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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- 1. Personal Profile**
- 2. Contextual Analysis**
- 3. Epistemology**
- 4. Literature Review**
- 5. Research Proposal**
- 6. Empirical Study**
- 7. Final Reflections on the Portfolio**
- 8.**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	1
Introduction .....	1-2
Behaviourism .....	2-5
Behaviourism and Knowledge .....	5
Behaviourism and Realism .....	6
Behaviourism and Materialism .....	6
Behaviourism and Positivism .....	6-7
Constructivism and Knowledge .....	8
Information Processing Constructivism .....	9
Radical Constructivism .....	9
Social Constructivism .....	10
Behaviourism versus Constructivism .....	11-12
References .....	13-14

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## **CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to look at English Second Language IGCSE Core Curriculum for Grades 11 and 12. The criteria that has been identified and selected for analysis as stipulated by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture Language policy Document of 1996 reads as follows: The aim of teaching English as a language should be to enable the learners to increase their participation in the learning processes. This aim was selected as the criteria for investigation because the notion of active participation by the learners in the teaching and learning process places the learners in a different perspective. In other words, the learners are to be seen as possessors of knowledge rather than ‘empty vessels’ as depicted by the behaviourist approach (Van Harmelen 1999). This idea of a learner-centred approach as embedded in Social Constructivism approach is the foundation on which the Namibian Education Reform Process is based.

The justification for selecting these particular criteria for close inspection in the English Second Language Curriculum was sparked by the professional attachment of the researcher into teaching English Second Language to Grades 11 and 12 at the Herman Gmeiner Technical School in Swakopmund. The researcher is also serving as a subject head for this particular discipline. Furthermore, evaluating and analyzing the English Second Language curriculum on this particular objective, the researcher hopes to uncover or come to an understanding of how our educational practices have moved from what was practiced under the behavioural approach and to discover the needs of teachers in terms of implementing the new curriculum in their daily practices as educators. Having the criteria stated, the study will focus on how the data was collected and the type of methodology used to gather this information.

#### **1. Methodology**

The data for this study was gathered by means of a self-completion questionnaire and group interviews. Two different sets of questionnaires of teachers and learners were designed respectively. Furthermore, documents analysis was carried out on the Language

Policy Document and the IGCSE English Second Language Curriculum Document. The participants chosen for this case study were mostly from the same institution, except for one teacher and one learner who were from different schools. Four teachers and four learners who completed the questionnaire were all attached to Herman Gmeiner Technical School except for one teacher from Atlantic Primary School and one Grade 11 learner from Swakopmund Secondary School.

The participants (teachers) were selected for their understanding of the current reform process and their knowledge about learning theories underpinning the learner-centred approach. Two of these teachers have B. Ed. Degrees from Rhodes University, the other two are studying at the University of Namibia and one is studying with Azaliah. This was done to discover the extent of their understanding regarding learning theories that are supposed to influence their professional practices in the classroom. The learners were selected on the basis of being exposed to the IGCSE Curriculum from Grade 11 to 12 in order to see whether they have realized or come to the sense of taking responsibility for their own learning or not, or whether they are aware of any changes in the teaching/learning process or not, and to uncover the notion of viewing themselves as 'possessors of knowledge' or not (Van Harmelen 2000).

## **ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The researcher overlooked the importance of conducting a pilot questionnaire before finalizing the questionnaire. Firstly, this was due to time constraints, and secondly, to the assumption that all stakeholders, specifically the teachers were thoroughly conversant with the topic under investigation. However, going through the questionnaire with each of the respondents minimized the problems of ambiguity when the researcher hand-delivered the questionnaire to them. Due to familiarity with the researcher most learners pretended to understand what was required but the responses through group interviews showed the contrary. Only three learners were able to communicate their ideas openly and clearly whilst the other two tended to agree with them rather than voicing their own opinions. Another problem encountered was that one of the teachers declined to grant an interview, stressing that she completed the questionnaire and had no time for an interview or further discussion on the topic. The questionnaire also provided limited space for responses.

The strength of this approach lay in the fact that the group interview process served the purpose of clarification and substantiation of responses on the questionnaire. This is viewed as strength in terms of coherent responses and determining the validity of information elicited through self-completion questionnaires.

Cohen and Manion assert that ‘an ideal questionnaire possesses the same property as a good law’ (Cohen and Manion 1980:92). In the light of that comment, the researcher realized the shortcomings of the questionnaire used in terms of its design, appearance and wording. In the teacher’s questionnaire there was a question that could be considered ‘high brow’, even for teachers who may be considered to be sophisticated respondents. The question read as follows: ‘Do you think that the English Second Language curriculum is addressing the principles of the Education Reform Process in this country?’ Considering that most teachers are not knowledgeable about the principles underpinning the Reform Process, the researcher took it for granted that all participants are conversant with these ideals, and that led to a misunderstanding. For the learners’ questionnaire, there was a ‘complex question’ that posed the following question: ‘Do you know what Learner-Centered education means?’ (Cohen and Manion 1980: 92). This is a complex question for learners as they may have heard about the idea but lack a great depth of understanding about it, resulting in misunderstanding and speculation of the meaning.

Although the wording of the questionnaire was simple and clear in most instances, the design was not attractive as it had a ‘compressed layout’ that was uninviting (Cohen & Manion 1980). This layout forced two teachers to make use of an extra sheet in response to the questionnaire due to the limited space provided on the questionnaire. As mentioned previously, if pre-testing had been carried out these problems would have been minimized. No covering letter was needed in this instance, as the questionnaires were hand delivered.

## THE DOCUMENTS ANALYSES

### The Language Policy Document

The overall aims of the English Course as detailed in the Booklet entitled 'English Language Policy for Namibian Schools Grades 5-10, published by NIED in 1998, will be analyzed. According to that booklet the English Language course should enable the learners to do the following:

- 1) Use English fluently and with increasing accuracy and confidence across the curriculum;*
- 2) Increase the learners' participation in their learning;*
- 3) Meet the challenges of living in a developing multilingual society;*
- 4) Use English for further training or study and improve future employment prospects.*

These four aims will be analyzed briefly to see how these objectives hold up in practice in education. The practical evaluation will be applied to the specific case study under investigation, and therefore, it will not claim to represent the education system in Namibia in general. Further exploration will be carried out to see whether these changes that are supposed to have been achieved by the teaching of English in schools have actually been realized or not and to examine whether these changes are 'real or cosmetic' (Van Harmelen 2000). The objectives will be reviewed and analyzed separately. Within this framework the data analysis will be interwoven within the discussion of the case study.

### **1. Use English fluently and with increasing accuracy and confidence across the curriculum**

Schools as secondary agents of socialization are charged with the task of educating the young. Looking at the four aims as stipulated in the Language Policy Document, one will come to the conclusion that post-independent Namibia assigned the formidable task of educating the Namibia youth in the new official language to the educational institutions (EFA 1993). However, if we look at this aim closely, we realize that there should be an



existing infrastructure in place that should be able to support such a development immediately after independence. The first objective of The English language course consists of three active words namely, fluent, accurate and confidence, would need such a well developed infrastructure, which was not firmly established in Namibia at the time when this was put in black and white as a policy.

Furthermore, consideration should have been taken into account regarding the stakeholders, specifically the teachers who were required to be active carriers of these ideas. According to Harlech-Jones, Namibian teachers were publicly informed that they were under-qualified 'poorly trained', and above all, they were lacking proficiency in the medium of instruction which they were expected to promote to the level of a lingua franca (Harlech-Jones 2000:29).

Now the question one has to pose is: How did the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture envisage such developments taking place on a national level whilst the teachers who were supposed to assist the learners in acquiring these skills were lacking in those skills themselves.

After twelve years of independence and of introducing English as an official language and as the medium of instruction from junior secondary level, teachers at Herman Gmeiner Technical School in Swakopmund are still conducting most official activities (in Afrikaans) such as staff meeting, lessons and assemblies. Most teachers at this school are resisting the change by teaching in Afrikaans rather than the stipulated medium of instruction for secondary schools because they claim that learners understand them much better in Afrikaans.

Furthermore the communities our learners and teachers alike originate from are predominantly Khoe-khoegowab, Oshiwambo and Afrikaans speaking. No single person at Herman Gmeiner, be it a teacher or a learner comes from a native English speaking background. With a situation like this, as revealed and confirmed through the interviews with learners, can one really claim that all the learners at Herman Gmeiner will be able to

acquire all these three skills as stipulated by the Language Policy document as the first major objective of teaching English as a language in the Namibian education system?

In order to speak fluently, accurately and with increasing confidence, the learners must be exposed to an environment that is conducive to the acquisition of English inside and outside the classroom. In the curriculum analysis, we will look at how the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture had tried to address this aim in practice through its curriculum development and assessment strategies.

## **2. Increase of learners' participation in their learning**

*“Language expresses culture and culture is mainly expressed through language”*  
Vygotsky 1987:5).

Vygotsky regarded formal schooling as an important agent in the child's cognitive development. He viewed schools as creators of social contexts for mastery and conscious awareness of cultural tools. Language is considered to be a tool for thought and therefore, language is central to learning (Vygotsky 1987). For learners to increase their participation in learning, they need to express themselves in that particular language of the classroom or school, especially during a language lesson. Given the Namibian situation and social context, a lot of work is needed in this area. The child may possess ideas in his/her mother tongue but to express those ideas in English might prove to be a problem due to the lack of the necessary vocabulary.

Real concepts are impossible without words, and thinking in concepts does not exist beyond verbal thinking. That is why the central moment to concept formation, and, its generative cause is the specific use of words as functional “tools” (Vygotsky 1987). Hence, the teaching of vocabulary and grammar in English is important to non-English speakers, specifically at Hermann Gmeiner Technical School, because this will never be acquired naturally in the absence of such an environment. For a Namibian learner, “the spontaneous concepts” that are learned through experience are from a different language

and different culture. Although the learner is ‘saturated with experience’ it is experience of a different nature (Vygotsky, 1987).

Learners are viewed as ‘possessors of knowledge’ in the social constructivist approach that underpins the education reform process in this country, and thus, a learner can only participate in learning when she/he has reached the level where he/she can claim that he/she ‘knows’ (Van Harmelen 2000). Only when such a level is reached, can we lay claim that learning has been effective. Otherwise, participation will be very limited or non-existent. The learner participants do not understand learner-centred education as an approach that views them ‘as possessors of knowledge’ but rather comprehend it as a technique that allows or make room for both learner’s and teachers to talk interchangeably, hence, an emphasis on communication between teacher and learner.

The participant teachers also stressed that the learners cannot be seen to take responsibility for their own learning at present due to the severe backlogs and lack of the necessary language repertoire and skills that they experience. In order for a learner to reach the level of participation in his/her schoolwork, a lot of scaffolding must take place from the teacher. The tasks given to learners must be mediated by means of temporary structuring and support (Bruner, as cited in Schunk 1996). Apprenticeship is learning alongside a more knowledgeable peer or adult, and, according to Bruner this type of learning presupposes a ‘specific social nature to learning’ and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them. Again, to carry out these activities and tasks, English, as a communicating ‘tool’ is a requirement (Vygotsky, as cited in Schunk 1996). In the survey carried out, all the learners reported that English helps them communicate in class and to make sense of the rest of the subjects in the curriculum to a greater extent.

Vygotsky focused on teaching as not dependent on skills transfer from those who know more to the less knowledgeable, but on the collaboration and social interaction that results in the creation, obtaining and communicating of meaning. (Vygotsky, as cited in Schunk 1996). Creating and communicating meaning for each individual learner in his/her own

specific way is imperative. Vygotsky ideas were centred on the learner as an active participant in the learning process through social interaction.

### **3. Meet the challenge of living in a developing multilingual society**

Schools are viewed as the major institutions established to bring about change and improvement in society. Schools have the potential to do so, but at the same time, they could serve to re-enforce existing relations in society. This could be done through selection, organization and evaluation of valued selective knowledge, which in turn is always linked to interest in society, particularly interest of those in political or economic power. The learners at this school are predominantly from previously disadvantaged groups. The same could be said about Namibian people, specifically in relation to the educational expectations proposed by the Reform Process in education. Currently, even after twelve years of introducing English as an official language, and as the medium of instruction from junior secondary level onwards since 1995, the majority of teachers at Herman Gmeiner are still predominantly ‘code-switching’ between Afrikaans and English in their classrooms. All the learners involved in the questionnaire and interview claimed that most teachers are still adhering to teaching mostly in Afrikaans from English textbooks.

According to four learners from Hermann Gmeiner Technical School, English teaching as a language helps them to a great extent to comprehend the other subjects where there is a lack in terms of gaining the correct vocabulary in those subjects. Therefore, I agree with Kristensen that there is a need ‘to widen and deepen the English language proficiency of both teachers and learners alike’ to meet the demands of living successfully in a challenging multilingual society, especially in the educational institutions and the work place. If our aim is to equip our people with the necessary skills that include proficiency in the English Language, we, at Herman Gmeiner School need to move away from using Afrikaans as a “crutch” for teaching in English (EFA 1993).

In conclusion, when English as a medium of instruction takes its full role or is implemented in all the secondary school classrooms in Namibia, without having to compete with Afrikaans in whatever way, then the policy developers will be able to claim that the teaching of English has enabled indigenous Namibians 'to meet the challenges of living in a developing multilingual society (EFA 1993).

#### **4. Use English for further training or study and to improve future employment opportunities.**

The newly elected Swapo government regarded English as a language for social mobilization of their people, whereas Afrikaans was seen as the 'language of the oppressor' (EFA 1993). Therefore, the teaching of English in secondary schools was seen or is viewed as the foundation for developing Namibian's proficiency skills in English or studies at tertiary institutions in Namibia or elsewhere. Since 1995, English has been introduced as the medium of instruction for all promotional subjects from Grade 8 to 12, and it has been subsequently phased in to include all the promotional subjects in the years thereafter. (EFA 1993). In reality, a different story is unfolding that is contrary to the anticipated one. As the results have indicated, most teachers in secondary schools still use Afrikaans as a 'crutch' to teach in English and Afrikaans is still predominant in this country in general. The question is how can learners, become competent, fluent and proficient amid such language acquisition constraints (Van Harmelen 2000).

Throughout their schooling, learners at Herman Gmeiner Technical School are exposed to an environment that does not promote the enhancement of English in any way that can lead to their development of understanding and skills to an extent that will be of any assistance to them in competing successfully for employment opportunities with others who are more privileged than them in terms of English competency, or to perform above average at an institution of higher learning (EFA 1993).

Education in general is expected by society and policy makers alike to contribute to economic progress of individuals in general, through the promotion of development of

skills such as understanding, analytical skills and general expertise (EFA 1993). To develop all these skills, English language proficiency is needed as most workplaces in need of human resources use English as the language of communication. There is definitely a need to revisit the role of English in Namibian secondary schools, in general, and at Herman Gmeiner Technical School in particular. However, that is probably a research study on its own.

English as a language of instruction will be considered further in the analysis of the curriculum document. However, the curriculum operates within a specific education theory and therefore, a brief review of the Reform Process and its ideas will be carried out before the curriculum analysis.

### **The Reform Process**

The democratic principles on which the reform process in education is based are access, equity, quality and democracy. These four principles form the foundation, which underpins the epistemology that is embedded in the social constructivist approach. Each principle will be reviewed briefly in relation to the case study in terms of the teaching English across the curriculum.

### **Access**

The incoming government was committed to educating the whole nation from pre-primary education to adult education. Learning was viewed as a 'lifelong process'. Hence, the term 'learner' was adopted rather than 'pupil' as used in English vocabulary (EFA 1993). Learning and knowledge gained new meaning within the classroom situation. Primary schooling was made compulsory for all as a means to ensure accessibility of schooling to all Namibians (EFA 1993). However, access encompasses more than the provision of education, it involves the making of 'knowledge and understanding' accessible to all. The focus on knowledge being 'what the learners learn and how they learn it', in order to develop holistically and to the best of their abilities (EFA 1993). Access should also be

looked at in terms of gender biased at Herman Gmeiner Technical School. For example the Grades 11 & 12 curriculum does not provide female learners with access to Mathematics and Physical Science as subjects, instead they are forced to take Biology and Child Development whether they like it or not.

However, since last year Mathematics has become an option, with Afrikaans, for girls, while it remains compulsory for boys together with Physical Science. This gender discrimination in terms of access to knowledge had forced many bright female learners that want to do Science subjects to leave Herman Gmeiner after Grade 10 and to seek places at other schools where they are not discriminated against on the basis of their gender. In this case, one could argue that at this school male learners are being empowered with scientific and technical knowledge at the expense of the female learners. This school is perpetuating the status quo of one gender above the other. At the end of the day high tech industries such as mining will employ the male learners who have the advantage of technical background knowledge as well as the basic scientific knowledge.

Access to English knowledge at this school is more or less balanced as none of the learners come from a native English speaking background, although learners come from different ethnical and social backgrounds that will play a role in the acquisition of any second or third language

## **Equity**

The equity problem at Hermann Gmeiner Technical School lies within the IGCSE curriculum for Grades 11 & 12. The problem in relation to curriculum is gender- related in terms of subject choices. Equity means the equal treatment of all learners, and, where inequity exists measures should be taken to 'redress' it (EFA 1993). Equity is concerned with issues such as race, gender and social class, which could be expressed as 'overt or covert' prejudice, bias or assumptions (Avenstrupp 2002). The problem with equity lies within the equal treatment of learners by the teacher as well as equal treatment of learners among one another (EFA 1993). No one can claim that all learners have equal

opportunities unless we examine the intakes and the outputs. Considerations of equal opportunities could include factors such as whether girls stop schooling more than boys due to pregnancy or other reasons. It is interesting to note that at Herman Gmeiner since the beginning of this year, nine girls have dropped out of school in comparison with only five boys. Out of the nine girls, three of them left school due to pregnancy and the rest due to lack of interest in schooling. Of the five boys who left the reasons are varied; two dropped out due to lack of interest in school; one left due to illness; one was transferred to another school and one is in prison. The Grade 11 learners carried out the survey as part of their Science-Fair entry.

The curriculum is prescriptive in terms of what subjects learners should or should not take; this being determined by their gender, specifically in the science field. Girls are not allowed to take Mathematics together with Physical Science, which is only a male privilege. Other social factors that could be examined in relation to equity are the completion rates and whether they are systematically and consistently higher in some regions than others and whether race and ethnicity are discernable in the examination results or not (EFA 1993). The gender inequity at Hermann Gmeiner Technical School needs to be addressed and redress on a higher level with Ministry of Basic Education and Culture through the regional education office.

## **Quality**

According to EFA (1993), quality in education means that the relevance, meaningfulness and reasonableness of challenge in education are in the foreground. The curriculum, the teacher, and the learning materials should all be of high standard. Definition of these standards is necessary for the monitoring of the quality and improvement of education where necessary. Teachers must structure the learning environment in such a way as to keep the learning process exciting and satisfying. In order to do so, teachers must have sufficient autonomy to design their lesson aims to the needs, interest and abilities of students in their classes. On the other hand, principals, inspectors and subject advisors



should also see their role as support rendered to the teacher to improve whatever is happening in the classrooms. Examinations cannot serve as the sole indicator of the quality of education as most of them assess or evaluate only a limited range of achievements (EFA 1993). To improve the standards and also provide quality education, schools must become creative and innovative in developing their own materials. If teachers and children use their own imagination and experience to design, construct and collect materials they need, then, they will start to find learning exciting, empowering and relevant to their lives (EFA 1993).

### **Democracy**

Democracy means that education should be democratically structured; democracy should be taught and experienced, with the aim of promoting a democratic society. If democracy is to be taught, then the education system in this country must reflect it in practical terms. However this would not necessarily mean that every decision taken by the school must be done so on the basis of a vote, or, that everyone must have the same roles. In a democratic school, teachers must be active creators of the learning environment and not its masters or caretakers. Learning is compared to a democracy in many ways, as both are active processes (EFA 1993).

In conclusion, nearly all the teachers claimed to be aware of the principles of the Reform Process, but were lacking greater understanding of its meanings and could only elaborate on equity issues such as sensitivity to gender and racial matters, while none of them possessed the necessary repertoire to comment on the remaining principles.

Having reviewed the principles of the Reform Process in education as underpinned by the social constructivist theory of education, an analysis of the IGSCE English Second Language Curriculum document will follow.

### **The Curriculum Document Analysis**

The curriculum analysis will mainly focus on the four basic skills that ESL as a subject is anticipated to equip the learners with. These four skills are as listening, speaking, reading and writing. A critical analysis will explore whether the curriculum supports, develops and

promotes the principles of democracy, for instance, in the promotion of democratic literature. It will further evaluate the extent to which the English Second Language IGCSE Core Curriculum reflects the ideals or principles of the Reform Process in terms of the removal of cultural, racial, gender and language bias and the extent to which it is sensitive to all these above mentioned issues.

Furthermore, the analysis will focus on the appropriateness of the curriculum for the learners in terms of whether and how it is addressing the issues of access and accessibility of education. Additionally, the analysis will focus on whether the curriculum has been designed within the framework of a learner-centred approach or whether it moves between the behaviourist and social constructivist approach.

Curriculum development has its origins as a discipline in the United States in the early twentieth century. It was developed as an administrative category within education; therefore it was regarded as a management 'tool' and took on an instrumentalist end-means ethos (Aoki as cited in Kristensen (1999). Ralph Tyler cited in Stenhouse (1981), is well-known for his objectives curriculum that proposed that any given curriculum should have clearly stated objectives that emphasize specific outcomes, which serve to identify both the kind of behaviour that the student should develop, and, the particular area of life in which this behaviour is to function. However, these stated objectives were designed for a behaviourist curriculum that emphasized the intended outcomes to be achieved through teaching. Curriculum development is linked with teaching, learning, knowledge and evaluation or assessments. Hence, learners and teachers are stakeholders in any curriculum development activities.

According to Avenstrupp (2002) the curriculum and syllabus design should be more explicit about how skills are to be developed and specify the particular outcomes to be anticipated as well as how knowledge is to be organized. Less emphasis should be placed on the description of how information is to be communicated. A nutshell evaluation of each skill will follow to determine whether they are coherent to the learner-centred approach curriculum or not.

## **1. Reading**

The reading skill has various clearly stated objectives or intended outcomes that the learners are supposed to acquire after or at the end of the lesson in question. The observable behaviours are to be displayed in terms of skills that the learners should demonstrate such as to recognize, to scan and to extract information be it specific or relevant. A variety of the type of information is also given as an example where this particular kind of skill is supposed to be operative. This gives room for exploration in terms of the type of information that the teacher thinks will be 'relevant' to his/her particular situation as well as for the specific learners. The teacher will be able to develop materials that are suitable or reflective of the learners' experience, interests and prior knowledge (Stenhouse 1981). The English Second Language IGCSE Core Curriculum does promote democracy in the sense that it allows the teacher scope to determine the type of knowledge he/she needs to select to teach a particular skill, but on the whole, the curriculum reflects a dominant leniency for the Behaviourist approach.

Vygotsky (1987) argued that new ideas are understood better when their introduction is built on the learners' prior knowledge. The curriculum in this instance was developed within the framework of learner-centred principles. For example, the extraction of specific information is required to be 'within the experience' of young people, and 'reflecting the interest of young people from various cultural backgrounds' (IGCSE Curriculum 2002). The curriculum appears to be sensitive to cultural, racial and language differences and barriers (Van Harmelen 2000). The acquisition of these skills is tested through continuous assessment and not through the formal written examination

## **2. Writing**

The writing skill also spells out specific writing activities that the learners are supposed to acquire. Again, specific observable behaviour through writing should be acquired by the learner, that he/she is expected to complete, describe, report, identify, organize, present and give various information, all depending on the situation (IGCSE Core Curriculum 2002).

All these activities should be done in an appropriate and accurate form of English in response to a written stimulus. The question of whether this curriculum is ‘appropriate’ for the learners come into question here, (Van Harmelen, 2000) due to the fact that all the learners at Herman Gmeiner Technical School are from non-English speaking backgrounds, and, the situation at this school is of such a nature that English is facing tough opposition from Afrikaans. I doubt whether ‘appropriate and accurate’ apply in this case.

