articles she had to read during her Honours year. During that time, she married an English first language speaker, so while her mothertongue is Afrikaans, her home language is now English. The majority of her exposure to psychology has happened in English. Therefore, she feels it would have been more of a challenge to conceptualise her Masters thesis in Afrikaans.

Because of the nature of psychology and the nature of academic articles, I learned everything in English and I don't translate, it's almost like my knowledge of psychology

is English and I know with my research supervisor, sometimes he'd use this perfect Afrikaans and I'd be lost with it. It's interesting like I've separated the two languages in my mind so psychology in my mind is English and I would struggle to conceptualise psychological terms or theories in Afrikaans actually.

She does not have trouble with writing. She attributes this to reading. She started reading English books in grade 1 and read consistently throughout the years. She feels that reading English books helped her understand the structure of the language and contributed largely to her ability to write correctly.

This participant would choose to study in English, given the choice, because studying in Afrikaans would require significantly more effort.

If I were to study in Afrikaans, first of all it's already difficult enough to understand them [academic articles] but now to translate that, whether in my mind or whether on paper would be challenging and more effort.

She encourages other non-mothertongue students who are considering a Masters degree, to work on their English ability before entering Masters in order to cope with the workload, but also because people judge intelligence based on language ability.

The sad thing is, because you're not doing it in your mother-tongue, people perceive someone as less intelligent because they can't bring themselves across as clearly in English but that doesn't mean that you're not so that's why I'm saying, get the help. Get the help that you need.


Overall, exposure to English was varied across the sample. Some participants were exposed to English early while others were first exposed in High school. A common thread for most participants was that their exposure to English was largely to non-mother tongue

speakers. This resulted in participants developing a non-standard model of English. Participants generally did not experience this as an issue until entering the Masters programme, during which factors emerged that either hindered progress or facilitated further proficiency and development. These factors are presented and unpacked as thematic findings.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Three categories were drawn from the data. These categories and their associated themes are presented in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: *Categories and Themes*



Categories	Themes
Language Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conceptual thinking Reading Speaking Writing
Motivation For Studying in English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and historical context Availability of home language resources Professional development and upward mobility Perceptions toward home language
Facilitating Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material aids Intrinsic protective factors Social support Supervisory relationship

The numbering of the themes presented below reflects the category followed by the theme. Therefore “Theme 1.1” would refer to category 1, theme 1.

4.3.1. Category 1: Language skills. The themes in the first category reflect how practical language skills affected the thesis process as well as, how social and historical context affected the acquisition or development of language skills. All of the participants reflected on practical aspects of the process that were made more challenging because of working in their non-mother tongue. Five themes were identified in this category namely, 1) Conceptual thinking, 2) Reading, 3) Speaking, 4) Writing and 5) Social and historical context. Each of these themes is presented below with illustrative quotes.

Theme 1.1: Conceptual thinking. Conceptualisation of the thesis topic was difficult for most participants. The difficulty lay in formulating abstract ideas in a non-mother tongue or difficulty in the translation of thoughts from home language to English. Some participants would have preferred conceptualising in their home language, but could not because they found that the necessary concepts did not exist in their home language. Others conceptualised in their home language, but then struggled to translate their thoughts into English, because for some concepts there was no direct translation. Converting a conceptualised idea was difficult in terms of direct translation and concept formation. Direct translation related to instances where there was no version of the word in the translated language, but it could be described using several words. Concept formation related to instances where there was no equivalent of a concept existing in the translated language. Therefore there were no language markers to denote it.

Part3: I would have an idea of what I want to do, the concept is more in my own home language then I try to [hesitates] put it into English and stuff so sometimes it becomes a bit tricky, maybe not finding the right words to use or maybe not

having the same idea that I had in my own language turning it into English. So it became a bit... um ja a bit difficult somehow...

Part2: It's one of those ugh no this wouldn't make sense if I translated it in English so I just eliminate it.

Part7...it's tricky because Afrikaans psychological terms is quite different from English; it's not a direct translation, the interpretation is different.

From the above quotes it emerges that participants had to adjust concepts formulated in their mother tongue to fit within the confines of English. Thus, it appears that the connotation rather than the denotation of words and concepts were of primary concern for non-mother tongue speakers when conceptualizing their research.

One participant was unable to identify the language in which s/he conceptualised. Participant 2 spoke about thinking in pictures rather than words as illustrated below:

Part2: I think in pictures so it's almost like I have this thing going on in my head and I need to convey and then it will take an essay for me to explain one thing.

This theme illustrates that some home languages do not have a language for psychology. This was particularly relevant for African language participants. This meant psychological concepts were only accessible in English and forced the conceptualisation of abstract ideas surrounding thesis topic in a non-mother tongue. Afrikaans does have a language for psychology and participants were able to conceptualise in their mother-tongue. However, the quotes also illustrate that neither Afrikaans nor any of the African languages run parallel to English with equivalent vocabulary or lexicons. This made translation a complex process for those who chose to conceptualise in their mother-tongue.

Participant 4 struggled to comment on whether he conceptualized in his home language. He challenged the construct of home language by interrogating the meaning thereof.

Part4: In a true sense, I don't know how can we conceptualise home language. So it depends. You see now, what do you mean by home language?

This quote underscores the relative nature of language in what constitutes home language and language status.

Theme 1.2: Reading. All of the participants mentioned reading as something which helped to improve their English proficiency. While reading helped with vocabulary and understanding, it did not appear to help with the structural aspects of language such as, grammar and spelling. Participants also made the distinction between reading for an assignment and reading for a thesis. For example, participant 6 reflected that writing a literature review involved reading and understanding text, as with a general assignment, but it also involved engaging with the text as an additional element. Participants described this process of engaging with text as challenging and time consuming.

Part6: Reading and understanding for me is a bit different I think than reading, understand and engaging and that process it's uh, very time consuming.

Part2: I've just been deurmekaar really, throughout the process... even the reading on the literature on [thesis topic] has taken me aback and just deciding whether or not do I understand what I'm doing... it doesn't matter if it's literature for the thesis or just reading in general it's just somebody whose second language [is] English... ok not even second, third or fourth [laughs] but it's always that challenge that, ok, I need to finish reading this, this piece, but eish, because I do

not understand that single word there or single paragraph, I will not understand what it says.

Another struggle in terms of reading was academic language and discipline-specific language or jargon. Participants felt that their understanding of English was good, but academic English or psychological jargon was like a different language entirely.

Part2: I think it's more about the different... maybe vocabulary? Like deeper level of vocabulary that I do not have, um, at this point and that are specific in, within, the reading. It's like uh [frustrated] this is jargon!

Part5: I think the difficulty, and I don't think anyone tells you this, is that academic language is not even English. It's completely different to what you had been taught or what you would normally choose to read so it was just at another level. The difficulty was at another level.

This theme introduces the fact that English has two branches: conversational and academic. The participants all reported that they were speakers of conversational English and many of them were first exposed to academic English at university level. Participants who were exposed to English as a language of instruction from the foundation phase, found it easier to adapt to academic English at a Masters level than those who were first exposed in high school or later. All participants found the level of English used in the readings at Masters level to be a significant adjustment. The quotes suggest that the understanding of written text was affected by the participants' level of relevant vocabulary. The findings also suggest that the ability to engage with text is not a natural by-product of understanding, but rather a separate skill that needs to be acquired.

Theme 1.3: Speaking. This was the one aspect of language that did not present a major problem for participants. This is perhaps due to the fact that speaking does not necessarily require the use of academic English. All participants were familiar with conversational English, at least at a basic level, prior to entering university. Participant 8 suggests that because psychology is so language dependent, students who are selected for the Masters programme should ideally have a high level of English language ability.

Part8: I think, before you even get to the Masters level, if language is not your strength then I would actually question going into psychology at this level because psychology is all about being able to communicate with people.

Additionally, participant 8 addressed the judgement she experienced from first language speakers when she had difficulty with pronunciation or articulation

Part8: ... people perceive someone as less intelligent because they can't bring themselves across as clearly in English but that doesn't mean that you're not.

Part4: ... you can pick it up when I pronounce words but I don't say it's wrong, that's my pronunciation.

Participant 4 is very purposeful in making the distinction between different and wrong. He makes the point that his pronunciation not meeting a standard created by those in power within a society, does not equate to it being incorrect. Pronunciation did however have an effect on data collection.

Part4: I speak English but ok, some people don't hear me clearly... Ok maybe because of the way I pronounce it or something but I hear everyone. I hear everyone but they can't hear me. Maybe that was the only challenge, but ok I still got my data.