The writing skill section is definitely designed to improve and to expand the learners skills in all writing activities that are needed while in school, (Bobbit, as cited in Stenhouse 1981). Learners are to be ‘actively involved’ in the writing process; therefore, learner-centredness has been taken into account in relation to this skill to a certain extent. The learners that were interviewed reported that the teacher is not the only one who talks in class, they also communicate with the teacher. This is where we have ‘teacher talk vs. learners’ talk’ (Van Harmelen 2000).

## **1. Listening and Speaking**

These skills are combined since listening and speaking are interdependent. The two activities objectives are stated as follows: The learners must be able to demonstrate understanding of specific details and competence in a range of speech activities. (English Second Language IGCSE Core Curriculum 2002). Although the curriculum throughout fails to state how these ‘skills are supposed to be developed,’ it places emphasis on the observable behaviour that the learners are expected to be engaged in. It does not also tell us how this knowledge is supposed to be organized, but it stresses the learners ‘involvement in the learning process’ rather than the teacher’ activities or knowledge she/he is supposed to impart to the learners. Therefore, one could argue that the curriculum developers adhered to the learner-centred principles in this instance (Avenstrupp 2002).

However, if we look at the extended curriculum of English Second Language the learners are expected to display a higher order of behaviour by identifying attitudes, points of themes and relationships between ideas. Learners are also expected to ‘show a sense of awareness’ of style and register, probably in literature. (IGCSE Extended Curriculum 2002) This aspect is not part of the English Second Language curriculum but applies to the English First Language curriculum.

The English Second Language curriculum design reflects or is basically an ‘objective model’ curriculum because ‘it is classifying the intended behaviour of students or the ways in which individuals are to act, think or feel as a result of participating in some unit of instruction’ (Krathwohl, as cited in Stenhouse 1981). This curriculum model is influenced by the epistemology and psychology of the Behaviourist approach.

The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture has tried to develop learning materials in the form of textbooks that are suitable or appropriate to the Namibian context, in order to address the issues of appropriateness, sensitivity to gender, racial and language issues (EFA 1993). All the teacher respondents remarked that the English Second Language curriculum is sensitive to language barriers, since it allows room for expression in the respective mother tongues of various learners. Immediately after independence, a series of English Second Language textbooks for learners in Namibian secondary schools was published by Gamsberg MacMillan, and more recently, from the beginning of 2001 new textbooks, from a series called ‘English in Context,’ have been making their appearance. Practicing teachers in Swakopmund wrote some of these books. Grade 10, English Second Language, English in Context has a learner-centred approach notion.

English as a subject is accessible to all learners in education but the issue of equal accessibility to English as a language or to education in general is not possible due to the different backgrounds and experiences that each individual learner brings into the learning environment (Vygotsky, as cited in Schunk 1996).

Most teachers that were interviewed did not have a clue about the Reform Process principles, i.e. access, equity, quality and democracy (EFA 1993). Therefore, there is a need to educate teachers in terms of the learning theories that are supposed to influence their day to day practice in the classroom if we want ‘real changes’ to take place in relation to the Reform Process (Van Harmelen 2000). Most teachers interviewed were uncertain about the learner-centred approach. They mostly equate learner-centred education with group work.

### **Synthesis**

The ruling government may have ideal principles to reform the education system in this country (EFA 1993). However, without ‘empowering the teachers’ to be part of the curriculum development relevant and appropriate to their own context, then ‘real changes’ will not materialize but merely ‘cosmetic changes’ will take place in education. (Van Harmelen 2000).

Teachers should not underestimate the role of language in the ‘internalizing of our experiences, constructing and sharing our understanding of the world in order to make sense’ (Avenstrupp, 2002). This could be verbal or written language, and, this is where the medium of instruction should be employed all the time instead of ‘code switching’ that is predominant in our classrooms, at Herman Gmeiner Technical School.

The understanding of gender issues in education needs to be revised. Curriculum developers do not recognize the problem of stereotyping of subject issues, specifically at technical schools. Teachers are also ignorant of preferential expectations and treatment in the classroom. According to Avenstrupp (2002) the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum and assessment and the design of materials, assessments and examinations need to be renewed if the teachers are to organize the learning experience in a more consistently learner-centred way. All these issues will become possible if we the teachers become ‘reflective and reflexive practitioners’ in our daily classroom activities (Prawat 1992). By looking at our own unique situation and tapping into our learners’ prior knowledge and

experiences before preparing teaching or learning materials, in order to create 'a community of consumers of other peoples' ideas (Van Harmelen 2000).

In conclusion, I strongly agree with Kristensen (2002) that the Namibian Reform has, like its predecessors, 'turned out to be an evolution rather than a revolution'. It dismally fails to redress the past, and in reality has managed to sustain the status quo by adhering to and promoting a view of education that rests on the pinnacle of a philosophy of education that supports and encourages the former educational system; the very system that it intended to reform.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview Questionnaires and Answers.**

#### **Learners**

1. Do you know what Learner-centred education means?

All four learners emphasized that they understand that the teacher must teach for understanding of the lesson context gaining knowledge on new skills and the learners must be able to communicate as well, not only the teacher. (during the lesson process).

2. Would you say that the teaching of English has equipped you with the necessary vocabulary that helps you to cope with your learning and understanding of the rest of your subjects?

The gaining of vocabulary helps them to cope in understanding the rest of other subjects and learning: English being the medium of instruction helps with the rest of the curriculum, and, even to complete the questionnaire, despite the limitations that exist in the teaching of other subjects in English.

3. Do you think that what you are learning in school will help you when you finish school, in what way, and which subjects?

All the learners interviewed were in agreement as to the role the teaching of English plays as a language in helping them to become more or less fluent in communicating with other learners and teachers. English, as a language was considered very important for later life in the employment sector especially in the private sector. Biology, Child Development, Home Science, Fashion and Fabrics, Typing and Geography were all regarded as relevant subjects for career purposes and employment opportunities.

4. Which of the subjects you are learning are concerned with your culture, are sensitive to gender and racial issues?

Life skills, Home Science, Biology and Child Development were listed as subjects touching on those issues respectively.

### **Teachers**

1. How do you see LCE as a teaching approach - do you think that the children take responsibility for their own learning?

The majority of the teachers argued that the learners couldn't take responsibility for their own learning without the teachers help. After the learners have been guided and 'scaffolded' from one level of understanding to the next, then they can be expected to become responsible for their own learning. 'Teacher talk' should be coupled with 'learners talk' (Van Harmelen, 1999).

2. Do you think that most teachers understand and apply this approach at your school or not? Explain your answer.

Some teachers were of the opinion that most teachers do not apply this approach, because they were not trained to apply that theory into practice. Some stressed the fact that teachers think of this approach as equal to group work teaching technique.

3. Do you think that the ESL curriculum is addressing the principles of the Education Reform Process in this country or not?

All teachers were in agreement that the textbooks prescribed for this curriculum are free from gender discrimination and cultural bias. It is also the policy of the Ministry of Basic

Education and Culture that second language teaching must be sensitive to the language barriers that might exist in the classroom, and, therefore mother tongue expression should be allowed to a certain extent.

4. What is the greatest obstacle you experience in the teaching profession currently?

Various obstacles were mentioned such as learners' severe backlogs preventing the teacher from doing what she/he intended or ought to do. This was seen as lack of academic progress due to problem behaviour of learners.

5. What is the greatest barrier in teaching English to non-native speakers?

Lack of vocabulary was cited as the main problem in general. Learners cannot express themselves fluently in the medium of instruction, due to the type of linguafranca that is predominant in the community as well as in schools in Swakopmund in general.

## **Learners**

**1. Do you know what Learner-centred education means?**

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**2. Would you say that the teaching of English has equipped you with the necessary vocabulary that helps you to cope with your learning and understanding of the rest of your subjects?**

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- 3. Do you think that what you have learnt in school will help you when finish school, in what way, and which subjects?**

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- 4. Which of the subjects you are learning are concerned with your culture, are sensitive to gender and racial issues?**

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### **Learners**

- 1. Do you know what Learner-centred education means?**

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# **The Empirical Study**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the various factors that could influence the language choices of bilingual or multilingual speakers during formal and informal interactions. The case study was conducted at a coastal technical secondary school in Namibia with the Grade 11 class group. The major difference between the two groups in the formal setting was in terms of composition. The Mathematics class consisted of about seventeen boys, while the girls numbered only seven. The Child Development group was exclusively a female group of nine girls. A second major variance that was important to the analysis was the fact that all the boys preferred to speak either Afrikaans or English in both contexts, while the girls claimed preference for their various vernaculars, and English or Afrikaans was reserved for the formal context when conversing with the teacher, or with a learner of a different ethnic background.

## **Introduction**

Language is recognized as “a social activity in which the construction of meanings and social realities take place” (Corson, in De Klerk and Hunt 2000: 50). The differences in language choices by various groups are largely the product of different ways of socialization. These social patterns are reflected in the way speakers make language choices, be it consciously or otherwise. Therefore, speakers enter social interaction with social identities that are predetermined and this affects their linguistic practices (De Klerk and Hunt 2000). It was social patterns such as these that were reflected in the way the learners in this group made language choices, which formed the primary focus of this study.

## **2. The Research Context**

### **2.1.Site of the Study**

This small-scale interpretive case study was conducted at a secondary school where the researcher is attached as a senior English Second Language teacher. The Grade 11 class group was selected as the research participants for the following reasons:

Firstly, the researcher had easy access to the participants as she saw them on a daily basis as a class during her teaching periods; secondly, the learners were studied in their natural setting during her



class and in two other teachers' classrooms. Due to the natural setting context, the researcher was able to interpret the phenomena in terms of what the participants themselves constructed of their language choices (Denzin and Lincoln, as cited in Winegardner 2001:1).

In a qualitative study, the data can be collected through multiple-methods, usually involving interviewing, observing and analysing of documents. Multiple sources of information are used due to the fact that no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective (Patton, as cited in Winegardner 2001:5). Therefore I decided to employ multiple methods to collect the data for this study. The initial technique that was employed was that of observation of a non-participant nature, followed by informal interviews, tape-recorded interviews and a questionnaire. I deployed all these data techniques so that I could validate and cross-check the findings (Patton, as cited in Winegardner 2001: 5).

In this case observations were carried out and the data that emerged from these observations prompted the informal interviews, which were conducted with a stratified purposeful sample in class, with ten learners across gender and ethnic language groups.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1.The Research Paradigm**

This research is embedded within an interpretive positivist paradigm and adopts an interpretive case study methodology, starting with the assumption that access to reality is through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Meriam, as cited in Winegardner 2001). My decision to base this research on the interpretive tradition is influenced by Bassey's description of this paradigm as:

*... a search for deep perceptions of specific events and for theoretical insights.*

*It may offer possibilities, but no uncertainties, as to the outcome of future events.*

*(Bassey 1995:12).*

In simple terms, one endeavours to describe what he/she sees happening in a specific situation and creates narratives of what is happening, thus giving the researcher an opportunity to understand the situation of the phenomenon by putting himself or herself in the shoes of her/his subjects (Gall, as cited in Winegardner 2001:5).

Furthermore, a case study is an appropriate strategy for answering research questions which ask the 'how or why and which' questions. These are questions, which do not require control over events (Robson, as cited in Winegardner 2001). My research epistemology raised the following questions:

- 1) How are we going to promote indigenous languages in Namibia to become the languages of communication among the various youth, while the tendency among the youth is to regard their vernaculars as backward and low class?
- 2) What can be done to develop indigenous languages in this country to become written as well as spoken languages among urban youths in the future?
- 3) Why are the learners at this secondary school still communicating in Afrikaans at school as well as in their communities?

### **3.2 The Research Techniques**

The data was collected through a combination of data gathering techniques. This was done to enable the researcher to capitalize on the strength of each method and to minimize the weaknesses inherent in single strategies (Patton, as cited in Winegardner 2001:5). Therefore, a combination of the following methods, were applied as tools for collecting the required information:

- a) Class room and playground observations
- b) Informal interviews
- c) Tape-recorded interviews
- d) Questionnaires

#### **3.2.1. OBSERVATIONS**

The purpose of observation is to enable the researcher to have direct access to the subjects or to have direct first hand experience with the phenomena to be investigated (Guba and Lincoln, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 95). In both environments and contexts where observation took place all activities were observable, what the learners or teacher said and did in the classroom was discernable. Equally, what the learners said and did on the playground was also observable.

Anderson (1998) and Cresswell (1994) assert that the direct observation of the subjects is one of the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research. On these grounds as well as on the basis of the nature of the study, I chose observation techniques to gather information. The main purpose was to observe the interaction process from learner to learner rather than the interaction between teacher and learners in particular. Interaction among learners during school break time was observed as

well. All the observations were carried out for the duration of three sessions each. Altogether nine observations sessions (inside and outside the class room) were conducted to determine the language choices and patterns of these learners.

The observation data were recorded in the form of field notes. These were the written accounts of what the researcher heard, saw, experienced and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data (Bogdan and Bilken, as cited in Cantrell 1993:96).

### **3.2.2 Informal Interviews**

Informal interviews were conducted using a stratified purposeful sampling. (Cantrell 1993:90). This was done to obtain information that included both genders as well as all the indigenous ethnic languages represented by the Grade 11 learners. The ethnic languages were Khoe-khoegowab (Nama and Damara), Otjiherero (Herero), Oshiwambo (Kwanyama/Ndonga) and Rukwagali (Kwagali). Two learners from both genders were included in the Otjiherero and Oshiwambo groups, while four girls speakers s from both dialects of the Khoe khoegowab language were selected as well as one boy from the Rukwagali group.

Altogether fifteen learners were interviewed informally during three English periods. This interview made use of unstructured questions. The informal interviews helped the researcher to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words, and to access the unobservable nuances. Furthermore, this helped me 'to develop insights into how the participants interpret and make meaning of the world' (Bogdan and Bilken, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 96). The observation and informal interview methods served as the "back bone" for the design of the final techniques to be used, i.e., the formal interview and the questionnaires, because they 'contained the straight forward accounts of what occurred and the reflective comments' (Miles and Huberman, as quoted in Cantrell 1993: 98).

### **3.3.3 The Formal Tape-recorded Interview**

The tape-recorded interviews consisted of approximately ten semi-structured questions. This format was adopted so that the researcher could at obtain comparable data across subjects. Although the format was that of a semi-structured interview, the interviewer offered considerable latitude to the subjects to shape the content of the interview, subject to the time limit and structure of the interview process (Patton, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 96). Four boys from a sample of ten were willing to grant interviews to the researcher. The rest of the group did not want to be tape-recorded.

### 3.3.4 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire consisting of ten questions was also administered to the whole class group, or to those who were present on that day. Out of 36 learners, 32 were present and completed and returned the questionnaire. The document consisted of four closed questions that were designed to obtain the language policy information that was quantitative in nature, while the rest of the questions were designed to elicit elaborate remarks and opinions from the participants.

The questionnaire was administered during a double English period lasting for about 80 minutes. This was done for two reasons, firstly, the timing was perfect as the researcher herself was present to clarify any ambiguities that may have occurred in the questions, and secondly, to ensure that all the learners completed and returned the questionnaires promptly.

## 3. Data Analysis

In an interpretive case study thick descriptive and narrative accounts are used to communicate a holistic picture of how these learners explain or experience their choices of language use and how they negotiate their social status through the language patterns they adopt in a multilingual society.

For the observation as well as the informal interviews, the data took the format of ‘rough notes’ jotted down in the field and ended as expanded notes fleshed out later. The observation data was expanded to serve as a “backbone” for the informal interviews (Miles and Huberman, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 98).

The emergent theme that was apparent during the observation, code switching, was nearly non-existent, in fact the learners were conversing in Afrikaans among themselves all the time. Patton maintains that descriptions and quotations are important ingredients of qualitative enquiry. According to him thick descriptions and direct quotations “allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report (Patton, as cited in Cantrell 1993:98). He further elaborates that thick description makes interpretation possible. Creswell (1994) concurs with his views, since he believes that descriptions and quotations provide a lens through which the reader can peer into the informant’s world.

The raw data from the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed and broken down into themes or categories. The raw data from the questionnaires were also analysed and broken

down into themes, specifically those that yielded qualitative remarks; and those that elicited quantitative data were presented in a spatial format that serves to present the information systematically to the reader. This information is displayed via tables of information known as a process of segmenting or dividing the information in order to develop and create categories, patterns or themes (Marshall and Rosman, as cited in Hitchcock and Hughes 1995).

## **4. Results and Findings**

### **5.1. Classroom Observations Themes**

#### **5.1.1. Afrikaans dominance/preference and Khoe-khoegowab preference**

During the classroom observations, I noticed that the learners preferred to communicate in Afrikaans when interacting with one another. The interaction with the teacher was in English, while reasoning among themselves was exclusively done in Afrikaans, with the exceptions of when they communicated with the Rukwagali speaker who is not conversant in Afrikaans. This was during the Mathematics period. This was a stratified class, but the girls did not participate at all. They were quiet all the time.

However, the Child Development (subject) class, an exclusively girls' class, was dominated by Khoe-khoegowab speakers. That was due to the majority of the girls (six) in the class, coming from this language background, while four other girls were from various other ethnic backgrounds. The other girls communicated in Afrikaans among themselves, while the teacher also spoke to them in Afrikaans. This was due to the fact that they were doing revision by themselves.

### **5.2. Playground Observations**

#### **5.2.1. Mother tongue preference for girls /Afrikaans for boys**

The observation sessions during the intervals yielded interesting data. The girls tended to group themselves according to their vernaculars and basked in the sun or shared some snacks, whilst conversing in their respective mother tongues. The boys on the other hand, spent their breaks playing football, and the yelling and communication was in Afrikaans. I used these emergent themes to prompt why they communicate the way they do. This gave me ideas of what type of information to explore through the informal interview in the classroom.

The informal interview was a rich source of revelations about the various groups' attitudes towards language choices. It was quite interesting to note the following comment from a Khoe-khoegowab speaker:

*It is very funny to speak to a fellow Damara in English or Afrikaans. It is so convenient and comfortable to express myself in my mother tongue.*

A second speaker from the same group had this to say:

*We are proud to speak our language, although it is too loud sometimes.* (Referring to the clicks).

However, the Oshiwambo speaking boys maintained that speaking Afrikaans is much easier for than speaking their mother tongues. They claimed to be more fluent in Afrikaans than in the mother tongue. One boy mentioned:

*It is seen as uneducated to speak your mother tongue on the school premises whether it inside or outside the classroom.*

The Nama speaking girls commented:

*We are very proud to speak our mother tongue, we are not ashamed of our identity, and we find no need to speak another language within our own ethnic group.*

However, the Otjiherero speaking learners had this to add:

*We are not used to our language, we are not very fluent in Otjiherero that is due to the area we live in. That is why we tend to code switch even when we speak to other Hereros.*

Having this data, I decided to carry out an extensive formal interview with ten participants, but in the end I used only four participants because the other six declined to give further comments on the topic claiming to have already done so extensively during the informal interviews.

### 5.3. Tape-recorded interview

The first three questions were similar to those of the questionnaire as the focus was on the policy information.

#### 5.3.1. Training in mother tongue

Of the four participants, only one was not taught his mother tongue at all. Three of the boys were exposed to mother tongue instruction during their formative years. Only one of them had mother tongue instruction throughout the primary phase, which is Grade 1 – 7. However, it is interesting to note that the one, who was not taught in his vernacular at school, was taught it at the church during the confirmation classes for about six months. I will call these boys Joel, Peter, David and John.

#### 5.3.2. Language choices influenced by contexts and topics

The three Oshiwambo speaking boys claimed to adopt various languages, be it their mother tongue, Afrikaans or English, according to where they were and to whom they were speaking. For communication with teachers at school English was the language used if the teacher addressed them in English; for classmates and friends at school, Afrikaans was the mode of conversation while with the parents and elders in the community Oshiwambo was the norm. Another revelation was that they spoke English to their siblings and relatives or friends who attended the former white schools in town. The reason given was that they try to maintain the perceived status of being educated when speaking English to them.

One boy (Joel) said this: *I don't want them to look down on me. I also want to show them that I go to school and can also speak English.*

Another boy (David)

Commented: *I simply speak English with them because I know they speak only English at school, and myself I am becoming more fluent in English my Afrikaans is diminishing. It got nothing to do with status.*

Peter agreed with Joel: *One has to speak English with them, otherwise they will think you are low class and know nothing.*

As for (John) the Rukwagali speaking boy, his observations were different from the rest. He maintained that:

*I prefer to speak my own language rather than English, but I use English more often than anybody else in my class because I don't know Afrikaans.*

All four boys claimed to think and reason with themselves in English specifically during examination time when they were writing.

However, an interesting revelation came to the forefront. One of the boys (Joel) said he used English or Afrikaans when he was talking about sexually related matters, such as love, condoms and so on, because it was considered “rude” in their culture to talk about such things and that was a language rule that he has to respect and obey. He further asserted:

*But I code switch a lot when I am talking about someone, when gossiping I tend to use all three languages simultaneously. Like I will speak a few words in Afrikaans, and then Oshiwambo and then English vice versa.*

## **5.2 Views on the future of indigenous languages**

The two Oshiwambo speaking boys (Peter, Joel) seemed very concerned about their languages becoming marginalized, but also express contradictory views. Peter and Joel categorically stated that they would not teach their children their mother tongue; first it would be English and then the mother tongue. Their views were expressed as such:

Joel: *Mother tongue is useless.*

Peter: *Nowadays, indigenous languages are not so popular ... not some thing that we should teach our children*

However, the other boy (David) was concerned about the indigenous languages and felt that they should be taught in school because as the years go by, they will forget their own cultures and their languages. He expressed his views in the following manner:

David: *I really think, ... it should have a place in education, because we*



*might forget about our own cultures and languages, even now, we  
know more about foreign countries than our own.*

John on the other hand, has a high regard for his mother tongue. This was expressed as follows:

John: *I will prefer to read the same love story or whatever in Rukwagali  
rather than in English because I can relate to the expressions and  
feelings worded in my language more than in English.*

His response when asked about the attitudes of Kwagali youths to a fellow Kwagali, addressing them in English was:

John: *They won't think that you're a VIP or highly educated, they would  
prefer to listen to someone speaking to them in Rukwagali rather than  
to the one addressing them in English.*

### **5.2.1 Motivations for speaking Afrikaans/English**

The three Oshiwambo speaking boys (David, Joel and Peter) unanimously indicated that their parents or guardians made it a point to teach them to speak Afrikaans and to master the language from an early age when they moved from the north to Swakopmund. They claimed this was done in order to ascertain future employment prospects. Here are extracts from the three interviews;

David *... people here in Swakopmund are used to speaking Afrikaans.  
It is important to speak Afrikaans very well, because the whites on  
who they depend for employment speak Afrikaans, and therefore  
one should know their language to ascertain employment  
prospects.*

Peter: *I am used to Afrikaans, so I speak it with everyone, because I  
know it very well, more than English. My grandmother made sure  
that I learnt to speak it well.*

Joel: *Speaking Afrikaans to everyone especially our friends show that  
we all have been to school, we are all educated.*

### 5.3 Questionnaire Themes

#### 5.3.1 The role of mother tongue instruction

Table 1 presents the language policy information results from the questionnaire on Yes/No responses from questions 1, 2, 3 and 6. This is an indication of how many learners were or were not taught their mother tongue in primary school.

Questions	Yes	No	No re- sponse	Total Responses
Can you read and write in your mother tongue?	16	16	0	32
Were you taught mother tongue in school?	14	9	9	32
Does the knowledge of your mother tongue help you to understand English?	11	21	0	32
Were you taught in mother tongue in non-promotional subjects?	3	27	2	32

The above table (table.1) highlights that about 30 percent of the learners were taught in their respective mother tongues at one stage or another during their formative years or primary education phase.

About 10 percent of the participants indicated that the mother tongue helped them to understand English. It is interesting to notice that nearly 8 percent maintained that they were not taught their mother tongue at all. Nearly 48 percent also reported that mother tongue instruction was not even taught to for non-promotional subjects. In contrast, fifty percent of the learners claimed to read and write in their mother tongues.

### 5.3.2 Mother tongue instruction per Grade

**Table. 2. Presents the results of mother tongue instruction per Grade**

**Results of questions 2 (a)**

Grades in which the mother tongue was taught	Number of learners
1-3	4
1-4	1
1-5	0
1-6	1
1-7	5
Total	11

Only 11 learners out of 32 indicated that they were taught mother tongue in various grades.