Data collection in this case was more challenging because although the vocabulary was there, pronunciation made it difficult for their participants to understand. The findings within this theme suggest that the stringent selection criteria for psychology Masters programmes invite a high level of verbal English proficiency, although that is not always the case. The findings also introduce the idea that pronunciation and English proficiency are being used as an informal measure of intelligence.

Theme 1.4: Writing. Writing was problematic on the level of syntax and of semantics. Some participants struggled with the structural aspects of writing while others struggled with creating flow or meaning. In terms of structure, participants struggled with grammar, tenses, spelling and punctuation.

Part4: Ugh writing I think the challenge to me... ja sometimes construction of sentence, ugh. Maybe it's not flowing, in a way. Maybe I'm writing in a way that I might speak.

Part6: I had to spend extra time making sure my grammar was fine, language was fine.

Part7: I sometimes think and as I write I think in Afrikaans and I just write in English... that's where the problem comes in.

Participants' knowledge of conversational English did not facilitate the writing aspect of the thesis process as academic writing conforms to a different set of standards for which conversational English would not necessarily prepare you. This came across when participants reported that they did not feel that prior learning, even at Honours level, had prepared them for Masters level studies.

Part2: it's almost like there are those words reserved for academics and there are those words used for every day communication in the language. To be honest I don't

think our undergraduate courses and our Honours level courses prepare us generally enough for Masters, I feel like it's such a huge leap. I feel like first year, second year there needs to be something implemented to help with the acquisition of the language... the language of Psychology, the language of research... of course it wouldn't predict that you would excel but it would make things so much more easier.

Part6: The meaning is there. But the structure I think it's more like speaking than... I think there's a difference. For me there's a different English; writing and spoken. There's a big difference.

The abovementioned quotes reinforce the concept of academic English being different to conversational English. It also indicates a difference between spoken and written English. The quotes suggests that the level of academic English prior to Masters is different to, and not sufficient preparation for, the level required during Masters. Participants express feeling as though they were highly proficient in English prior to enrolling for Masters, but now feel less confident about their level of proficiency.

Part2: I'm comfortable with English I've been speaking it my whole life and then you get to Masters and you're like 'ooh! Ok, I guess I don't know English!' So I sit there and think [gasps] do I really know what's going on? It really sounds like Greek but I've always thought I've spoken English and I've spoken English all my life so what's going on [exasperated]?

Part1: Hmm, I think I'm fairly proficient. I previously would have said good or excellent but um I think it's fairly, fairly good. [Sighs] In general communication I think it's good... language within Psychology is drama... let me say concepts within the language of psychology is hard to understand so I'm coming to terms with my

communication language is very good but when it comes to understanding research, especially Psychology as a language in itself is challenging. It's not necessarily that it's not there but it's not as good as I would like it to be at Masters level.

From the quotations above it emerges that studying a discipline includes learning a new language. Psychology as a field also has its own language for which equivalent forms do not exist in some home languages. This affects conceptual thinking as well as, understanding of written text. Speaking is largely unaffected by either of these factors but does introduce us to the biases which exist in terms of proficiency and pronunciation as indicators of intelligence. This process of acquisition is stepped up during postgraduate research and studies in that the level of proficiency on the discipline-specific language becomes more important for the learning outcomes of the degree. There is a disparity between conversational English and academic English which is challenging to overcome. This affects primarily the areas of writing and reading.

Theme 1.5: Social and historical context. Language is discussed in relation to race and historical context throughout the data. Participants allude to racialized patterns of exposure to standard and non-standard models of English. The data also illustrates that there is a perception among participants that whiteness is associated with opportunity and higher proficiency in English.

Part4: But everywhere I have seen with these academics everyone has a problem with writing so that's why I don't worry anymore... I see also so called white people struggle with the same thing, so it happens so we are the same, but I need to improve more on that.

This quote speaks to the notion that everyone struggles, which underscores the challenges associated with discipline specific language for mothertongue and non-mothertongue speakers. However, participant 4 does not use the phrase “mothertongue speakers”, but rather “so called white people” to illustrate that everyone experiences difficulty with writing. This suggests that to some extent there is an existing rhetoric in South Africa wherein whiteness is associated with more opportunities that in turn translated into greater proficiency and competence in English. This notion is reinforced by participant 5.

Part5: There are a lot of things going on in South Africa and although we speak English, it carries with it a lot of history, a lot of emotion. In primary school you're not really aware of anything but then in high school kids start to notice things like race and the divides along racial line and how black kids and white kids aren't really given the same opportunities. Black kids are taught by teachers who English isn't their first language while white kids don't have that and that's why you have things later on like Fees Must Fall, because people become aware of the situation and their own identity in the South Africa that we live in.

This quote provides an illustration of racialized patterns of exposure to standard and non-standard models of English. The reference to “Fees Must Fall” provides an indication of the social implications of the racialized patterns of exposure. It also reinforces the perception of an association between whiteness and superiority including higher proficiency in dominant languages such as English and Afrikaans. This perception was initially shared by one of the white participants, participant 6, although it changed shortly after entering university.

Part6: So coming into university, I had this idea of um... you know... I'm in a class with a lot of... black people, so the way I was brought up....you would think that ja you cleverer than others.

The abovementioned quote illustrates a feeling of superiority linked to race. Overall, this theme illustrates how language and race have become intertwined and to some extent perceptions of language are tied to perceptions of race. The findings suggest that there is a strong perception among black and white participants that whiteness is associated with opportunity and by extension, ability.

4.3.2. Category 2: Motivation for Studying in English

This category discusses themes that addressed participants' motivation for studying in English as a non-mothertongue. The three themes that emerged were 1) Availability of home language resources, 2) Professional development and upward mobility and 3) Perceptions of home language.

Theme 2.1: Availability of home language resources. Findings indicated three areas in which access to home language resources was limited or completely unavailable. These were access to home language institutions as a resource, equivalent lexicons and a tradition of academic language as a resource. Results pertaining to these are presented below.

One of the reasons that participants were studying in English was lack of access to tertiary education in their home language. For African language speakers, tertiary institutions in their home language were non-existent. Afrikaans-medium and dual medium tertiary institutions exist, but academic resources such as Afrikaans journal articles, do not.

Part5: If we lived in a world where my mother-tongue was well used, academically, and I could get all those articles in Afrikaans and I knew my work would just be in

Afrikaans and textbooks would have been in Afrikaans, it might have been easier for me to just you know, then I might have made a different choice. So it has to do with the usability of a language in a work environment and the availability of materials in that language.

For Afrikaans speakers, there was an interesting intersection between availability, costs and access. Gaining entry into those institutions was also difficult due to a range of reasons that made the availability of resources more complex.

Part6: Uhhh, I don't think we had a choice. Ah ok I could have gone to I suppose Stellenbosch but, um, money wasn't there so I couldn't afford that

Afrikaans speakers are therefore not a homogenous group and access to the home language institution, as a resource, is reliant on factors such as affordability. This participant went on to say that there is a distinction made between academic and conversational Afrikaans. Beyond that, the type of Afrikaans to which you are exposed is dependent upon class and culture.

... and I don't think... there is words that I don't... even my parents who are staunch, conservative Afrikaners, they won't even know these words.

Languages with an academic tradition such as English and Afrikaans differentiated between academic and conversational language. Afrikaans also has an equivalent lexicon in terms of psychological concepts. This meant that Afrikaans participants had an existing frame of reference in their own language from which to draw when studying in English. One of the benefits of this was the ability to translate psychological concepts into their home language to make sense of them.

Part7: if I don't understand specific English words I... well I first check to see the actual English meaning, but then if I'm still unsure of the context it's used I go to Afrikaans and then it usually helps me because then I have more begrip or comprehension of what's actually the meaning of it. So quite often I would think in English but just go back in Afrikaans just to double check.

African languages do not have that same academic tradition. African language speaking participants were therefore not able to use translation as a tool for understanding.

Part3: Sometimes it's a bit challenging. Like, for example, my thesis has like, "perceptions", which doesn't have direct translation into [home language].

Part2: I probably wouldn't even know what it means to be psychotic in my mother language, I don't even know if that exists... I don't know if I would understand anything in my language... any deep concepts, you know like "conceptualisation" I don't know if there's a word like that in an African language.

The language of psychology that African language speaking participants had learned in university was therefore only known to them in English. This theme illustrates that participants' motivation for studying in English lay partly in the unavailability of academic resources in their home language. For African language speaking participants there are no resources of any kind and studying in English is a necessity, rather than a choice. For Afrikaans speaking participants the tertiary institutions exist but academic resources are limited largely to textbooks. Textbooks may be adequate for undergraduate studies but are not applicable for Masters level studies, particularly the thesis process. Access is an issue for Afrikaans participants as for some it is unaffordable. Having an established academic status in the home language also impacts the ability to cope with or adjust to the academic English

demands. The data suggests then that, rather than being a choice, studying in English is necessitated by access and inadequate home language resources.