These results show that from the eleven participants that were exposed to mother tongue instruction, only 45 percent were taught in their mother tongue or were it taught as a subject throughout the primary phase. Approximately 40 percent were exposed to mother tongue instruction during the first three years of primary education. Most of these children also indicated that they started school in the rural areas.

### 5.3.3. Attitudes towards mother tongue instruction at Grade 11 level

Table 3 presents results related to the views of the learners regarding mother tongue introduction as a subject in secondary education.

<i>Positive Responses</i>	<i>No of Learners</i>	<i>Negative Responses</i>	<i>No. Of Learners</i>	<i>Other Responses</i>	<i>No. Of Learners</i>
Preserve language for culture	4	Boring	1	It will be difficult to start now	5
Language dying out	1	Talk enough at home	1	English language of education and state	1
Language assists in understanding English	5	It is useless	2	Not linked to jobs or tertiary education	6
Promote indigenous languages	1			Unable to read or write well	1

About 28 learners responded and only 4 learners failed to indicate their views one way or another.

The learners were required to express their general attitude towards mother tongue instruction at the level where they are now, which is Grade 11. This was asked with a view to determine whether the learners thought that it would be beneficial to them or not, presently or for future employment prospects.

This table of results shows various opinions in relation to mother tongue introduction as a subject at secondary school level. It clearly indicates that learners have different perceptions regarding their respective mother tongues. There are those who view their mother tongue as important for maintaining their identity and for the preservation of their culture and language itself. One of the negative responses, however, indicated that their mother tongue was “useless and boring”. Those who expressed other or neutral reasons commented that to study it in secondary school was a bit too late, as they did not learn to read and write it in the primary school. Some took into account the fact that mother tongue instruction is not prerequisite for employment opportunities or for further education therefore it would not serve any purpose to introduce it at this level.

### 5.3.4. Communication in English (during school hours and after school hours)

**Table 4 highlights the results on a combination of questions 8, 9 and 10. The number of respondents was 32 learners.**

When	With whom	Number of learners
School hours	classmates	10
	teachers	16
	friends	17
After school	parents	1
	siblings	7
	relatives	1
	officials	4
	pastor	3
	soccer coach	1
	radio announcer	1
	tourists	4

The results of these findings indicate that learners speak English mostly to their friends and to teachers and to a lesser degree with their classmates. These results are contrary to the observation and informal interview results that evidently showed that the learners in this class mostly converse in Afrikaans. Some remarks were as follow:

*We don't need to speak English, we all understand Afrikaans very well.*

(Boy's comment)

*I only speak English when I am talking to John, because he is the only person in our class who cannot speak Afrikaans.*

(Boy's comment)

*We don't want to speak English, because if we don't know a word or we pronounce it wrongly, then everyone laughs at you, especially the boys.*

(Girl's comment)

*We are so used to speaking Afrikaans at this school, but our siblings are used to speak English, because there they are communicating in English.*

(Two boys comments)

One must mention that a very small number of learners indicated that they speak English to tourists, which indicates that they have very little contact with either native English speakers or foreigners

for that matter, despite the fact that Swakopmund is the largest holiday resort in Namibia. It seemed as if the learner's institution is hampering their acquisition of English to a large extent. One can deduct this from comments such as:

*Our siblings and cousins attend the former white schools;  
There they are taught in English and they communicate in  
English all the time. Here, we all speak Afrikaans, although  
The teachers give the lessons in English sometimes.*

Throughout this study and from what transpired or emerged through the combination of techniques used to gather the data, I came to the conclusion that the choice of language use for a multilingual speaker would be influenced by various social factors such as: upbringing, values and attitudes attached to language; the topic of discussion, as well the context and the participants. Above all, the findings showed that an educational institution has a greater role to play in the promotion of any language, whether it is a mother tongue, English or Afrikaans.

## **6 Discussions of the Findings**

This section focuses on the interpretation of the narrative description of the data, while comparing its relevancy to the current available literature or research. This means that I shall compare my findings with what other research has already highlighted on code switching.

*'Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations,  
drawing conclusions, making inferences, attaching meanings...'*

*(Patton, as quoted in Winegardner 2001: 95).*

The discussion is based on the themes as outlined in the data presentation.

### **6.1 Policy information on mother tongue instruction**

The Ministry of Education and Culture distributed a document titled 'Provisional Language Policy for Schools – A Draft for Discussion' at the end of 1991, for consideration and discussion (EFA 1993:63). This document was recommended and approved as the "New Language policy" in June 1992 (EFA 1993:64). The document clearly stipulated that from 1993 onwards 'the home language,

a local language, or English will be the medium of instruction from Grades 1 – 3, with English as a subject’ (EFA 1993:66).

We can clearly see that right from the start the language policy created a leeway by not establishing strict guidelines in terms of the medium of instruction for indigenous languages in this country. The results in this study show that we have learners who cannot read or write in their mother tongues. We have learners who do not possess knowledge of the basic concepts in their mother tongues, and thus, the mother tongue does not serve as a bridge between the second and third language they are learning in school. Research evidence in developed as well as developing countries has shown that learners’ performance is enhanced through the medium of the mother tongue, or the child’s first language. This has shown that the acquisition of a second language is promoted by building on what the child already knows in the first language, and then building and consolidating on what the child knows in the second language (Murray 1989).

About 50 percent of the learners in this study were never exposed to mother tongue instruction, be it as a medium of instruction or as a subject. The loophole was created by not putting in place a policy that demanded that every African child be taught in his/her mother tongue during the formative years. Instead, as Swarts (2000) indicates the choice to implement the language policy was given to the schools under the supervision of the respective regional education offices. The recommendation also stipulated that mother tongue instruction should be promoted through non-promotional subjects. The opposite appears to be the case, as less than 10 percent of the participants reported that they had been taught these subjects through the medium of their mother tongue.

Additionally, a positive aspect that was highlighted by the results was the high rate (70 percent) of participants who claimed to feel proud when conversing in their various mother tongues. The reasons provided were, among others, that ‘speaking mother tongue is an indication of your roots, your identity or who you are’. This is in accordance with Makgoba’s view that:

*‘Language is culture and in language we carry our identity and culture...’*

(Makgoba, as cited in Alexander 2000 : 12)

## **6.2 Positive, negative and neutral attitudes toward the introduction of the mother tongue as a subject**

The learners expressed a range of views regarding the introduction of the mother tongue as a subject in Grade 11. Those who responded in favour of it mentioned issues such as the need to preserve the

various languages as written as well as spoken languages; the promotion of languages for functional purposes such as the transmission of culture; and to develop it for literary purposes. These views are in concordance with Makgoba views that argue for the preservation of African languages because ‘the majority of the African people live in their indigenous languages throughout their lives’ (Makgoba, as cited in Alexander 2000:12).

One of the positive and interesting remarks made by 15,6 percent of some of the participants is that mother tongue helps them to understand English. This concurs with Bamgbose’s research that has shown that learners who acquire literacy and numeric skills in their first language are inclined to perform better in school, and they are also better equipped to acquire a second language at a later stage (Bamgbose, as cited in Swarts 2000). Some of the participants responded negatively to this issue, making remarks such as ‘boring, useless or they talk enough at home’, and, ‘there is no need to make the mother tongue a language of education as well’.

The Namibian Education system advocates a bilingual curriculum, which is the mother tongue/home language and English. Despite this provision and requirement, some learners were never exposed to mother tongue instruction, hence, the negative attitude of considering the mother tongue as useless (Swarts 2000). This negative attitude is due to the fact that national languages are not used in formal domains such as governmental agencies, the employment sector and so on, therefore, the people are bound to think of the mother tongue as serving no educational purpose at all (Legere 2000).

However, the majority of the learners gave neutral reasons as to why mother tongue as a subject would be impractical to be introduced at Grade 11 level, taking into consideration that they already lack the basic skills of reading and writing in it. Some respondents also commented that it (the mother tongue) would serve no purpose, as it is not linked to jobs or tertiary education. This concurs with Legere’s observation that maintains that the use of national languages in Namibia ‘will not gain momentum’ if the government does not alter the practice of excluding national languages from formal domains (Legere 2000: 53).

Another neutral consideration concerning the introduction of mother tongue was elicited in this comment:

*English is the medium of instruction in secondary education, why should mother-tongue be introduced at this stage, it is not a priority to read or write in mother-tongue.*

This is reasonable from the participants’ point of view because they do not possess the basic skills in their respective mother tongues, therefore, it would definitely prove disastrous to try and force them to acquire these skills at such an advanced level and for no feasible reason at all.



### 6.3 Communication in English in formal and informal contexts

From the questionnaire the findings show that over half (17) of the respondents reported to communicate in English to their friends during school hours. Another half (16) showed that they converse in English with their teachers. This is in contrast with the informal interviews and the tape-recorded interviews. The observation results indicated that learners do communicate in English if addressed as such, but overall they said they speak Afrikaans to their friends and classmates. However, if we take into account Harlech-Jones' comment that in the 1990's Namibian teachers were found wanting and were publicly informed that they were 'under qualified and poorly trained', and that the majority were lacking English proficiency, then it is not astonishing that only half of the respondents confirmed this. Maybe the rest communicate in Afrikaans or in an indigenous language to the teachers. (Harlech-Jones 2000:29).

Some of the respondents showed that they converse in English to their siblings and relatives after school hours. Reasons given for adopting English with siblings were as follow:

*They are taught in English and they are used to English, so we do not want them to look down on us by not responding in English, therefore, we speak English to them instead of Afrikaans or mother tongue.*

Meeuwis and Blommaert, as cited in Kamwangamalu (2000), commented that code switching involves negotiation of identities, rights and obligations. The speaking of English in this case involves the negotiation of social status or a complex related perception. For instance, the McCormick study of District Six in Cape Town showed that black people adopted English for formal occasions while Afrikaans was reserved for expressing personal emotions such as anger or when the discussion became an argument. Sometimes, English was chosen to spite white Afrikaners or to make them feel inferior. The speaker commented about that as follow: “ *I feel so good if a white man cannot speak English and I as a black man come to them and speak English and I feel more superior to them, because they regard us- anybody who speaks English- as superior to them. That is definite.*” (McCormic, as cited in Kamwangamalu 2000: 65). English is definitely accorded prestige above Afrikaans.

One can conclude that language choices or code switching is an intentional communication strategy that is influenced by various factors such as the participant, topic of discussion, social context and so on. All these influence the bi/multilingual speaker's decision of which code to adopt.

This was widely reported by the Oshiwambo speaking learners who commented that they speak Afrikaans to fellow learners at their school, English to those from the former white schools and Oshiwambo to their parents and elders in the community. The formal interviews also revealed that English and Afrikaans are chosen to discuss sexually related matters, as it is taboo in Oshiwambo to talk publicly about such topics. The learner indicated that he does not feel bad when discussing an issue like sex or love in English or Afrikaans, because he constantly hears about it in both languages. However, when gossiping, one learner indicated that he used all three languages he can speak, Afrikaans, English and Oshiwambo. This comment is contrary to Bonvillain's findings that revealed that Spanish speakers in the USA speak English at work but when gossiping or they are on their way home they revert to Spanish.

The findings of this research have shown that female learners are the dominant group in relation to mother tongue use. During observations inside and outside the classroom, during school break or in the playground, the girls were the ones conversing more in their respective mother tongues than the boys. This finding is similar to Appalraju and de Kadt's study that shows that code switching is also gender-based and culturally influenced among the participants. Their study revealed that code switching between English and isiZulu was perceived as a male thing and carried the connotations of upward social mobility and success in the job market. The female pupils were strong advocates for the mother tongue because 'they tended to retain their use of Zulu to a much greater extent' (Appalraju and de Kadt 2001: 135).

From the formal tape-recorded interviews, only one participant indicated that he would like his children to speak, read and write Kwagali, his mother tongue. While the three Oshiwambo speaking boys all argued that they would prefer their children to speak English first, before they learn to speak Oshiwambo, for the simple fact of increasing education and employment opportunities. Females strongly supported the preservation of the mother tongue, maybe because they view themselves as the custodians of the mother tongue and as having the responsibility to transmit it to the next generation, probably like the isiZulu female pupils that speak without code switching among themselves to a greater degree than their male counterparts.

## Conclusion

The main findings of this study have shown that learners adopt communication strategies intentionally to serve certain purposes. Code switching is therefore a ‘powerful and potentially effective strategy’ that people have at their disposal and which they use to achieve predetermined social goals (Hecker, Meeuwis and Blommaert, as cited in Kamwangamalu 2000:64). As the literature has indicated time and time again, code switching is influenced by various social factors at interplay. However, this study indicates that negative attitudes toward the mother tongue are entrenched in the Namibian indigenous people and this needs to be addressed and redressed through the launching of national awareness campaigns that involve the government and its agencies, as well as traditional leaders and influential members of society.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interviews Transcription

#### Interview I JOEL

- E Hello, Joel. I am very happy you are here to talk about language and how you communicate with other people in your area and so on. What is your mother tongue?
- J Oshivambo
- E Which one – is it Oshincongga or Oshikwanyama?
- J Oshindonga
- E Can you read and write in Oshindonga?
- J Yes, I can read and write it, a little bit.
- E Were you taught in school to read and write in Oshindonga?
- J Yes. From Grade 1 till Grade 3.
- E Did you start Grade 1 here in Swakopmund or was it in the North?
- J Yes, it was in the North.
- E But you say you think you've forgotten how to write it, but can you read it?
- J Not exactly, but I think I can try to read it.
- E Can you speak it fluently?
- J Yes, I mean no, I cannot speak it fluently. I am not used to speak it, it's like a habit. I am used to speaking Afrikaans or English here in Swakopmund.
- E Are you saying that people in the North are unaware that you cannot communicate so well in Oshindonga, so they try and adapt to you by communication with you in English rather than in Oshindonga?
- J Yes.
- E If you are here in Swakopmund at home, how do you communicate – in which language?
- J Mostly in Oshiwambo to grown ups – to my siblings I communicate in Afrikaans, it's like a habit. We're used to speaking Afrikaans to one another.
- E Why do you communicate in Afrikaans to them?

- J We are all taught Afrikaans at school – somehow speaking it is showing that we all have gone to school, that's why we choose Afrikaans rather than Oshindonga.
- /2 (Interview Joel)
- E Do you speak Afrikaans rather than English to your siblings – at what particular instances do you find yourself sometimes mixing Oshindonga with Afrikaans or English or whatever.
- J Exactly. I sometimes mix all three languages.
- E At what particular words would you mix Oshindonga with Afrikaans or English? When you talk about what – is it experiences, feelings or words that are not in your language?
- J Maybe, it is a gossip, ja, like gossip.
- E Is it? So when you are gossiping you tend to Afrikaans or English?
- J I tend to use Oshiwambo mostly, then Afrikaans or English. Let's say I tend to use a mixture of the three languages when gossiping.
- E Is it? WOW!  
And let's say, if you meet here at school with a fellow oshindonga speaker, how do you address this person when you approach him/her?  
Let's say, you know the person, will you start speaking in Oshindonga, Afrikaans or English to this person?
- J Please would you repeat the question?
- E If you approach or are coming toward a person that you know is also Oshindonga speaking person, do you start speaking your mother tongue or what?
- J I will address him first in Afrikaans.
- E Why?
- J It's like a habit, I am used to it. I do it at home and at school. We meet people of other indigenous languages, so we speak Afrikaans, I am used to speaking Afrikaans with everybody except ...
- E Mhmmm .... so, even if the person is from the same language group as you, you will rather address this person in Afrikaans rather than in your mothertongue?
- J Yes. Up to a certain extent.
- E Up to extent that the other person switches to Oshindonga or what?
- J Up to an extent when maybe I want to explain something that might not sound rude in my language, than I will switch to mother tongue to convey the feeling that I want to say in English.
- E What are your personal reasons for you to use all these different languages within the same group – with your siblings – you said one it's when you are gossiping, when else do you use different languages instead – when you are discussing what type of topics?

- J When discussing something other than schoolwork – let`s say something happened – I prefer to speak all the languages or something like a youth topic – something to do with youths.
- /3 (Interview Joel)
- E How about when you are discussing politics or current affairs, things that are in the newspapers about the country or community – like robberies or crime – in what language do you discuss it?
- J Afrikaans. I prefer Afrikaans because when I was brought I know Afrikaans from an early age on, there are some words in Oshiwambo that I don`t know, and sometimes they sound very harsh – in Afrikaans they don`t sound so harsh.
- E You don`t want to use these harsh expressions in Oshiwambo, give an example.
- J It`s like sexual related words or issues – words having to do with sex – they are quite harsh and sound rude in Oshiwambo.  
I find it quite rude to swear in Oshiwambo but don`t feel the same in Afrikaans, because I am used to hearing them (words) in Afrikaans.
- E Where do You hear these words in Afrikaans?
- J Everywhere. People are using it, but it is not Oshiwambo culture to swear – one is not supposed to swear – those are rules you are supposed to obey.
- E For you when you are using “sexual language” you find it easy to speak/converse in Afrikaans, when does the English come in?
- J Mostly in the classrooms. Afrikaans is preferable when maybe we are discussing everyday topics, but English, I prefer to speak English, my understanding of English is much better when discussing academic matters, while Afrikaans is for everyday conversation with people of my age.
- E Your English academic level is much better than Afrikaans. When talking about schoolwork in classrooms do you find yourself speaking Afrikaans or not?
- J Mostly commonly I think I can really think in Afrikaans – when I think.  
I can relate to things that I was brought with during my life so much better ... the words.
- E Do words come easily to you in Afrikaans?
- J Yes.
- E But, the in exams – you`re writing an exam – in what language do you think?
- J I Sometimes find myself thinking in the indigenous language (Oshiwambo)  
English/Afrikaans.
- E In what particular order?
- J Like when it`s English, I can writing English. I try to imagine, translate it in Oshiwambo the way I think I understand it.
- E What else do you want to argue? Since you speak combination of languages.



What are you going to teach your children one day when you have them – do you want them to speak their mother tongue?

/4 (Interview Joel)

J I prefer them to speak English.

E What about Oshindonga?

J It will be second, I'll rather teach my kids how to speak English before they go to school so maybe, maybe I can help to start thinking in English.

E Pre-Primary

J Truly speaking. I don't think Oshiwambo is fitting into today's academic life.

E We don't only have an academic life, we also have a social life and a personal life and community life – how is your child going to fit into the community – Oshiwambo-speaking – while you want your child to speak only English – better for performances.

J Combination of languages lead to confuse Proficiency in English is important for academic reasons and for employment opportunities.

E Should the Ministry introduce a language policy that prescribe that everybody must have mother tongue instruction whether you're here or confined to rural areas?

J I don't want to support it – but if it is the only language in the community that you can relate to, than it should be allowed.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview with John**

E Hallo, John.

J Hallo Miss.

E Can you shift nearer, please?

J Okay.

E John, what's your mother tongue?

J Rukwangali is my mother tongue.

E Have you ever been taught in Rukwangali?

J Yes, from Grade 1 to 7.

E So, you've a good grounding in Rukwangali, you can read and write it.

J Yes, currently, I can read better than writing.

E Say, you come across a love storybook – with the same story in both English and Rukwangali – which book would you prefer to read?

J Preferably Rukwangali, because the language expresses more than English – I'll understand more.

E You can read more between the lines from the expressions?

J Yes.

E In which language do you mostly think?

J Mostly in English.

E Do you ever think in Rukwangali?

J No ... I don't think so.

E Really?

J Mmh ... maybe only when I was in Grade 8 and 9.

E Which moments were you thinking about what – was it about schoolwork, love, home sick or angry?

J When something was complicated?

E Something such as what, a complex mathematical problem or what?

J No, something to do with how I feel. I can't find the right word to express myself.

/2 (Interview John)

E Is it something like love – expressing your innermost feelings?

J Yes, innermost feelings.

E With other Kwangalis, which language do you use?

J Rukwangali.

E When you are in the Kavango area in the north – when you come across someone and you want to ask for directions, how will you address him/her. Is it first in Rukwangali and then English or what?

J Yes, I greet in Rukwangali first and then if there's no response then I'll switch to English.

E Is it because you assume that everyone in the Okavango area should be able to speak Rukwangali or what?

J Ja, that's the expectation, most of them speak that.

E It's a natural thing to speak Rukwangali first.

J Ja.

E So, what is the language used most at home?

J Rukwangali.

E How do you feel after a long time here when you go back home in the north?

J Nowadays I speak it on a daily basis where I stay.

E Most of the time you speak English because you're involved in a lot of activities with meetings?

J But when I am at home, people try to speak English to me, I always get upset, I tell them please, this is the only time I get to speak my mother tongue. Let's stick to it. During the holidays I also try to speak it as much as I can, but I don't spend enough time in the house.

E At school you use English for learning, reasoning and communication?

J Ja, I speak a little bit of Afrikaans, but I don't know it.

E How do the Kwangali youth when you address them in English – do they think you are “cool”, “high” or a “VIP” or high class or what? What is their reaction toward people that tend to speak English rather than their mother tongue?

J No, they don't think so. They prefer to listen to you when you speak to them in Rukwangali than in English.

E When I asked this, the girls were claiming that others of the same language group would view them as bragging.

What is your personal view or feeling toward your mother tongue – do you feel that it is a backward, inferior or low class or what?

/3 (Interview John)

J No, I feel proud to speak my mother tongue – that's my roots, my identity and my culture, that's who I am.

E What's your opinion of mother tongue instruction as a subject in secondary education till Grade 12?

J It will be a good thing if it is introduced till secondary education, because it will help us to relate more to what we are learning, because we will be able to comprehend much better to our own languages.

E Would you prefer your children to be taught your mother tongue at school?

J Yes, definitely, I will make sure that my children learn to speak, read and write Rukwangali. How can I teach my children my culture and my traditions if not through my own language.

E Thank you, John, for that comment and for the interview.

J It was a pleasure.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview with Peter

E Hallo, Peter.

P Hallo Miss.

E You were present when Joel argued that he doesn't want his children to be taught mother-tongue first. What's your views about that?

P I think indigenous languages are not so popular nowadays – not something that we should teach children to speak it with other people like foreigners.

E Is not about speaking to foreigners ... but about language as language. If we want our languages to survive, then we should teach our children to speak it, otherwise it will not survive on its own – it will die out. I must speak Otjiherero at home, if you're Ndonga than you must speak Oshindonga or whatever at home, why don't you want your children to speak Oshindonga?

P Is not that we don't to speak Oshindonga ....

E So, you are not going to speak Oshindonga at your home with your children one day?

P I have to ... I can.

E Can you speak it fluently?

P Not that fluently?

E Can you read and write it?

P Yes I can.

E Where did you learn to read and write it?

P I started learning it in the Confirmation school at the church.

E How old were you?

P Seventeen.

E So, you started learning to read and write Oshindonga when you were 17. Were you not taught in Grade 1 to 3? Where did you start school?

P No, I was not taught in school.

E Would you claim to read and write it competently?

P Yes.

E How long did you learn that ... a year or what?

P No, only a couple of months – about six months. But it was the church elders that forced us to learn – because at the end we had to write a test and oral testint by answering questions.

/2 (Interview Peter)

E Can you read the Oshiwambo section in one of the newspapers – do you read that part or not?

P Ja .... but not so fast like some languages, because in Oshiwambo we have long sentences say one word of about 12 letters – I read without understanding till I come to the end.

E Don`t you think African languages will die out if we don`t do anything about it?

P I think it will die out.

E What can we do, are we going to allow this to happen?

P No, we can`t allow that to happen, maybe we will try to bring it, introduce into urban schools just mostly use English/Afrikaans, but bring in both languages.

E From Grade 1 to which level?

P Maybe from Grade 1 – 10.

E Is that all?

P And then to Grade 11 to Grade 12.

E Do you think that language convey a certain social message to the listener about you?

P I don`t understand what you mean?

E Let`s say for example, you come and start to speak to a person in the north in Oshindonga, will the listener get a certain message about you?

P They will ... they will start laughing.

E Is it? What`s the message they get?

P They will know that you are an Oshindonga speaking person, but they will know that you are not used to it even if it is your language.

E You mean that they can see..... I mean hear that you don`t speak it very often. What type of attitude do people have toward fellow language speakers that are unable to express themselves fluently in their mother tongue?

P They start asking questions that you are from Angola.

E So, they start to assume that you are a foreigner, but if you tell them that you are not, what`s their reaction ... their attitude ... aren`t they surprised?

- P They are surprised, but they start asking why you speak as if you are not one of them. If I meet an Oshiwambo speaker in Owamboland, then it is difficult to understand what they say to me.
- E What do you speak then?
- P I speak mostly Afrikaans to my friends, brothers and sisters and a little bit of English, not so  
/3 (Interview Peter)
- P much English, and with my parents and their friends only in Oshiwambo.
- E With your father and mother, do you speak probably that little Oshiwambo, and they understand you, but why do you find it difficult to understand people in the north?
- P Those guys will for instance, say a word in Oshindonga, but will stress or put intonation differently will make it longer ....
- E When you are at school, learning and reasoning, do you try to think in your mother tongue in order to try and understand?
- P When I am writing Biology ... I think in Afrikaans.
- E Are you taught Biology in Afrikaans – why do.
- P No, but when you take it to Afrikaans from English, it is easy.
- E Is there no way that you think about schoolwork in your mother tongue?
- P No
- E When you are speaking to your grandmother you speak Oshindonga – your mother can probably speak a bit of Afrikaans?
- P No.
- E But why do you speak English or Afrikaans to your siblings, don't they speak Oshindonga?
- P They can talk to Mum in Oshindonga.
- E You mean that you normally exclude both your mothers in your conversations – I mean you and the children?
- P No, grandma understands Afrikaans but my mother does not.
- E How is that possible?
- P Grandma is an old Swakopmunder, that's why she understands.
- E In class, you speak a lot of Afrikaans among yourselves, I mean Oshiwambo speakers.
- P In class among others they complain that is not official – make remarks – stop that language.
- E How about when you start speaking English. What's the feeling of the group in the class?
- P It's like you are trying to be high or something.

- E English is the medium of instruction ... how about learners from former white schools when they speak English?
- P They are cool, they only speak English – come from better schools because of the English they speak.
- E Mmmh ... Thank you, Peter.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview David

#### E Hallo David.

- D Hallo Miss.
- E As you know I am investigating language choices – we in Namibia speak many languages – sometimes we use Afrikaans, English or any other local language. What's your mother-tongue?
- D Oshikwanyama.
- E Were you taught to read and write in your mothertongue? From which Grade ...?
- D Yes, I was in the north – from Grade 1 to 4, and when I came here I started Grade 1 again.
- E Can you read and write in Oshikwanyama?
- D No, I cannot.
- E How is that possible – you were taught to read/write it for four years?
- D Well, I was in a state of proceeding well, but was cut off ...
- E So, if you have to read a text in Oshikwanyama you won't be able to make sense of it?
- D I can, but it won't sound so good for those knowing the language.
- E In which language do you think when you are doing schoolwork, is it your mother tongue, English, or Afrikaans?
- D Mostly in English at school – event at home with my friends sometimes.
- E When you say sometimes when you think in English – is when you are thinking about what things?
- D Anything that comes in English.
- E When do you think in or speak Afrikaans? Do you have Afrikaans as a subject?

D No.

E So, your Afrikaans is diminishing, but last year you had Afrikaans, isn't it?

D Yes.

E At school which language do you mainly use?

D English most of the time, but at certain points I code switch in Afrikaans, but mostly I converse in English.

E When do you tend to code switch in Afrikaans?

/2 (Interview David)

D When speaking to learners who prefer Afrikaans or to a teacher when certain things – when I don't understand certain things.

E What about when with friends?

D Most of my friends converse in English, Oshiwambo and Afrikaans, but mostly English.

E When do you speak Oshiwambo?

D At my mother's family in the north – they don't understand English or Afrikaans. There's no other way of communicating with them.

E What about here in Swakopmund?

D With my siblings and cousins we speak English – but with my aunt we speak Oshiwambo that doesn't sound so convincing ....

E How old were you when you came to Swakopmund?

D Ten or eleven.

E You seem to have a good grounding in your mother tongue, how come you are struggling with it?

D I started school here I had to learn Afrikaans, than English – like I was forced to know these two – no space for mother tongue.

E What about at home after school?

D Most of the time people spoke Afrikaans to me.

E Why? ... was it a sort of way to help you to acquire the language much faster?

D Yes ... people here in Swakopmund are used to speaking Afrikaans. They were/are employed by Afrikaans speakers – it is important to know the language.

E So, they went out of their way to make sure that you master the language?

D Yes.



E You said you speak English with your sisters .... where do they attend school?

D One is at SSS and the other at WSH.

E Can these two speak Oshiwambo?

D They do, but not so well.

E What do you do when you are in the north?

D I mostly of the time enjoy my own company, because I hate it, I mean I hate to talk when people laugh at me when I speak Oshiwambo.

/3 (Interview David)

E What is your opinion of mother tongue instruction in education – do you think it should have a place or not?

D Yes, I think, it should really, the more the ages or the time goes by, the more we'll forget about our own culture and languages. We even know more about the foreign countries than our own.

E What do you mean it should ... can you elaborate a bit, how will your mother tongue helps you to understand the foreign language?

D Like in class, come across a word that you don't understand in English, the teacher explains in Afrikaans, still you are left in the dark, I think if it was to be explained in one's mother tongue it will be much better.

E You mean to get an equivalent of that word in your mother tongue?

D Yes.

E Thanks David.

# **The Empirical Study**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the various factors that could influence the language choices of bilingual or multilingual speakers during formal and informal interactions. The case study was conducted at a coastal technical secondary school in Namibia with the Grade 11 class group. The major difference between the two groups in the formal setting was in terms of composition. The Mathematics class consisted of about seventeen boys, while the girls numbered only seven. The Child Development group was exclusively a female group of nine girls. A second major variance that was important to the analysis was the fact that all the boys preferred to speak either Afrikaans or English in both contexts, while the girls claimed preference for their various vernaculars, and English or Afrikaans was reserved for the formal context when conversing with the teacher, or with a learner of a different ethnic background.

## **Introduction**

Language is recognized as “a social activity in which the construction of meanings and social realities take place” (Corson, in De Klerk and Hunt 2000: 50). The differences in language choices by various groups are largely the product of different ways of socialization. These social patterns are reflected in the way speakers make language choices, be it consciously or otherwise. Therefore, speakers enter social interaction with social identities that are predetermined and this affects their linguistic practices (De Klerk and Hunt 2000). It was social patterns such as these that were reflected in the way the learners in this group made language choices, which formed the primary focus of this study.

## **2. The Research Context**

### **2.1.Site of the Study**

This small-scale interpretive case study was conducted at a secondary school where the researcher is attached as a senior English Second Language teacher. The Grade 11 class group was selected as the research participants for the following reasons:

Firstly, the researcher had easy access to the participants as she saw them on a daily basis as a class during her teaching periods; secondly, the learners were studied in their natural setting during her

class and in two other teachers' classrooms. Due to the natural setting context, the researcher was able to interpret the phenomena in terms of what the participants themselves constructed of their language choices (Denzin and Lincoln, as cited in Winegardner 2001:1).

In a qualitative study, the data can be collected through multiple-methods, usually involving interviewing, observing and analysing of documents. Multiple sources of information are used due to the fact that no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective (Patton, as cited in Winegardner 2001:5). Therefore I decided to employ multiple methods to collect the data for this study. The initial technique that was employed was that of observation of a non-participant nature, followed by informal interviews, tape-recorded interviews and a questionnaire. I deployed all these data techniques so that I could validate and cross-check the findings (Patton, as cited in Winegardner 2001: 5).

In this case observations were carried out and the data that emerged from these observations prompted the informal interviews, which were conducted with a stratified purposeful sample in class, with ten learners across gender and ethnic language groups.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. The Research Paradigm**

This research is embedded within an interpretive positivist paradigm and adopts an interpretive case study methodology, starting with the assumption that access to reality is through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Meriam, as cited in Winegardner 2001). My decision to base this research on the interpretive tradition is influenced by Bassey's description of this paradigm as:

*... a search for deep perceptions of specific events and for theoretical insights.*

*It may offer possibilities, but no uncertainties, as to the outcome of future events.*

*(Bassey 1995:12).*

In simple terms, one endeavours to describe what he/she sees happening in a specific situation and creates narratives of what is happening, thus giving the researcher an opportunity to understand the situation of the phenomenon by putting himself or herself in the shoes of her/his subjects (Gall, as cited in Winegardner 2001:5).

Furthermore, a case study is an appropriate strategy for answering research questions which ask the 'how or why and which' questions. These are questions, which do not require control over events (Robson, as cited in Winegardner 2001). My research epistemology raised the following questions:

- 1) How are we going to promote indigenous languages in Namibia to become the languages of communication among the various youth, while the tendency among the youth is to regard their vernaculars as backward and low class?
- 2) What can be done to develop indigenous languages in this country to become written as well as spoken languages among urban youths in the future?
- 3) Why are the learners at this secondary school still communicating in Afrikaans at school as well as in their communities?

### **3.2 The Research Techniques**

The data was collected through a combination of data gathering techniques. This was done to enable the researcher to capitalize on the strength of each method and to minimize the weaknesses inherent in single strategies (Patton, as cited in Winegardner 2001:5). Therefore, a combination of the following methods, were applied as tools for collecting the required information:

- a) Class room and playground observations
- b) Informal interviews
- c) Tape-recorded interviews
- d) Questionnaires

#### **3.2.1. OBSERVATIONS**

The purpose of observation is to enable the researcher to have direct access to the subjects or to have direct first hand experience with the phenomena to be investigated (Guba and Lincoln, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 95). In both environments and contexts where observation took place all activities were observable, what the learners or teacher said and did in the classroom was discernable. Equally, what the learners said and did on the playground was also observable.

Anderson (1998) and Cresswell (1994) assert that the direct observation of the subjects is one of the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research. On these grounds as well as on the basis of the nature of the study, I chose observation techniques to gather information. The main purpose was to observe the interaction process from learner to learner rather than the interaction between teacher and learners in particular. Interaction among learners during school break time was observed as

well. All the observations were carried out for the duration of three sessions each. Altogether nine observations sessions (inside and outside the class room) were conducted to determine the language choices and patterns of these learners.

The observation data were recorded in the form of field notes. These were the written accounts of what the researcher heard, saw, experienced and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data (Bogdan and Bilken, as cited in Cantrell 1993:96).

### **3.2.2 Informal Interviews**

Informal interviews were conducted using a stratified purposeful sampling. (Cantrell 1993:90). This was done to obtain information that included both genders as well as all the indigenous ethnic languages represented by the Grade 11 learners. The ethnic languages were Khoe-khoegowab (Nama and Damara), Otjiherero (Herero), Oshiwambo (Kwanyama/Ndonga) and Rukwagali (Kwagali). Two learners from both genders were included in the Otjiherero and Oshiwambo groups, while four girls speakers s from both dialects of the Khoe khoegowab language were selected as well as one boy from the Rukwagali group.

Altogether fifteen learners were interviewed informally during three English periods. This interview made use of unstructured questions. The informal interviews helped the researcher to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words, and to access the unobservable nuances. Furthermore, this helped me 'to develop insights into how the participants interpret and make meaning of the world' (Bogdan and Bilken, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 96). The observation and informal interview methods served as the "back bone" for the design of the final techniques to be used, i.e., the formal interview and the questionnaires, because they 'contained the straight forward accounts of what occurred and the reflective comments' (Miles and Huberman, as quoted in Cantrell 1993: 98).

### **3.3.3 The Formal Tape-recorded Interview**

The tape-recorded interviews consisted of approximately ten semi-structured questions. This format was adopted so that the researcher could at obtain comparable data across subjects. Although the format was that of a semi-structured interview, the interviewer offered considerable latitude to the subjects to shape the content of the interview, subject to the time limit and structure of the interview process (Patton, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 96). Four boys from a sample of ten were willing to grant interviews to the researcher. The rest of the group did not want to be tape-recorded.

### 3.3.4 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire consisting of ten questions was also administered to the whole class group, or to those who were present on that day. Out of 36 learners, 32 were present and completed and returned the questionnaire. The document consisted of four closed questions that were designed to obtain the language policy information that was quantitative in nature, while the rest of the questions were designed to elicit elaborate remarks and opinions from the participants.

The questionnaire was administered during a double English period lasting for about 80 minutes. This was done for two reasons, firstly, the timing was perfect as the researcher herself was present to clarify any ambiguities that may have occurred in the questions, and secondly, to ensure that all the learners completed and returned the questionnaires promptly.

## 3. Data Analysis

In an interpretive case study thick descriptive and narrative accounts are used to communicate a holistic picture of how these learners explain or experience their choices of language use and how they negotiate their social status through the language patterns they adopt in a multilingual society.

For the observation as well as the informal interviews, the data took the format of ‘rough notes’ jotted down in the field and ended as expanded notes fleshed out later. The observation data was expanded to serve as a “backbone” for the informal interviews (Miles and Huberman, as cited in Cantrell 1993: 98).

The emergent theme that was apparent during the observation, code switching, was nearly non-existent, in fact the learners were conversing in Afrikaans among themselves all the time. Patton maintains that descriptions and quotations are important ingredients of qualitative enquiry. According to him thick descriptions and direct quotations “allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report (Patton, as cited in Cantrell 1993:98). He further elaborates that thick description makes interpretation possible. Creswell (1994) concurs with his views, since he believes that descriptions and quotations provide a lens through which the reader can peer into the informant’s world.

The raw data from the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed and broken down into themes or categories. The raw data from the questionnaires were also analysed and broken

down into themes, specifically those that yielded qualitative remarks; and those that elicited quantitative data were presented in a spatial format that serves to present the information systematically to the reader. This information is displayed via tables of information known as a process of segmenting or dividing the information in order to develop and create categories, patterns or themes (Marshall and Rosman, as cited in Hitchcock and Hughes 1995).

## **4. Results and Findings**

### **5.1. Classroom Observations Themes**

#### **5.1.1. Afrikaans dominance/preference and Khoe-khoegowab preference**

During the classroom observations, I noticed that the learners preferred to communicate in Afrikaans when interacting with one another. The interaction with the teacher was in English, while reasoning among themselves was exclusively done in Afrikaans, with the exceptions of when they communicated with the Rukwagali speaker who is not conversant in Afrikaans. This was during the Mathematics period. This was a stratified class, but the girls did not participate at all. They were quiet all the time.

However, the Child Development (subject) class, an exclusively girls' class, was dominated by Khoe-khoegowab speakers. That was due to the majority of the girls (six) in the class, coming from this language background, while four other girls were from various other ethnic backgrounds. The other girls communicated in Afrikaans among themselves, while the teacher also spoke to them in Afrikaans. This was due to the fact that they were doing revision by themselves.

### **5.2. Playground Observations**

#### **5.2.1. Mother tongue preference for girls /Afrikaans for boys**

The observation sessions during the intervals yielded interesting data. The girls tended to group themselves according to their vernaculars and basked in the sun or shared some snacks, whilst conversing in their respective mother tongues. The boys on the other hand, spent their breaks playing football, and the yelling and communication was in Afrikaans. I used these emergent themes to prompt why they communicate the way they do. This gave me ideas of what type of information to explore through the informal interview in the classroom.

The informal interview was a rich source of revelations about the various groups' attitudes towards language choices. It was quite interesting to note the following comment from a Khoe-khoegowab speaker:

*It is very funny to speak to a fellow Damara in English or Afrikaans. It is so convenient and comfortable to express myself in my mother tongue.*

A second speaker from the same group had this to say:

*We are proud to speak our language, although it is too loud sometimes.* (Referring to the clicks).

However, the Oshiwambo speaking boys maintained that speaking Afrikaans is much easier for than speaking their mother tongues. They claimed to be more fluent in Afrikaans than in the mother tongue. One boy mentioned:

*It is seen as uneducated to speak your mother tongue on the school premises whether it inside or outside the classroom.*

The Nama speaking girls commented:

*We are very proud to speak our mother tongue, we are not ashamed of our identity, and we find no need to speak another language within our own ethnic group.*

However, the Otjiherero speaking learners had this to add:

*We are not used to our language, we are not very fluent in Otjiherero that is due to the area we live in. That is why we tend to code switch even when we speak to other Hereros.*

Having this data, I decided to carry out an extensive formal interview with ten participants, but in the end I used only four participants because the other six declined to give further comments on the topic claiming to have already done so extensively during the informal interviews.

### **5.3. Tape-recorded interview**

The first three questions were similar to those of the questionnaire as the focus was on the policy information.

#### **5.3.1. Training in mother tongue**

Of the four participants, only one was not taught his mother tongue at all. Three of the boys were exposed to mother tongue instruction during their formative years. Only one of them had mother



tongue instruction throughout the primary phase, which is Grade 1 – 7. However, it is interesting to note that the one, who was not taught in his vernacular at school, was taught it at the church during the confirmation classes for about six months. I will call these boys Joel, Peter, David and John.

### 5.3.2. Language choices influenced by contexts and topics

The three Oshiwambo speaking boys claimed to adopt various languages, be it their mother tongue, Afrikaans or English, according to where they were and to whom they were speaking. For communication with teachers at school English was the language used if the teacher addressed them in English; for classmates and friends at school, Afrikaans was the mode of conversation while with the parents and elders in the community Oshiwambo was the norm. Another revelation was that they spoke English to their siblings and relatives or friends who attended the former white schools in town. The reason given was that they try to maintain the perceived status of being educated when speaking English to them.

One boy (Joel) said this: *I don't want them to look down on me. I also want to show them that I go to school and can also speak English.*

Another boy (David)

Commented: *I simply speak English with them because I know they speak only English at school, and myself I am becoming more fluent in English my Afrikaans is diminishing. It got nothing to do with status.*

Peter agreed with Joel: *one has to speak English with them, otherwise they will think you are low class and know nothing.*

As for (John) the Rukwagali speaking boy, his observations were different from the rest. He maintained that:

*I prefer to speak my own language rather than English, but I use English more often than anybody else in my class because I don't know Afrikaans.*

All four boys claimed to think and reason with themselves in English specifically during examination time when they were writing.

However, an interesting revelation came to the forefront. One of the boys (Joel) said he used English or Afrikaans when he was talking about sexually related matters, such as love, condoms

and so on, because it was considered “rude” in their culture to talk about such things and that was a language rule that he has to respect and obey. He further asserted:

*But I code switch a lot when I am talking about someone, when gossiping I tend to use all three languages simultaneously. Like I will speak a few words in Afrikaans, and then Oshiwambo and then English vice versa.*

## 5.2 Views on the future of indigenous languages

The two Oshiwambo speaking boys (Peter, Joel) seemed very concerned about their languages becoming marginalized, but also express contradictory views. Peter and Joel categorically stated that they would not teach their children their mother tongue; first it would be English and then the mother tongue. Their views were expressed as such:

Joel: *Mother tongue is useless.*

Peter: *Nowadays, indigenous languages are not so popular ... not some thing that we should teach our children*

However, the other boy (David) was concerned about the indigenous languages and felt that they should be taught in school because as the years go by, they will forget their own cultures and their languages. He expressed his views in the following manner:

David: *I really think, ... it should have a place in education, because we might forget about our own cultures and languages, even now, we know more about foreign countries than our own.*

John on the other hand, has a high regard for his mother tongue. This was expressed as follows:

John: *I will prefer to read the same love story or whatever in Rukwagali rather than in English because I can relate to the expressions and feelings worded in my language more than in English.*

His response when asked about the attitudes of Kwagali youths to a fellow Kwagali, addressing them in English was:

John: *They won't think that you're a VIP or highly educated, they would prefer to listen to someone speaking to them in Rukwagali rather than to the one addressing them in English.*

### 5.2.1 Motivations for speaking Afrikaans/English

The three Oshiwambo speaking boys (David, Joel and Peter) unanimously indicated that their parents or guardians made it a point to teach them to speak Afrikaans and to master the language from an early age when they moved from the north to Swakopmund. They claimed this was done in order to ascertain future employment prospects. Here are extracts from the three interviews;

David *... people here in Swakopmund are used to speaking Afrikaans.*  
*It is important to speak Afrikaans very well, because the whites on who they depend for employment speak Afrikaans, and therefore one should know their language to ascertain employment prospects.*

Peter *I am used to Afrikaans, so I speak it with everyone, because I know it very well, more than English. My grandmother made sure that I learnt to speak it well.*

Joel *Speaking Afrikaans to everyone especially our friends show that we all have been to school, we are all educated.*

### 5.3 Questionnaire Themes

#### 5.3.1 The role of mother tongue instruction

Table 1 presents the language policy information results from the questionnaire on Yes/No responses from questions 1, 2, 3 and 6. This is an indication of how many learners were or were not taught their mother tongue in primary school.

Questions	Yes	No	No response	Total Responses
Can you read and write in your mother tongue?	16	16	0	32
Were you taught mother tongue in school?	14	9	9	32
Does the knowledge of your mother tongue help you to understand English?	11	21	0	32
Were you taught in mother tongue in non-promotional subjects?	3	27	2	32

The above table (table.1) highlights that about 30 percent of the learners were taught in their respective mother tongues at one stage or another during their formative years or primary education phase.

About 10 percent of the participants indicated that the mother tongue helped them to understand English. It is interesting to notice that nearly 8 percent maintained that they were not taught their mother tongue at all. Nearly 48 percent also reported that mother tongue instruction was not even taught to for non-promotional subjects. In contrast, fifty percent of the learners claimed to read and write in their mother tongues.

### 5.3.2 Mother tongue instruction per Grade

**Table. 2. Presents the results of mother tongue instruction per Grade**

**Results of questions 2 (a)**

Grades in which the mother tongue was taught	Number of learners
1-3	4
1-4	1
1-5	0
1-6	1
1-7	5
Total	11

Only 11 learners out of 32 indicated that they were taught mother tongue in various grades.

These results show that from the eleven participants that were exposed to mother tongue instruction, only 45 percent were taught in their mother tongue or were it taught as a subject throughout the primary phase. Approximately 40 percent were exposed to mother tongue instruction during the first three years of primary education. Most of these children also indicated that they started school in the rural areas.

### 5.3.3. Attitudes towards mother tongue instruction at Grade 11 level

Table 3 presents results related to the views of the learners regarding mother tongue introduction as a subject in secondary education.

<i>Positive Responses</i>	<i>No of Learners</i>	<i>Negative Responses</i>	<i>No. Of Learners</i>	<i>Other Responses</i>	<i>No. Of Learners</i>
Preserve language for culture	4	Boring	1	It will be difficult to start now	5
Language dying out	1	Talk enough at home	1	English language of education and state	1
Language assists in understanding English	5	It is useless	2	Not linked to jobs or tertiary education	6
Promote indigenous languages	1			Unable to read or write well	1

About 28 learners responded and only 4 learners failed to indicate their views one way or another.

The learners were required to express their general attitude towards mother tongue instruction at the level where they are now, which is Grade 11. This was asked with a view to determine whether the learners thought that it would be beneficial to them or not, presently or for future employment prospects.

This table of results shows various opinions in relation to mother tongue introduction as a subject at secondary school level. It clearly indicates that learners have different perceptions regarding their respective mother tongues. There are those who view their mother tongue as important for maintaining their identity and for the preservation of their culture and language itself. One of the negative responses, however, indicated that their mother tongue was “useless and boring”. Those who expressed other or neutral reasons commented that to study it in secondary school was a bit too late, as they did not learn to read and write it in the primary school. Some took into account the fact that mother tongue instruction is not prerequisite for employment opportunities or for further education therefore it would not serve any purpose to introduce it at this level.