Theme 2.2: Professional development and upward mobility. Across the data, there was an overriding perception of English as a global language. The overarching sentiment was that any skills and abilities you have, or will acquire during university, are only relevant in so far as you can utilise them in English. Participants consistently emphasized the pervasive nature of English in the world as a whole. They also highlighted it as a professional requirement in the field of psychology. Participants spoke about the opportunities English proficiency will afford you and conversely, the perception that home language alone would be professionally limiting.

Part4: I think if I write [journal article] in my language, no one will ever want to read it.

Part7: I think it's critical as well because I mean let's face it, you're not living in a closed domain world so if you wanna expand your future, English is a must. I mean in like hospitals, internships are all English after you've qualified you wanna spread your wings and go overseas you're gonna have to do English, board exam English, comm. serve is English so you gonna be at your detriment if you continue Afrikaans.

Part6: I don't think there's many, if any, research institutes that would want you to write in [home language].

Part1: English is an international language, it's used everywhere... there's no running away from English.

The abovementioned quotes illustrate that English has been well-established and was necessary for upward mobility, progress and professional advancement. The participants reflected that English has been accepted as essential in the professional world.

Theme 2.3: Perceptions of Home Language. White Afrikaans participants expressed negative feelings toward their home language due to the political history of South Africa. They reflected on how studying in English might be beneficial as it allows them to move away from their home language and the associated feelings.

Part6: I don't know if it's because I have sort of biased negative feelings towards Afrikaans because of our history. I'm not too proud of the Afrikaners. My only thing with Afrikaans is the self-entitlement.

One Afrikaans participant reflected on the merits of using English only in academia as a means of reducing classification based on race.

Part6: I'm not saying stop all languages, but languages and your ethnicity is being used as classification or statuses, right? I mean universities are trying to get away with Afrikaans teachings and things like that. It [race] is a card people are using today. I'm not saying it doesn't impact things, it's just an easy way to blame people and I think um, I don't think I can feel anything else except 'shit, what a crap thing we've done' so it's sort of a regret, embarrassment type of thing. In academia there shouldn't be a place for that I don't think.

African language participants conversely associated positive feelings with their home language. Having noted that studying in English affords opportunities for professional advancement and upward mobility, African language participants expressed sadness that this advancement in English came at the cost of proficiency in their home language.

Part1: ...when I'm interacting with people back home, the majority of the language that is spoken is [home language] so if I can't speak it well enough then obviously you get judged [hesitates] about that and called names because you speak English instead of your own language but what can one do?

Part4: If you give me the [home language] ones [books] it's hard for me... I don't read [home language]. I don't know why. Maybe it's because it's the global, I read English. Whatever I read, I never read in [home language]. Even, I'm a Christian, I never read a [home language] bible. I never had one. We had English.

Most of the African language speaking participants reportedly lost proficiency in their home language due to time spent trying to improve their English. This generally had negative repercussions such as straining relationships between the participants and other home language speakers.

Summary: The thread running through all the themes in this category seems to be that studying in English is not a choice. The decision is necessitated by the unavailability of academic resources in participants' home languages and reinforced by the desire for professional advancement. There is a general perception of English being a global language which feeds into the idea that proficiency is a necessary tool for career development. Afrikaans-speaking participants did not lose home language proficiency during their acquisition of English. African language participants reportedly did. This may be because most African language participants received English instruction from or before foundation phase, whereas all Afrikaans participants received home language instruction until university or senior high school.

4.3.3. Category 3: Facilitating Factors

The third thematic category related to facilitating factors employed or accessed by participants during the process of conducting their research. Facilitating factors in this instance refers to anything which helped participants cope and persevere during the thesis process. Both internal and external facilitating factors were identified in the data. Two of the participants were recent graduates and so described the process of coping which had assisted them with completion. The other six participants described the coping strategies they were currently employing to facilitate the thesis process. Four themes were identified in this category namely, 1) Material aids, 2) Intrinsic protective factors 3) Social support and 4) The supervisory relationship.

Theme 3.1: Material aids. Participants made use of materials aids to help with the structural aspects of writing a thesis. For example, language-based resources and software such as, dictionaries, the spell check function in Microsoft Word and Google Translate. Material aids also included the use of a copyeditor to check written work.

Part 6: ... so there's no additional support, it's just me and MS Word [Laughs] ... and Google!

Part3: I can't say I have any other support...there's no one who can help me, actually. I just leave it that way, or I just maybe use the dictionary to find... ja... definitions and stuff

The use of these resources assisted with reading, as well as writing. With regard to reading, material aids helped with understanding unfamiliar terminology. Using these tools also enabled participants to check their written work before sending drafts to their supervisors.

Theme 3.2: Intrinsic protective factors. This theme refers to internal facilitating factors, such as beliefs, values or qualities within the individual which assisted with coping. Two intrinsic factors were identified which were vital in helping the participants move through the thesis process. These were 1) Religion, and 2) Time management skills.

3.2.1. Religion. Participants who were religious, found their beliefs to be a source of strength which helped them to persevere under challenging circumstances.

Part 3: I think [religion 's] one part of me that really helps me when things gets tougher.

It just makes me to not really give up because I can open my bible, read some verses and just get... an encouragement.

For this participant, having something bigger than herself to believe in was encouraging enough to stabilise her when she wanted to quit. Religion provided her with the motivation and comfort she needed to persevere.

3.2.2. Time management. All aspects of the thesis process, from conceptualisation to write-up, took longer for non-mother tongue speakers to complete. The ability to manage time was identified as a skill that was useful for participants.

Part2: ... someone who's uh... who's always used English. It becomes easier for them when uh writing down the stuff. For me it takes a while, but I mean at the end, I've learned to... you know, ja... to make, produce, somewhat good work though it takes a long time... which delays the whole process of my thesis and stuff.

Part 6: What I do is I take time when I do my work so that I can go over it multiple times.

Yes, in the beginning there's errors there and there, grammar and stuff, but I go over my work which might take a long process.

Part 7: I think if it's in your second language you'll definitely spend more time than the rest of the students... the effort and time. It's ok... but it can become frustrating a bit.

Having a realistic awareness of their needs enabled them to plan ahead and make allowances for the additional time needed. However, there was frustration and in some cases, resentment, that their English peers did not have to endure the same struggle.

Theme 3.3: Social support. Another external facilitating factor was support from family and friends. Having a strong support system played a substantial role in the emotional coping of participants throughout the thesis process.

Part3: I always feel like I have that support system going now from my supervisor, my classmates and also my, where I stay, my landlord so I don't usually feel like there's something lacking... the support system in school has been great, I mean so, that's why sometimes maybe I don't feel that much of reaching like [Sighs]... ja, that breaking point...

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The abovementioned quote illustrates that the support system is made up of many subsystems such as the supervisor, classmates and the landlord. Support systems were therefore not limited to the traditional friends and family, but included anyone who played a role in providing support to the participants during the thesis process. However, when participants felt they were at risk for being overwhelmed by emotions, they expressed a need to turn to family.

Part1: There were times when I felt like, um, I'm about to give up... that's when it becomes a bit tougher for you... you need people around you who understand you and that's when sometimes I miss my family, you know?

Some participants identified that support from family and friends was limited.

Part4: I'm learned enough for them so how can they support me? No one in my area, in my family, in my area where I stay is educated. There is no one there who knows more than me.

Part 6: Uh, nothing [support]... my whole family's Afrikaans so no, my friends that are English, they're not really interested in helping me so um... right now for me, I'm left alone.

Participant 4 attributes the lack of support to the fact that he is the most educated person in his family as well as in the area in which he stays. On that basis he feels they would not be able to support him, whether he needed it or not. Participant 6 also feels his family would not be able to provide support as they face the same language struggle that he does. He also feels that while his friends may be capable of helping, there is no interest in doing so. Participant 4 also expresses the loneliness that can come from having no one around who speaks your home language. This is illustrated by the quote below.

Part4: Because we are surrounded by not our local people where I stay. Where I work, I don't work with my people. Here, I'm working and I'm alone, wherever I'm alone.

The abovementioned quote suggest that communication is not the sole purpose of language. The participants are all proficient in conversational English and quite capable of communicating in English. The participant would therefore easily be able to carry a conversation with the people around him, yet he feels alone. The quote suggest that language is firmly intertwined with culture and not being a member of that culture leads to a sense of distance or alienation, unrelated to fluency in the language.