### 5.3.4. Communication in English (during school hours and after school hours)

**Table 4 highlights the results on a combination of questions 8, 9 and 10. The number of respondents was 32 learners.**

When	With whom	Number of learners
School hours	classmates	10
	teachers	16
	friends	17
After school	parents	1
	siblings	7
	relatives	1
	officials	4
	pastor	3
	soccer coach	1
	radio announcer	1
	tourists	4

The results of these findings indicate that learners speak English mostly to their friends and to teachers and to a lesser degree with their classmates. These results are contrary to the observation and informal interview results that evidently showed that the learners in this class mostly converse in Afrikaans. Some remarks were as follow:

*We don't need to speak English, we all understand Afrikaans very well.*

(Boy's comment)

*I only speak English when I am talking to John, because he is the only person in our class who cannot speak Afrikaans.*

(Boy's comment)

*We don't want to speak English, because if we don't know a word or we pronounce it wrongly, then everyone laughs at you, especially the boys.*

(Girl's comment)

*We are so used to speaking Afrikaans at this school, but our siblings are used to speak English, because there they are communicating in English.*

(Two boys comments)

One must mention that a very small number of learners indicated that they speak English to tourists, which indicates that they have very little contact with either native English speakers or foreigners

for that matter, despite the fact that Swakopmund is the largest holiday resort in Namibia. It seemed as if the learner's institution is hampering their acquisition of English to a large extent. One can deduct this from comments such as:

*Our siblings and cousins attend the former white schools;  
There they are taught in English and they communicate in  
English all the time. Here, we all speak Afrikaans, although  
The teachers give the lessons in English sometimes.*

Throughout this study and from what transpired or emerged through the combination of techniques used to gather the data, I came to the conclusion that the choice of language use for a multilingual speaker would be influenced by various social factors such as: upbringing, values and attitudes attached to language; the topic of discussion, as well the context and the participants. Above all, the findings showed that an educational institution has a greater role to play in the promotion of any language, whether it is a mother tongue, English or Afrikaans.

## **6 Discussions of the Findings**

This section focuses on the interpretation of the narrative description of the data, while comparing its relevancy to the current available literature or research. This means that I shall compare my findings with what other research has already highlighted on code switching.

*‘Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations,  
drawing conclusions, making inferences, attaching meanings...’*

*(Patton, as quoted in Winegardner 2001: 95).*

The discussion is based on the themes as outlined in the data presentation.

### **6.1 Policy information on mother tongue instruction**

The Ministry of Education and Culture distributed a document titled ‘Provisional Language Policy for Schools – A Draft for Discussion’ at the end of 1991, for consideration and discussion (EFA 1993:63). This document was recommended and approved as the “New Language policy” in June 1992 (EFA 1993:64). The document clearly stipulated that from 1993 onwards ‘the home language,



a local language, or English will be the medium of instruction from Grades 1 – 3, with English as a subject’ (EFA 1993:66).

We can clearly see that right from the start the language policy created a leeway by not establishing strict guidelines in terms of the medium of instruction for indigenous languages in this country. The results in this study show that we have learners who cannot read or write in their mother tongues. We have learners who do not possess knowledge of the basic concepts in their mother tongues, and thus, the mother tongue does not serve as a bridge between the second and third language they are learning in school. Research evidence in developed as well as developing countries has shown that learners’ performance is enhanced through the medium of the mother tongue, or the child’s first language. This has shown that the acquisition of a second language is promoted by building on what the child already knows in the first language, and then building and consolidating on what the child knows in the second language (Murray 1989).

About 50 percent of the learners in this study were never exposed to mother tongue instruction, be it as a medium of instruction or as a subject. The loophole was created by not putting in place a policy that demanded that every African child be taught in his/her mother tongue during the formative years. Instead, as Swarts (2000) indicates the choice to implement the language policy was given to the schools under the supervision of the respective regional education offices. The recommendation also stipulated that mother tongue instruction should be promoted through non-promotional subjects. The opposite appears to be the case, as less than 10 percent of the participants reported that they had been taught these subjects through the medium of their mother tongue.

Additionally, a positive aspect that was highlighted by the results was the high rate (70 percent) of participants who claimed to feel proud when conversing in their various mother tongues. The reasons provided were, among others, that ‘speaking mother tongue is an indication of your roots, your identity or who you are’. This is in accordance with Makgoba’s view that:

*‘Language is culture and in language we carry our identity and culture...’*  
(Makgoba, as cited in Alexander 2000 : 12)

## **6.2 Positive, negative and neutral attitudes toward the introduction of the mother tongue as a subject**

The learners expressed a range of views regarding the introduction of the mother tongue as a subject in Grade 11. Those who responded in favour of it mentioned issues such as the need to preserve the

various languages as written as well as spoken languages; the promotion of languages for functional purposes such as the transmission of culture; and to develop it for literary purposes. These views are in concordance with Makgoba views that argue for the preservation of African languages because ‘the majority of the African people live in their indigenous languages throughout their lives’ (Makgoba, as cited in Alexander 2000:12).

One of the positive and interesting remarks made by 15,6 percent of some of the participants is that mother tongue helps them to understand English. This concurs with Bamgbose’s research that has shown that learners who acquire literacy and numeric skills in their first language are inclined to perform better in school, and they are also better equipped to acquire a second language at a later stage (Bamgbose, as cited in Swarts 2000). Some of the participants responded negatively to this issue, making remarks such as ‘boring, useless or they talk enough at home’, and, ‘there is no need to make the mother tongue a language of education as well’.

The Namibian Education system advocates a bilingual curriculum, which is the mother tongue/home language and English. Despite this provision and requirement, some learners were never exposed to mother tongue instruction, hence, the negative attitude of considering the mother tongue as useless (Swarts 2000). This negative attitude is due to the fact that national languages are not used in formal domains such as governmental agencies, the employment sector and so on, therefore, the people are bound to think of the mother tongue as serving no educational purpose at all (Legere 2000).

However, the majority of the learners gave neutral reasons as to why mother tongue as a subject would be impractical to be introduced at Grade 11 level, taking into consideration that they already lack the basic skills of reading and writing in it. Some respondents also commented that it (the mother tongue) would serve no purpose, as it is not linked to jobs or tertiary education. This concurs with Legere’s observation that maintains that the use of national languages in Namibia ‘will not gain momentum’ if the government does not alter the practice of excluding national languages from formal domains (Legere 2000: 53).

Another neutral consideration concerning the introduction of mother tongue was elicited in this comment:

*English is the medium of instruction in secondary education, why should mother-tongue be introduced at this stage, it is not a priority to read or write in mother-tongue.*

This is reasonable from the participants’ point of view because they do not possess the basic skills in their respective mother tongues, therefore, it would definitely prove disastrous to try and force them to acquire these skills at such an advanced level and for no feasible reason at all.

### 6.3 Communication in English in formal and informal contexts

From the questionnaire the findings show that over half (17) of the respondents reported to communicate in English to their friends during school hours. Another half (16) showed that they converse in English with their teachers. This is in contrast with the informal interviews and the tape-recorded interviews. The observation results indicated that learners do communicate in English if addressed as such, but overall they said they speak Afrikaans to their friends and classmates. However, if we take into account Harlech-Jones' comment that in the 1990's Namibian teachers were found wanting and were publicly informed that they were 'under qualified and poorly trained', and that the majority were lacking English proficiency, then it is not astonishing that only half of the respondents confirmed this. Maybe the rest communicate in Afrikaans or in an indigenous language to the teachers. (Harlech-Jones 2000:29).

Some of the respondents showed that they converse in English to their siblings and relatives after school hours. Reasons given for adopting English with siblings were as follow:

*They are taught in English and they are used to English, so we do not want them to look down on us by not responding in English, therefore, we speak English to them instead of Afrikaans or mother tongue.*

Meeuwis and Blommaert, as cited in Kamwangamalu (2000), commented that code switching involves negotiation of identities, rights and obligations. The speaking of English in this case involves the negotiation of social status or a complex related perception. For instance, the McCormick study of District Six in Cape Town showed that black people adopted English for formal occasions while Afrikaans was reserved for expressing personal emotions such as anger or when the discussion became an argument. Sometimes, English was chosen to spite white Afrikaners or to make them feel inferior. The speaker commented about that as follow: “ *I feel so good if a white man cannot speak English and I as a black man come to them and speak English and I feel more superior to them, because they regard us- anybody who speaks English- as superior to them. That is definite.*” (McCormic, as cited in Kamwangamalu 2000: 65). English is definitely accorded prestige above Afrikaans.

One can conclude that language choices or code switching is an intentional communication strategy that is influenced by various factors such as the participant, topic of discussion, social context and so on. All these influence the bi/multilingual speaker's decision of which code to adopt.

This was widely reported by the Oshiwambo speaking learners who commented that they speak Afrikaans to fellow learners at their school, English to those from the former white schools and Oshiwambo to their parents and elders in the community. The formal interviews also revealed that English and Afrikaans are chosen to discuss sexually related matters, as it is taboo in Oshiwambo to talk publicly about such topics. The learner indicated that he does not feel bad when discussing an issue like sex or love in English or Afrikaans, because he constantly hears about it in both languages. However, when gossiping, one learner indicated that he used all three languages he can speak, Afrikaans, English and Oshiwambo. This comment is contrary to Bonvillain's findings that revealed that Spanish speakers in the USA speak English at work but when gossiping or they are on their way home they revert to Spanish.

The findings of this research have shown that female learners are the dominant group in relation to mother tongue use. During observations inside and outside the classroom, during school break or in the playground, the girls were the ones conversing more in their respective mother tongues than the boys. This finding is similar to Appalraju and de Kadt's study that shows that code switching is also gender-based and culturally influenced among the participants. Their study revealed that code switching between English and isiZulu was perceived as a male thing and carried the connotations of upward social mobility and success in the job market. The female pupils were strong advocates for the mother tongue because 'they tended to retain their use of Zulu to a much greater extent' (Appalraju and de Kadt 2001: 135).

From the formal tape-recorded interviews, only one participant indicated that he would like his children to speak, read and write Kwagali, his mother tongue. While the three Oshiwambo speaking boys all argued that they would prefer their children to speak English first, before they learn to speak Oshiwambo, for the simple fact of increasing education and employment opportunities. Females strongly supported the preservation of the mother tongue, maybe because they view themselves as the custodians of the mother tongue and as having the responsibility to transmit it to the next generation, probably like the isiZulu female pupils that speak without code switching among themselves to a greater degree than their male counterparts.

## Conclusion

The main findings of this study have shown that learners adopt communication strategies intentionally to serve certain purposes. Code switching is therefore a ‘powerful and potentially effective strategy’ that people have at their disposal and which they use to achieve predetermined social goals (Hecker, Meeuwis and Blommaert, as cited in Kamwangamalu 2000:64). As the literature has indicated time and time again, code switching is influenced by various social factors at interplay. However, this study indicates that negative attitudes toward the mother tongue are entrenched in the Namibian indigenous people and this needs to be addressed and redressed through the launching of national awareness campaigns that involve the government and its agencies, as well as traditional leaders and influential members of society.

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**APPENDIX A****Interviews Transcription****Interview I  
JOEL**

- E Hello, Joel. I am very happy you are here to talk about language and how you communicate with other people in your area and so on. What is your mother tongue?
- J Oshivambo
- E Which one – is it Oshincongga or Oshikwanyama?
- J Oshindonga
- E Can you read and write in Oshindonga?
- J Yes, I can read and write it, a little bit.
- E Were you taught in school to read and write in Oshindonga?
- J Yes. From Grade 1 till Grade 3.
- E Did you start Grade 1 here in Swakopmund or was it in the North?
- J Yes, it was in the North.
- E But you say you think you've forgotten how to write it, but can you read it?
- J Not exactly, but I think I can try to read it.
- E Can you speak it fluently?
- J Yes, I mean no, I cannot speak it fluently. I am not used to speak it, it's like a habit. I am used to speaking Afrikaans or English here in Swakopmund.
- E Are you saying that people in the North are unaware that you cannot communicate so well in Oshindonga, so they try and adapt to you by communication with you in English rather than in Oshindonga?
- J Yes.
- E If you are here in Swakopmund at home, how do you communicate – in which language?
- J Mostly in Oshiwambo to grown ups – to my siblings I communicate in Afrikaans, it's like a habit. We're used to speaking Afrikaans to one another.
- E Why do you communicate in Afrikaans to them?



- J We are all taught Afrikaans at school – somehow speaking it is showing that we all have gone to school, that's why we choose Afrikaans rather than Oshindonga.
- /2 (Interview Joel)
- E Do you speak Afrikaans rather than English to your siblings – at what particular instances do you find yourself sometimes mixing Oshindonga with Afrikaans or English or whatever.
- J Exactly. I sometimes mix all three languages.
- E At what particular words would you mix Oshindonga with Afrikaans or English? When you talk about what – is it experiences, feelings or words that are not in your language?
- J Maybe, it is a gossip, ja, like gossip.
- E Is it? So when you are gossiping you tend to Afrikaans or English?
- J I tend to use Oshiwambo mostly, then Afrikaans or English. Let's say I tend to use a mixture of the three languages when gossiping.
- E Is it? WOW!  
And let's say, if you meet here at school with a fellow oshindonga speaker, how do you address this person when you approach him/her?  
Let's say, you know the person, will you start speaking in Oshindonga, Afrikaans or English to this person?
- J Please would you repeat the question?
- E If you approach or are coming toward a person that you know is also Oshindonga speaking person, do you start speaking your mother tongue or what?
- J I will address him first in Afrikaans.
- E Why?
- J It's like a habit, I am used to it. I do it at home and at school. We meet people of other indigenous languages, so we speak Afrikaans, I am used to speaking Afrikaans with everybody except ...
- E Mhmmm .... so, even if the person is from the same language group as you, you will rather address this person in Afrikaans rather than in your mothertongue?
- J Yes. Up to a certain extent.
- E Up to extent that the other person switches to Oshindonga or what?
- J Up to an extent when maybe I want to explain something that might not sound rude in my language, than I will switch to mother tongue to convey the feeling that I want to say in English.
- E What are your personal reasons for you to use all these different languages within the same group – with your siblings – you said one it's when you are gossiping, when else do you use different languages instead – when you are discussing what type of topics?

- J When discussing something other than schoolwork – let`s say something happened – I prefer to speak all the languages or something like a youth topic – something to do with youths.
- /3 (Interview Joel)
- E How about when you are discussing politics or current affairs, things that are in the newspapers about the country or community – like robberies or crime – in what language do you discuss it?
- J Afrikaans. I prefer Afrikaans because when I was brought I know Afrikaans from an early age on, there are some words in Oshiwambo that I don`t know, and sometimes they sound very harsh – in Afrikaans they don`t sound so harsh.
- E You don`t want to use these harsh expressions in Oshiwambo, give an example.
- J It`s like sexual related words or issues – words having to do with sex – they are quite harsh and sound rude in Oshiwambo.  
I find it quite rude to swear in Oshiwambo but don`t feel the same in Afrikaans, because I am used to hearing them (words) in Afrikaans.
- E Where do You hear these words in Afrikaans?
- J Everywhere. People are using it, but it is not Oshiwambo culture to swear – one is not supposed to swear – those are rules you are supposed to obey.
- E For you when you are using “sexual language” you find it easy to speak/converse in Afrikaans, when does the English come in?
- J Mostly in the classrooms. Afrikaans is preferable when maybe we are discussing everyday topics, but English, I prefer to speak English, my understanding of English is much better when discussing academic matters, while Afrikaans is for everyday conversation with people of my age.
- E Your English academic level is much better than Afrikaans. When talking about schoolwork in classrooms do you find yourself speaking Afrikaans or not?
- J Mostly commonly I think I can really think in Afrikaans – when I think.  
I can relate to things that I was brought with during my life so much better ... the words.
- E Do words come easily to you in Afrikaans?
- J Yes.
- E But, the in exams – you`re writing an exam – in what language do you think?
- J I Sometimes find myself thinking in the indigenous language (Oshiwambo)  
English/Afrikaans.
- E In what particular order?
- J Like when it`s English, I can writing English. I try to imagine, translate it in Oshiwambo the way I think I understand it.
- E What else do you want to argue? Since you speak combination of languages.

What are you going to teach your children one day when you have them – do you want them to speak their mother tongue?

/4 (Interview Joel)

J I prefer them to speak English.

E What about Oshindonga?

J It will be second, I'll rather teach my kids how to speak English before they go to school so maybe, maybe I can help to start thinking in English.

E Pre-Primary

J Truly speaking. I don't think Oshiwambo is fitting into today's academic life.

E We don't only have an academic life, we also have a social life and a personal life and community life – how is your child going to fit into the community – Oshiwambo-speaking – while you want your child to speak only English – better for performances.

J Combination of languages lead to confuse Proficiency in English is important for academic reasons and for employment opportunities.

E Should the Ministry introduce a language policy that prescribe that everybody must have mother tongue instruction whether you're here or confined to rural areas?

J I don't want to support it – but if it is the only language in the community that you can relate to, than it should be allowed.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview with John**

E Hallo, John.

J Hallo Miss.

E Can you shift nearer, please?

J Okay.

E John, what's your mother tongue?

J Rukwangali is my mother tongue.

E Have you ever been taught in Rukwangali?

J Yes, from Grade 1 to 7.

E So, you've a good grounding in Rukwangali, you can read and write it.

J Yes, currently, I can read better than writing.

E Say, you come across a love storybook – with the same story in both English and Rukwangali – which book would you prefer to read?

J Preferably Rukwangali, because the language expresses more than English – I'll understand more.

E You can read more between the lines from the expressions?

J Yes.

E In which language do you mostly think?

J Mostly in English.

E Do you ever think in Rukwangali?

J No ... I don't think so.

E Really?

J Mmh ... maybe only when I was in Grade 8 and 9.

E Which moments were you thinking about what – was it about schoolwork, love, home sick or angry?

J When something was complicated?

E Something such as what, a complex mathematical problem or what?

J No, something to do with how I feel. I can't find the right word to express myself.

/2 (Interview John)

E Is it something like love – expressing your innermost feelings?

J Yes, innermost feelings.

E With other Kwangalis, which language do you use?

J Rukwangali.

E When you are in the Kavango area in the north – when you come across someone and you want to ask for directions, how will you address him/her. Is it first in Rukwangali and then English or what?

J Yes, I greet in Rukwangali first and then if there's no response then I'll switch to English.

E Is it because you assume that everyone in the Okavango area should be able to speak Rukwangali or what?

J Ja, that's the expectation, most of them speak that.

E It's a natural thing to speak Rukwangali first.

J Ja.

E So, what is the language used most at home?

J Rukwangali.

E How do you feel after a long time here when you go back home in the north?

J Nowadays I speak it on a daily basis where I stay.

E Most of the time you speak English because you're involved in a lot of activities with meetings?

J But when I am at home, people try to speak English to me, I always get upset, I tell them please, this is the only time I get to speak my mother tongue. Let's stick to it. During the holidays I also try to speak it as much as I can, but I don't spend enough time in the house.

E At school you use English for learning, reasoning and communication?

J Ja, I speak a little bit of Afrikaans, but I don't know it.

E How do the Kwangali youth when you address them in English – do they think you are “cool”, “high” or a “VIP” or high class or what? What is their reaction toward people that tend to speak English rather than their mother tongue?

J No, they don't think so. They prefer to listen to you when you speak to them in Rukwangali than in English.

E When I asked this, the girls were claiming that others of the same language group would view them as bragging.

What is your personal view or feeling toward your mother tongue – do you feel that it is a backward, inferior or low class or what?

/3 (Interview John)

J No, I feel proud to speak my mother tongue – that's my roots, my identity and my culture, that's who I am.

E What's your opinion of mother tongue instruction as a subject in secondary education till Grade 12?

J It will be a good thing if it is introduced till secondary education, because it will help us to relate more to what we are learning, because we will be able to comprehend much better to our own languages.

E Would you prefer your children to be taught your mother tongue at school?

J Yes, definitely, I will make sure that my children learn to speak, read and write Rukwangali. How can I teach my children my culture and my traditions if not through my own language.

E Thank you, John, for that comment and for the interview.

J It was a pleasure.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview with Peter

E Hallo, Peter.

P Hallo Miss.

E You were present when Joel argued that he doesn't want his children to be taught mother-tongue first. What's your views about that?

P I think indigenous languages are not so popular nowadays – not something that we should teach children to speak it with other people like foreigners.

E Is not about speaking to foreigners ... but about language as language. If we want our languages to survive, then we should teach our children to speak it, otherwise it will not survive on its own – it will die out. I must speak Otjiherero at home, if you're Ndonga than you must speak Oshindonga or whatever at home, why don't you want your children to speak Oshindonga?

P Is not that we don't to speak Oshindonga ....

E So, you are not going to speak Oshindonga at your home with your children one day?

P I have to ... I can.

E Can you speak it fluently?

P Not that fluently?

E Can you read and write it?

P Yes I can.

E Where did you learn to read and write it?

P I started learning it in the Confirmation school at the church.

E How old were you?

P Seventeen.

E So, you started learning to read and write Oshindonga when you were 17. Were you not taught in Grade 1 to 3? Where did you start school?

P No, I was not taught in school.

E Would you claim to read and write it competently?

P Yes.

E How long did you learn that ... a year or what?

P No, only a couple of months – about six months. But it was the church elders that forced us to learn – because at the end we had to write a test and oral testint by answering questions.

/2 (Interview Peter)

E Can you read the Oshiwambo section in one of the newspapers – do you read that part or not?

P Ja .... but not so fast like some languages, because in Oshiwambo we have long sentences say one word of about 12 letters – I read without understanding till I come to the end.

E Don`t you think African languages will die out if we don`t do anything about it?

P I think it will die out.

E What can we do, are we going to allow this to happen?

P No, we can`t allow that to happen, maybe we will try to bring it, introduce into urban schools just mostly use English/Afrikaans, but bring in both languages.

E From Grade 1 to which level?

P Maybe from Grade 1 – 10.

E Is that all?

P And then to Grade 11 to Grade 12.

E Do you think that language convey a certain social message to the listener about you?

P I don`t understand what you mean?

E Let`s say for example, you come and start to speak to a person in the north in Oshindonga, will the listener get a certain message about you?

P They will ... they will start laughing.

E Is it? What`s the message they get?

P They will know that you are an Oshindonga speaking person, but they will know that you are not used to it even if it is your language.

E You mean that they can see..... I mean hear that you don`t speak it very often. What type of attitude do people have toward fellow language speakers that are unable to express themselves fluently in their mother tongue?

P They start asking questions that you are from Angola.

E So, they start to assume that you are a foreigner, but if you tell them that you are not, what`s their reaction ... their attitude ... aren`t they surprised?

- P They are surprised, but they start asking why you speak as if you are not one of them. If I meet an Oshiwambo speaker in Owamboland, then it is difficult to understand what they say to me.
- E What do you speak then?
- P I speak mostly Afrikaans to my friends, brothers and sisters and a little bit of English, not so  
/3 (Interview Peter)
- P much English, and with my parents and their friends only in Oshiwambo.
- E With your father and mother, do you speak probably that little Oshiwambo, and they understand you, but why do you find it difficult to understand people in the north?
- P Those guys will for instance, say a word in Oshindonga, but will stress or put intonation differently will make it longer ....
- E When you are at school, learning and reasoning, do you try to think in your mother tongue in order to try and understand?
- P When I am writing Biology ... I think in Afrikaans.
- E Are you taught Biology in Afrikaans – why do.
- P No, but when you take it to Afrikaans from English, it is easy.
- E Is there no way that you think about schoolwork in your mother tongue?
- P No
- E When you are speaking to your grandmother you speak Oshindonga – your mother can probably speak a bit of Afrikaans?
- P No.
- E But why do you speak English or Afrikaans to your siblings, don't they speak Oshindonga?
- P They can talk to Mum in Oshindonga.
- E You mean that you normally exclude both your mothers in your conversations – I mean you and the children?
- P No, grandma understands Afrikaans but my mother does not.
- E How is that possible?
- P Grandma is an old Swakopmunder, that's why she understands.
- E In class, you speak a lot of Afrikaans among yourselves, I mean Oshiwambo speakers.
- P In class among others they complain that is not official – make remarks – stop that language.
- E How about when you start speaking English. What's the feeling of the group in the class?
- P It's like you are trying to be high or something.



- E English is the medium of instruction ... how about learners from former white schools when they speak English?
- P They are cool, they only speak English – come from better schools because of the English they speak.
- E Mmmh ... Thank you, Peter.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview David

#### E Hallo David.

- D Hallo Miss.
- E As you know I am investigating language choices – we in Namibia speak many languages – sometimes we use Afrikaans, English or any other local language. What's your mother-tongue?
- D Oshikwanyama.
- E Were you taught to read and write in your mothertongue? From which Grade ...?
- D Yes, I was in the north – from Grade 1 to 4, and when I came here I started Grade 1 again.
- E Can you read and write in Oshikwanyama?
- D No, I cannot.
- E How is that possible – you were taught to read/write it for four years?
- D Well, I was in a state of proceeding well, but was cut off ...
- E So, if you have to read a text in Oshikwanyama you won't be able to make sense of it?
- D I can, but it won't sound so good for those knowing the language.
- E In which language do you think when you are doing schoolwork, is it your mother tongue, English, or Afrikaans?
- D Mostly in English at school – event at home with my friends sometimes.
- E When you say sometimes when you think in English – is when you are thinking about what things?
- D Anything that comes in English.
- E When do you think in or speak Afrikaans? Do you have Afrikaans as a subject?