From this theme it emerges that a support system plays a large role in facilitating coping during the thesis process. This support system may consist of a network of various people such as friends, family, classmates, supervisors, and even landlords. Essentially, anyone who is willing to make themselves available to the participants to support in any way. Although the support network may potentially consist of a multitude of people, when participants felt most overwhelmed, they expressed a specific need for support from family. Participants studying far from home experienced this as a challenge as accessing this resource was then difficult. Family and friends were not always able to assist practically or provide functional support in the process of thesis research and writing. This was because they did not possess the requisite skills for providing support directed at the thesis process. This was due to insufficient English language ability or proficiency, lack of understanding of the research process, lack of research skills, or not having an understanding of psychological concepts. This may be attributed to some home languages not having a language for psychology. It may also be attributed to limited exposure to academic language. Classmates appeared to be a source of support for participants, perhaps because of shared experience. Friends who did not share the experience were sometimes indifferent to the struggle and participants felt they could not reach out to them. Overall, participants expressed a desire for more support however, they all appeared to be coping with the support they had which came mainly from classmates and supervisors. Perhaps because these are the people closest to the process. Being a postgraduate student appears to make the participants part of a different culture and group. Other groups that participants are members of might not have the reference for what they are going through and may even be judgemental. Thus they are impacted on two levels. They are alone in their experience with regard to people outside of the academic sphere not understanding what they are going through, and they are also not fully part of the academic culture because they have the realistic challenges of studying in a non-mothertongue.

Theme 3.4: Supervisory relationship. Supervisors have already been identified as a source of support for participants. The data shows that supervisors played a large role in the thesis process and that supervision had the potential to help or hinder participants' progress. Three factors were identified as affecting the supervisory relationship. These were 1) approachability, 2) ability to relate, and 3) nature of contact.

3.4.1. Approachability. This was a characteristic which influenced the thesis process positively when it was present and negatively when it was not. Approachability created a relationship wherein participants felt they could approach their supervisors with academic or even non-academic issues.

Part6: ... look, he's very open. Especially in the beginning of the year I had some issues... he was nice and support, he understood so he's there for... just if I wanna talk so that's also cool.

Part3: He do helps a lot and I think he's someone whom I'm not afraid to speak to him and you know, tell me what... what's wrong, where I'm having difficulties and stuff and he's always ready to help me anytime.

Conversely, when supervisors were not perceived as approachable, participants were hesitant to ask for their help which hindered their academic progress.

Part6: so far there's uh... we don't communicate that much [Looking down at table/ fidgeting with hands] um, like I say I don't know if it's because of my lack of submitting things to him or maybe... I don't know.

Participants experienced the overall thesis process as less challenging when they perceived their supervisors as approachable. When supervisors were not perceived as

approachable, it impacted on their willingness to submit drafts of their work which ultimately impeded progress and advancement toward completion.

3.4.2. *Ability to relate.* Another characteristic which was identified as helpful was supervisors who were able to relate to the participants' experiences of either being a foreign student or a non-mother-tongue student.

Part 4: I think my supervisor because he was a foreigner in another country before so he understands. He understood the way he sounded differently so he understands the way I'm sounding differently. Maybe if it's someone else they are not going to get me right or maybe they are going to judge.

Part 3: ... he [supervisor] is also not South African so I mean it helps in the sense that I think he understands some of the challenges that I face so it helps having him as my supervisor.

When supervisors were able to share their own experiences it made participants feel more at ease and willing to be open about their struggles. Supervisors with relatable experiences were also able to offer relevant advice which was helpful.

3.4.3. *Nature of contact.* Participants reported a differential response to the various forms of contact during supervision. For example, when face-to-face supervision was provided, it facilitated a deepening of rapport and an increased understanding of feedback.

Part3: I do go for supervision with my supervisor so we sit down and he tries to, you know, help me understand what's, what's wrong with the whole draft that I do send and stuff so it's not that bad I could... I can actually understand.

When written feedback was sent to participants and subsequently discussed in supervision, it helped participants to gain a deeper understanding of what was expected of them than the written feedback on its own.

When supervision sessions took place via electronic platforms such as e-mail, there was a negative impact on progress. Participants found it difficult to understand what was required of them when instructions were given via email and there was no opportunity for clarification.

Part2: I would describe my relationship with her, she's on the one side of the computer, I'm on the other side of the computer. We've been speaking a lot more on the com- like literally via e-mail um so we haven't had a lot of sessions face to face, contact sessions but the relationship, I think, from what I experienced it is, is just ok? [unsure tone]... Um so we really went around in circles at the beginning point of but what is it that I'm doing? What do I wanna do? What, what, what is my understanding of it and what angle do I wanna take? And shoo, and I'm still deurmekaar even today, to say the least [exasperated laugh].

The themes in this category draw out factors which helped participants persevere when the thesis process became challenging. Support from family and friends was vital, but this support was emotional rather than practical. This underscores the idea that completing thesis work in a non-mothertongue presents challenges which go beyond the functional language requirements of research work and thesis writing. To address the functional aspects, material aids were used. Aside from the external support of friends and family, there are intrinsic factors which participants were able to draw on to facilitate their progress. This category also highlights the importance of the supervisory relationship which can either be immensely beneficial or hinder participants' progress.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Core Findings

The core findings illustrate that for most participants, studying in English is not a choice. It is necessitated by lack of access to home language tertiary education, either because it does not exist or it is too expensive. It is further necessitated by a lack of academic resources, such as journal articles, in the home language. The lack of home language journal articles accompanied by the fact that internships are generally hosted in English, serves to perpetuate the notion of English as a necessary means for upward mobility and professional advancement.

During the thesis process, participants struggled with conceptualisation, engaging with literature, and writing. This was largely due to the reported difference between conversational and academic English as well as, the discipline specific language of psychology. Participants who had an academic proponent to their home language, found it easier to transition than participants who did not. Overall, participants felt competent with conversational English, but felt there was a substantial leap in difficulty from conversational to academic English. This affected conceptualising topics, synthesizing literature, and writing the thesis but did not affect speaking ability. This may be because academic English is not required in speaking to the same extent as it is with writing. The one aspect of speaking which did impact the thesis process, was pronunciation. Participants sometimes found interviews difficult as their interviewees struggled to understand their accent or pronunciation. There was however emphasis on the distinction between wrong and different in terms of pronunciation. Participants were very purposeful in making this distinction and

highlighted that their pronunciation was not necessarily wrong purely because it was different.

To assist with these language related challenges, participants made use of material aids such as Google Translate and online dictionaries as well as hiring copyeditors. Family and friends were not generally able to provide language related support as they did not possess the requisite language or research skills. Friends who did possess those skills were not always interested in providing this support. Participants found the greater part of their practical and emotional support from classmates and supervisors.

Factors which affected the supervisory relationship included approachability, the ability to relate to the supervisor, as well as the nature of the contact. In this instance, face-to-face contact was perceived as more beneficial for understanding feedback than electronic contact. Aside from supervisors and classmates, support was also found in an extended network of people in close proximity, such as a landlord. Although this was of great help to participants, when emotionally overwhelmed the desire for the support of family was expressed. Inability to access family due to proximity, negatively impacted the process. In addition to external support systems, intrinsic factors such as religion and time management skills also served to facilitate the thesis process.

5.2 Discussion

This study utilized Micro Social Constructionism. This aimed at exploring the ways in which participants use language in their interactions in order to achieve a particular agenda (Burman, 1999; Burr, 2015; Danzinger, 1997). Three forms of rhetoric were identified within the results. 1) Rhetoric of Skill, 2) Rhetoric of Power and 3) Rhetoric of Identity. These are discussed below in relation to the objectives of the study.

5.2.1. Rhetoric of skill. The current study sought to explore four skills as per the objectives. These were 1) Conceptualizing research, 2) Conducting fieldwork, 3) Writing up a thesis and 4) Integrating feedback provided in English.

5.2.1.1. Conceptualizing research. Participants reflected that this skill was more challenging to master or execute in English. Participants identified that translation and concept formation were challenges that impacted negatively on the process. What emerged was that there was a distinction between academic and conversational English. Participants felt they were well versed with conversational English, but not academic English. This is in contrast with a study which found that bilingual students demonstrated greater mastery of academic English than conversational English (Bialystok et al., 2010). Bialystok (2010) interprets these findings by explaining that bilingual students are typically acquiring English in a school context rather than a home setting, resulting in the acquisition of academic English more so than conversational English. Many of the participants in the current study reported that the English to which they were exposed at school, was compromised and non-standard. Thus, the fact that participants felt better versed with conversational than academic English may be an indication of contextual influence relating to historical policy issues which translated into poor quality training in English as a second language. The participants of the current study stated that they felt competent with academic English prior to entering Masters; with most participants explicitly stating that neither their undergraduate studies nor their Honours degrees prepared them for the level of English required in their Masters year. It appears then that there is a jump in difficulty from undergraduate to postgraduate level and even from Honours to Masters. This jump is challenging for non-mothertongue speakers to master.