D No.

E So, your Afrikaans is diminishing, but last year you had Afrikaans, isn't it?

D Yes.

E At school which language do you mainly use?

D English most of the time, but at certain points I code switch in Afrikaans, but mostly I converse in English.

E When do you tend to code switch in Afrikaans?

/2 (Interview David)

D When speaking to learners who prefer Afrikaans or to a teacher when certain things – when I don't understand certain things.

E What about when with friends?

D Most of my friends converse in English, Oshiwambo and Afrikaans, but mostly English.

E When do you speak Oshiwambo?

D At my mother's family in the north – they don't understand English or Afrikaans. There's no other way of communicating with them.

E What about here in Swakopmund?

D With my siblings and cousins we speak English – but with my aunt we speak Oshiwambo that doesn't sound so convincing ....

E How old were you when you came to Swakopmund?

D Ten or eleven.

E You seem to have a good grounding in your mother tongue, how come you are struggling with it?

D I started school here I had to learn Afrikaans, than English – like I was forced to know these two – no space for mother tongue.

E What about at home after school?

D Most of the time people spoke Afrikaans to me.

E Why? ... was it a sort of way to help you to acquire the language much faster?

D Yes ... people here in Swakopmund are used to speaking Afrikaans. They were/are employed by Afrikaans speakers – it is important to know the language.

E So, they went out of their way to make sure that you master the language?

D Yes.

E You said you speak English with your sisters .... where do they attend school?

D One is at SSS and the other at WSH.

E Can these two speak Oshiwambo?

D They do, but not so well.

E What do you do when you are in the north?

D I mostly of the time enjoy my own company, because I hate it, I mean I hate to talk when people laugh at me when I speak Oshiwambo.

/3 (Interview David)

E What is your opinion of mother tongue instruction in education – do you think it should have a place or not?

D Yes, I think, it should really, the more the ages or the time goes by, the more we'll forget about our own culture and languages. We even know more about the foreign countries than our own.

E What do you mean it should ... can you elaborate a bit, how will your mother tongue helps you to understand the foreign language?

D Like in class, come across a word that you don't understand in English, the teacher explains in Afrikaans, still you are left in the dark, I think if it was to be explained in one's mother tongue it will be much better.

E You mean to get an equivalent of that word in your mother tongue?

D Yes.

E Thanks David.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1-2
Methodology .....	1-2
Analyses of the Questionnaire .....	2-3
The Documents analyses .....	4
The language policy document .....	4-10
The Reform Process .....	10-14
The Curriculum Document Analysis.....	14-18
Synthesis. ....	18-19
References .....	20-21
Appendix .....	22-26

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Epistemology

Abstract

Introduction

Behaviourism

Behaviourism and Knowledge

Behaviourism and Realism

Behaviourism and Materialism

Behaviourism and Positivism

Constructivism and Knowledge

Information Processing Constructivism

Radical Constructivism

Social Constructivism

Behaviourism versus Constructivism

References

## **EPISTEMOLOGY**

### **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to look critically at the epistemological approaches embedded in the Behaviourist and Constructivism theories of education. Each theory will be reviewed and analyzed in relation to approaches associated with it. Then, a critical look at the weaknesses and strengths of each theory will be considered. This will enable the writer to come to an accurate understanding of how the two approaches complement or contradict each other as well as their usefulness to educational practice under the Reform Process in Namibia.

### **Introduction**

The traditional view of knowledge is based on the common sense belief that 'a real world exists regardless of whether we take interest in it or even notice it (Bodner 1986: 874). Humans are considered to be mere 'discoverers' who construct copies or replicas of reality on their minds. This approach views the mind as a 'black box', able to be judged accurately in terms of what goes in (stimulant) and what comes out (response). Knowledge is viewed as truth only when it agrees well with independent, objective reality.

The constructivist view of knowledge views the environment as 'a black box', meaning that we know what is going on in our minds, but can only guess about the relationship between our mental structure and the real world (Bodner 1986).

Empiricism originates from the Greek word meaning experience. The early Greek philosophers such as Aristotles and Plato are associated with the Idealist tradition that regards knowledge as the awareness of absolute universal ideas or forms.

Plato viewed knowledge as existing independently of any subject (person) trying to comprehend it. Aristotle, on the other hand, stressed the importance of the logical and

empirical techniques of gathering knowledge, although he supported the notion that postulated knowledge as the understanding of necessary and universal principles (Van Harmelen 1995). The 'idealists' provided a solution by suggesting that 'nothing exists', beside the concepts carried by the human mind.

After the Renaissance the two epistemologies that dominated the philosophy were empiricism and rationalism. Aspin defines empiricism as the philosophy that 'views experience as the only source of knowledge' (Aspin 1982:21). Rationalism considers knowledge to be the product of rational reflection, in other words, knowledge in this philosophy is seen as resulting from a kind of reflection of external objects through our sensory organs possibly with the assistance of various observation instruments to our brain or mind

However, during the same period, Kant developed a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. He argued that knowledge results from the organization of discernable information based on inborn cognitive structures, which he referred to as 'categories'. These categories included space, time, objects and the causality. From Kant's point of view, knowledge is embedded within space and time (Kant, as cited in Aspin 1995).

## **BEHAVIOURISM**

Logical empiricism is rooted in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and is associated with British empiricists such as Locke, Hume, Berkeley and Bacon. The work of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, stressed the need of making an attempt to describe all our experience of reality and the world through recording and then classification of all the results of observation and of its appearance, and, then examines the data impartially and objectively as possible (Aspin 1995).

Behaviourism links the study of human behaviour to the early positivist work of Comte, and supported the classical empirical belief that all authentic knowledge is based on sense-experience and can only be promoted by means of observation and experience. By following this tradition, behavioural enquiry was/is confined to what could be firmly determined through observation only, rejecting speculation, mental concepts and inner states as having no influence on the observable behaviour (Van Harmelen 1995).

However, John Locke (1632-1704) expanded on Aristotle's ideas of observation, recording and classification of information by focusing on

- (a) the nature of the experience itself;
- (b) the ways in which humans acquire their knowledge of the world; and
- (c) the validity and reliability of information collected in this manner (Aspin 1995). For them, the only way in which one can get such an experience is the evidence in the combination of senses and the emotions to form meaningful concepts via psychological principles such as association (Aspin 1995).

This was a deliberate moving away from the rationalist explanations of human knowledge as proposed by Plato and his followers. The empiricists attached no credibility to rationalist claims they were interested in an account of the growth of human ideas and knowledge that was fixed only in human experience. Philosophers of science and mathematics involved in the work of a group that was known as the 'Vienna Circle' who emphasized the verification and application of the empiricist/positivist approach to the problems of philosophy. The 'Vienna Circle's programme was serving two purposes:

- (a) to get rid of metaphysics and to establish methods of natural sciences and
- (b) to set up a paradigm to which all enquiries claiming intellectual acceptance will adhere to.

In conclusion, the historical development of the epistemology shows a clear trend, despite the confusion of many seemingly contradictory arguments. The first theories of knowledge stressed its absolute, permanent character, whereas, the latter theories put the emphasis on its relativity and situation dependence, its continuous development or evolution, and its active interference with the world and its subjects and objects. The whole trend moves from a static, passive view of knowledge towards a more and more adaptive and active one.

Having considered the historical views of the epistemology, I will now focus on contemporary theories on knowledge.



According to Cornbleth (1987), myths fulfill an important social function role, particularly in promoting the acquisition of valued knowledge and in terms of contributing to social justice. Myths are defined as the widely held beliefs with strong associations to pertinent evidence or circumstances. Thus, sometimes beliefs can be seen as 'truths' or as 'common sense' empirically establish facts or natural laws (Cornbleth 1987: 186).

For the purpose of this article, I will focus attention on the functional role of myths in relation to the acquisition of valued knowledge, the stress being on the 'myths of thinking skills' and the right answer as manifestations of Western middle class worldviews and values that have been made to appear universal (Cornbleth 1987:189).

Furthermore, Cornbleth elaborated that increasing evidence shows that the development of thinking and associated skills is highly knowledge-dependent. This simply means that we cannot think about ideas we encounter unless we know something about the topic or area in question. Knowledge, in which thinking is located, is more empirical than conceptual. In schools, for instance, the various fields of knowledge have different logics or mode of reasoning. McPeck, as cited in Cornbleth (1987) maintains that these modes of reasoning are not mutually exclusive, the standards of judgment for what counts as sound knowledge and argument differ from one subject area to another. Therefore, knowledge is regarded as procedural, normative, empirical and conceptual.

Thus, we can see the importance of teacher empowerment in terms of logical self-control as proposed by Prawat (1991) that enables the teacher either to accept or reject knowledge claims advanced by the so-called experts in the field. This has to do more with reasoning, or the internal dialogue as Peirce referred to it in his writings back in 1870. For him reasoning was the purpose of persuading the critical self. However, Prawat commented that Dewey elaborated on this concept by defining critical reflection as a process that involves 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that supports it, and the further consequences to which it leads' (Prawat 1991:741)

In summary, contemporary views on knowledge seem to reject the notion of knowledge as an external entity that encroaches itself upon the receiver. It is clear that these

approaches consider knowledge as contestable, changing and challengeable. Social knowledge is socially constructed, and depends on the value and beliefs of a particular society in a given period. Scientific knowledge is regarded as universal at a particular time or period, but it is neither, static or fixed, it could change in the light of new scientific discoveries or research.

Nevertheless, knowledge as an epistemological concept is located within two different schools of thought, which are behaviourism and constructivism theories. I will now focus on the views of these two theories of education on knowledge respectively.

## **BEHAVIOURISM AND KNOWLEDGE**

The founding fathers of behaviourism were Pavlov (1849-1936), Watson (1878-1958) and Skinner (1904-1990). Behaviourism theory uses the scientific approach as its springboard in education. Knowledge, according to this approach, is acquired through observation and experimentation, and that, is claimed to be 'true knowledge'. Any other knowledge is regarded as 'mere' speculation and as of no value (Van Harmelen 2000). Van Harmelen further commented that according to this tradition, knowledge is considered to be 'out there' waiting to be discovered; hence, it is viewed as external to the human mind. This resulted in the notion of 'one right answer' or truth. Knowledge is also regarded as fixed, unchanging, unchallengeable, value-free and not related to understanding.

Furthermore, behaviourism has connections with three different theories that are known as follow: Realism, Materialism and Positivism. I will now highlight these various theories in relation to behaviourism respectively.

### **Behaviourism and Realism**

Behaviourism is associated with modern realism due to its practical support of science. Both approaches stressed the importance of carrying out a thorough study of particular behaviours in order to understand human conduct. Ozman and Craver commented that

realist behaviourist stresses the observation of particular facts, rather than the observation of forms or laws of behaviour. While, on the other hand, the behaviourist's argument is that the visible characteristics of an individual is not influenced by emotions, but are merely behaviour patterns that are affected by the environment through conditioning (Ozman & Craver 1986).

The realist behaviourist is leaning toward the importance of perceivable, factual aspects of the universe as important, seeking meaning in the facts as we find them. While pure behaviourist on the other, holds the view that we should not look at the mind, consciousness or soul as the seat of behaviour, but rather focus on what we can see and test (Ozman & Craver 1986).

### **Behaviourism and Materialism**

Materialism behaviorism originated from the Greek philosophy. Materialism as a theory maintains that reality is explicable through the laws of matter and motion. In other words what one can see and what one can do, that is what makes reality or truth. The inner person or psychological make-up of an individual is rejected of no importance in determining observable behaviour.

Thomas Hobbes (1588- 1679) is closely associated with mechanistic materialism, arguing that an individual psychological make-up, can be explained in mechanistic terms, meaning the humans experience objects by their qualities through perceptions or feeling. For him (Hobbes), sensation is physical while quality is motion (Ozman & Craver 1986).

### **Behaviourism and Positivism**

Watson's inclinations for giving acceptance only to those things that are directly observable set a pattern for those who succeeded him. This notion was strongly supported by Thorndike who argued that anything, which exists, consists of some quantity that is measurable. Auguste Comte initiated the philosophical principle that is known as positivism. His objectives were to reform society, and, therefore, he argued for a positive social science to achieve this end. This gave birth to the concept that if scientific

principles are applied to social conditions, we would be able to recognize the laws constituting the social order, their evolution and the techniques to apply them more systematically (Ozman & Craver 1986). The test value of this knowledge would be extent to which it will assist us in changing the material world and society to conditions that are more desirable. The positivist theory stresses the fact that one should not attempt to go beyond observable and measurable facts (Ozman & Craver 1986).

Through various readings engaged in, I reach the understanding that knowledge is socially constructed within the boundaries of a specific society within a particular period, while the historical sociopolitical situation of that society will have an influence on it as well. Knowledge that is gained through observation and experimentation has value to society in terms of scientific explorations, but is not the ultimate knowledge. The making sense of this type of knowledge will depend on factors such as the educational and social background of an individual, information, ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes and skills, all of which the behaviourist theory fails to take into account.

In summary, behaviourism and its associated theories strongly emphasize the importance of applying scientific principles to observe, record, measure and understand observable human behaviour. The realist theory is stressing the importance of undertaking a thorough study of observable facts, while materialism is explaining reality through the scientific laws of matter and motion. The same pattern of observing and measuring human behaviour is postulated by the positivist theory as the ultimate determinant factor in understanding behaviour.

In conclusion, the observable behaviour is considered more important than the invisible inner qualities of a person that could also influence the observable behaviour.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM AND KNOWLEDGE

The Constructivism contends that knowledge does not exist outside a person. True knowledge can only exist when it is created within the mind of a knowledgeable being. If we (humans) are to understand any event, situation or problem, we need to rely on our existing knowledge base (Etchberger & Shaw 1992).

Von Glaserfeld maintains the same opinion that knowledge 'is not passively received, but is actively built by the cognizant being.' For him, the construction of knowledge is a 'search for a fit' rather than a match with reality (von Glaserfeld 1989: 182). The argument here is that individuals construct their own reality or knowledge. How then, is it possible for a group of people to share the same common knowledge?' The point that von Glaserfeld stressed repeatedly is that knowledge must 'fit reality'. Therefore, knowledge construction is a process whereby knowledge is both built and continually tested (von Glaserfeld in Bodner 1986).

Most cognitive scientists now believe in a constructionist model of knowledge that endeavours to answer the primary question of the epistemology, which is, 'how do we come to know what we know?' (Bodner 1983:873). This led to the single statement concerning the constructivist model: the learner constructs knowledge in his/her mind. Pioneers of constructivism such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner supported this idea. Piaget argued that knowledge is constructed in the mind that is subjective and private, but despite its privacy, the mind generates a product that is public, which is worldly, useful knowledge. This definitely includes our knowledge of the natural world as well as our knowledge of the social world and the knowledge about us.

For Piaget, knowledge of the world is made, not found. Furthermore, Piaget believed that 'knowledge is acquired as the result of a life-long constructive process in which we try to organize, structure, and restructure our experiences in the light of existing schemes of thought, and by gradually adapting and expanding these schemes' (Bodner 1986: 874).

Bodner argues that there was a hidden assumption that knowledge can be transferred intact from the mind of the teacher to that of the learner. This is where the difference comes into play, the constructivist model maintains that knowledge should fit reality the same way a key fits a lock. The difference between the concepts of 'fit and match' shows how radically constructivism differs from the traditional view of knowledge. Knowledge is good if and when it works, and if and when it allows us to achieve our goals. In this model, knowledge is seen as viable (Bodner 1986).

The constructivism theory has three approaches embedded in it. These are the following: Information processing, Radical, Critical and Social constructivism.

### **Information Processing Constructivism**

All the Constructivism theories consist of the first principle that holds that knowledge is constructed within the cognizant being in relation to pre-existing mental structures (Bodner 1986).

The information processing theory is based on the metaphor that the conscious model of the mind is viewed as a computer. The mind as a computer processes information and data, calling up various routines and procedures, organizing memorization and retrieval of data. This theory recognizes that knowing involves active processing, that is individual and personal, and that is based on previously acquired knowledge (Ernst 1993).

### **Radical Constructivism**

The second principle of this theory asserts that the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organization of experiential world, not the 'ontological reality' (von Glaserfeld, as cited in Ernst 1993). This radical constructivist model relates that the 'the experiencing organism' turns into a builder or creator of cognitive structures intended to solve problems as the organism perceives or conceives' (von Glaserfeld, as cited in Ernst 1993).

## **Social Constructivism**

This theory is the most current form of constructivism. Social constructivism views individual subjects and the realm of the social as completely interconnected. Human subjects are formed through their interactions with each other (Ernst 1993). The underlying metaphor here is that of people that are engaged in a meaningful linguistic as well as extra linguistic interactions, rather than a metaphor of the isolated individual mind (Ernst 1993). Within this model, the individual is making sense of his/her world via the sharing of ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes within his/her society and with his/her contemporaries. However, the socially constructed reality is constantly subjected to adaptations in order to fit reality, and to pre-arrange it according to socially accepted assumptions despite the failure of giving a 'true picture' of it (Ernst 1993).

In summary, all three theories of constructivism adheres to the first principle of constructivism that asserts that 'knowledge is not passively received, but is actively built up by the cognizant being'. The information processing theory seeks knowing as involving active processing theory on the part of the individual and the making sense of becomes individual and personal. The radical model considers the individual as actively creating cognitive structures, to solve problems, while relying on previous experience doing so in isolation.

The social constructivist model places the individual within a society, creating his/her social reality within a society through shared experiences, values, beliefs and so forth through the process of social interaction. Vygotsky maintained that we make sense of our place in the world through social interaction (Vygotsky 1987).

The Constructivism approach has its limitations as a technique within the classroom situation. For instance, the interactive engagement with students' ideas would be time-consuming, and, therefore less content will be covered in a given period than in a more traditional didactic delivery (Davson-Galle 1999).

However, the 'exchange of ideas' should also involve acquainting students with the current concepts and hypotheses of science. On the concept of evaluation of new ideas that the students are expected to consider what is to be taken as a satisfactory educational

outcome emerging from a consideration of a range of different views. The attitude of Constructivism to the situation where the students are prone to be persuaded by a different view is regarded as out of step with current best theory and thus needs further consideration. To sum up shortly, Constructivism is only good in parts, and the good parts are separable from the bad (Davson-Galle 1999).

### **Behaviourism Vs Constructivism**

For the behaviourist the 'only true knowledge' is the observable, measurable facts that could be obtain with the aid of different observation instruments. The scientific principles have a bearing on this approach in relation to knowledge that could be tested for validity and reliability. This type of knowledge is contested as only 'true' knowledge. The individual is a passive object at the receiving end of this reflection of external artifacts on his /her mind and brain.

A weakness of this approach is the fact that knowledge is said to be unchanging, unchallenged, value-free and not in need of understanding (Van Harmelen 1995).

The Constructivism approach argues that the individual is actively participating in the acquisition and processing of knowledge. The individual, through social encounters, is actively engaged in constructing his/her own social reality within the framework of his/her immediate community in particular and his/her society in general.

Knowledge is challengeable, provisional and contested. It is also context, content and time-bound. This simply means that what counts as knowledge today in a certain place or subject will not apply as knowledge tomorrow in the face of new evidence (Van Harmelen 2000).

Constructivism as an approach is essential in imparting practical knowledge, while it could prove to be time-consuming in a syllabus driven curricula. It shows limitations when considering the notion of constructing new ideas, but also the evaluation of these new ideas could yield different synthesis and antithesis (Davson-Galle 1999).

The Constructivism model is the ideal one to my situation in my professional capacity as a language teacher, where active participation through interactions is a prerequisite in a



learner-centred approach classroom. However, it has its advantages and disadvantages that are separable from each other.

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## **Factors influencing language choices**

*Please tick the appropriate answer were relevant.*

1. Can you read and write in your mother tongue? **YES / NO**

2. Were you taught in your mother tongue in school? **YES / NO**

If yes, tick the appropriate grades:

**Grades: 1-3**

**Grades: 1-4**

**Grades: 1-5**

**Grades: 1-6**

**Grades: 1-7**

3. Does the knowledge of your mother tongue help you to understand English much better? **YES / NO**

4. Where did you start Grade 1? (Give place and region.)

.....

.....

5. Would you like to have your mother tongue as a subject in school? (Give reasons for your answer)

.....

.....

6. Were you taught in your mother tongue in non-promotional subjects only or others as well?

.....

7. What is your view of your mother tongue, do you feel proud to speak it or not?

.....

.....

8. When and with whom do you communicate in English?

.....

.....

9. Do you use English and Afrikaans on equal level? **YES / NO.**

If no, when and with whom do you speak it, and why do you choose to speak one above the other.

.....

.....

.....

10 With whom do you communicate exclusively in English?

- **Friends**
- **Teachers**
- **Officials**
- **Siblings**
- **Other**

(If other,specify).....

.....

## **Questionnaire**

### **Factors influencing language choices**

*Please complete the following questionnaire as soon as convenient. Don't put your name on it. Confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. This is only for a research paper on language purpose. Thanking you in advance for your assistance in this regard.*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter offers a critical analysis of the approaches that informs the small-scale study that is investigating the various factors that can have an influence on the language choices of multilingual learners at a secondary school in Swakopmund, Namibia. The premises of the argument informing the study are outlined in Figure 2. 1. The paper is structured around these premises and the argument will be explored by considering the various theoretical perspectives.

Language, according to Vygotsky, is a tool for thought, and, thus, central to learning. Thought does not occur in isolation, but within social interaction. Vygotsky further argued that culture and thinking are inseparable, and, that cognitive development is seen as influenced by both inner development and society (Vygotsky 1987).

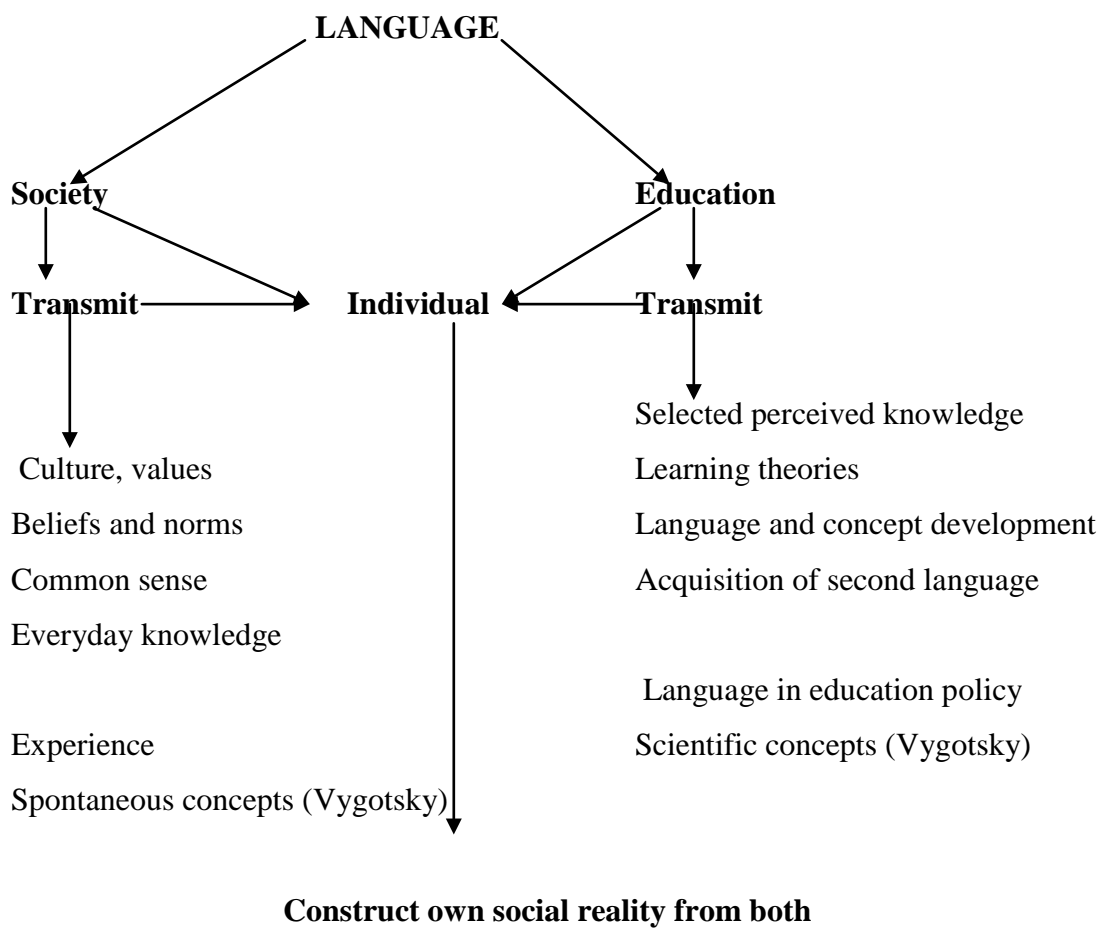
If language is to be recognized as an essential mode of communication and learning, and, therefore, an indispensable element in education, then we need to raise the following questions:

- 1) How are we going to promote indigenous languages in Namibia to become the languages of communication among the various youth, while the tendency among the youth is to regard the speaking of mother tongue as a sign of being primitive and ignorance?
- 2) What can be done to develop the indigenous languages in this country to become written as well as spoken languages among urban youths in the future?
- 3) How can we successfully promote the acquisition of a third language whilst that language is greatly overpowered by a second language (Afrikaans) at some of our schools?