Participants reported that they struggled to find English equivalents for ideas or conceptualizations in their mother tongue. This was more of an issue for African language

participants who do not have that distinction between academic and conversational language in their home language. More specifically, with African languages, there is no history of the mothertongue as an academic language. Afrikaans participants still struggled with the transition from conversational to academic English but were able to use translation to facilitate this transition. This was again as a function of the home language having an existing academic tradition, as well as there being an equivalent lexicon in terms of psychological concepts.

5.2.1.2. Conducting fieldwork. This process or aspect was less impacted, possibly due to the fact that conducting fieldwork generally required conversational English rather than academic English. Some participants even conducted fieldwork in their home language or a combination of home language and English. Participants expressed less anxiety with this aspect than those aspects more reliant on academic language such as, conceptualisation and writing. There was however an awareness of the impact of the language status. For example, research participants reacted to different pronunciations. One participant noted that it seemed as though some of his participants struggled to understand his pronunciation, although he felt he spoke well in terms of structure and vocabulary. This same participant emphasized repeatedly that although his pronunciation was different, it was not wrong. Tiwane (2016) notes that due to the apartheid past, there is a lot of racial tension surrounding pronunciation in South Africa. Results of the current study show that participants measured their speaking proficiency in relation to mothertongue English speakers, particularly white mothertongue English speakers. Dlakavu (2015) states that the benchmark for correct pronunciation in South Africa has always been determined largely by white people. Inability to perfectly match that standard is perhaps why participants were often hesitant to explicitly rate their language ability. This idea was reinforced when participants felt like they were judged as being less proficient when their verbal ability did not come close enough to that of first

language speakers. This idea is not a novel one. A study conducted at WITS University found that admission to the clinical Masters programme in Psychology was influenced largely by verbal English proficiency which meant that white applicants often presented themselves more effectively than their black counterparts (Rafaely, 2014). Proximity to whiteness as a measure of ability is illustrated when participants found comfort when presented with the fact that white students also struggled with academic writing. This is reinforced again by one of the participants who, despite being a second language student, expected to excel at university due to his whiteness. Participant 8 however, demonstrates that white non-mothertongue speakers also face judgement by mothertongue speakers due to accent and pronunciation, regardless of English ability. The language proficiency and dominance thus represented cultural groups with various historical associations and connotations.

5.2.1.3. Writing up a thesis. This skill took longer to master and was particularly impacted by the challenges around structure and convention in English. Participants were required to demonstrate mastery of high level academic writing which was different from conversational English but also different from the level of academic writing required of them prior to the Masters level. When participants used non-standard versions of English to capture their initial thoughts in writing, they had to engage in multiple revisions until their submissions resembled acceptable standard versions of English. Thus, mastery of these skills at the expected level and in the standard form constituted an iterative process that was time consuming. Peets and Bialystok (2015) discovered that grammatical errors in written work was highly and positively correlated with the academic skill of the student. They found that non-mothertongue students who were academically stronger, made more grammatical errors in their writing, because the standard they were striving for required more complexity and nuance. Non-mothertongue students who were academically weaker made fewer grammatical

errors because they tended to use simpler sentences and uncomplicated writing structures (Peets & Bialystok, 2015).

The extent of reading required to prepare a full draft of the research write up demanded engagement with academic texts which was at a higher level, more complex skill than reading with comprehension. One of the reasons provided by participants was that the amount of unfamiliar vocabulary in the prescribed articles made it challenging to engage beyond a superficial level. They were generally able to understand the article as a whole, but the amount of unfamiliar vocabulary made it difficult to engage with the text line by line, which made synthesizing the information difficult. Perry et al. (2018) found that vocabulary is learned at a significantly faster rate through peer interaction than via interaction with an adult. Only two of the participants from the current study had exposure to English from peers. For the other six participants their only exposure came from teachers. These two participants reported struggling less with conceptualisation and writing due to more expansive vocabularies and both enjoyed reading as a hobby. However, they still struggled with synthesizing literature, which suggests that vocabulary is not the only determining factor. Engaging with text and synthesizing literature may be a separate skill, not necessarily related to language ability. Chen et al. (2016) state that the reason for this is that writing a literature review requires students to engage on an ontological, methodological, conceptual, and linguistic level simultaneously. Writing a literature review therefore seems to require skills that go beyond language ability.

5.2.1.4. Integrating feedback. Results show that the integration of feedback was more readily achieved when face-to-face supervision was provided to discuss the feedback. This process did not necessarily take place when feedback was provided electronically. Literature shows that for at least 30 years, non-mother tongue students have found face-to-face feedback more meaningful than electronic feedback (Zamel, 1985). Bitchener et al. (2005) illustrate

that non-mother tongue students' preference for face-to-face feedback is supported by the quality of work produced. Students who had received face-to-face supervision to discuss written feedback demonstrated greater integration of this feedback and produced work of significantly higher quality than students who received purely electronic feedback (Bitchener et al., 2005). Results of the current study illustrated that the skill required to integrate feedback provided in English was presented as a higher level skill that required facilitation from the supervisor. Although literature supports that this is the case for non-mothertongue speakers (Abdulkhaleq & Abdullah, 2013; Abbidin & West, 2007; Bitchener et al., 2005; Bitchener et al., 2011; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990), it may also apply to first language speakers. Suciati (2011) found that even first language Masters students preferred face-to-face feedback over electronic feedback. Students reported that they often accepted the track changes made by the supervisor without understanding the reasons behind those suggested changes (Suciati, 2011). Abdulkhaleq and Abdullah (2013) state that many functions occur during face-to-face feedback. These include discussion of the written feedback but also include additional elements such as, allowing space for the student to reflect on the process as well as positive feedback from the supervisor, which is not generally included in electronic feedback. Abdulkhaleq and Abdullah (2013) suggest that all of these elements together provide students with greater understanding of the thesis process as a whole and also build a sense of research identity within the student which is beneficial to the writing process. That may explain why face-to-face feedback is preferred by non-mothertongue as well as mothertongue speakers.

5.2.1.5. Summary. The skills that participants identify as challenging to master, are for the most part reciprocated in the literature. In the case of synthesizing information for a literature review, literature suggests that this may be a skill that goes beyond language ability. Additionally, mothertongue and non-mothertongue speakers share preference in terms of

mode of feedback, with both preferring oral feedback as opposed to electronic feedback. Literature also shows that both mothertongue and non-mothertongue speakers sometimes struggle to understand written feedback. Pronunciation was identified as a skill which had no major impact on completion however the language used by participants to discuss this skill may be indicative of attitudes informed by the apartheid history in South Africa.

Participants' use of language in discussing all of these skills provides insight into how they are believed to be measured. The results show that the benchmark which participants are using to measure their own proficiency is proximity to the implicit standard set by first language speakers. There was also undertone in the data which alluded to the idea that this standard is related to proximity to whiteness. Overall, when skills were not performed at the expected level, it was assumed that participants were less capable and less intelligent. Thus the rhetoric surrounding skills were a proxy for standard conventions and cultural normativity and by extension whiteness.

5.2.2. Rhetoric of power. A dominant discourse which emerges in the findings is that of English as a necessary tool for career development and upward mobility. This discourse takes two branches; 1) The power dynamics of English and 2) The power dynamics of the home language.

5.2.2.1. Power dynamics of English. Firstly, English was constructed by the participants as a global language. In speaking about studying in English, participants underscored the benefits it could offer them in terms of opportunities for growth in their field, as well as the potential for international relations. Participants used phrases such as “there is no escaping English” which speaks to their sense that there was a clear rhetoric of power relating to English as a language of study. Casale and Posel (2010) stated that English remained the dominant language of economic, government, and public spheres, years after

the end of apartheid. Prah (2018) confirms that this remains true, but that Afrikaans has almost achieved societal equality with English while the usage of African languages is still largely confined to informal, domestic settings. Results of the current study showed that participants believed their English proficiency was being measured by proximity to standard conventions. This included aesthetic aspects, such as pronunciation. Results showed that participants believed themselves to be judged less intelligent because they did not have a South African English accent. This was reciprocated by the findings from the WITS study (Rafaely, 2014). Similarly, international studies show that South Africans with white English accents are more likely to be employed in the USA in the field of business (Goatley-Soan, 2016) as well as, South East Asia in the field of teaching (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Participants' perceptions that English proficiency will grant them better access to international relations, appears then to be supported by the literature.

5.2.2.2. Power dynamics of the home language. The second way in which participants spoke of studying in English was in contrast to the lack of opportunities to study in home languages other than Afrikaans. Studying in English was also a more viable alternative for Afrikaans speakers who reported that access to Afrikaans-medium institutions was more difficult and that the academic version of Afrikaans was also less accessible to first language speakers. Participants used strong negative terms like “forced”, “had to” and “it’s not a choice” when discussing the limited range or lack of options available for studying in languages other than English. Participants emphasized that although studying in the home language would be ideal, given the pervasive nature of English in the world in general, it would realistically require additional effort in terms of translating journal articles and would be problematic in terms of international relations. Despite this, a local study showed that mothertongue English students enrolled in professional degree programmes reported that not speaking an additional South African language posed as a barrier to engaging with clients,

which in turn limited opportunity for professional development (Seabi, Seedat, Khosa-Shangase & Sullivan, 2014). This suggests that while the global importance of English proficiency has been established, it may be worthwhile exploring the importance of advocating for proficiency in other South African languages. This may be particularly important for students in professional degree programmes, given that the majority of the South African population is not first language English.

5.2.2.3. Summary. There is a strong contrast in the data between the positive language used to describe the advantages of English proficiency and the negative language used to describe the lack of opportunity to study in the home language. This may be a reflection of participants' acceptance of the power or dominance of English as well as an indication of an internal attitude of hope to study in a first language. Potter and Wetherell (1988) posit that it is not unusual for participants to provide accounts with such contradictory statements. According to Gergen (1989) people are motivated by the desire to have their interpretation of reality accepted as truth. He states that to achieve this goal, we represent ourselves in a variety of different ways, depending on context and these different versions of selfhood that exist have emerged throughout history as people have found it necessary to "construct them into an armoury with which to fight their own group battles for voice (Gergen, 1989, p. 466). Burr (2015) adds that those groups who win the battle for voice are rewarded with greater social standing as well as, power and resources in the form of jobs, education and other valuables in the given society. It is clear from the findings that participants have accepted and internalized the apparent reality that English affords its' speakers social standing, power and opportunity. This view is reciprocated in the literature which shows that the majority of students graduating from postgraduate programmes are English first language (Letseka et al., 2010). Within the interviews for the current study, participants were careful to align themselves with English so as to move toward the power it affords. There were however

other goals competing to be achieved within that same interaction. One of those goals was to draw emphasis to the structures within society that created the criteria through which this power is attained; thereby emphasizing the limitations of personal agency. The other goal was establishing personal identity, which is unpacked in the next section.

5.2.3. Rhetoric of identity. Throughout the interview process, participants spoke about the ways in which language and culture are linked and how both aspects contribute to the formation of personal identity. Findings indicated that the age and quality of English exposure had implications on the identity formation of the participants, in terms of identification with English speakers and home language speakers. They reflected on their feelings toward the home language as well as the cultural implications of being more proficient in English than in the home language. They also reflected on the fact that striving for English proficiency is related to the upward mobility it can provide. The rhetoric of identity, which is discussed below, seeks to provide an understanding of how participants negotiate their identity in terms of the abovementioned factors.

5.2.3.1. Exposure to English and identity development. Objective 1 of the current study, required establishing a demographic profile of participants. In terms of language exposure, all African language participants received English instruction prior to entering university, with most receiving English instruction from the foundation phase or earlier and therefore never receiving instruction in the home language. Afrikaans-speaking participants received home language instruction from the foundation phase until at least senior high school or university. This had various implications on the way participants presented themselves. Never having received home language instruction and only having received English language instruction from non-mothertongue teachers appears to have placed the African language participants in a position where they are not proficient enough to be fully accepted by home language speakers or by First language English speakers. These

participants framed their dialogue in a manner which suggests the intention to claim their home language identity. Participants used possessive language such as “my language”, “our local language”, and “our people” to speak about their home language as well as speakers of that language. This is in contrast to the distancing language used to speak about English. Participants also constantly referred to their home language by name, sometimes several times in the same sentence. Participant 4 mentions his home language by name 43 times during the interview. African language participants also used devices such as justification when discussing lack of proficiency in their home language. One of the justifications provided is that all of their subjects, aside from their home language subject, were presented in English which lead to them being more proficient in English than their home language.

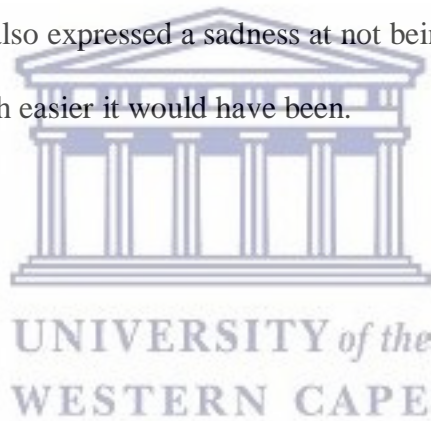
5.2.3.2. “English” identity and career advancement. There is a constant struggle for African language participants to simultaneously assert their sameness with English speakers while maintaining their sameness with home language speakers. Results of the study show that participants’ desire to align themselves with English is tied to the belief that English proficiency is necessary for career advancement. This belief is supported by literature which demonstrated that black South Africans proficient in English earned on average 55% more than black South Africans who spoke predominantly indigenous languages (Casale & Posel, 2011). A more recent study found that unemployment rates were not significantly different for those proficient in English proficiency and those who are not however, English proficiency does significantly affect the type of job to which South Africans have access (Mckenzie & Muller, 2015). These authors found that South Africans proficient in English were six times more likely to be employed in high level professional, technical, educational or managerial positions.

5.2.3.3. English proficiency in relation to home language identity. For the participants of the current study, a consequence of English proficiency has been the backlash

from other home language speakers. Many participants reported being called names and mocked because of not being proficient enough in their home language or being more proficient in English. Literature shows that speaking pure English, without code switching or mixing with the home language, paints people living in townships as outsiders and leads to name calling (Rudwick, 2008). This backlash is supposedly fuelled by the belief that seeking proficiency in English has become more important than seeking home language proficiency. In South Africa, African languages are spoken primarily by the black population and English is spoken primarily by the white population (WESGRO, 2012). This suggests then that moving toward English may be perceived as moving toward whiteness. Rudwick (2008) found that in townships in South Africa, it is a necessity to speak the indigenous language of the region as many older residents as well as those living in abject poverty, have little to no knowledge of English. These participants appear to be struggling both with the goal to identify with English first language speakers in order to obtain the upward mobility English proficiency affords and to identify with first language speakers of their home language.

The dialogue which emerged with the Afrikaans participants was structured in such a way that it indicated a desire to move away from Afrikaner identity associated with Afrikaans as home language and move towards a post-apartheid identity associated with English. In this instance, Afrikaans is framed as the language of oppression. Participants constantly reiterate their preference for English, even outside of the academic setting. At the same time though, they express how much easier it would have been if they had been able to study in their home language. The first goal is to disassociate from the negative connotations associated with Afrikaans. The second goal is to do well academically and this goal is expressed by statements of longing as well as statements asserting that English first language speakers are at a distinct advantage in terms of achieving this goal.

5.2.3.4. Summary. There was an agreement among all participants that improving English proficiency is vital for career advancement. For this reason, participants aligned themselves with English and first language English speakers during the interview process. Throughout the interviews, there was an undertone among all participants which alluded to sadness at the unfeasibility of studying, and in a broader sense working in their chosen career, in the home language. This placed many participants, particularly black participants, in the awkward position of pursuing English proficiency for career advancement while having to defend their cultural roots and being mocked and labelled as an outsider. Afrikaans participants struggled with feelings of superiority and wanting to distance themselves from the home language in order to distance themselves from the connotations attached to it. At the same time, these participants also expressed a sadness at not being able to study in the home language because of how much easier it would have been.



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Executive summary

The current study was inspired by the findings of Rae (2015) that language affected completion among postgraduate students. The thesis process involves producing a substantial body of written work that requires engagement with high level academic language on the level of conceptualisation, reading, synthesizing, and writing. Integration of feedback from the supervisor is also reliant on language. Language is a cultural artefact that involves complex systems, symbolization and forms of expression. These are integrally linked to demographic factors such as, ethnicity, socio-economic factors and quality of education. The patterned way in which these factors manifest themselves in participation in higher education, as well as retention and throughput has been well documented in literature (Cao, 2016; Stegers-Jager, 2016; Tate, 2017). The racial and economic pattern to enrolment at institutions has also been noted (CHE, 2018). In addition, Psychology students were identified as a vulnerable group (Nel, 2016; Offord, 2015). Thus, the present study attempted to explore the experiences of Masters students in Psychology enrolled at a historically disadvantaged institution and who were completing thesis work or supervised research in English as a non-mothertongue.