- 4) Why is Afrikaans still the lingua franca among the youth at some of the schools in this country?

In order to make these statements or questions clear, we need to review critically the notions related to language learning.

**Figure 2.1. The functions of language in society**





The researcher designed the diagram above in an attempt to explain the functions of language in society.

## **2.2. Language and Learning Theories**

Vygotsky asserted that culture and language form a dialectic relationship that is open and generative respectively. His interest was to discover how a cultural tool such as language gets from “outside to inside”. He observed the use of language by young children when solving practical tasks with or without assistance. His observations led him to believe that language is involved which he refers to as “egocentric speech”, which means that the child is speaking to him/herself either aloud or silently, as a means of guiding or making himself/herself understand what s/he is doing.

The older child might be reasoning quietly through the various stages/steps of what to do and he viewed this process 'as internalized thought or inner speech'. Therefore, Vygotsky maintained that language is a silent tool for thought (Vygotsky 1987). For him, the relationship between speech and action is regarded as dynamic in a child's development. At the very beginning, action is viewed as preceding language, while during the latter stages inner speech appears to initiate action. For instance, young children will draw something first, and then name it, while it will be the opposite for the older child, who first think or decide what to draw. These two types of communication by children are seen as social, and it is said to occur from the social to the individual rather than from the individual to the social (Vygotsky 1987).

## **2.3. Language and Concept development**

Vygotsky viewed concept development as bound to language, because he asserted that real concepts are impossible in the absence of words, and, that thinking in concepts is impossible beyond verbal thinking.

Hence, the central moment in concept formation and its generative use is the specific use of words as functional “tools”. The development of true concepts is seen as the gradual

process from the more knowledgeable to the less knowledgeable ones, but it is rather based on the collaboration that takes place through social interactions (Glassman 2001). Glassman maintains that Vygotsky's spontaneous and scientific concepts are of importance to education. He elaborated that spontaneous concepts are common sense every day understanding, and these are learned unconsciously through experience. While on the other hand, scientific concepts are acquired through instruction and mediation.

Bagus and Moll (1998) revisited Vygotsky's notion of spontaneous and scientific concepts. They assert that the notion of concepts are suitable to the comprehension of differences between the formal, abstract knowledge of school, and the every day cultural experience or prior knowledge that is learned unconsciously through social interactions in the community. Scientific concepts are viewed as lacking personal experience, which each individual child brings into the learning situation. However, their tenacity lies in their conscious and deliberate character (Bagus and Moll, as cited in Vygotsky 1987).

The social interactions serve the purpose of creating, obtaining and communicating meaning. This collaboration is termed "scaffolding" by Bruner, and is the process whereby the adult (parent or teacher) "lends consciousness" to the child who does not have it and helps him/her through the Zone of Proximal Development. The ZPD is the existing gap between what one can do unaided on one's own, and what one can accomplish with hints and assistance from knowledgeable others (Bruner, as cited in Schunk 1996).

This deals with pedagogy through the forefronting of questions or problems, by sequencing steps to aid understanding, by promoting negotiation or by some other form of scaffolding. This requires a lot of guided participation, and what children acquire is not necessarily an exact replica or accurate representation of what was transmitted to them. The learner will internalize the new knowledge with the old one to create new meanings and understanding. Therefore, cultural tools such as language are not acquired passively from the interactions of the knowledgeable ones (Glassman 2001)

As it is known children do not enter classrooms empty-headed, but what they learn in the classroom depends to a large extent on what they already know. Their concepts or 'schematas' could be hazy, incomplete or plainly wrong, but the school will change these via teacher –talk, through telling, demonstrations, explanations and elaboration. These will enable the learners to work out different tasks or activities designed to allow the practice, development, or generation of a wide range of knowledge and understanding. This process takes place through social interaction (Bennett & Dunne, as cited in Moon & Shelton 1994).

Learning is seen as awakening a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his/her environment and in co-operation with his/her peers. Social interaction is therefore given a central role in facilitating learning.

Vygotsky maintained that a child's potential for learning is revealed and is often realized through interactions with more knowledgeable ones. He further stressed that the foundation of learning and development as a co-operatively achieved success depends solely on language and communication. Children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech (inner/egotistical) as well as with their eyes and hands (Vygotsky 1987).

Splitter's notion of a community of inquiry is founded on Vygotsky concept of language as the major tool in carrying out activities such as thinking, talking and writing. He argues that the chief dynamic is dialogue, which can be characterized as structured or connected conversation. Interpersonal dialogue is the tool by which a community of inquiry publicly reasons its way toward the truth and understanding. Learners can develop competence through dialogue by expressing their thoughts and experiences and testing or applying it to the more general concepts, criteria and principles as understood by others. Through this dialogue a deeper understanding and thoughtfulness will take place. 'The linguistic interchange involved in dialogue shapes our thinking as much as it is shaped by it' (Splitter 1991:102).

Through inner speech and other significant people in a child's life, children begin to organize their experiences into thought, and thus, one of the major functions of language that should concern teachers is its use for learning. For example, learners need to express themselves when trying to put new ideas into words, testing out one's thinking on others, fitting together new ideas and so on, all these are necessary to bring about new understanding. These functions suggest active uses of language by the pupils, as opposed to passive reception (Murray 1989).

The survey that was carried out by APU in the 1980's has reinforced the status of classroom talk. The findings revealed that gains in mastery of spoken language might have beneficial effects on pupils' learning capabilities. The experience of expressing and shaping ideas through talk as well as writing and, of collaborating to discuss problems or topics helps to develop a critical and exploratory attitude towards knowledge and concepts.

It was recommended that pupils' performances could be considerably enhanced if they were given regular opportunities in the classroom to use their speaking and learning skills over a range of purposes, in a relaxed atmosphere (APU, as cited in Moon & Shelton 1994). Due to APU's recommendations, the authors of the English National Curriculum proposed a separate component for speaking and listening, hence demonstrating their belief in oracy. This was done to show their conviction that these skills are of central importance to children's development (National Curriculum Council 1989). Learning is regarded as optimized in settings where learners are encouraged to talk.

According to Schunk Vygotsky considered the social environment as critical for learning and thought, putting forward the argument that the integration of the social with the personal factors produces learning. The social environment is seen as influencing cognition through its 'tools' that is its cultural objects, (i.e., cars, machines) and its language and social institutions such as churches, schools. Thus, cognitive change is regarded as a result of using cultural tools in social interactions and from internalizing and mentally transforming these interactions. Language is considered to be the most influential process in the dialectic relationship because it emphasizes the interaction between persons and their environment (Schunk 1996).

## **2.4. Second language acquisition and learning**

The term acquisition in relation to language ‘refers to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations’ (Yule 1985). While, the term ‘learning’ applies to a conscious and deliberate process of accumulating knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. Yule asserts that the acquisition of a language is associated with activities that are experienced by a young child or ‘picking up’ another language through long periods of exposure in social interaction. However, the second language speaker’s experience is primarily a learned one, which lacks the tendency of developing the proficiency of those who have had an acquiring experience (Yule 1985).

In Africa in general, and in Namibia in particular, some obvious reasons for the problems experienced in second language acquisition could be related to the fact that most people are exposed to the learning of another language during teenage years. This is done in a few hours on a weekly basis at school, rather than through constant interactive experiences.

The argument supporting this notion stresses that the learners in their early teens are prone to be quicker and more effective second language learners than for instance 7 year olds. This is due to the ‘flexibility’ of the language faculty that is still not lost completely, and, the maturation of cognitive skills that allows a more effective ‘working out’ of the regular features of a second language encountered (Yule 1985).

The most recent approach to second language teaching, which is generally used, is commonly referred to as the communicative thematic approach. It is based on the view that the functions of language should be emphasized rather than the correct grammatical structure (Yule 1985). This technique is characterized by lessons organized around concepts and themes relevant to everyday experiences in a learner’s life or relevant to

various social contexts. One of the dominant features of this approach is the leniency or tolerance toward language mistakes such as spelling, concord and tenses. In the traditional approach, errors were seen as negative and were penalized. However, the current approach sees such errors as 'acceptable' in relation to second language acquisition and learning. Errors are not regarded as a hindrance to the learners' progress, but rather as an indication of the gradual acquisition and learning process in action. Therefore, mistakes are considered to be an active learning progress made by the learner while he or she is trying out strategies of communication in a new language (Murray 1989).

For example, if the plural form of the common nouns women and children, are given wrongly as womens/childrens, this is considered to be a kind of creative or innovative construction in accordance with the most general rule of making regular plural forms in English. This is what is taking place in the Namibian English Second Language classrooms at secondary level, credit is awarded on the basis of what a learner can do and penalty is not applicable at all (Yule 1985).

This is in harmony with Murray's ideas that a different approach is needed in relation to errors, because it is inevitable to make mistakes in language learning. Mistakes are actually in fact, an indication that a learner is testing out in practice whatever knowledge he/she has acquired in a second language (Murray 1989). According to Krashen, language learning occurs when we are listening or reading rather than when we are writing or speaking. Then we practice what we have learned through listening when we speak or write. One of the factors conducive to learning a language well is familiarity along with the introduction of some new language, for example, English, which means that there must be a gap between what is known and what is new. The learner must be able to make sense actively of what she knows, in order to make sense of what he/she does not know Krashen, as cited in Murray 1989).

Additionally, language learning occurs better when the learners are feeling relaxed and secure rather than anxious or threatened. For example, a learner may feel anxious because of the fear of exposing him/herself to correction by the teacher, or even to the

ridicule of fellow learners. Instead of spending energy in language learning, his/her energies are expended in avoidance and face-saving strategies. Therefore, a good language environment where learning could take place in a relaxed atmosphere is requirement (Yule 1985).

Murray (1989) argues that the learning of a second language should be based on three basic principles. The first principle is that of building on what the child already knows from his/her first language. Language itself is given, in other words, the child already has knowledge and experience of language. Hence, we should build on what the child already knows about language from learning her first language. Additionally, we must also build on what the child already knows in the second language (Murray 1989). The child's language must be extended and consolidated on a daily basis, and, this will yield a process where the new language becomes a consolidated given language. Murray is also of the opinion that it is helpful to consciously teach children strategies for concept development to make them aware that new concept relate to existing ones. This will encourage the learners to understand that learning is an ongoing process.

The second principle in second language learning is the active involvement of learners in the language classroom. This means that learners must be mentally engaged, exploring ideas, testing out hypotheses, solving problems, in other words seeking to make sense of language and to understand his/her world. The third principle is that of seeking to build confidence and to reduce anxiety in the language classrooms (Murray 1989). Language learning is a social activity, and therefore, children must learn to work with others by sharing information, by learning through dialogue, by testing out their ideas on others, and by making use of feedback. The goal of second language teaching should be the enabling of learners to develop the skills and strategies that will enable them to become independent learners (Murray 1989).

## **2.5 Language in education policy in Namibia**

A brief review of the pre-independent Namibian language policy in education will be considered in order to explain the current prevalent language dilemma we are experiencing in language classrooms in particular, and, in education in general.

Afrikaans was actively promoted in Namibia from the 1970 onwards, and it gradually spread efficiently as the medium of instruction in most state schools across the country with the exception of the Caprivi region. By making it the medium of instruction, Afrikaans was established as a second language in Namibia and eventually became the lingua franca among the various ethnic groups (Cluver 1989). Afrikaans was introduced as a medium of instruction after the first three to four years of mother tongue instructions according to the various indigenous mother tongues.

After independence, many Namibians opted for a model in which English would be used as the medium of instruction from the first year, 'a model that has been proved to be disadvantageous to the child,' particularly the indigenous African child (Bamgbose, as cited in Cluver 1992).

However, the Afrikaans mother tongue speakers (white) and the German settlers who learned to speak Afrikaans fluently formed the gate for economic and social mobility of indigenous Namibians. This was due to positions of economic, social and political power that the Afrikaners occupied, while the Germans mostly occupied economic power in Namibia in general. This served as a highly efficient mechanism to spread Afrikaans as a second language and thus eventually to enable it to become the lingua franca in Namibia, particularly in urban areas (Cluver 1992).



## **The language in education policy in post -independent Namibia**

*‘An official language is the main language in which the government and its Agencies communicate with the people whom they serve.’*

(Harlech-Jones 2000: 27).

The choice of an official language for an independent Namibia was politically and socially motivated, and, thus, had an impact on the choice of language in education. Although the language in education policy of the former colonial power did not differ in principle from the model that was proposed by SWAPO for an independent Namibia, the South African model was stigmatized from the Namibian perspective (EFA 1993). In the light of this evidence, the policy of mother tongue instruction and the codification of indigenous language were viewed as another way of perpetuating the apartheid principles and thus became stigmatized in the eyes of the Namibian indigenous people.

*‘All languages are equally capable of expressing whatever their users need them to express, and have equal potential, although historical events may significantly benefit or impede a particular language’.*

McArthur quoted in Chick as cited in Kgomoewana & Masekela 1993).

For an average African living on the African continent, McArthur’s words do not apply in terms of a good or quality education. In African terms, formal education is a foreign commodity, leading to affluence, and as such, to be regarded as prestigious, it needs to be in a foreign language, not in an African language (Bamgbose as cited in Alexander 2000). Bamgbose (2000) argues that African languages in education do not command the respect that they should, and therefore, English becomes the parents' choice for their children where an alternative African medium is available. This leads us to an understanding of why the current government opted for a foreign official language, and how this choice had a ripple effect on the language in education policy in particular.

After independence, the intention of promoting indigenous languages did not materialize as the newly elected government had envisaged. This was due to financial resources, as well as the stigma associated with mother tongue instruction of the notorious Bantu education policy that plagued the South African and the Namibian indigenous people during the Apartheid era (Alexander 2000).

The language in education policy stipulated and stressed the equality of all languages, putting in place a policy that promotes mother tongue instruction for the first three to four years. English has become the medium of instruction from year three or four, depending on the choice of the Regional Education Office, subject to the guidance of the educational director in each of the various regions respectively (Swarts 2000)

Due to the stigma associated with mother tongue instruction, most parents in urban areas do not opt for schools that use mother tongue instruction for the first three years. Thus, we have young children who are second language speakers without the necessary foundation in their first language. Therefore, most children in urban Namibia cannot read or write in their mother tongue. The Namibian youth possess fragmented knowledge of three different languages, namely, a mother tongue, which is mostly limited to a spoken language, Afrikaans and English that they can read, write and speak to a very limited extend (Swarts 2000).

The Namibian youth are at a disadvantage in the sense that they do not possess a solid foundation in concept development in their first language, and, therefore, the tendency is to use code switching in most of their conversations with peers or plain Afrikaans instead of the vernaculars.

Although English is the official language as well as the medium of instruction in all the promotional subjects from Grade 4 onwards, given the history of language development in this country, most teachers are not proficient enough to teach solely in this mode. Therefore, they tend to code switch between Afrikaans and English, or between English and indigenous languages as a means of clarification, is an accepted norm in some predominantly traditional black schools (EFA 1993). The language policy is flexible in this regard, as it stresses the importance of 'sensitivity' when it comes to language barriers that might exist in the classroom, thus allowing room for code switching as an acceptable communication strategy in a multilingual classroom.

According to Swarts the quest for a language policy that would be acceptable to all for the purpose of instruction was initiated by the then Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. This was a case of the choice medium of instruction from a pedagogical point of view rather than a choice of medium of communication as English had been already embraced as the official language (Swarts 2000).

The National Language Policy Congress held in Ongwediva in 1992 discussed the proposed language policy for schools, elaborated on it and approved it, while the emphasis was put on the promotion of the following principles:

- 1) Primary education should enable learners to acquire reasonable competence in the official language;
- 2) Education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners by using their home language as the medium of instruction at least from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and by continuing to teach the mother tongue as a subject throughout the years of formal education.
- 3) Ideally, schools should offer at least two languages in order to promote and foster bilingualism (Swarts 2000: 39).

All these ideals are in black and white, but it is not carried out in practice, since the reality in Namibian education depicts a different picture altogether.

Languages in Namibia were linked to ethnicity and it was used to exploit and divide the Namibians via the policy of deliberate ethno-linguistic fragmentation, thus the Namibian public regards mother tongue instruction as contradictory to the goals that the newly elected government was endeavoring to promote (Harlech- Jones 2000). The question of why the African indigenous people in Namibia reject mother tongue instruction for their children is thus obviously comprehensible. This point of view is not positive in relation to intellectual writings, albeit, it finds resonance in the following quotation:

*‘ Language is culture and in language we carry our identity and culture; our nuances, impressions and interpretations of the English language are rooted in our African languages, experiences and meanings’*

(Makgoba et al, as quoted in Bamgbose 2000:2).

It is known through surveys conducted in the developed countries that for pedagogical reasons, it is ideal for learners to study through their home language especially during the formative years. The language in education policy in principle promotes the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at lower primary level as a means of fostering and developing the cultural identity and language of the learner. However, the feasible reality that the Ministry of Basic Education, Youth and Sport has to come to terms with, is the following:

- 1) The lack of adequate resources in the form of qualified teachers for the various indigenous languages.
- 2). The lack of financial resources to develop adequate teaching and learning materials for all and,
- 3) The lack of support for the development of African languages in general was lacking (Swarts 2000). According to Bamgbose facilities and materials made available for the European languages are of superior quality to their equivalents for African languages. Understandably, parents always want to provide the best for their children by exposing them early to the prospective employer's language rather than their own language.

Swarts argues that since independence, the Namibian experience has shown that the intentions of the language policy are manipulated to foster certain agendas and serve certain interests. Ironically, the government seemed to be the main culprit, along with the politicians, schools and the communities (Swarts 2000).

However, Harlech-Jones (2000) asserts that if the language policy meant to contribute to 'national development', then its main objective should be to assist both teachers and learners to succeed at their educational task. Therefore, the language policy should have been designed in close and engaged communication with the professionals and planners in all spheres of the system as well with other interested parties.

According to Legère (2000) the Namibian government controls language use and expects people to communicate exclusively in English. However, this requirement is strictly adhered to in relation to written material and for public official address, but oral communication runs contrary to this stipulation, since a number of languages including Afrikaans, are frequently spoken among civil servants at their offices as well as to their clients. Despite the expectations of the government regarding the official language, some formal domains such as schools are using national languages to a large degree. This is also supported by the information sector, specifically the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation that produces the News bulletin in various indigenous languages, as well as Afrikaans, English and German. Naturally, English enjoys a dominant status over all the other languages, since it is aired on the national broadcaster for about 18 hours a day.

At Hermann Gmeiner Technical School in Swakopmund, the medium of instruction may be English but what is taking place in some of the subjects is contrary to policy. The attitude towards the use of English is similar to the findings of McCormick who in his study investigated the politico-ideological dimension of code switching with reference to the District Six speech community in Cape Town. Among other things he discovered that English was spoken for formal occasions such as the opening of a meeting, reading of minutes and so on. However, when the discussion heats up or becomes an argument, then people switch back to Afrikaans. McCormick reported that his findings revealed that English is also used for different reasons, for an example such as, to talk to a white man who cannot speak English and feel superior for a few minutes, since it is assumed that they regard anybody who speaks English as superior to them (McCormick, as cited in Kamwangamalu 2000).

Legère maintains that the use of national languages in Namibia will not gain impetus in the future, as long as the official policy in Namibia does not anticipate any extensive use of national languages in the formal realm (Legère 2000). Due to this fact, further review of the purpose and reasons for various choices of language use will be highlighted through the analysis of the current prevailing literature on code switching.

## 2.6. Code switching as a research topic

Code switching as a research topic, was established by socio-linguists, psychologists and anthropologists as a subject of study from a number of different points of view. The pioneers in code switching are Jan Blom and John Gumperz, who studied the difference in code switching between dialects in a Norwegian fishing village back in the 70's. This sparked an interest in the study of code switching between languages as the utterances contributed by each person are easily distinguished in code switching between languages, by making the interpretation much easier and the data more accessible (Myers-Scotton 1993).

Code switching is a 'communication strategy that is adopted by bilingual speakers when conducting a conversation in two or more languages' (Myers-Scotton 1993). Bilingualism and multilingualism is not necessarily a term that is referring to someone who can conduct a conversation in two or more languages perfectly. In some countries such as the USA, newly arrived immigrant children entering schools are described as 'bilingual children', this term is often used as a euphemism for 'poor' and 'uneducated'. In that example, the term bilingual is used to convey a very different set of meanings from what linguists intend. From the perspective of this framework, a bilingual individual is not necessarily an ambilingual (an individual with native competency in two languages) but rather a bilingual who possess high levels or varying degrees of proficiency in both languages in the written and the oral modes. He/she could display varying proficiencies in comprehension and/or speaking skills depending on the immediate area of experience in which they are called upon to use their two languages.

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the latter definition when discussing bilingualism or multilingualism in the Namibian context. Due to the variety of linguistic resources that bilinguals/multilingual have at their disposal, they frequently integrate material from both of their languages within the same discourse segment (Bonvillain 1993). Code switching is context and situation bound, it means, that the bi/multilingual choice of code is influenced by contextual factors such as the location of interaction, degree of formality, degree of intimacy and seriousness of discourse. Rubin's study on

Guarani and Spanish yielded the evidence that Spanish is seen as the language of urban life and of formal situations, such as speaking to officials, doctors, teachers and others with whom a speaker is socially distant. Guarani, on the other hand, predominates in rural areas and is spoken in interactions with family and friends about informal or personal topics (Rubin, as cited in Bonvillain, 1993).

Africa, with its diversity of ethnic dialects has an abundance of code switching sources, and Namibia with its eleven indigenous languages has great potential to explore the various code switching strategies employed by the speakers in this country. In the north of Namibia, there is evidence of ethnic codes that are harmoniously in co-existence and Afrikaans, the Namibian lingua franca, serves various communicative functions.

However, for the rest of the country one cannot claim the co-existence of ethnic codes at all. It largely depends on the majority of indigenous speakers that are inhabitants of a particular area, that a particular ethnic code assumes the role of inter- ethnic code for communication purposes among the various ethnic groups. Afrikaans is the established lingua franca in this country to a very large degree in informal contexts specifically and in formal contexts to a limited extent.

According to Bonvillain (1993) the choice of code switching is further influenced by factors such as the participant, topic and idea. Her findings have revealed that two Spanish speakers in the USA may converse in English at work, while reverting to Spanish on their way home. Current international affairs may be discussed in English, while gossip may be carried out in Spanish. Attitudes toward the two languages are mixed, particularly regarding Guarani. Spanish is accorded prestige based on its association with international culture and an important literary tradition.