The study was located in social constructionism as a theoretical framework. Micro social constructionism was used to understand the conversations participants use to describe their experiences. A Collective case study design was used to provide a linguistic description of participants and provide contextual information within which to understand the results. A maximum variation purposive sample of eight students in professional Masters programmes

was used. Semi-structure interviews were conducted and data was analysed using deductive, social constructionist thematic analysis, searching for semantic as well as latent themes.

6.2 Core findings

Three forms of rhetoric were identified namely. 1) Rhetoric of Skill, 2) Rhetoric of Power and 3) Rhetoric of Identity. In essence, participants struggled with conceptualising, synthesizing, and writing skills. Structural supports offered by the university, such as mentors, were not experienced as being effective. Findings indicated that the use of strategies such as, code-switching was only useful if the supervisor was conversant in the mother tongue of the student. Strategies such as, online dictionaries and Google Translate were used extensively in the thesis writing process. These tools were not appropriate for capturing nuances in expression and thought. Participants used these tools even when decoding feedback from supervisors. What emerged very clearly was that students experienced both expressive and receptive challenges in this process that made them more vulnerable.

All of the participants felt competent in their level of English proficiency during the Honours level, none felt equipped for the Masters level. This experience essentially demonstrated that the level of mastery required was beyond just language ability and related to conceptual thinking, academic convention, academic writing, argument development and meta-discourse. This finding was consistent with the reflection in literature that some elements of the thesis process, such as the literature review, involved skills beyond language ability.

Students' experiences of the thesis process differed according to their demographic profile, particularly the age and quality of prior exposure to English. There were high levels of similarity within racial groups in terms of prior exposure to English, with most black participants receiving English instruction from primary school and most white participants

receiving English instruction from university level. The findings suggested here that level of prior exposure and timing of exposure impacted confidence and perceived mastery rather than skill level in second language acquisition and proficiency. This perceived confidence was eroded during the thesis writing process for all participants. The historical inequity identified as one of the causes of high attrition rates in the National Development Plan 2030 manifested in this process as a differential access to support and in the extent to which their supports had a reference for what was required in postgraduate studies in general, and thesis writing per se.

Support was a vital contributor toward completion. Support within the supervisory relationship took on the form of the supervisor being approachable, relatable and providing feedback in person. Support was also sought from classmates, friends, and family. Participants tended to seek support wherever it could be found in order to assist them throughout the process.

The experience of writing a thesis in a non-mother tongue was impacted by the status of the mother tongue. In particular, the extent to which the home language distinguished between academic and conversational language was important. Where these two versions existed, students were at least prepared for the reality that English has an academic and conversational form. In addition, mastery of the academic form of the home language assisted with mastery of academic English. Students whose home languages did not have an academic tradition were at a distinct disadvantage. Another important finding was that the comparability of lexicons in English and the mother tongue also assisted with the process of engaging in thesis work. For example, Afrikaans speakers found it easier to engage with the work as equivalents for many words and psychological concepts exist in the home language.

Results also showed that language signifiers in students and supervisors could exacerbate issues of power in supervision. Where supervisors were perceived to be English first language speakers, students reported an increased awareness of and sensitivity to their own level of mastery. This in turn created distance between the supervisor and student. Where supervisors were perceived to be non-mother tongue speakers, students reported increased identification with the supervisor. They reported that they felt more comfortable sharing their experiences that were culturally based. Thus, the language signifiers of the supervisor formed an important intersection with the students' language identification and writing process.

The findings indicated that non-mother tongue speakers benefitted from discussing written feedback face-to-face. Literature supported this finding and suggested that discussing feedback face-to-face aided in improving confidence and assisted students with developing researcher identity (Abdulkhaleq & Abdullah, 2013; Bitchener et al., 2011). This suggests that the benefits go beyond practical assistance in terms of integrating feedback. Exploring the reasons for this or the way in which this process works went beyond the scope of this study.

In terms of identity, developing English proficiency was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it was sought after as an indication of upward mobility, career advancement and future prospects. On the other hand, maintaining cultural identity became more difficult as proficiency in English often came at the expense of proficiency in the home language and loss of cultural identities resulting in alienation and isolation. The results echo the distinction between acculturation and enculturation. Acculturation requires an immersion into the academic culture with English as primary language and adopting the values and conventions which distances them from their home cultural language and values. Enculturation entails

being schooled and becoming adept in the skills required whilst still maintaining their own cultural identities.

The findings indicated that students perceived first language English speakers to be at a distinct advantage. They were receiving higher education in their mother tongue. Participants expressed some resentment at the advantage this gave mothertongue speakers and expressed a longing for the ease that studying in their mothertongue would bring. The assumption that first language speakers do not struggle during thesis writing or do not struggle as much as non-mother tongue speakers, must be explored further in research.

Overall, English proficiency affected the ability of students to complete many of the components of the thesis process. Doing so required more time and the use of additional tools and resources. The higher education landscape of South Africa is also in many ways still shaped by historical inequity. Participants have had differing opportunities, depending on their demographic profile. Participants are also struggling with issues of identity tied to language and culture and the divide between the desire to succeed professionally and the desire to be accepted by home language speakers. In terms of the plans of the National Development Plan 2030 and the Higher Education Act to redress the discrimination from the apartheid regime, results of the current study indicate that this has not yet been achieved. In the context of improving throughput rates for Psychology as a discipline, awareness of the practical difficulties faced by students as well as, an understanding of the cultural and historical context informing these difficulties can translate into supervision which is more intentional in terms of creating a space which facilitates learning for non-mothertongue students. Creating a supervisory space which acknowledges the specific needs of non-mothertongue students will be conducive to enabling students to acquire the appropriate skills, improve confidence in engaging with research and increase completion rates.

6.3 Limitations of the study

The study included a small population from one public university and the findings may not necessarily apply to other students in similar circumstances. However, measures such as thick description were employed to increase transferability to assist other researchers in making that decision.

In terms of sampling, the study only included white Afrikaans speaking participants. A large proportion of the Afrikaans population, especially in the Western Cape, are “Coloured”. The views of this population may not necessarily have been the same and may have added additional perspectives to the study. However, the population from which the sample was drawn did not include this demographic, therefore inclusion was not possible.

During data analysis, I noticed that some participants had touched on the importance of emotion regulation in terms of facilitating the thesis process. However, I did not pick up on this during the interviews and therefore could not report on it as a theme. I also did not enquire as to whether participants were first generation students. This prevented me from exploring this potential intersectionality which may have added another layer of understanding of student experiences.

The university at which the study was conducted, allows postgraduate students to write their theses in Afrikaans. Despite having this as an option, the Afrikaans speaking participants all chose to write their theses in English. Although this was partially addressed in the findings, the research did not include any explicit questions about the language policy of the university. Therefore, I could not provide any insight into participants’ motivation in this regard.

6.4 Recommendations for further study

It is recommended that future research explore the potential benefits of face-to-face feedback with the aim of understanding what it is that makes this process beneficial to the progress of students. A further exploration of structural supports, such as mentors, provided to postgraduate students should also be examined as these were not experienced as being effective.

The importance of emotion regulation as a facilitating factor was mentioned, but not explored. It is recommended that future research further explore this concept in relation to thesis completion with non-mothertongue students.

I recommend that further exploration of the use of methods like thematic analysis in interpretive frameworks like social constructionism remains a focus of further research.

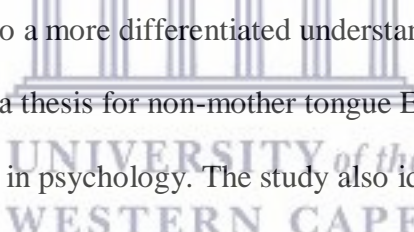
Replication of the study with a larger population, including masters by thesis students, is recommended. The current study only included students from professional Masters programmes, it would be useful to understand the experiences of students completing Masters by thesis programmes. It is also recommended that the study be replicated with first language speakers to explore any similarities or differences in experience. This would also allow exploration of aspects of the thesis process that have been identified as going beyond language ability, such as synthesizing literature.

6.5 Significance of the study

This section reflects on the contribution of the study on the level of theory, methodology and practice.

The study challenges notions of the types of methodologies that could be used in social constructionist studies. The current study demonstrated that Social Constructionism and thematic analysis can be used in conjunction with one another in qualitative research.