The reasons for code switching from English to Afrikaans seem to be influenced by a lack of vocabulary in the language on the floor. Mouton de Gruyter (1988) discussed the lexical switching by the Mohawks as influenced by the lack of specific words in their language, such as 'Sunday morning', which they call 'holy day' in their language.

The literature review highlighted a negative perception or attitude towards code switching, specifically in education. A South African study at Kwa-Thema Secondary School indicated that code switching is a language of incompetence. Whenever words do not come easily or are not known, the speaker tends to switch to another language, be it inside or outside the classroom. A teacher resorting to the use of code switching instead of using alternative words is labeled as frustrated and possesses insufficient command of the language (Kgomoeswana & Masekela 1993). They regard code switching in the classroom when employed by the teacher as not for the children's sake, but rather for the sake of the teacher due to his/her incompetence or lack of proficiency in English.

However, another research carried out at Tsolo Secondary School in South Africa is in support of code switching in the multilingual context, as a resource that needs to be fully exploited by both teachers and learners. The point made here is that a teacher could use code switching consciously, purposefully and systematically to facilitate learning (Faleni 1993). This could be utilized for various purposes such as for classroom management and control, for lexical clarifications and to explain difficult key concepts that the learners are unable to understand in English. Additionally, Faleni asserts that code switching could be adopted when one encounters words and phrases that belong exclusively to English. The idea that there is a case for developing and refining the skill of code switching in multilingual classes is echoing my opinion

Appalraju and de Kadt carried out a study in which they investigated the language choice patterns of Zulu –speaking rural youth in the rural community of Murchison in KwaZulu –Natal. Their results showed that the formerly monolingual community is moving towards bilingualism, and that the male pupils are specifically active proponents of both cultural and language shift towards English. The female pupils tend to retain their use of Zulu to a much greater extent. These differing language practices are considered in terms of gender identity. For the young men, the use of English assists in constructing a masculine identity striving towards modernity, social mobility and success in the job market. The much higher female retention of Zulu, constructs a more traditionalist feminine identity typically associated with the home and the maintenance of Zulu culture (Appalraju and de Kadt 2002: 135).



Namibia, like the rest of Africa is bilingual in the sense that everyone is speaking one's own mother tongue as well as an indigenous lingua franca. This is also noted in the study of Scotton in Kenya and Nigeria. In Namibia, this will lead to a concoction of different languages forming a new dialect.

At the moment Afrikaans seemed to be the single accepted dominant lingua franca in Namibia because even learners seem to feel awkward using English in their conversations with other learners who are Afrikaans conversant. They claim that others view them as if they are bragging or to be upper class.

If a single language is known to be useful for communicating with persons from various ethnic groups, learning that language is more useful than trying to learn bits and pieces of individual ethnic-group languages. It is obvious that this strategy is employed in Africa due to its hundreds of languages. Therefore, it is difficult to find any large areas where in inter-ethnic communication all languages compete at an equal level rather, regional lingua francas arise.

For Namibia, Afrikaans is still fulfilling that purpose for the different ethnic groups, despite the government's fierce opposition to it after independence (EFA1993). English may be the language of liberation for those in power, but for the masses, access to English is not easy. The masses still regards Afrikaans as the language of social mobility for the kind of unskilled jobs that they eke out a living from. Those who can afford to send their children to former white schools are also recognizing English as the language of social advancement and international communication.

School children are perhaps the speakers who do the most code switching no matter what their socio- economic level is. Myers-Scotton's field work showed that school children in Nairobi are the most code switching users, while Mazrui and Mphande (1990) point out that in the middle and upper class areas in Harare, pupils are the prominent users of code switching (Mazrui and Mphande as cited in Myers-Scotton, 1993). The tendency to speak a neutral lingua franca is brought about by having neighbours from various ethnic groups. Therefore, in Nairobi, Swahili and English are spoken, in Harare, it is Shona and

English while in Windhoek it is Afrikaans and English or an indigenous language and English.

Although this was a small-scale research, it focused attention on important language issues currently debated in Namibia.

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## **Current professional position and responsibilities**

I am a subject head in the English Department and senior language teacher for Grades 10, 11 and 12. I am also a subject head and school counsellor for Life Skills.

Responsible for moderating and approving internal English Second language question papers for the lower grades, i.e., Grades 10, 9 and 8. Moderation of marked examination papers, written work throughout the year at least twice in trimester, Cass Marks and conducting of subject meetings and submission of subject meeting reports.

## **Academic background**

I am currently a B.Ed (Honours) and B.A (Honours) holder. The B.Ed was obtained through the Rhodes University programme in Namibia during the academic year 1999-2000. Majored in Multicultural Education and Research Methods and Interpretations. The B.A.(Hons) in Communication Studies was obtained in the United Kingdom from the then Polytechnic of Wales, currently the University of Glamorgan in 1984. I majored in Applied Linguistics and Behavioural communication.

## **Community outreach**

I am responsible for counselling learners at school and their parents if learner's troublesome behaviour or persistent absenteeism does not improve. I am also responsible for referring learners either to the regional counsellor, psychologist or to the school board if counselling at school level fails to modify the learner's behaviour. I act as a mediator between the school and the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services in connection with learners that are facing financial difficulties or that are abused at home.

**Achievement which I most proud of**

I am proud of myself for being in the M.Ed (GETP) course over the past two years where I have grown holistically. I was tempted to quit the programme as juggling my various responsibilities proved too strenuous at times and I was constantly stressed, but my determination and perseverance stood me in good stead.

**Hopes and expectation in relation to this course**

My hope is to succeed and graduate in April next year. The success should not only be in terms of getting the qualification, but to grow professionally and to become well versed in education theories that inform my professional practice. Above all, I am anticipating a better professional move from being a secondary school teacher to either a lecturer at one of the institutions of higher learning, or a curriculum developer or to become involve in language research at NIED.

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

**Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION  
(GENERAL EDUCATION THEORY AND PRACTICE)**

**CANDIDATE: E.P. HOVEKA**

**NO. 699H4449**

**SUPERVISORS: U. VAN HARMELEN**

**W. HUGO**

**PROVISIONAL TITLE**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO FACTORS INFLUENCING  
LANGUAGE CHOICES OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS.**

**AN INTERPRETIVE CASE STUDY OF GRADE 11 LEARNERS IN  
NAMIBIA**

## **Research Proposal**

Provisional Title: An investigation of the factors that play a role in the language choices of multilingual learners inside and outside the classroom. A case study of Grade 11 learners at Hermann Gmeiner Technical School in Swakopmund, Namibia.

**Field of Research:** General Education Theory and Practice

## **Context**

Language has long been recognized as a ‘social activity in which the constructions of meaning and social realities take place’ (Corson, as cited in De Klerk and Hunt 2000). According to De Klerk and Hunt the differences in language choices by various groups are largely the product of different ways of socialization. These social patterns are reflected in the way speakers make language choices, be it consciously or otherwise. Therefore, speakers enter social interaction with social identities which are pre-established and this affects their linguistic practices.

Gaganakis (1990) argues that language is a symbolic form through which meaning is expressed and experienced. Thus, languages spoken in bilingual or multilingual communities can become associated with particular contexts and can invoke some clear social and personal meanings (Bonvillain 1993). Therefore, both bilingual and multilingual speakers can employ various choices of language according to different speech events. The choice of code switching is influenced by factors such as context, participant, topic and goal.

Bonvillain defines a lingua franca as ‘a language that is adopted by non-native speakers to communicate with speakers of different codes’ (Bonvillain 1993:20).

Namibia has a variety of ethnic languages that are spoken alongside the indigenous South African lingua franca Afrikaans. English has been added as an international



lingua franca to a very limited extent. Currently, Afrikaans may not be the official language, but it is definitely the official lingua franca of the masses.

However, a lingua franca is not always the language of the former colonial master. Swahili is a classic example of an indigenous language that has functioned as a lingua franca in many parts of Africa. However, most of those African countries use French or English as international and interethnic languages, since both function as codes for administration, business, advance education and elite discourse (Bonvillain 1993).

Namibia differs from the rest of the former African colonies, by adopting English as the official language, and automatically the language of administration, law and education. The choice of an official language for Namibia was politically, socially and economically motivated. Despite its limited usage before independence, English was seen as the language of liberation, unification and nation building, and, it is associated with social mobility and progress. Afrikaans was seen as the language of oppression, discrimination and everything the Apartheid system stood for (EFA 1993).

Despite the negative image Afrikaans has in Namibia, it is still the language of communication among the various ethnic groups. Most Namibians switch codes between Afrikaans and their indigenous vernacular rather than in English. The choice of English as the only official language is comprehensible in the Namibian context, since the choice of one ethnic language among other ethnic languages could have carried 'social messages' related to status, prestige or authority. This type of 'hidden messages' could have potentially led to antagonism. Hence, interethnic interactions often take place through the medium of a neutral language, which is either Afrikaans or English respectively in this case (Scotton 1993).

The communicative intention of code switching has stimulated the interest of socio linguists, psychologists and anthropological linguists to study this phenomenon in various social contexts. Current interest in code switching is attributed to the work of Jan Blom and John Gumperz, who published their findings on code switching on dialects in a Norwegian fishing village in 1972. Even though their work was on code switching between dialects, it prompted a flood of investigations on code

switching between languages, since it was seen as easy to distinguish between the switches to a different language and that made the data easily accessible.

Bonvillain defines code switching as ‘a communication strategy’ that is adopted by bilingual or multilingual speakers when conversing by ‘frequently integrating linguistic material from both languages or even from a third language within the same discourse segment’ (Bonvillain 1993:72).

Namibia, like the rest of post-colonial Africa is not lacking in code switching interactions. It has also a rich source of code mixing and code switching. Kamwangamalu (2000) conducted research on code switching at the university of Natal. According to the various writings cited in her work, code switching is regarded as ‘having multiple interaction functions such as conceptualization cue, situational and metaphorical code switching, external code switching, sociological and psychologically conditioned code switching (Kamwangamalu 2000: 60).

Despite all these multiple functions it serve as a communication tool in multilingual interactions, code switching carries a stigma in regard to its use in some areas, particularly in education. The use of code switching is viewed as ‘a mark of linguistic deficiency’ according to Lin (1996) as cited in Kamwangamalu (2000). The findings of a study at the Kwa-Thema Secondary School in South Africa indicated that code switching is a language of incompetence. A teacher resorting to this strategy of communication in a classroom is labeled as ‘frustrated and lacking proficiency’ in the language (Kgomoewana & Masekela 1993). The researchers argue that code switching in the classroom is not used for the benefit of the learners, but rather for the sake of the teacher due to the insufficient command the teacher has in this regard.

*‘All languages are capable of expressing whatever the users want to express and have equal potential although historical events may significantly benefit or impede a particular language’*  
(McArthur, quoted in Chick as cited in Kgomoeswana 1993).

In recognition of the above stated quotation, the Namibian language in education policy stipulated that ‘all national languages are of equal importance,’ despite the ‘developmental level of the language in question’ (EFA, 1993: 65). However, the Namibians learned English the hard way after independence. They were expected to communicate in a foreign language that they barely knew and almost never heard being spoken on the streets, except for those few who were fortunate enough to have heard it in a classroom during the English periods.

This resulted in code switching between more than two languages. The Namibian teachers were seen as under qualified, incompetent, and lacking proficiency in the official language (Harlech-Jones 2000). Despite all these defects, the government’s anticipation was that the schools should shoulder the task of promoting English proficiency among learners, and eventually promoting English to the status of a lingua franca in Namibia in general (EFA 1993).

### **Goals of the research**

The goals of this research are two- fold: Firstly, to uncover the underlying factors at play that can have an impact on language choices of multi lingual learners; secondly, to gain a better understanding of the reasons provided by the participants and to locate it within the current prevalent literature.

### **Methodology**

This research was carried out in the post positivist qualitative paradigm. This method was appropriate for the following reasons. According to Hitchcock and Hughes the ‘principle rationale’ of a qualitative approach is ‘to reproduce social

action in its natural setting'. Secondly, this technique 'places individual actors' at its centre and focuses upon factors such as context, meaning, culture, history and biography (Hitchcock & Hughes 1991:323). Furthermore, 'it recognizes that what goes on in schools and classrooms is made up of complex layers of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes' (Hitchcock & Hughes 1991: 25, 26).

This is an interpretive case study aiming to give a narrative or descriptive account. 'A case study is a collection and presentation of detailed, relatively unstructured information, from a range of sources about a particular individual, group or institution; these usually include the accounts of the subjects themselves' (Hammersley, as cited in Hitchcock and Hughes 1991)

According to Hitchcock and Hughes, a case study 'evolves around the in-depth - study of a single event or a series of linked cases over a defined period of time'. The researcher tries to locate the 'story' or a certain aspect of social behaviour in a particular setting and the factors influencing the situation (Hitchcock and Hughes 1991:317). Therefore, the researcher attempted to understand the underlying factors influencing the language choices of the Grade 11 learners at Hermann Gmeiner Technical School, while subjecting the results to critical analysis of the current empirical data related to the field of study.

## **Techniques**

The initial idea was to collect the data through observations and tape recorded interviews. For the purpose of this research, the researcher assumed the role of a non- participant observer, after making known the reason for her presence in the classroom to the teachers and learners alike in advance. I chose to adopt the observation technique since it will enable me to discern 'the ongoing behavior as it occurs naturally' (Hopkins 1993: 23).

I made use of the 'structured observation approach, which is the coding or tally system' (Hopkins, 1993: 100). I coded up verbal exchanges every three seconds between teacher and the learners respectively; and, among learners themselves, by means of a structured set of observational categories for example; English/Afrikaans; Afrikaans/ English; English/ Indigenous language and so on. I

put down a tick, every time a learner respondent in class, whether to the teacher or among themselves.

However, after two observation sessions in class, I abandoned this technique of coding, because the emergent theme was not so much about code switching, but rather of using Afrikaans constantly among themselves (learners) when reasoning about Mathematics, while the response was given in English to the teacher. In view of this, I decided to use a questionnaire as 'a tool' to obtain the learners self-report on their language usage and the reasons for their particular choices.

The observation during the play ground periods showed that the learners were grouping themselves according to their various vernaculars. The observation during the break yielded the evidence that mother tongue was dominating their conversations accordingly.

The learners were also observed during another period that fell in the same period as the Mathematics period. This class was an exclusively female class. The teacher explained that they were finished with the syllabus for that term, and thus the learners were allowed to do their own thing during the Child Development periods. A group of six girls were conversing solely in their mother tongue Khoe khoegowab, while some three girls in the class were from the Otjiherero and Oshiwambo group respectively. This made me realize that I needed to modify my data gathering techniques, and therefore I decided on a questionnaire and tape-recorded interviews.

The questionnaire that was administered contained semi- structured and unstructured or factual questions. The semi- structured questions were included for the respondents to elaborate on their views, while the factual questions were serving the purpose of requesting Yes/No questions that did not need further explanations, and for obtaining quantitative results (Bell 1993).

Additionally, I conducted a recorded interview with four out of the ten participants. This technique will be chosen since it has the advantage of yielding 'ample material with great ease', and I will be able to monitor the recorder (Hopkins, 1993: 120).

Informal group interviews were conducted randomly in class, in order to get a wider opinion of the whole group collectively. This was done to enhance the depth and breath of the responses than what occurs in individual interviews, and therefore,

ascertain the reliability of the interview responses (Lewis, as cited in Hitchcock & Hughes 1995: 161).

### **The sample**

The sample for both interviews individual and group, consisted of ten Grade 11 learners spread across the ethnic language groups, comprising out of two learners, (females and males) from each group respectively. Both the informal interviews and the questionnaire were conducted during the English periods when the whole group was in my classroom. This saved time and ensured that all the questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher promptly. This method of administering the questionnaires under my supervision also enabled me to clarify the information to the learners, right there on the spot.

This research is significant because although small scale it sheds light on an important debate current in Namibia.

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## **REFLECTIONS ON THE M.ED GETP PORT FOLIO**

### **Introduction**

Various definitions are associated with the word portfolio. Sweet (1993) comments that educational portfolio is a collection of evidence that demonstrates the progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes, while reflecting your individual experience in a learning situation as well. Carol et al (1996) define a portfolio as a collection of the student's work, describing the student's efforts, progress or achievement in a given area. Thus, a portfolio contains a diverse set of information gathered across a variety of learning contexts, content areas and forms of communication. This information is intended to reveal the full range of an individual's talents and interests. It is both a reflexive as well as a reflective process. The reflexive process requires that one has to look back critically on your activities inside the classroom, and ask yourself the wh-questions of what, why and how learning had taken place. It is also reflective as it implies a self-evaluation notion in which the student has to contemplate the next action to take and how to improve on it. The cursive notion of reflexive and reflective thinking sets the platform for determining new goals for the future.

The reflection in this paper is an attempt to focus on the long and winding academic path that I have followed over the past two years during the Masters (GETP) programme of 2002-2003. The portfolio is structured under various headings and sub-headings, reflecting the various assignments done over the two- year period. It will also focus on the anxieties, despair and agony suffered throughout the course. Furthermore, a candid account of my own weaknesses will be related and the personal as well as the professional growth that had ensued from this endeavor will be presented as well.

## **1. REFLECTIONS ON THE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **1.1 Contextual Analysis**

This assignment required every student to look at how the Reform Process in education in Namibia is holding out in practice according to the respective roles every student is fulfilling in her/his professional capacity. Being a second language teacher, I decided to look at the language in education policy, the curriculum document as well as the principles of the reform process in relation to the actual practice at my institution. Since this is well-known area to me, I had no problem in locating the relevant literature that is pertaining to this area. I carried out a survey with learners and teachers at my school to ascertain their views regarding the policy and the reform process principles. The data was analyzed critically and commented upon.

However with the first draft, the comments from my tutors alerted me to make the voices of my participants prominent by reflecting on it consistently in my writings. Before I revised the second attempt, I went through the questionnaire again to try and locate some important information I have overlooked. I re-worked the second draft adhering to the comments and suggestions.

Additionally, I submitted this piece of work to the editor for her perusal, quite a few mistakes were detected and I worked on that for the third time round. However, after the examinations, I submitted the same work to my tutors for the final polishing, it was indeed not the final of finals. After two more submission to two different editors, I gave the same work to a third editor who really made work of that piece. A lot of mistakes were noted on which I had to re-work it to attain the required standard, and I have realized that editing is an in-depth work that needs to be done thoroughly.

Before this Masters course I did not know how to interpret policies, let alone analyze it critically or relate it to the classroom practice. Now, I can read and interpret any policy as long as I am acquainted with the practice on the ground. This course has enabled me professionally to understand the Language policy in relation to the aims of the English Second Language curriculum.

Furthermore, I have gained insight into what the Reform Process in Education principles mean in reality. Through the contextual analysis research, I made the management of the school aware that the Grade 11's curriculum is gender biased, and pointed out that it is still promoting inequalities in relation to gender. My outspokenness on this issue had reaped some fruits. For the first time, there are seven girls in Grade 11 taking Mathematics and Physical Science with the boys. Home Economics and Child Development were compulsory subjects for all the girls at this school since 1994 till last year. This programme has definitely empowered me to be more assertive and to push for what I think is best for the learners without undermining those in authority or sounding conceited.

I have also grown professionally in the sense that I can look at my own practice in relation to the education theories, particularly in terms of the learner-centred approach and the various assessment methods. Before this course, I came to an understanding of the various techniques of evaluation, but I failed to put all of them into practice in my lessons. However, the course has empowered me to become more reflective and critical of my approach in the classroom, and therefore, I am now able to teach in a more learner-centred approach, that allows the learners to have an active share in the lesson as it unfolds. Additionally, when I am setting up a question paper, I tend to look for material that will pose questions that need critical thinking and analytical skills from learners, questions such as 'why' that need elaboration with reasons for the specific answer. Prior to the course, I concentrated on questions that could easily be lifted from the passage, but now I focus more on questions that require insight into the text.

Another important thing I also noticed is the fact that the Grade 11 English second language curriculum is only summative, which is a formal written examination without

continuous assessments throughout the year. This is contrary to the constructivist approach, supporting the learner-centred notion that the reform process in education is claiming to have introduced across the curriculum. However, for Grade 10's and the lower grades, the curriculum has adhered to the constructivist approach of evaluating the learner holistically through various assessment techniques. I must mentioned that this Masters programme has empowered me tremendously, in the sense that I have become more reflexive, I tend to have 'conversations with self and settings' and this helps me to become a constructivist teacher in my approach in the classroom.

## 1.2 Epistemology

This piece of work required the student to reflect on the epistemology in the behaviorist and constructivist paradigms, critically reflecting on their weaknesses and strengths in relation to education. This was the second most difficult assignment that I have ever done in my academic career. To locate the relevant literature proved to be problematic to me, especially the writings of founding fathers and their associated theories. For the first time, I went to the Internet to extract information on knowledge, and I got started. Somewhere, somehow I could not locate all the theories associated with Constructivism, and I settled for those I obtained through the Internet mainly. I wrote about five drafts before I could make sense out of the whole piece of writing. My referencing was problematic right from the word go, I was so frustrated and felt so dejected that I wanted to quit the programme. My motto being 'quitters are losers'' I stuck it out to the bitter end. Since then I had re-worked the epistemology piece about four times more.

Fortunately, we had two wonderful tutors who really were there for us, they were not looking for their own interests, but for the students' interests. They guided me positively with their kind but firm comments and urged me to read more widely and to look at the epistemology as presented by both approaches and to look at it critically in relation to my current classroom practices.

I re-worked the references as well to the satisfaction of my tutors and the requirements stipulated by the university.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

My initial plan was to investigate the phenomenon of code switching among bi/multilingual speakers. I had a pre-conceived idea that learners at my school are code switching mostly between English and Afrikaans due to the lack of the necessary vocabulary in the medium of instruction. I wanted to find out why they speak the way they do, so that maybe I could make some recommendations that will minimize this problem at our school.

Most of the literature related to this topic are published in journals, so I needed to get hold of journals and therefore I was compelled to go to UNAM's and NIED's libraries, to seek information. Through reading the various literatures related to language, I gained insight as to the importance of mother tongue instruction in concept development, how it helps to promote second language acquisition and enhance performance as well as assist learning.

Without my tutors comments and support I could not have gained clarity how to find my way through the maze of literature that I collected.

### **1.4 The Research**

The research proposal was not so much of a headache but needed several drafts and re-workings. What was a bit of a headache was the setting of goals of why I wanted to do that particular research and what its implications will be, that proved to be a challenge. Eventually after considerable amount of readings I formulated a few questions that I thought my research will be able to answer, and that gave me a foundation on which to base my research.

Mostly, I encountered difficulties when it was time to transcribe the tape- recorded interviews. I interviewed only four learners, each one talked between five and eight minutes, and it took me about eight hours to transcribe the data. I realized that I was overtly ambitious at the outset, as I intended to interview about ten learners. Now, I realized that I could not have coped to transcribe such an amount of information within the time limit I had at my disposal.

My other problem was related to the various techniques I adopted to gather the data. At the end of the day, I had three different data that needed to be analyzed, to be organized in themes and to be interpreted in conjunction with the relevant literature in the field of study.

However, my journey through the Masters programme was by no means not only filled with agony, but it was also mingled with moments of joy and exultation. My word processing skills have considerably improved, I have conquered the technological fear, specifically the mouse that I used to find unpredictable and capable of being mean by deleting one's work at a whim. At first, my computer skills were limited to typing with three fingers only, but now, I can access the Internet for information and communicate via the E-mail.

My other bad habit that I took for granted for too long is the habit of procrastination. I tend to leave things to the last minute before acting, even though I thrive under pressure, this is not a good habit at all. Procrastination is not a positive quality at all. It made one produce work that is below one's potential.

However, I have two strong positive qualities that I relied on time and time again. I believe in myself all the time, and, I am a very determined person, if I want something, come what may, I make sure that I work to realize that dream.

I feel that we did not get clear guidelines in relation to the writing of a portfolio. The lack of clear guidelines made the task of writing a portfolio difficult, in the sense that one did not know for sure which experiences to highlight, whether it was the course

itself, the impact of the course on my professional practice or my personal experiences and feelings in relation to the course.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my tutors, Ursula and Wayne who rendered their support consistently without tiring, you proved to be more understanding and kind than what was expected from you professionally. To Ursula, thank you for your support and encouragement and your belief in my potential, your words inspired me to hang in there even when I felt like quitting.