Social Constructionism requires an intricate and detailed analysis of latent levels of conversation and consideration of historical and contextual factors (Andrews, 2012). There are perceptions of thematic analysis as a general form of analysis, less sophisticated than other forms of qualitative analysis and ineffective at providing detailed and intricate analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Holloway & Todres, 2003). Some researchers feel that thematic analysis is not a method in and of itself, but rather guidelines intended to assist researchers with analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Not all researchers agree with this perception (King, 2004; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Recently, the combination of Social Constructionism and thematic analysis has been used successfully by several studies (Budds et al., 2013; Busch & Ledingham, 2016; Timberlake, 2015). The use of methods in this study provide further support for the use of thematic analysis to understand data from within a Social Constructionist framework.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

The study contributed to a more differentiated understanding of how language impacts the process of writing a thesis for non-mother tongue English-speaking students in a structured Masters programme in psychology. The study also identified several intersectionalities in terms of language, demographics and postgraduate studies that underscored the importance of recognizing that the supervisory relationship and thesis writing process are impacted by these social artefacts. The study identified that proficiency and exposure to English was not sufficient to master the skills required in the process of thesis writing. The study also underscored the distinction between academic and conventional language and the importance of enculturating students into the practice and use of academic language in postgraduate work and in the pipeline for graduate studies.

These findings speak to the current practice and institutional operating plan (IOP) of the identified university to critically engage with institutionalized practices. Institutions can examine their current practice and the support they offer, in relation to the identified needs of

students. The areas of difficulty identified by this study can be used to improve supervisory practice by encouraging an awareness of common challenges faced by non-mothertongue students to facilitate prevention or early intervention. Knowledge of the facilitating factors identified through this study can be consolidated and used by supervisors to promote and foster the strengths identified in their students. Stakeholders and institutions can use the findings of this study to further develop postgraduate programmes with the aim of aligning practice with stated policy outcomes.



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APPENDIX A – Ethics Clearance

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T: +27 21 959 2988/2948
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10 June 2016

Ms NL Rae

Psychology

CHS Faculty

Ethics Reference Number: HS/16/3/29

Project Title: Psychology Masters students' experiences of conducting supervised research in their non-mothertongue

Approval Period: 10 May 2016 – 10 May 2017

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Josias', on a white rectangular background.

Ms Patricia Josias

Research Ethics Committee Officer

University of the Western Cape



UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa, Telephone: (021) 959-2283/2453

Fax: (021) 959-3515 Telex: 52 6661

APPENDIX B – Request for Permission from Registrar

The Registrar
Student Administration
UWC
Private Bag X17
Bellville, 7535
25 May 2016

Re: Permission to conduct research at the University of the Western Cape.

I am currently registered as a student in the M. A. Psychology Research degree programme at UWC.

I have to complete a research project/ thesis in fulfilment of the degree requirements. The proposed study entitled, “Psychology Masters students’ experiences of conducting supervised research in their non-mother-tongue” has been approved for ethics clearance by the UWC Human and Social Science Research Ethics Committee. The study includes recent graduates and current Psychology Masters students registered at UWC and who have completed at least three chapters of the thesis. The study aims to explore the subjective experiences of students who are completing postgraduate thesis work in their non-mother-tongue. The study is being supervised by Dr. Mario R. Smith who is co-signing this letter to request permission to conduct the study with Psychology Masters students and graduates at UWC. I wish to apply for permission to conduct my Masters level study at UWC.

The study has been designed to include qualitative methods. Students will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview on campus. The standard protocol for ethics recommended by UWC will be

adhered to and all data will be properly anonymized including the identity of the institution, students and their supervisors. There are no risks anticipated in participating in this research project.

The benefits of participating include

- An opportunity to reflect on the extent to which language impacted on the students' general satisfaction with conducting supervised research
- An opportunity to learn more about the experiences of students who have to write their Masters theses in Psychology in their non-mother-tongue
- Future students and supervisors might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the experiences of Masters students at the institution.

In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPI), I understand that I will not be able to have direct access to the contact details of the students/ graduates. Our proposal is that my supervisor distributes an e-mail in which he introduces me and the study to the potential participants and invites them to participate in the study at UWC. Thus interested students will be able to contact me. My supervisor will have access to the contact details of the target group for the study as an academic member of the department of Psychology. Find attached a copy of the proposal, ethics clearance certificate and proof of registration.

We hope that this application will be met with your favourable approval. Please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or myself if you require additional information.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Ms. Nicolette Rae
Student # 3476064
nikkii77@gmail.com
0824519912

Prof. Mario R. Smith
Supervisor
mrsmith@uwc.ac.za
0823309284/ Office X2283

APPENDIX C – Permission from Registrar



Administration Building, 1st Floor

ashaikjee@uwc.ac.za, nschoeman@uwc.ac.za

021 959 2110

13 June 2016

Dear Nicolette Rae

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

As per your request, we acknowledge that you have obtained all the necessary permissions and ethics clearances and are welcome to conduct your research as outlined in your proposal and communication with us.

Please note that while we give permission to conduct such research (i.e. interviews and surveys) staff and students at this University are not compelled to participate and may decline to participate should they wish to.

Should you require any assistance in conducting your research in regards to access to student contact information please do let us know so that we can facilitate where possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Shaikjee".

DR AHMED SHAIKJEE
MANAGER STUDENT ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

APPENDIX D -Information Sheet

Project Title: Psychology Masters students experiences of writing a thesis in their non-mother-tongue.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Nikki Rae and Prof. Mario Smith at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have completed or are completing a thesis for a Masters degree in Psychology in your non-mother-tongue.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview at a time most convenient for you. Interviews will be conducted at the University of the Western Cape. The approximate duration of the interview will be 60 minutes.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, *your name will not be included on data collected. A code will be placed on the collected data.* To ensure your confidentiality, *locked storage areas will used to store information, using identification codes only on data forms, and using password-protected computer files.* If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

This research project involves making audio-recordings of you. The audio-recordings will be transcribed in order to look for common themes arising from various interviews. The audio-recordings will be kept in a safe location with only the researcher having access to it.

To ensure your confidentiality, the audio-recordings, interview notes and transcribed interview will be kept in a safe location with access only available to the researcher.

Electronic data will be stored using password-protected computer files.

The researcher will protect your identity in all formats that findings will be distributed including

- An unpublished thesis

- A conference presentation
- A manuscript submitted for publication

What are the risks of this research?

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. During this study there is a possibility that your reflections on your thesis-writing process might stir up emotions that could require containment. We will nevertheless attempt to minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher learn more about the experiences of students who have to write their Masters theses in Psychology in their non-mother-tongue. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the experiences of Masters students at the institution. A direct benefit for you is the opportunity to reflect on the extent to which your language impacted on your general satisfaction with conducting supervised research and subsequent academic performance.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Nikki Rae at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact:

Researcher:

Nikki Rae

Dept of Psychology, UWC

082 451 9912

nikkii77@gmail.com

Researcher supervisor:

Prof. Mario Smith

Dept of Psychology, UWC

021-9592283/ 0823309284

mrsmith@uwc.ac.za

Head of Department:

Dr. Michelle Andipatin

Dept of Psychology, UWC

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Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:

Prof José Frantz

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E-mail: nikkii77@gmail.com

Title of Research Project: Psychology Masters students experiences of writing a thesis in their non- mother-tongue.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

I agree for this interview to be audio-taped.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

APPENDIX G - Glossary of Terms

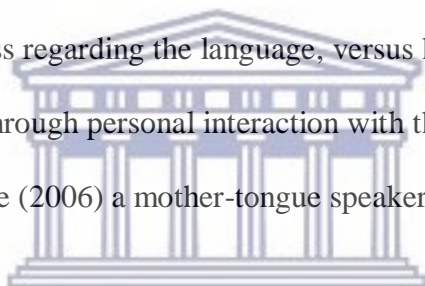
Discourse: The creation of meaning via larger portions of text such as paragraph.

Enculturation: The process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values.

Grammatical accuracy: Includes sentence structure, use of tenses, wording and punctuation.

Meta-discourse: the manner in which writers use language to organise their thoughts and ideas in text, in relation to the perceived expectations of potential readers

Mother tongue: Speakers are considered to be an authority on their given language due to their natural acquisition process regarding the language, versus having learned the language later in life. This is achieved through personal interaction with the language and speakers of the language. According to Lee (2006) a mother-tongue speaker is defined according to the following:



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1. The individual acquired the language in early childhood and maintains the use of the language
2. The individual has intuitive knowledge of the language
3. The individual is aware of the language conventions (e.g. Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation)
4. The individual is able to produce fluent, spontaneous discourse
5. The individual is communicatively competent and able to communicate easily within different settings
6. The individual identifies with or is identified by a language community

Non-mother tongue: Individuals who do not conform to all of the guidelines highlighted above for mother-tongue speakers.

Non-standard models of English: English which is regionally specific as opposed to universal and does not conform to the usage characteristics of most mother-tongue speakers in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Rhetorical conventions: Having an awareness of the context in which the thesis is being written, as well as the accepted conventions of thesis writing within the specific discipline of study.

